

After the partition, Osmany joined the Pakistan Army on October 7, 1947, and was soon promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He attended the staff college at Quetta where he served alongside (then) Major Yahya Khan, Tikka Khan and A.A.K Niazi, all of whom ironically were destined to lead the Pakistan army against Mukti Bahini commanded by Osmany in 1971. The recruitment policy at the time was weighed against Bangali officers and Osmany, fearless soldier that he was, spoke out against this discrimination. He was sidelined, and his promotions held up. Col. Osmany retired in 1967. He joined the Awami League and was elected a member of the Pakistan national assembly in the 1970 elections.

Col. Osmany was present at the house of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when Bangali officers informed Awami League leaders of the departure of Yahya Khan and army movement. After failing to persuade Bangabandhu to leave, Osmani shaved off his famous mustache and made for the Indian border.

With the formation of the Bangladesh government on 17 April 1971, Colonel Osmany was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all Bangladesh Forces. He was later promoted to the full rank of General during the Bangladesh Sector Commanders' Conference in July 1971. Under his direct command, Osmany divided up the entire Bangladesh territory into 11 sectors. Each sector was under the command of a trained military officer with the title of Sector Commander. Each sector also had sub-sectors with sub sector commanders. Osmany orchestrated the valiant struggle of the Mukti Bahini against the much better equipped Pakistan army.

After independence, Osmany was included in the cabinet of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He resigned from the cabinet in May 1974. After the introduction of one-party system of government through the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution in 1975, he resigned from the Jatiya Sangsad and also from the primary membership of the Awami League protesting the abolition of democracy.

M.A.G. Osmany was appointed an Adviser for Defence Affairs by Khondaker Mostaq Ahmed on August 29, 1975, but he resigned immediately after the killing of four national leaders inside the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

In 1984, Osmany, victorious soldier of many battles, lost the fight against cancer. The nation lost a valiant son. A lifelong bachelor, Osmany left behind his ancestral house in Dayamir, Sylhet where visitors still gather. His favourite Alsatians are no more, but the remains of the pond that he dug himself and the wide lawn remind visitors of the great man.

Banga Bir M.A.G Osmany always carried the courage of his convictions. In a day and age when unselfish patriots are sorely needed, M.A.G Osmany was a model of selfless service. He was a man who truly did everything for a reason, a purpose, not for himself or for his own glory, but for the glory of the nation.

Ataul Ghani Osmany defended freedom. That will be his lasting legacy. ■

"Papa Tiger", as he was affectionately known, came out of retirement to lead the Liberation Forces. The very name of Colonel (later General) Osmany electrified all Bangali officers, and struck fear into the hearts of the enemy.