much suspicion between the Muslims and Hindus in Bangladesh Waheedul's family made concerted efforts to socialise with their Hindu neighbours. Over the years as Waheedul watched the increasing marginalisation and persecution of Hindus he always stood up to protect their rights. Once when a nine-year-old Hindu girl was gangraped in Kishoreganj Waheedul was infuriated and went off to Kishoreganj and rescued the girl and brought her back to Dhaka to rehabilitate her.

It was right after he appeared for his SSC examinations that a subtle change came in him. He used to go out saying he was going for his classes but he did not go there. He would not tell anyone where he would go. He had actually started mingling with members of the Communist party, which was banned during that time in the 1950s. Although he abandoned his political career a few years after the war, he forever maintained a minimalist lifestyle never letting the material world ever come into contact with him. In a world of designer clothes and luxurious homes, he would always be seen in his simple white Punjabi and khaddar bag and always lived in his simple home in Agargaon. He was least interested in acquiring money or name. His thirst was always for knowledge. Even when he faced financial hardship during his last few years he refused to take any help from his sons and daughters although they are all well established in their own work. A few months after his death a modest sum of 300 takas was discovered from his bank account.

The movement he began in the sixties by publicly reciting Tagore at a time when it was banned by Ayub Khan, has in many ways shaped the cultural and political face of present-day Bangladesh.

But his real love was music Rabindra Sangeet in particular. And it was through his music that he made his political statements throughout his life. 1961 was the hundredth birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Mohammad Ayub Khan's dictatorship was at that time reigning supreme and Rabindranath's songs were strictly prohibited from being aired publicly. And no dictatorship was going to hold a man like Waheedul Haque from practicing what he believed was his right as a Bangali. That thought gave birth to Chhayanaut, a movement for freedom of thought and speech, a movement for secularism, a movement for the Bangali cultural identity, a movement against autocracy and religious discrimination. With his then wife Sanjida Khatun taking over the responsibilities of Chhayanaut, Waheedul Haque preferred to remain in the background. Chhayanaut first celebrated Pohela Boishakh in 1963 with Rabindra Sangeet much to the annoyance of the Pakistan government. Ever since Chhayanaut's valiant first step, the celebration of Pohela Boishakh at the Ramna Botomul has become an integral part of Bangali's life.

But the institutional form that Chhayanaut now has was not what Waheedul had in mind during its initiation. It was supposed to be a country-wide cultural movement. And in 1980 he started the Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sommelon Parishad to bring Rabindra Sangeet to the masses. Chhayanaut being based in Dhaka excludes the many talents all across the country and the last thing Waheedul wanted was to make it a luxury for the few. The Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sommelon Parishad to bring Rabindra Sangeet now operates across all districts in the country. He also founded a number of prominent cultural and poetry recitation organisations like Kanthashilan and Anandadhwani. He played a leading part in founding Nalanda, an alternative school for children.

It is beyond the scope of this article to talk about how this man touched the lives of many people. When one of Waheedul's students got married and had to stop her music training following constant pressure from her in-laws he decided to pay her a visit. Seeing him the girl went down on her knees and started crying. Her in-laws weren't happy at all and they made it quite clear to him that he wasn't quite welcome to their house. When asked why he would visit someone's house like that he simply said those who welcomed him did not need convincing, it's people like them who need to be enlightened, which is where his real work was. It was in his nature to tell the truth to everyone's face. Needless to say not everyone took kindly to this side of his nature. But that never stopped him from doing so. He had his idiosyncrasies too. He had a personal car for some time. No one knows what came over him one day and he decided to push the car into the Buriganga River. And he never travelled by car ever since. He preferred to travel by public transport. He preferred to be with the people he loved so much.

The nation may have lost a great man but it's more important to see what we have gained from his life, his work and his thoughts. The people he has touched, the ideals he has instilled, which will surely be transferred to the next generation. The claws of globalisation and imperialism have reached far and wide. Everything has its price. Selflessness is slowly becoming a long forgotten concept. But if one were to study the life's work of this man, one would find a simple ideal that he adhered to all his life, which is encapsulated forever in a few words that he always used to say -- "To work for my country is a reward in itself."