



The study room of Bangabandhu at his 32 Dhanmondi residence which has now been turned into Bangabandhu Museum. An avid reader, he studied in this room whenever he got the time.

Bangabandhu ... Our Moral Compass

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up to the polls. Mujib simply ignored it, telling the whole of Pakistan that the elections were to be a referendum on the Six Points of the Awami League. He was not prepared to be caught in a bind by the regime through an arbitrarily drawn document; and in the end it was indeed a referendum ... and he won it handsomely. It was not surprising, therefore, when a few months later, as his writ came to run all over Bangladesh during the non-cooperation movement, that he asserted that he was the government. The statement was a response to a query by a foreign newsmen on whether he was not defying the Pakistan government through his political acts. 'What do you mean by government? I am the government', said he. And he was, in the sense of the de jure. The de facto part would come a million rivers of blood later.

In the early sixties, Mujib refused to buy his freedom from the Ayub regime through signing a bond promising to stay away from politics. The consequence was repeated spells of imprisonment, a process helped along rather gleefully by the dictator's henchmen in Dhaka. And then there is the apocryphal story dating back to the fifties, when a young Mujib is said to have startled a tired and dozing Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy with his inquiry of whether it would be right to put an end to Pakistan. There is too the story told by his elder daughter: in 1961, as Bengalis observed joyously the centenary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went into the business of fashioning dreams of Bengali freedom, images of a free Bangladesh rising out of the mists someday. Ten years on, the dreams would be translated into substance. At what as to be an abortive RTC in March 1969, Mujib lost little time in dissociating from the Democratic Action Committee once he became convinced that the body was underplaying the Bengali demand for democratic rights. He was simply severing all ties with the old

People could always get the opportunity to talk to him about their weal and woe. That is why he is Bangabandhu — Father of the Nation.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who made his dream come true

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riding high on its wings. From March 1 to March 25, 1971, till the stupid and brutal Pakistani military junta unleashed on the unarmed people of Bangladesh history's worst genocide, Sheikh Mujib played an unforgettable role in directing that unique movement. He was the uncrowned king of the Bangalees, their most beloved leader whose word was law for them. All Bangalees, irrespective of their religious or class affiliations took part in that movement. Everybody lustily chanted such slogans as 'My leader and your leader Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Mujib,' 'Heroic Bangalees, take up arms, free Bangladesh.' Your address and mine Padma-Meghna-Jamuna' and above all 'Joi Bangla! Victory to Bengal!' As he heard these slogans standing on the balcony of his house at Road no 27 of Dhaka's Dhanmondi Residential Area, clad in his white pajama-punjabi, with a pipe in his hand, Sheikh Mujib's heart must have swelled with pride and gratitude. The Bangalees were behaving in an exemplary manner. Hundreds of thousands of Bangali, Muslim's, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians were parading the streets of Dhaka shouting slogans of Bangali nationalism holding aloft farmers, festoons, flags, staffs, ploughs, spades, hammers and sickles in their hands. They filled the streets jostling one another, and yet there was no skirmish, no quarrel, no indiscipline, no confusion. Sheikh Mujib gave detailed directions each morning from his residence and the people obeyed them implicitly. Ordinary citizens, peasants, workers, government officials, policemen, fankees, hill people and men of the plains. This went on unabated from March 1 to March 25. It was a most heartwarming experience. Sheikh Mujib must have realised during those days that his dream was about to come true. His tryst with destiny could not be delayed much longer.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dreamed of a secular, democratic and exploitation-free Bangladesh, nourished by the spirit of Bangalee nationalism. The nationalism he championed was liberal and accommodative and had no room for narrowness or aggression. By upholding secularism, democracy, socialism and Bangalee nationalism at a time when few people had the vision, wisdom or courage to do so Sheikh Mujib carved out for himself an unparalleled position of love, respect and glory in the hearts of his people. His dream finally materialised on December 16, 1971. After a nine-month long heroic war of liberation the freedom fighters of Bangladesh and the allied forces made up of Bangalees and Indian soldiers

inflicted a crushing defeat on the 93 thousand strong Pakistani occupation army compelling the latter to surrender unconditionally. An independent and sovereign country called the People's Republic of Bangladesh emerged on the map of the world.

Many distinguished leaders could not materialise their dream in their life time. Some names that come to mind include those of Parnell of Ireland, Anwar Pasha of Turkey, Saad Jaglul of Egypt, Mazzini of Italy and Subhas Chandra Bose of India. However, all of them made invaluable contribution to the nationalist cause of their countries. They paved the way for the realization of their dreams at a later stage. Some, however, did succeed in making their dreams come true during their own life time. One recalls Mahatma Gandhi of India, Mohammad Ali Jinnah of Pakistan, Lenin of Russia, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Kim Il Sung of North Korea, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Kamal Ata Turk of New Turkey. The dreams of Jinnah and Lenin, however, later went askew, about a quarter century later in Jinnah's case and about three-quarters of a century in Lenin's case. In the case of Sheikh Mujib one can say that he brilliantly succeeded in making his dream come true in making his dream come true in his own life time. Among many

