

## Special Supplement

## The Glorious Victory Day - 2006

Saturday 16 December

FROM PAGE 37

## Dynamic Nation, Convulsive Politics

relevant and quality education, setting a new direction and speed in development, infusing new values and norms in the younger generation and, above all, ensuring order and discipline in the society. The future challenge of Bangladesh will therefore continue to be: how to create a strong edifice of state that can sustain continued economic growth and at the same time bridge the gap between rich and poor that has widened over the years and created the most entrenched social division.

Today, Bangladesh is at an important crossroad in its political journey as a democratic nation. Bangladesh's achievements over the years in many areas are positive and offer reasonable hope for a better future of its people. The new imperatives of global order, regional environment and democratization are impinging on the capacity of the Bangladesh state with greater complexities than ever before. The form of democracy is still debated - the substance in terms of effective participation of people, the quality of representation and standard of governance is yet to be achieved. The institutions of governance are in the process of change and adaptation to new norms and values. But the ubiquitous nature of politics cast shadow on the growth and development of these institutions. The role of national parliament needs to be established as the symbol of democracy, legitimacy and representative government.

No doubt, democracy is our aspiration. But we need a democracy that can deliver and rise up to the expectations of the people - not a degraded one where people live in fear and the nation languishes. This 'new democracy' is deliberative where people can participate in a meaningful way to choose their leaders. The Victory Day provides us with the opportunity to feel proud of our people and patriotic armed forces - their ability to create a state, give us a flag and provide us with the opportunity to engage constructively in all spheres of national life with strong determination. On this anniversary of the nation's victory we expect our political leaders to show vision and develop a culture to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. They need to evolve a deliberative democracy through dialogue, negotiations and compromise to reject the evils of extremism and destructive politics. Let us hope that our political leaders will rise to the occasion to resolve their differences and pave the way for a 'new democracy', thus showing honor to the nation's glorious Victory Day.

My Native Land  
Al Mujaheedy

My Native Land my earth!  
There's love only love for you.  
I know how these waters and the earth have formed;  
I know the various ages:  
Tertiary—  
plyostecin—  
palol—  
O the soil of these ancient ages  
I sing your paean—  
The waves of passion of Tethys' love  
have embraced you  
like the flow of eternity.  
You have been in existence for centuries  
with your head erect  
with your natural stalwarts like  
the sal, the fig tree and the sky  
Ever unmoved by thunder and lightning,  
The planned moments of time  
Go on collapsing  
O my native land!  
You are an entity  
Not alone like the lonely hill  
Not a tranquil beach of time...  
The reeds of transition float on  
far and far away....  
This human habitation is "of the people"  
An indivisible entity,  
The stupendous nature  
cover this earth  
O unique soil-my native land-my soil!  
O fatherland, oppressed by heat and bloodshed!  
Each morning is alive and a crimson entity  
Colourful and reflected-  
Buds emerge on the stalk of the breasts  
of each dark night,  
This is the reality of nature - ever creative  
If you touch my body once  
I throb in creativity again and again  
I travel on like the navigators of far of seas.  
I throb now like the throbs of your heart  
The flowery grasses are drenched in the dews  
Who was it that kissed you on the lips last night?  
Do you remember the springs voice of that lover?  
We are the human offsprings of this great soil-  
The Samotat-Banga-Harikel chandradwip  
of ancient times.  
I know the history of the oceans and  
Lands of this world.  
We survive.  
We survive.  
We have crossed the whirlpool and survive  
We survive like Gilgamesh across the peak of death.  
The dry field, covered with grass and treeless.  
We.  
All of us,  
Are attentive to the future.  
Like ancient sage 'Unapishim' of the  
town of 'Shuruppak'  
We reached the border of the  
mountain range near the  
edge of the earth,  
For attaining the life eternal.  
We crossed men surrounded by scorpions  
and darkness  
And reached the garden of flowers and stones.....  
In the light of souls in trance  
We wake up by and by  
And my native land  
Wakes up .....  
Wakes up .....  
Wakes up .....

Translation : Prof. Abu Taher Mojumder

Today is 16 December, the Victory Day of Bangladesh. The document of surrender was signed on behalf of the Pakistan government and the Pakistani Army by the chief of its eastern command Lt. General Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi in front of a huge cheering crowd who had assembled at the historic Racecourse Maidan at 4:30 afternoon on Thursday, 16 December 1971. It was at the very same Racecourse Maidan where Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had tactfully declared the independence of Bangladesh 284 days back on 7 March 1971 while standing in the midst of a vast sea of people. Nonetheless, it was the moment of signing that document from when we were formally liberated.

