

# Nation and Literature: No Longer a Teenager

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UNTIL yesterday, 15th December, 1991, Bangladesh, our beloved homeland, could have been called a teenager. But, today she turns twenty full-fledgedly. As the country, Bangladesh, becomes mature from today, we the citizens of Bangladesh should, from now on try to become more mature and shun the childish attitudes, such as distorting the history.

Speaking of teenage, the Bengali literature, if not other literatures, has a special place for teenagers in its poetry, songs, short stories etc. The 'shoroshi' (the sweet-sixteen) or the 'kishore' and 'torunda' (the thirties-going-on-eighties) plays a major part in the Bengali literature.

gan, when the British were about to leave the sub-continent. That's how we had the influence of Tagore although he didn't even live to see the partition in 1947. The influence comes from the consciousness in favour of the proletariat in Bangla literature.

Tagore's plays "Muktadhara," "Rakta Karabi," "Tasher Ghar," and others have voiced their strong "anti-oppressive" statements. His novel "Ghare Bairey" subject was directly anti-British agitations. His poem "Bashundhara," sonnets "Doridra," "Atmasamarpan" and numerous other poems have literally taught the Bengali nation to love their motherland and even die for their homeland.

significant play 'Kabar', based on the language movement. Although it was unwittingly an adaptation of Irwin Shaw's 'Bury the Dead,' 'Kabar' played a deserving role in the building of our consciousness.

During the Pakistani regime allegorizing the underlying anti-exploitative statements in any literary work was a common practice, due to the censorship. Sikander Abu Jafar's 'Shakunta Upakhyan' was such a play; so was 'Kupokat' by Munier Chowdhury in a simplified way, as it was a play for the children. A very significant allegory play of this time, was broadcast from what was then the eastern section of Radio Pakistan on the 22nd of April, 1965. It even used the word 'Shoichar' (autocrat) in it. It may be recalled that, we were in the midst of the Ayubian dictatorial decade then. That play was 'Dik Chalar Path' by Nurul Momen, a masquerade play.

Other plays by playwrights as Syed Wafulullah, Sayeed Ahmad, Showkat Osman, Ashkar Ibne Shaikh, Obaidul Huq and others played their deserving roles in Bangla literature.

Novelists like Zahir Raihan wrote 'Arek Falgun,' based on the language movement and 'Are Katodin' (Let there be light) which pursued the liberty of humanity. His film 'Jiban thekya neya' also contributed largely. Other novelists like Showkat Ali, Shahidullah Kaiser, Rahat Khan, Abu Ishaq, Rashid Karim, Razia Khan and others also contributed significantly to Bangla literature.

In totality our literature contributed and laid a major sense of nationality and independence in the mind of the whole Bengali nation.

## Tajuddin Issues Directives

from The Statesman, Calcutta

Media Flashback '71

NEW DELHI, May 15, 1971: Mr. Tajuddin Ahmad, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has issued an 18-point directive outlining the tasks of the people in the liberation struggle.

He has said that the people should not listen to rumours nor should they have doubts about the 'ultimate victory of the people'.

He says: "Let the people remember that in war marching forward and retreating are of equal importance. The retreat of the liberation army from one point should not give the people the impression that we have abandoned our war against the Pakistan occupation forces."

In the struggle, people are not divided on the basis of parties, religion or classes. "We are united as Bengalis, and our enemies look at us that way. When they burn villages, shoot people or destroy towns, they attack us as Bengalis, not caring for our religion or politics."

"No Bengali employee should co-operate with the enemy; employees of all ranks should act according to the directive of the Bangladesh Government in areas occupied by the enemy, they should work under the guidance of the popular representative and use their discretion as circumstances demand."

Mr. Ahmad says "Employees of Government and semi-government organizations who have taken shelter elsewhere will be considered as holding their posts and are expected to help the

Bangla Desh Government and the Mukti Fauj according to their capacity."

Officers and men of the military and para-military organizations, whether they are in service or retired, should immediately report for duty at the nearest liberation army unit and "should in no circumstances" allow themselves to be exploited by the enemy "nor should they co-operate with the enemy."

The directive says "only the Bangla Desh Government and none else has the right to collect taxes, revenues and duties. It should be remembered that a paise collected by the enemy will be used to kill you and your children."

"So anybody who will pay taxes to the enemy or help them in the matter will be considered by the Bangla Desh Government as an enemy of the nation."

Employees in the communication and transport system "should not be co-operative with the enemy. At the first opportunity, they should vacate along with their means of transport, the enemy-held areas."

Proper attention should be paid to the food and commodity needs of the people and the people should be encouraged to produce more.

"The people should remember that dependence on imported food or articles will be suicidal. There should be greater emphasis on farm produce, reliance on locally available goods and production in cottage industry."