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landing was to shoot Bangabandhu on sight. But he couldn't do it. Something made him stop. Was it the immensity of the personality in Bangabandhu that made him stop, subdue him? He could only murmur, 'Sir, you have to come with us.' Bangabandhu asked him, 'Why? Where do I have to go?' Just at that instant another of the killers appeared, pushed the first man aside and then began firing away at Bangabandhu in frenzy. Within moments Bangabandhu collapsed on the stairs. Begum Mujib, who had appeared behind Bangabandhu and whom Bangabandhu had asked to go back in, now rushed out at the sound of shooting. She was brutally cut down. A living witness to that sordid deed is the servant Abdul, who himself was shot on that terrible morning. He remembers the horrors of the day. The killers leapt across Bangabandhu's body sprawled on the stairs, killed Begum Mujib and then went berserk looking for the other members of the family. The remaining members of the family, terrified, had concealed themselves inside a bathroom. They were now seized and killed in cold blood. On the ground floor, a few servants had already hidden Bangabandhu's youngest child

Russel from the killers. The child was in tears, and said he wanted to go to his mother. The killers located him, took him across all the other bodies, placed him near his mother's body and then blew his brains out.

Curfew was clamped on the capital Dhaka that day. That made travel difficult, and with it any attempt at eliciting information about the happenings on Road 32. Newspapers, although published, were not sold. Shops and markets remained closed. On the roads could be seen only military vehicles tanks, armoured cars, jeeps as a sign of the terror that had come over the entire country.

From six o'clock in the morning, the radio blared out the fearsome message. Sheikh Mujib has been killed. Martial Law has been imposed in the country. The announcement came from the voice of one of the killers, Major Dalim. That was followed by the announcement of a list of measures the usurpers had initiated. Kazi Nazrul Islam's song Aaj Srishti Shukher Ullash was played in a macabre twist of history. Soon the news was broadcast that Khondokar Moshtaque Ahmed had taken over as the president of the country. The news of the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was on the airwaves everywhere abroad.

The news spread throughout Dhaka by the evening that Bangabandhu and his entire family had been murdered. On Minto Road, Irrigation Minister Abdur Rab Serniabat and his family too had come under assault. They too were dead. Not far away, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni, Bangabandhu's nephew and a prominent youth leader, was gunned down with his pregnant wife Arzoo. Slowly the details trickled out. A horrified country waited, hoping that the worst had not happened. The worst, in truth, had already taken place. Bangabandhu's body lay on the stairs that day. But it stayed under the constant guard of his killers. All the other bodies were put together and kept at Road 32. Deep in the night the bodies, except that of Bangabandhu, were buried in Banani graveyard without proper Islamic rites. The decision taken about Bangabandhu's body by the killers was that it would be buried far away from the capital, in the Father of the Nation's ancestral village Tungipara. The officer-in-charge of Tungipara police station was informed that Bangabandhu's body would be flown to the village the following day for burial.

Bangabandhu's body was kept covered in slabs of ice at his residence throughout the night. Soldiers stood guard over the body constantly. Lt. Col. Abdul Hamid was given the responsibility of taking Bangabandhu's body to Tungipara and burying it in haste, with an adequate number of soldiers being posted at the grave to prevent anyone visiting the site. In the morning, the body was placed in a coffin, which was again packed with ice, and taken to the canteen. On Saturday, and eerie silence was all that could be felt in Dhaka. In Tungipara, the O.C. Nurul Alam Chowdhury, had already informed the imam of the mosque in Bangabandhu's homestead that the body was being flown in from Dhaka. A grave had to be dug. The imam was already sorrow stricken at the news. Bangabandhu had once told him that he wanted his janaaza (funeral services) to be conducted by him. The imam saheb had two graves, one for Bangabandhu and the other for Begum Mujib, dug with the help of the mason Ali Asgar Miah, who with his assistants was then busy setting up the stone plaques on the graves of Bangabandhu's parents. Bangabandhu had chosen the marble himself. At noon, the imam Saheb said his prayers and waited.

At one thirty a helicopter landed in the village, close to the Tungipara police station. Bangabandhu's body was brought down by twelve soldiers led by Lt. Col. Hamid. Full, strict security was all around and the whole of Tungipara had been placed under curfew. The body was handed over to two of Bangabandhu's relatives, Sheikh Mansurul Haq and Sheikh Manzurul Haq. Two of Bangabandhu's aunts were permitted to see the body. The ice was removed from the body, and with the water that flowed, went a lot of blood seeping through the coffin. The body was wrapped in a soiled piece of cloth. Bangabandhu was in a white vest, Punjabi and check-lungi. His spectacles were in the pocket of the Punjabi. The body was drenched in blood.

Colonel Hamid instructed the imam Saheb to carry out the funeral formalities quickly. He was informed that the job would take two hours. The colonel wanted to know why. The imam Saheb told him that religious formalities necessitated the timing. On Hamid's inquiry as to whether those rites could be dispensed with, the imam replied, 'A Muslim can be buried without a last bath if he is a martyr.' The imam Saheb said, 'No, unless you give it to me in writing that you have brought the body of a shaheed (martyr). In the end, the killers were forced to agree to the demands of the imam saheb and go by

The Black Night and the Events that Followed

the necessary religious injunctions.

