



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a young football player. Front row third from left (1940).

Father and son football face off

(1940)
In school I was crazy about sports. However, my father tried to discourage me from playing since my heart wasn’t strong. My father himself was a good sportsman. He was secretary of the Officers’ Club. I was captain of the Mission School. When my team played father’s club people were quite excited. Our school team was quite strong. We used to admit the best players of the region and exempt them from paying tuition fees.
In 1940 my team managed to defeat my father’s team in almost every sport. And yet the Officers’ Club had no shortage of funds. It would recruit players from outside our area. All of them were big-name players. In the last football match of the season our team drew with father’s team for five successive days. We were all students and the eleven of us always played together whereas the Officers’ Club always had to hire a fresh set of players for every game. But we had become exhausted from the effort. Father said we would

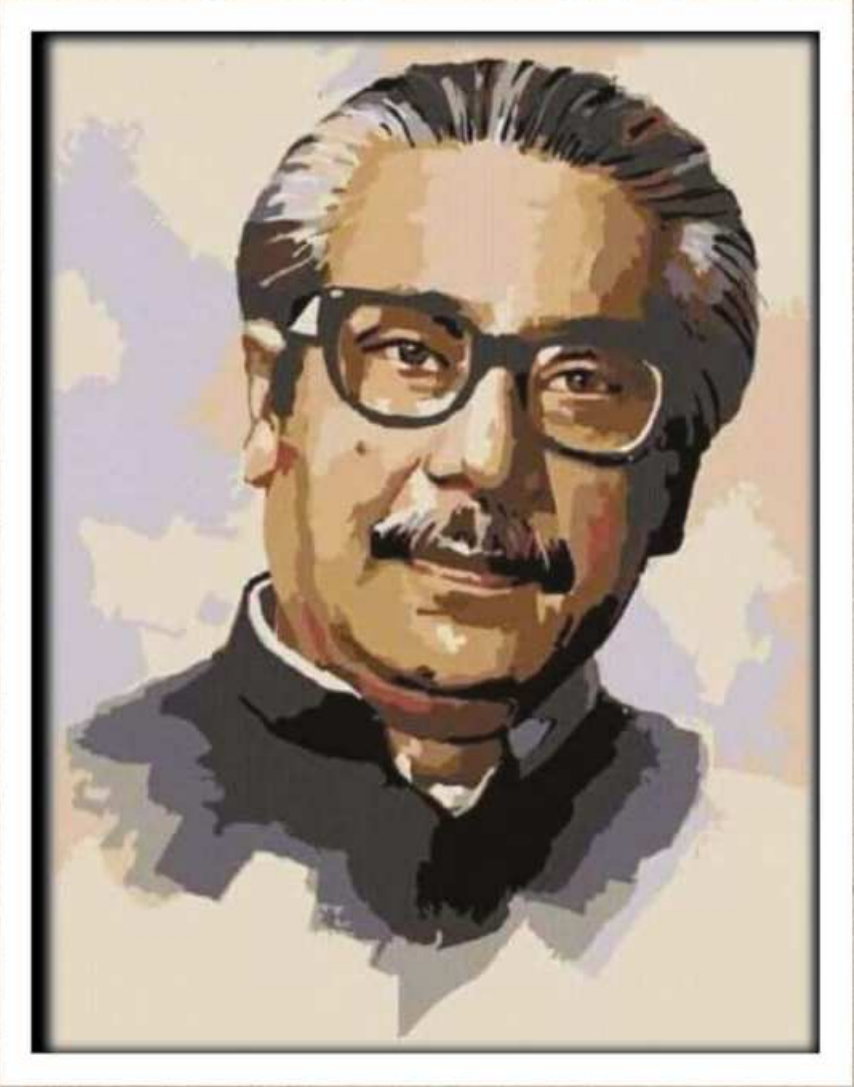
have to play the next morning to come up with a decisive result. He argued that they couldn’t keep the players that they had hired in our town forever since it was costing them a lot.
However, I pointed out that we had examinations the next morning and thus wouldn’t be able to play at that time. The secretary of Gopalganj Club began to shuttle back and forth between my father and me and after some time gave up in exasperation, declaring, ‘This is between you and your father; I can’t keep shuttling back and forth as a negotiator between you two forever.’
The headmaster of our school was a man called Roshoranjana Sen Gupta. He used to tutor me at that time. My father summoned him. I took up position along with my players at one goalpost while my father took his stand on the other side. The headmaster urged me to yield to my father’s request and play the next morning since they had a real problem on their hands what with their out-of-town players. I told


