

## Extraordinary Fine Art of Politics

Rabiul Husain

A boat anchors at an unknown river-bank of a habitat  
Like many other freedoms I am also bound in my hands, feet and back  
I can understand that we are standing in a single row at a killing field  
We shall be shot and then thrown into the river.

The vultures fly and the hawks cry in the afternoon clouds of the sky.

There were intermittent sounds of bullets at a distance;  
smokes from burnt villages were rising  
The death-cries of humans could be heard  
But even then there is no fear in me, I feel the inevitable shall happen  
May be because of that, I do not have the slightest fear.

The Paki brutes in khaki dress, worst than even beasts  
Impassive, unfeeling, robot-men, took us to the river-bank  
Then moved forward by aiming the rifles at us  
But when I trudged along looking backwards  
Don't know how I suddenly fell into the river, outside their view.

Then inside the water, even there my motherland appeared with her water  
After spreading her worn-out sari, in tatters, with infinite affection she said  
Come son, eat water-rice, go to sleep by wrapping yourself with a sheet of water  
I shall wake you up at the right time; oh you haven't slept for so long!

After unfastening the ropes in my hand and feet, I did exactly that;  
While sleeping, and in dreams, I strove hard in that watery struggle  
Swimming on and on, after crossing so many water-lands -  
Suddenly the water-mother woke me up from sleep and said  
Get up son; go to your free land of dreams -  
Build it up with your courage, ideals and conviction.

Everything shook all around; in the mouths of people were then the sounds of  
Joi Bangabandhu, Joi Bangla,

The new flag was fluttering in the air  
With the crimson colour of sun inside the verdant green of crops.  
If Sheikh Mujib was the poet and artist of politics, a white stork,  
Then Bangladesh is surely the earth's most extraordinary fine art of politics.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed

(Continued)

## 26 March is not only a day of mere Celebration

There may be criticisms of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a ruler but there is no denying the fact that he was number one patriot and the greatest champion of the causes of the suffering masses in this country. He did not forget them even in those most miserable days in Pakistan.

That is why, on the first day of his setting feet in Bangladesh after nine months of secluded and tortured life in Pakistan, he once again made a decisive statement from the Race Course Maidan on 10 Jan 1972 that the struggle now would be for emancipations especially for the economic emancipation of down-trodden people of the country. He asserted that political independence would be meaningless unless economic, social and cultural emancipation are ensured.

Then he started a long and arduous journey for the emancipation of his people. He switched over to parliament form of democracy from the presidential form in order to attain his cherished vision of Sonar Bangla. This move did not fail but for the quickest and uninterrupted emancipation he changed the strategy and reverted to presidential form of collective government. While this strategy started giving results, the conspirators at home and abroad killed him along with his family members except Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana. They would have been equally butchered if by any chance they were in the country on 15 August 1975. With the killing of Bangabandhu, the country not only lost its leader and the father of the nation but also a true friend of the Bengalees and one of the greatest leaders of the world. The struggle for emancipation came to a temporary halt.

The period of August 15, 1975 to June 30, 1996 may be deemed as an era of renewed efforts of Pakistanization in all respects. Sheikh Hasina on assuming power after 21 years of the killing of her father and the father of the nation put a hard brake to this vehicle of Pakistanization. Then the period between 1996 and the large part of 2001 may be compared with the period of 1948 to 1952 when, Bengalees, as a nation started coming back home. Thereafter, with debacle of election result in 2001, the country plunged into another crisis amounting to a crackdown of different sort but of equal magnitude of 25 March, 1971. Immediately, the blunt befall on the Bengalees and it continued till the general election of 29 December 2008. With a landslide victory, Sheikh Hasina has come back to power. She got the mandate of the people to start a renewed struggle for emancipation. The Awami League election manifesto contains the same dream, same vision,



same mission and same goals and objectives as were visualized by the Father of the Nation. Now, it is time to march forward. But, the meaningless, baseless and often fruitless unending controversies causing irreparable damages to the struggle for emancipation must be effectively handled at least for the sake of the toiling masses.

