



The last days of a martyred intellectual

Mufazzal Haider Chaudhury, noted essayist, linguist and scholar, was taken away from his home on December 14, 1971 by members of Al-Badr and executed. The following (translated) excerpts from his diary in 1971, when he was Reader of Bangla at the University of Dhaka, provide a window into the last days of this martyred intellectual.

Monday, November 29

We were on strike today to protest the attack on India. None of us went to the university. I sat at home and prepared examination questions. I didn't go anywhere else today. By evening, I had finished the question paper for the Honours students.

Tuesday, November 30

This morning, I went to Shumon's school first before going on to university. None of the students of the primary section are attending school anymore.

None of the university students came into class either. I submitted the Honours exam question paper. In the afternoon, around 12pm, I took Syed, one of the office peons, and went to Gulshan. Didn't go anywhere later on in the day. At 7:35pm in the evening, there was the sound of a large explosion.

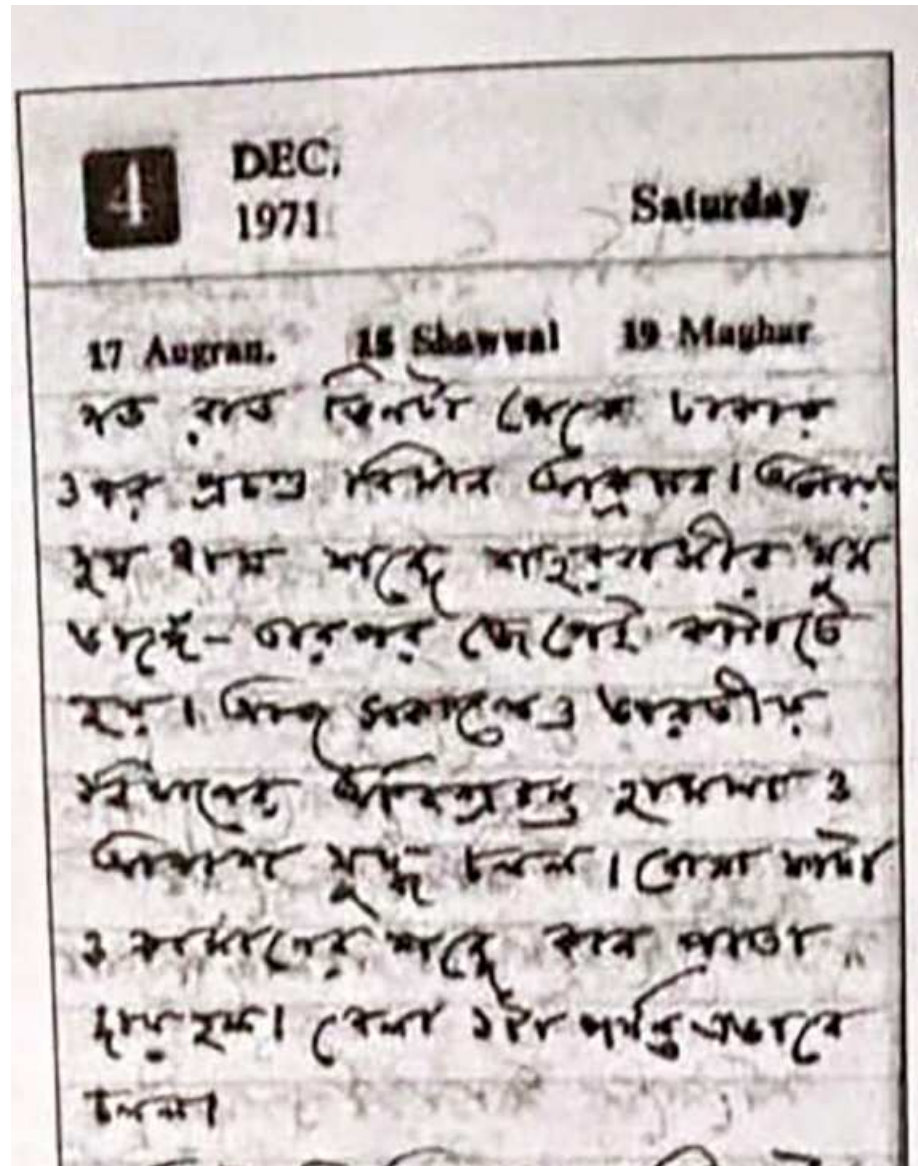
Wednesday, December 1

I went to the university at 10am today. There was meant to be a second MA class, but none of the students came in today either. I went to the Shahbag store later to buy a milk tin, but there was none. I bought a tin of Ovaltine instead. I went to Eskaton after that, and went by Laboratory Road.

My wife was not willing to listen to why I couldn't get any milk for our youngest child, so we had an argument. Didn't go anywhere else today. At 6:15pm in the evening, and later again at 8pm, we heard the sound of bombs exploding.