Bangabandhu's body was washed with the cheap 570 brand of soap. His shroud was made from sarees given out as relief material by the Red Cross. There were bullet marks all over the body. A bullet had struck the back of the head. Nine bullets went into the chest. A vein in one leg had been cut. A finger bore marks of a bullet. The body was buried, after it had been bathed in brisk manners, in the courtyard of Bangabandhu's ancestral home. Arrangements were then made by the soldiers to keep the grave under watch. The house was sealed off and soldiers were positioned to prevent anyone from approaching the grave. Only Nirmal, the boy who had taken care of Bangabandhu's parents, remained in the house. It was a scene reminiscent of the worst that could happen in life.

At the time of Bangabandhu's assassination on 15 August, his two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana were away on a visit to West Germany. Dr. Wajed Miah, Hasina's husband, was in the Federal Republic on a scholarship. Sheikh Hasina had arrived in Germany with her sister and children on 30

August. 1975. On 26 September 1975, the killer Government of Khondokar Moshtaque Ahmed decreed the notorious Indemnity Ordinance which barred any challenge, legal or political, to the killings of 15 August. Announced through a gazette notification, the ordinance read thus:

On 26 September 1975.

No. 692-Pub. The following Ordinance made by the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, on the 26th September, 1975, is hereby published for general information:

THE INDEMNITY ORDINANCE, 1975

Ordinance No. L of 1975

An ordinance to restrict the taking of any legal or other proceedings in respect of cer-

any legal or other proceedings against persons in respect of certain acts and things. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any law, including a law relating to any defence service, for the time being in force, no suit, prosecution or other proceedings, legal or disciplinary, shall lie, or be taken in, before or by any Court, including the Supreme Court and Court Martial, or other authority against any person, including a person who is or has, at any time, been subject to any law relating to any defence service, for or on account of or in respect of any act, matter or thing done or step taken by such person in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or as necessary step towards the change of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Proclamation of Martial Law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975.

3. For the purposes of this section, a certificate by the President, or a person authorised by him in this behalf, that any act, matter or thing was done or step taken by any person mentioned in the certificate in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or as necessary step towards, the change of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Proclamation of Martial Law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975, shall be sufficient evidence of such a matter or thing having been done or step having been taken in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or as necessary step towards, the change of such Government and Proclamation of Martial Law on that morning.

At a subsequent stage, General Ziaur Rahman incorporated this notorious measure into the nation's constitution through the fifth amendment.

It was to be four years before the leaders of the Awami League would visit the mazar (grave) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1978. The visit was occasioned by the presidential elections scheduled for June of the year. General MAG Osmany was pitted, as the candidate of the combined opposition, against Zia, who had taken power following a series of coups and counter coups in November 1975.

It was on a rain-swept afternoon on 17 May 1981 that the elder daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina, returned to Bangladesh after having been chosen by a grateful nation as the president of the Awami League. Aged thirty three, Hasina told the multitudes in a voice choked with emotion that her goal in politics would be the restoration of the rights of the people, the establishment of full and unfettered democracy in the country.



Bangabandhu loved children. Despite his busy schedule, he used to try to be amongst them whenever he could. Children's love for him was also unfathomable.

July, Rehana was preparing for her Higher Secondary Certificate examinations. The two sisters had also been to Brussels. Before flying into Bonn, on 13 August, Rehana spoke to Bangabandhu on the phone and told him she wanted to go back home. Bangabandhu told her that she ought to inform the country's ambassador, who would take the necessary steps. On 15 August, Wajed Miah was informed of the coup. Subsequently, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana were told that a military coup had taken place in Bangladesh and that all the members of their family had been killed. It was on their way to New Delhi from Bonn that the sisters came to know from newspapers how their family had been massacred on 15 August.

On the day Bangabandhu was assassinated, India was busy observing its independence day. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was informed of the tragedy in Bangladesh as she watched an armed forces march past in Delhi. In Bangladesh, the entire day was given over by the killers to media propaganda against the Father of the Nation. Anti-Bangabandhu songs were composed with alacrity by Khan Aftab Rahman and played on the radio. People were exhorted to work. The presiden-

tain acts or things done in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or steps necessitating, the historical change and the Proclamation of Martial Law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975.

Whereas it is expedient to restrict the taking of any things done in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or steps necessitating, the historical change and the Proclamation of Martial Law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975.

And whereas Parliament is not in session and the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render immediate action necessary:

Now, therefore, in pursuance of the Proclamation of the 20th August, 1975, and in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of article 93 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the President is pleased to make and promulgate the following Ordinance:

1. Short title—This Ordinance may be called the Indemnity Ordinance, 1975.

2. Restrictions of the taking of



Labourers apprising Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman about their problems. Common people could easily approach him and he would always give them a patient hearing.