I think the Supreme Court has played its due role by putting an end to the controversy surrounding the declaration of Independence. This will be deemed as win-win situation by all concerned. Since the court is free from any control or influence, they may aid the nation in dispensing many more dysfunctional controversies which will create a congenial atmosphere and pave way towards economic emancipation of not less than 40 percent people who go to thorny bed without eating. The vision 2021 and its supporting strategies appear to be the right steps towards right direction. Especially, the Digital Bangladesh will put the train in the right track aimed at ensuring accountability & transferability as well as flexibility and efficiency in all sphere of life and paving the way towards attaining a country of middle income people by 2021.

This will not also ensure the Sonar Bangla of Bangabandhu. We need to be more determined; more united, more dedicated and should utilize this 26 March as the spring board of emancipation, and not simply a day of formal celebration. ■

(Continued)

## Non Cooperaton Movement In 1971 Rehearsal For Liberation War

had to work as a military administrator alone. At the start of genocide in Bangladesh Tikka Khan was appointed governor and general Niazi was appointed as the chief of army in East Pakistan.

On 10 March Bangabandhu in a statement said 'All organs of the government including the secretariat, government and autonomous organizations, courts, railway and ports are obeying our directives. Those who thought that they could impose their decision upon us by force have unveiled their true colour to the world. The anti-people conspiracy clique are still carrying on their heinous activities. Everyday there is movement of troops and arms and ammunition from West Pakistan. There is curfew in Rangpur and Rajshahi. The ruling clique does not rest content with the power of killing. They are also engaged in the conspiracy to destroy the economy of East Pakistan. There is a reign of terror in the country. The foreign specialists are being threatened to leave Bangladesh. Attempt is being made to maintain an emergency situation by arms build-up. U Thant, the UN secretary general permitted the evacuation of UN staff. This in effect is an admission of the insecurity of life and property in Bangladesh caused by military force. He should realise that his responsibility does not end with removing the UN staff to safety. But threat today is for a potential genocide. The threat is to deny the fundamental rights of seven and half crore people of Bangladesh granted by the UN.' (Dainik Pakistan, 11 March 1971).

On 13 March, the Bengalee officers of CSP and EPCS cadres extended their support to non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On 14 March Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave yet another statement. He said, 'the flame of independence of Bangladesh cannot be extinguished nor can we be defeated. Because we are prepared to die if need be so that our posterity can live in freedom and dignity as free citizens in an independent country. Therefore we will continue wholeheartedly with our struggle till we achieve our objective. You have to be ready for any sacrifice. I call upon all of you from every quarter to put up resistance to force by the army'. (Dainik Pakistan 15 March 1971)

On 15 March Yahya Khan with almost all army generals arrived Dhaka under strict army watch.

From 15 March began the farce of discussion meeting at the president house between general Yahya and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. General Yahya Khan under the pretext of this meeting was finalising the plans for impending military campaign in consultation with the top generals in the cantonment. On the other hand the non-cooperation movement was going in full steam. Everyday innumerable meetings and processions continually raised slogans against any compromise on the issue of independence of Bangladesh. Eastern Mercantile Bank started accepting all central revenues at the directive of Bangabandhu. The Army continued with their repression. Repression was let loose on the participants of non-cooperation movement in Rajshahi Medical College hostel, Zoha Hall, Mannujan Hall, near Rangpur and Jessore cantonment areas, Khulna, Chittagong, Dhaka Peelkhana, Farm gate, Rampura and Kachukhet. Mothers and sisters were not spared from this repression of the army.