If 16 December 1972 is counted as the first anniversary of victory, then today is the 35th anniversary. Man will continue to arrive in this world and then depart; As long as there is youth and vigour, people themselves, or their elders and junior would celebrate the birth, death and marriage anniversaries. But inspiration drawn by celebrating this anniversary of victory of the motherland is everlasting. But this year's Victory Day is taking place in a different setting. Let me first narrate some information and emotion before going into that stock-taking.

The whole landmass of Bangladesh was divided into 11 sectors during the liberation war. Let me first mention the names of the sector commanders here for the benefit of the present generation. (No. 1 sector commander) At first Major Ziaur Rahman and later Major Rafiqul Islam. (No. 2 sector commander) Initially Major Khaled Mosharraf and later Major ATM Hyder. (No. 3 sector commander) At first Major KM Shafiqullah and later Major ANM Nuruzzaman. (No. 4 sector commander) Major CR Datta. (No. 5 sector commander) Major Meer Showkat Ali. (No. 6 sector commander) Wing Commander MK Bashar. (No. 7 sector commander) Major Quazi Nuruzzaman. (No. 8 sector commander) Initially Major Abu Osman Chowdhury and later Major MA Manzur. (No. 9 sector commander) Major MA Jalil. (No. 10 sector) Naval commandos in coastal zones and inland waterways. The naval commandos used to operate under concerned sector commanders while engaged in specific missions in various sectors. (No. 11 sector commander) At first Major Abu Taher and later Squadron Leader M Hamidullah Khan.

Both regular freedom fighters as well as guerrilla warriors fought in these sectors. Three brigade-size forces were set up between August and September 1971. These were: 'K' Force led by the then Lt. Col. Khaled Mosharraf ('K' being the first letter of his name), 'S' Force led by the then Lt. Col. K M Shafiqullah ('S' being the first letter of his name) and the 'Z' Force led by the then Lt. Col. Ziaur Rahman ('Z' being the first letter of his name). The sectors or forces participated in the final campaign of the liberation war as operational associates of the Indian Army. There were other forces as well including Kader Bahini and Hemayet Bahini. A naval commando force was formed to launch attacks on ships moving through rivers while small planes were readied to conduct symbolic aerial operation near Narayanganj. These two forces made unforgettable contribution towards achieving victory. Although the final victory was achieved on 16 December, various sub-divisional and district towns of Bangladesh were liberated earlier on different dates of December. This is why, the days of liberation are observed on different dates at various places, towns and habitats of Bangladesh. No writings on the Victory Day would be completed if respect is not paid to the individual accomplishments of lakhs of mothers, sisters, fathers and brothers. National victory was possible because they could courageously place their personal interests below that of national interest. It is not possible to cover many aspects within this short space. That is why only a single episode of December would be described here as a symbolic gesture.

On December 1, 1971, the Second East Bengal Regiment started moving towards Dhaka from the southern fringe of Azampur railway station, two kilometres north of Akhaura railway junction. Akhaura was liberated early at dawn on 4 December. Many officers and soldiers embraced martyrdom in that battle. The troops then crossed the Meghna river, travelled through Narsingdi and Murapara of Rugganj thana, crossed the Shitalakhya river and then took up positions on the eastern bank of Balu river near Demra. The Pakistanis were stationed on the western bank of the river. In this backdrop, news came in the afternoon of 16 December that the Pakistanis had surrendered inside Dhaka city. It may be noted here that the areas under Dhaka city were within geographic and operational jurisdiction of sector no. 2. As a result, many guerrilla fighters of the sector were already present in Dhaka.

In the same afternoon, some troops of the Kader Bahini entered Dhaka from the northern side while some more fighters of sector no. 2 entered from the south-eastern direction. The members of Second East Bengal Regiment arrived at Dhaka stadium on foot within 8 pm in the evening on 16 December. Thirty-five years have elapsed since then. The freedom fighters have undergone an aging process while taking stock of what they had aspired for, what they actually got and what they failed to get. It does not appear that we shall be able to achieve what we aspired for within our lifetime. May be we will have to leave this world with this sorrow and pain inside us, unless the most merciful creator delivers some other verdict. This theme would be touched later on.