It adds: "We should also be ever cautious about another kind of anti-social and criminal elements who are acting as traitors. They should be marked, because they are our bitterest enemy. In the name of religion and a united country, they are trying to mislead the simple people. They are really the agents of the West Pakistan vested interests."

The Awami League, in a directive published in the Party's weekly 'Jai Bangla', has directed all MPs and MLAs to stay in their respective areas and help the liberation struggle.

"If it appears absolutely impossible for an elected representative to stick to his constituency, he should move to the nearest liberation army unit and supervise training and arrange supplies for liberation fighters," the party directive says.

The MPs and MLAs who have gone on the other side of the border into India should immediately act according to the Party directive, the Awami League high command has ordered. People who are young or middle-aged and have taken shelter in India should immediately enlist themselves for training.

"Those who have taken shelter in refugee camps on the other side of the border to save their lives should always keep it in mind that this is only a temporary arrangement. They have not gone to India for permanent settlement."

## No Settlement, Says Bhasani

from The National Herald, New Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 3, 1971: Report of Maulana Bhasani's talk with some local foreign correspondents somewhere in a liberated area of Bangla Desh on June 2, 1971.

The octogenarian National Awami Party leader, Maulana Bhasani, made it absolutely clear that he did not want any mediation for a political settlement of the Bangla Desh issue. He, however, reiterated his earlier stand that a referendum could be held under the direct supervision of the United Nations to ascertain the wishes of the Bangla Desh people.

The NAP leader was talking with some local and foreign correspondents somewhere in a liberated area of Bangla Desh. He asked: "How can there be a political settlement with the invaders who have killed lakhs of defenceless people and unleashed a reign of terror in Bangla Desh?"

The Maulana said that their main aim was to liquidate the hordes of West Pakistan. "We will fight to the finish; either we achieve victory or die," he said.

Mr. Bhasani spoke in the same vein as the leaders of the Awami League had done a few days ago. During his talk with newsmen he called the Chinese bluff and said that he was never a communist.

Deprecating the international inaction, he said it was strange that the world com-

munity behaved like a silent spectator when Bangla Desh was being drenched with the blood of its people. There was not a single country left to whom he had not approached seeking recognition to the Bangla Desh Government, he said. They had only expressed sympathy.

The NAP leader expressed his gratitude to the Indian Government for helping lakhs of refugees with food and shelter. He felt sorry that no other country, be it a socialist or imperialist, had taken any note of the pitiable plight of the people of Bangla Desh.

In reply to a query he said that China's friendliness with the military junta of Islamabad was a strange politics. He ruled out the possibility of his ever visiting China. For long popularly known as a friend of China, the Maulana said that Peking would one day realise its mistakes in supporting Islamabad.

The Maulana is against the formation of a liberation front or a National Government at this stage because, according to him, there might be a struggle for leadership "which will jeopardise our cause." He said he was in favour of an all-party action committee to mobilise the people for the long-drawn battle against Pakistan.

He emphatically said that Pakistan and Bangla Desh "can never meet together, the breach is total and final," he prophesied.

Though, Walt Whitman said in his 'Specimen Days', "The real war will never get in the books," but then again he himself said in "Democratic Vistas," "In the civilization of today it is undeniable that, over all the arts literature dominates, and serves beyond all." And it is also undeniable that, that domination sometimes plays a vital role in life.

During our War of Independence a lot of literateurs all over the globe, expressed their solidarity with us. Some of them even wished to fight alongside us and lay down their lives if necessary. Andre Malraux, the French author, was the most anxious among them.

World famous protest singer and ballad singer Joan Baez put words to her tune, "Bangladesh! Bangladesh! Where the sun does never end. The hungry millions of Bangladesh."

In the field of the Bengali literature also, the songs provided the greatest impetus to our freedom-fight. It may be recalled how the protest songs imbued us with the needed vigour during the days of our non-cooperation, from 1st to 25th March, 1971.

These songs were on the lips of the entire nation throughout the liberation war. In the non-co-operative days, these songs were ever printed every day on the front pages of the national dailies, sponsored by Bangladesh based commercial organisations and banks.

The inspiring songs included, "Amar Sonar Bangla" (which was by then regarded as, but not officially the national anthem yet), "Ovi khati, sonar cheye khati," "Kandari hushiar," "Puber of akashe surja utheche," "Joy Bangla, Banglar Joy," "Dhanodhanya pushpavara," "Sharthok janom amar," "Badha diachi Badhbe loral," "Songram, Songram, Songram," "Amar deshero matir gondhe," "Salam Salam, hazar Salam" and others. These were not just trendy songs, as literature too, they were rich.

