The Tales that Smiles Tell

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The battling Begums finally meet.

We were, all of us, quite mesmerised by the smiles with which Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia greeted each other a couple of weeks ago. That was quite natural, for two reasons. The first is that the two pre-eminent women in the land do not normally look at, speak to or smile at each other. When they do, it is news, almost a miracle. The second is that when political rivals look at one another in friendship, it soothes our common souls. By and large, though, the smiles that break out on politicians' lips hold the possibility of conveying mysteries and riddles we often do not understand. Go back to history, of recent times or of the distant past. You might come away with something of insight for yourself.

There are hardly any instances of Adolf Hitler smiling at people. He was perhaps not born to smile. You could say much the same about Ayatollah Khomeini. Neither man had a sense of humour; and they killed