It was not known in advance that the victory day would materialise on the day of its actual occurrence after nine months of liberation war. The Bengalees had fought the war

Let the Victory Day be  
Our Ladder of Light

By Major General (ret.) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, Bir Pratik



with all their resources and passion. The Indian assistance was added to this process as an inevitable accompaniment. The final chapter of the liberation war of the Bengalees became a campaign by the joint forces. More than one thousand members of the Indian armed forces had sacrificed their lives for liberating Bangladesh. The chief of the liberation forces, the then Colonel M A G Osmany, could not remain present at the surrender ceremony of the Pakistani military held at Ramna Racecourse (presently Suhrawardy Udyan) on 16 December 1971. The deputy chief of the force, the then Group Captain A K Khandakar (later Air Vice-Marshal) was present on behalf of the freedom fighters. And about the surrender itself, it was not a case of Pakistan surrendering to India. Rather the eastern command of the Pakistani military had surrendered to the eastern command of the Indian army. But those who had opposed the liberation war within Bangladesh had never surrendered openly to the flag of Bangladesh, the rifles of the freedom fighters or the political leadership of the liberation war. They are now part of the political process because successive governments have pardoned them formally or informally for the sake of upholding the democratic process and in order to widen the base of our democratic tradition. I am mentioning this because the cherished goals of the freedom fighters could not be realised yet despite so many measures and both these developments have today become matters of regret.

Many battles were fought during the nine months of liberation war. They have found places in history books. What lessons could we learn from these? These are matters relevant for those who study warfare or undertake research on the subject. Those battles during the liberation war were not merely familial affairs, clashes for killing people or confrontation for seizing lands. Rather, the liberation war was waged to establish the right of self-determination of a nation and a people, elicit an inspirational name for a landmass and the right to hold aloft one's flag. The present generation of young people would draw inspirations from the sacrifices made during the liberation war. They would be motivated to give up their lives for the sake of their country. But even dedication or sacrifice need an appropriate setting. The question comes, do we have that setting?

The general masses of this country had waged the liberation war by staking their lives. Some had participated directly, some indirectly. A portion of them were teenage boys, whose age ranged between 10 to 14. I have read narratives of their daring campaigns in the Documents of the Independence War. Let me mention some of them. Teenager Dula had joined the liberation war when the sounds of rifles, mortars and machine guns of the cruel Pakistanis were reverberating all around. He could not be subdued even after his whole body was riddled with bullets. The first martyr of Bogra was a juvenile. Tito of Manikganj had joined the liberation war when he was only twelve or thirteen. He did not know much; he only understood that there would be no enemies if the country was freed and people would then see the face of happiness. Muhammad Imran was a small member among the 600 active freedom fighters of Madaripur. His age was hardly ten.

The reason why I am bringing the subject of these teenagers in my discussion is because those boys were inspired to sacrifice their lives under the then leadership. It is questionable whether we now possess those leadership qualities to inspire the juveniles and youths of the country towards good deeds. If we do not have that, then what lies in store for us in the future?

Many of us hesitate to pronounce our identity of a Bangladeshi, derived from the name of the country for which we fought. Many also hesitate to acknowledge our Bengalee identity, although we started our independence war after being subjected to repression and suppression because of our Bengalee ethos. We are Bengalee because the great creator was kind enough to send us to the homes of our Bengalee parents. Bangla is one of the ten major languages of the world. We established Bangladesh after fighting with our lives, resources and honour at stake, while praying to the great creator for his blessing. But why do we hesitate to call ourselves Bengalees or Bangladeshis? A simple man like me fails to understand this. Many avoidable arguments are at work in this politico-psychological conflict. But I am avoiding this topic here because of space constraints.

After Bangladesh was freed from the enemies, the freedom fighters were either sent home packing on the basis of rules, regulations and contracts, or they were engaged in their old or newer jobs. The freedom fighters were organised collectively during the nine months of liberation war. They were habituated with working under a chain of command. But when they became disorganised or fragmented all of a sudden, they lost their weight and influence. The only difference was that the Bangladesh government-in-exile had worked in Kolkata between 17 April and 16 December 1971. The freedom fighters were then under that government. On the other hand, the occupying forces were in control of the Pakistan central government as well as the provincial government of East Pakistan alias Bangladesh. The Dhaka-based Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh started to function formally with effect from 17 December 1971. In other words, the buildings, files and officers-employees of the secretariat of a provincial government were inevitably transformed overnight into the secretariat of an independent Bangladesh. It was indeed a difficult task. Despite good intentions, the new secretariat could never be organised on the basis of the spirit of liberation war because of various

Let Bangladesh Live on  
Nirmalendu Goon

My darling is not feeling well.  
With shattered dreams and an inarticulate huff  
Black lines have appeared below her eyes,  
There is a frown of disdain on the forehead and a knot in her hair.  
On the glory of her riverine breasts  
There are now dark shadows of a setting sun.  
Even this spring-clad month of tumultuous March  
Does not bring any good tidings  
For her bruised psyche.

Keeping pace with my sweetheart,  
Happiness has vanished from my mind as well.  
Such an occurrence is only natural.  
If the smile of the beloved fades from her face  
Can the lover be in good health?