him that the eleven of us were exhausted since we had been playing endlessly all year long. I pointed out to him that our bodies were aching and we needed to rest for at least a couple of days. The alternative would be to have us lose badly. I also stressed that we hadn’t lost a game that whole year and this was the final of the prestigious A.Z. Khan Shield Tournament. A.Z. Khan was a SDO who had died in Gopalganj. Among his sons, Amir and Ahmed were my childhood friends. I was especially close to Amir. He now works in Radio Pakistan and is better known as Amiruzzaman Khan. When his family had to leave Gopalganj when Mr Khan died, I was very sad. But to come back to my story, in the end I had to yield to the headmaster’s request and so our team played father’s team the next morning. We lost the game by one goal.
Source: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s *The Unfinished Memoirs* published by University Press Limited

My loving mother

(1966)
When I went out in the morning, I noticed that those who had been interned in old cell number 20 were looking at me through an opening in the door. Little by little, I went towards them. I asked them how they were feeling. They had sad stories to tell...
At five o’clock, when I was sitting by myself and was lost in my thoughts, the head constable came and said to me; “you have an interview coming up; your wife has come with the children.”... Was there bad news? I immediately headed for the jail gate...
My youngest son cried out to me, “Daddy,” “Daddy,” just as he would do before. I took him up in my lap and hugged him. My youngest daughter was standing by the door... My eldest daughter and son and Khoka, my cousin brother, as well as my wife, looked at each other. It was as if they were trying to tell me something but were not able to do so. I said, “What is the matter? How come you were given permission to meet me so easily?” My wife said to me slowly “a telegram has come saying your mother is very sick.” It wasn’t difficult for me to figure out what had really happened; my mother must be really unwell, for otherwise my father wouldn’t have sent a telegram to them...
I returned once more to my lonely room. On the way back, the prisoners greeted me again but I was not able to look at them. All I could do was raise my hand by way of greeting them... I will not be able to explain to anyone the extent of the affection my father and mother have for me. They have always called me “Khoka”. It is as if I am still a child as far as they are concerned. If they could, they would still go to sleep holding me in their laps. Even at this age I hug my mother tight. But they arrested me from my house and put me in Dhaka jail all of a sudden on the evening of the 8th of May. I kept thinking of what she had said then again and again now: “I won’t live much longer. Come and see me.” I didn’t feel like talking to anyone anymore. It became dark and I stayed in bed. I didn’t feel like reading... Yesterday we came to know about the many people who had been killed in Teigaon and Narayanganj. And this day I have come to know about my mother’s condition. On top of that I was being kept in solitary confinement. I tried hard to sleep but just couldn’t do so.
I wrote previously that I was being kept all by myself. I wasn’t able to talk to anyone. I had no way of discussing things with anyone. There was no one to console me. What could be crueler than to keep someone in jail all by himself? Other political prisoners can go places in groups but I couldn’t even be left with anyone for that was the government’s directive...
When it was 9 am I sent word for the Deputy Jailer to meet me. He did so as soon as he was informed about this. I told him that I want to send a telegram to the Chief Secretary worded thus: “My mother is in poor health in our village home; if possible, release me.”...
When they arrested me soon after Pakistan was created in 1948, and when they arrested me again during the Bengali Language Movement in 1949, only to release me in 1952, my mother had asked me, “Son. Why is it that they put you in jail though you were so vocal about wanting Pakistan and had spent so much of your own money for it, and though the people of this part of the country had learned about Pakistan because of you?”
Tell me- what answer should I have given to my village-born mother? I had said to her then, “Ma. I’ll explain everything to you later.” What was really there for me to say though?... I could never make my mother understand. From time to time she would tell me, “Take me to those who put you in jail so that I can confront them.”...
The newspapers came; I could see from them that the government had stopped the free flow of news. They had almost made them pamphlet-like. There was no news feature on the ongoing movement...
I couldn’t concentrate on my reading today. I hadn’t even realized when they had locked me in since I had returned to my cell just before the sun had set. The mate, the cook and the other help who used to be with me came near me and said, “Don’t worry Sir; if God wills it, your mother will recover soon.” And so I think, how can politics make people so heartless? Even prisoners have compassion and can be caring, but selfish people outside can’t! I thought it would be difficult for me to pass the night, but it went by. I looked outside through the windows for a long time and tried to see “darkness’s beauty.” But I’m not Sharat Chandra. I don’t have either his capacity to see or think through things!

Source: *Prison Diaries* by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman published by Bangla Academy.





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