As on any other aspect of Bengali life, Rabindranath Tagore's literature had the greatest influence on our war of independence. His patriotic songs and verses influence us the most.

As a matter of fact, literature's role began earlier in the history of the Liberation War. Literature's way of influence is usually like that. It uses the long way round. The longer but the firmer one. Actually, it be-

Division thus came into being in September '75. The quick expansion of these brigade groups to division was possible because by then repatriation was already complete. We received trained man power. With these additional troops all brigade group became four infantry battalion strength in place of three. Further expansion was possible as the preliminary work was already completed and was only waiting for the green signal from the government by way of approving the table of organisation and equipment.

In spite of strain on the national budget, the government did not hesitate to provide fund for the development of the armed forces. Progoti was providing vehicles for the army. All the workshops were up graded to meet the requirement of the army then. Signal equipments and wireless sets were bought with hard cash from the UK.

By the time I left Bangladesh Army was already a well organised institution capable to take on any task. May it be internal or face external threat, but there were a lot of scope for development.

In short this is the history of Bangladesh Army. It started as Mukti Fauj and today it is well established, well trained and disciplined body who has proved its worthiness during the crisis period in the country. At the same time it also enhanced our image outside.

## Building from Scratch

(continued from previous page)

then he did not neglect this side. By the end of 1973, we not only built this accommodation, we also built further accommodation to accommodate at least another 20,000 troops who were to join us on repatriation from Pakistan.

Since there was no arrangement to produce military equipment in Bangladesh, we had to depend for this from outside. India being our closest neighbour we initially procured some from there. Later we started experimenting to produce these locally. The government of Bangla Desh gave me permission to explore the possibilities of producing some of these in Bangladesh. We imported know how from Singapore to produce boots and canvas shoes locally through Bata. To produce cloth for uniform we started trial production locally. Today's camouflage uniform is the outcome of this trial.

As I said before, the Pakistan army did not establish any training institution in the than East Pakistan which we could inherit. But the army could not be developed without training. It was also costly to send people abroad for training. We therefore had to establish some training institution.

First of all we had to establish a Military Academy to train the young ones to become officers. The reason this was our priority was because we needed officers for these newly raised units.

Another reason was that some of the students who were on training in India to become officers were returned to Bangladesh before their training was complete. Since the war was over so they were returned. We could not disheartened these boys, so we established the Academy in Dhaka

to train them. The first Passing Out parade of these boys took place in Dhaka. This Academy was later shifted to Comilla where from the first batch of the cadet passed out in the month of March '75 the President Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman was there to take salute. The same Academy is now shifted to Chittagong.

We also needed a training institute for various arms and services. For such training an adhoc institute was first established at Comilla. It was later shifted to Jessore. At that stage, since we could not establish institutions for all arms and services separately so we named this institution as Combined Armed School.

Incidentally, the tactical wing of this school started its initial courses with my personal collection of books and tapes and the exercises that I wrote in Staff College Quetta and as instructor in the school of infantry and tactics.

This institution is now located at Sylhet and it is now known as the school of infantry and tactics. Apart from this, few other smaller institutions were established in Dhaka and they were, Signals, Engineers, Ordnance and Supply. Some of the students of these arms and services were given on the job training and some in the class room.

So far as the armour was concerned we inherited only four M-24 medium tank. All these were also not road worthy. Just to keep the armour troops engaged we gave them these four tanks. Since we did not have any more tanks and also due to financial constraint was not visualising to procure tanks from outside in near future, we restricted the raising of armour units to only one. Without tanks, morale of

the troops of this unit was also not very high. Banga Bandhu knew the morale condition of his troops. So during goodwill visit of President Anwar Sad't of Egypt, Banga Bandhu raised this point with him who immediately offered 32 tanks. On arrival of these tanks some time in 1974 this unit was properly organised. This being the only one of its kind was kept in Dhaka.

After the surrender of Pakistan Army all their weapons were moved to India. It was because of our insistence and Banga Bandhu's effort, some of the weapons we got back from India. With those weapons we raised new units.

Some Artillery and Anti-Aircraft units were equipped with these weapons. Another consignment of weaponry we got was from Yugoslavia. When President Tito came to Dhaka Banga Bandhu approached him for this, who honoured Banga Bandhu by giving him certain quantity. These also arrived in Bangladesh some time in early 1975.

Once these armament were in the pipe line, I prepared a new organisational table to organise the Army into five self-contained military zone, initially up to Divisional level. It took about six months to prepare and finally it was with the Government for approval from some time end-of 1974 onwards. Banga Bandhu was probably hesitating to approve this at that stage because of financial constraint. He was still to recover from the shock of famine and I also could not insist on it as I was also aware of the country's financial position. The same table of organization and equipment was put into operation immediately after August 15, '75 incident. 9



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