Looking at the face of my dearest  
The independence of our cravings  
Today appear meaningless.  
If this was to be our fate  
Then let me be subjugated once again.  
Carrying my darling with me  
Let me leave Bangladesh  
For some other place.

Otherwise, Oh my faded freedom  
Please sanctify the profane  
With the sacred waters of Abe-Zamzam,  
The paddy-grass, Ganges-water and the leaves of wood-apple trees.

Please purify, and enliven.  
Please remove all suspicions  
From the heart of my beloved.  
Please cure her mind, Oh lord,  
Freed at the cost of three million lives  
Let Bangladesh live on.

Translation : Helal Uddin Ahmed

constraints. This is the foremost cause of the socio-political sickness of independent Bangladesh. The responsibilities of the political leadership of the time should have discharged at that time were to nurture and flourish the sentiments of the liberation war. But that did not happen due to various reasons.

The members of the army, police, Ansar, BDR, BNCC (former UOTC) had embraced martyrdom during the 9-month long war. More than one thousand members of the Indian armed forces sacrificed their lives for the realisation of our freedom. 751 members of Bangladesh Police were martyred. We emerged victorious in exchange for the blood of innumerable martyrs and the sacrifices of the living. 7 freedom fighters were conferred with the highest gallantry award 'Bir Sreshta', 68 freedom fighters were decorated with Bir Uttam, 175 with 'Bir Bikram' and 426 with 'Bir Pratik' awards as recognition of their exceptional courage and valour. The decorated freedom fighters included people from various age groups and sex. Two female freedom fighters were awarded the title of Bir Pratik. Was our victory merely over a group of foreign troops? Or was it a victory of ideals and values?

The objective of the liberation war was to stop discrimination of our people on the basis of language, religious faith or any other ground in order to ensure justice and welfare. The liberation war was against corruption, dishonesty and wastage. We have carved out Bangladesh by breaking a state called Pakistan, but have we achieved these objectives? In most cases, the democratic practice that we resort to through an electoral system every five years by rendering so called public services with the help of black money and by hoodwinking the public through sweet words, is in fact not geared towards public welfare. Therefore it becomes difficult in this Western-model of election-based democracy to find a leader who places the party above his own self and the country above his party. The chick which is to be hatched from the egg cannot undertake its own reform. I feel that it would be difficult to ensure welfare-oriented democratic governance by those political parties who themselves are in need of democratisation. At the same time, I also believe that the political parties would definitely reform themselves at one time or another and the country would move forward under their leadership.

On the eve of this 35th Victory Day, our minds remain stuck in the middle of hope and disappointment, restlessness and stagnation. At this very moment, crores of Bangladeshi citizens including myself are worried about the prevailing political unrest and gloom. On 28 November 1999, the topmost headline of a leading periodical of Dhaka city was: "Sense of national insecurity has to be freed from the clutches of national politics". The emergence of politics as a culture and its practice as a profession started more than two centuries ago. Prior to 1947, the mainstream politics of the then Indian subcontinent was focused on gaining independence from the British. After 1947, the politics of Pakistan started to become polluted. Grievances started to pile up in East Pakistan. Initially, we sought equality and justice, and later independence. Today, the principal negative attributes of our politics are: (a) division; (b) blaming one another for contacting foreign countries or foreigners; (c) existence of issues on which agreement is impossible; (d) lack of legal control on the nature of politics or the number of political parties; (e) mutual distrust; (f) dependence on student politics; (g) absence of accountability on the question of personal and party income and expenditure; (h) absence of democratic practice within the political parties themselves, etc. These points may be relevant, but it is difficult to discuss these attributes in detail here inside a concise article like this. Even then, I have pointed these out because we are worried about the security of the country and its people even while celebrating this Victory Day. We want to emerge victorious over these negative traits.

As Muslims, we should never feel gloomy about the prospects of Allah's mercy, whose infinite mercy led to the creation of Bangladesh. We shall be able to build our country a new one again if the most compassionate Allah favours us with His kindness. But there are some prerequisites for that to happen. One, there is no need for us to lament the lack of national consensus on national issues, because that is impossible. Two, it would be possible to bring about a socio-economic revolution in the country if the major political parties show goodwill on some issues. I shall mention four such issues: the first one is controlling corruption at the top level. The second one is, inculcating a sense of social equality. Third, the administration, especially the law enforcement agencies have to be freed from political influence. Fourth and last, major changes should be brought about in the election process. If we can move forward with this outlook, then the Victory Days will become meaningful in the not-too-distant future. Otherwise, although we emerged victorious in the liberation war, we shall continue to be beaten by our processes and temptations. My prayer on the occasion of Victory Day would be: let our younger generation realize these realities.

Translation : Helal Uddin Ahmed