Thursday, December 2

Today, the first thing I did in the morning was go to the registrars office and pick up my salary cheque, which I then took to the bank. I also picked up money for household expenses from the bank. After that, I went to the university—again, no students came in today. I went to Shahbag



Mufazzal Haider Chaudhury with his son.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

store afterwards and got a tin of Molly. This is the tinned milk we get for Shobhon.

Kanchan came over today in the late afternoon. He cautioned me to be more careful. We didn't go out anywhere else.

Friday, December 3

I went to the university today at 9:15 in the morning. There was a class for second year Honours students. But again, there were no students. I went to the registrar's office after that to pick up a cheque of Tk 60. Then I attended the jumma prayers at the university mosque.

In the late afternoon, I went to Mr Bari's house in Dhanmondi—after Mr Bari passed away, they have just come back on the 30th. At 7pm in the evening, the sound of explosions again. At 9pm, there was a sudden black out.

Saturday, December 4

Last night from 3am, there have been large scale aerial attacks on Dhaka. All the city dwellers must have been woken up by the relentless sound of explosions—there's nothing to do except stay up through all of it. Even this morning, the Indian aerial forces' untiring attacks continued. The sound of bombs and

cannons was all that we could hear. This went on till around 1pm.

I didn't leave the house today.

Sunday, December 5

Today during the day, there was more or less a break in the air attacks, but in the middle of the night, they started dropping bombs again. We could also hear the sound of gunfire.

I didn't go outside today either. Everyone is scared. I heard again today that an emergency hospital is being set up, next to us in Iqbal Hall.

From evening to dawn, not a light could be seen and there was a curfew.

The night is full of horrors.

Monday, December 6

The planes have continued to attack from this morning. I went out around 10am in the morning with Nuru to try and get rations, but there were such huge crowds that we returned without any.

Went to the university around 11am. There was no one there.

I went out again around 12:15pm to get some bread and biscuits. Went to Eskaton and got stuck there because of the aerial attacks. Came home around 2pm.

I didn't go anywhere else today.

Tuesday, December 7

Nuru went out at 7:15am and brought back rations. The aerial bombardments are continuing unabated. When we had sat down for lunch, Nuru came and told us about attacks by miscreants in certain parts of the city. After hearing this, we packed a few of our belongings and came to Eskaton at around 5pm.

Wednesday, December 8

My wife and I went out this morning and looked in on our house. Dropped by the university on the way there. We ate at home.

I can hear the sound of heavy bombing tonight. We found out later that some of the bombs had been dropped very near Eskaton (this was on Friday night).

Thursday, December 9

Went home with my wife around 10am. In the meantime, the bombs had already started falling. We ate quickly and went back to Eskaton.

The whole night, we could hear the bombs falling.

Friday, December 10

Went out today again around 10am with my wife and Babu's wife. We dropped her off in Bakshibazar, at her parent's house. Came home and showered, after which I went to attend the jumma prayers at the university mosque. We could hear bombs exploding, before and after the prayers. We didn't eat today, we went straight back to Eskaton because of that.

Saturday, December 11

Yesterday evening, Boro Mama and his family suddenly took the decision to move out to Mr Haque's house in Tikatuli, so we decided to go with them. But it was quite difficult there at night. So today, we came to Ninu's house in Shantibag.

A curfew was declared suddenly from 3pm. At 10, I took Ninu to the bank and withdrew some cash. We also went back to my house and picked up the TV set.

Sunday, December 12

There was a curfew all day today. I found out that the telephone in our house is also not working. We couldn't get any news or updates from anyone, anywhere.

The whole day was spent worrying and in fear. But we didn't hear much sounds of bombs or explosions today.

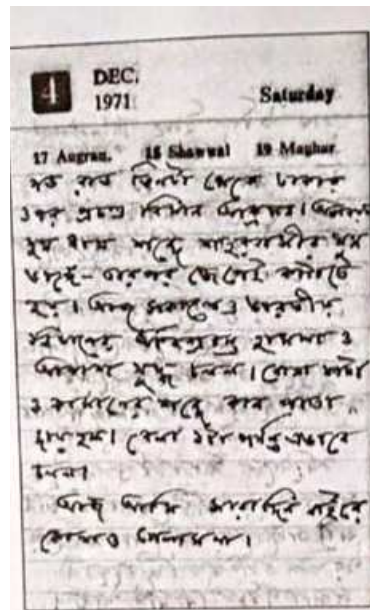
Monday, December 13

The curfew ended at 8am today. My wife, Nina and I left the house around 9am and went to Purano Paltan first, to Kanchan's house. Amma is there. Then we went to my in-law's house in Haathkhola. From there, we went to our house in Fuller Road. We collected some belongings from there and came back to Shantibag. We got out again to change two of the tyres on the car—it cost Tk 80.

Tuesday, December 14

9-15 B. A. Exam. Hall : Chief Supervisor.

Translated from Bangla by Shuprova Tasneem.



Mufazzal Haider Chaudhury's 1971 diary.