On 17 March talks were again held between general Yahya and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. March 17 is the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu. On that day he told the journalists. 'I do not observe my birth anniversary. My date of birth and date of death do not matter in this unfortunate land. Birth in this country does not have any significance. We have to lay down our lives at somebody's sweet will. They have not kept any security of lives for people of Bangladesh. The people here are nearly dead. There is no meaning of my birth anniversary. My life is dedicated to people. I belong to them.' (Dainik Pakistan 18 March 1971)

On 18 March Independent Bangladesh Central Students Council in a statement sought support of freedom-loving people of the world to the struggle for independence of Bangladesh. The statement, to prevent a genocide in Bangladesh, also appealed to America, Britain, Russia, China and others to stop supply of arms to Pakistan. The teachers' association of Dhaka University sent a number of telegrams to governments, Universities and intellectuals of different countries urging them to intervene to avert a potential catastrophe.

On March 19 there were clashes between the Pakistan army and Bengalee soldiers and common people in Joydevpur and Gazipur cantonment areas. The East Bengal Regiment refused to open fire on people. The people of those areas raised barricades to stop movement of Pakistan Army. Battle ensued when curfew was imposed and attempts were made to dismantle brricades. The Pakistan Army opened a round of fires in the areas injuring many, entered homes and carried repression of men and women. Tongi was also affected by army action. The second battalion of East Bengal Regiment was posted in Joydevpur on that day. The second battalion refused to obey the order of Brigadier Jahangir Arbar, 57 brigade commander to fire upon Bengalees observing non-cooperation in Joydevpur cantonment and Gazipur ordinance factory areas. Attempts were made to disarm the second battalion but failed. Major Shafiqullah led the rebellion of Bengalee soldiers and officers. (later he became chief of staff of Bangladesh Army) The Joydevpur incident had a serious reaction in Tongi industrial area and Dhaka. Particularly, the attempt to disarm second Bengal Regiment and take control of Gazipur ordinance factory away from Bengalees by the Pakistan Army caused deep tension. In fact, the heroic manner in which Bengalee workers of Gazipur ordinance factory, the jawans and officers of Second East Bengal Regiment and the workers of Tongi industrial

area put up resistance and fight against the powerful Pakistan Army may be described as the beginning of armed resistance of Bengalees. Hurmat and Manu Khalifa became martyrs by Pakistani bullets..

On 19 March the third round of Yahya- Mujib talks was held. Protesting against the killing by Pakistan army in Joydevpur and Tongi areas, Bangabandhu said 'If they think they can suppress the people's struggle by bullets and force, they are living in fools paradise. when people are ready to shed blood, no power on earth can suppress them'

On 20 March Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Khandaker Mustaq Ahmed, Mansur Ali, Kamruzzaman and Dr. Kamal Hussain held one and a half long meeting with President Yahya Khan. On March 21 Bangabandhu and Tajuddin Ahmed held another 90 minute talks with Yahya Khan. Meanwhile general Yahya Khan along with his military advisers, general Hamid Khan, general Tikka Khan, general Pirjada, general Omar, general Mitha were giving final touches for military action. Everyday from 6 to 17 PIA Boeing flights were carrying troops and arms logistics to Dhaka. Ship loads of troops and arms were also reaching Chittagong port. At the beginning of March the strength of Pakistan Army was limited to one division. The strength was doubled and gradually increased. Simultaneously the Navy in Chittagong was strengthened. On 21 March Zulfikar Ali Bhutto along with 12 of his advisers came to Dhaka to join the conspiracy with Yahya Khan.

On 22 March the colourful portrait of national flag of independent Bangladesh as determined by Independent Bangladesh Students Sangram Council was published in all newspapers of Dhaka. They called upon people to hoist the flag in every house on 23 March, the so called 'Pakistan day'. A stream of processions were moving towards the residence of Bangabandhu at road no 32 in Dhanmondi. He had to address every procession. He told them. 'With my blood I shall repay the debt of your blood' On 22 March Yahya-Sheikh-Bhutto meeting lasted 75 minutes.

On 23 March flag of independent Bengal was hoisted in every home and transport of Bangladesh.



