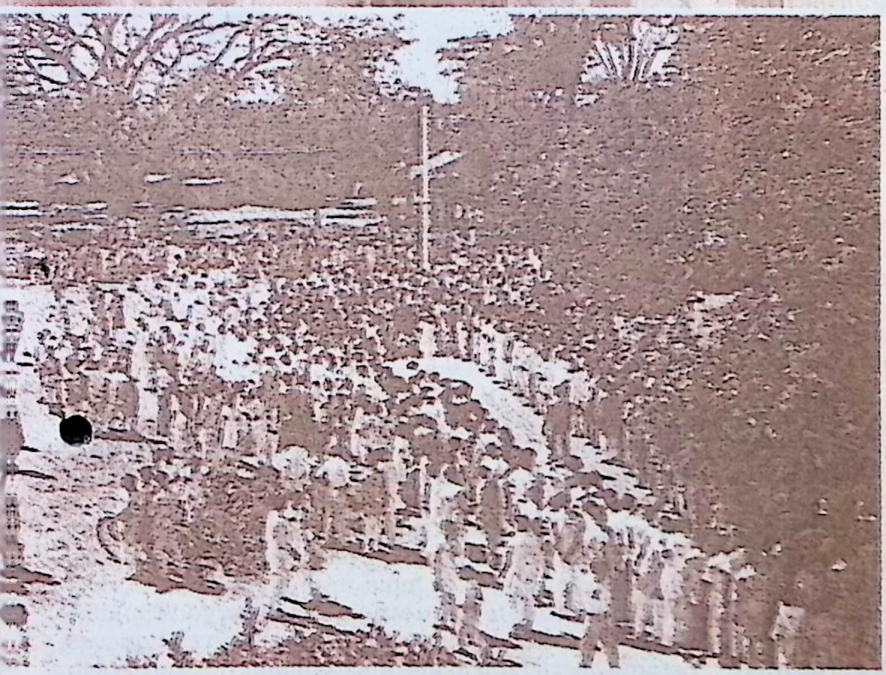




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consistent conviction in the face of adversity. Having been a young man in the early 1950s, Haque remembered the events that had shaped the Language Movement and would give us graphic details of the incidents which led to the seminal happening of February 21, 1952. And then of course there were the anecdotes Gaziul Haque came up with, tales that gave us a little more insight into the lives of such illustrious Bengalis as Sher-e-Bangla, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Bhashani. A particular trait in Haque was his clear staying away from speaking ill of anyone. He did not carp; and it was not in him to denigrate anyone who has had a hand in the making of Bangladesh's history.

If you ask me what it is that makes me remember Gaziul Haque, apart from all his other attributes, I can tell you, simply and surely, that it was his abundant sense of humour. Being in his company was an experience in the gathering of joy. He laughed uproariously manner. It was, as they say, infectious laughter. Even the most sombre among us could not fail to be affected by his good cheer. It was the raconteur that worked in him. You could say that every time Gaziul Haque entered the room, he filled it with his presence. He cracked jokes as he dipped that biscuit in his tea before placing it in his mouth. And he did all this even as he worked on the documents and photographs that lay before us as part of the programme to inject dynamism and vigour in the Bangabandhu Museum.

Gaziul Haque was deeply committed to secular politics. It was a conviction that took root in him in his youth and rippled out into an ever-widening sphere in his adulthood. Unlike so many others, he was not, in the days that I knew him, disheartened by what was being done to Bangladesh by those who had yanked the country away from its liberal political moorings. It was always his belief that a better tomorrow would dawn, that we as a people would find the path back to the principles which had led us to freedom through the darkness of 1971.

The passing of Gaziul Haque is for all of us a renewed awakening of consciousness about the contributions of an iconic generation to the forging of national liberty. That generation now slowly makes it way into the twilight, taking with it its free spirit, its abundant laughter, its priceless humour and the moral principles on which it lived life. Its transition to the world beyond the grave leaves us that much poorer. ■