Never before the unprecedented spectacle of black flag and flag of Sonar Bangla was noticed. On that day the independent Bangla Central Labour Federation formally hoisted the flag of independent Bangla at the residence of Bangabandhu. On 23 March the important event was the parade by the Joy Bangla force. The national song 'Amar Sonar Bangla' was played on records. Joy Bangla force consisted of 10 platoons and one band platoon. This force after their parade was over, marched to the residence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangabandhu addressed them.

On 24 March Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed and Dr. Kamal Hossain held a two hour long meeting with the advisers of president Yahya Khan. On 24 March when the Awami League leaders were busy to tide over the crisis, the non-Bengalees at the instance of Pak army began a campaign of extermination of Bengalees in Chittagong, Syedpur, Mirpur of Dhaka. In fact, they began the killing, loot and rape from 24 March. As a consequence there was loss of lives and property in different parts of the province. There was again stream of combative processions at the residence of Sheikh Mujib. Addressing them he said, 'Nobody has the power to purchase me. I cannot betray the people of Bangladesh, with the blood of martyrs. I am not sure if I shall remain alive to give directive for an intensive movement. You will continue with your struggle till you achieve your demands.'

On 25 March meetings, processions and demonstrations continued. On 25 March it was hoped that an understanding will be reached. Tajuddin Ahmed, the general secretary of Awami League said, 'No more discussion, we want a clear announcement'. On 25 March, Bhutto after his meeting with Yahya told the journalists, 'The situation is very precarious'. The journalists rushed to Bangabandhu and informed him of Bhutto's observation. He became grave and went into meeting with leaders of Awami League. Many domestic and foreign journalists gathered at the residence of Sheikh Shahib. Some one brought the information that Yahya Khan in civilian dress left the president house and went towards the cantonment or the air port. At this time a Boeing aircraft left Dhaka for Karachi. Yahya Khan left Dhaka in secrecy. While leaving he gave the ultimate order to the Army. News reached Sheikh Shahib that disturbance was created by the non-Bengalees in Syedpur, Rangpur, Chittagong and other places. On 25 March evening he in a statement said, 'I am shocked at the army action in Syedpur, Rangpur and Joydevpur. News is coming about firing and repression of unarmed civilians. A reign of terror is being created completely ignoring the police. These incidents are taking place at a time when the president himself is present in Dhaka. I am requesting him to give directive to immediately stop such military action.'

One must know such killing, barbarism will not be allowed unchallenged. I have confidence that sons of Bangladesh are brave. They are prepared to face any eventuality to secure their objective of emancipation of people of Bangladesh'. (Dhaka Television and Radio evening news broadcast. 25 March 1971)

The military ruler of Pakistan general Yahya Khan under the facade of talks with Bengalee leaders from March 16 to March 25 completed the military preparation. Pakistan Army launched the most heinous genocide in the world in Dhaka on the night of 25 March and Yahya left Dhaka. He was accompanied by Bhutto. At midnight on March 25 the Pakistan army arrested Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of Bengalee nation. Before his arrest, Bangabandhu declared independence of Bangladesh over wireless. Thus began the 1971 liberation war of the Bengalees. ■

Translation: Abdul Hannan

## MY DEAR INDEPENDENCE

Habibullah Sheraji

The night dark as Dumur flower  
When merged with sudden flickering light  
Ignites a powder keg of lightning and ammunition  
Field after field lie solid in dry Chaitra  
Burning and parching in flames  
It started long ago  
From the jute leaves and paddy stalk  
It whistles.... Bangladesh  
Bending on his knees he looks once again at the limits of his existence  
Towards the west or East  
From the North to the sea at south  
Listens to that thunder of blood  
'If there is one more bullet'

The Palm leaves of vadra floats under the clear sky  
The wall is pushed against the wall  
The sweat and salt is hand in hand with three zero three  
The hair is disheveled, the leech drags and the mosquito bites  
Alam, do you have a Bidi?  
Aswin and katrik ends, who cares?  
The moon over head disappears into the West  
My boy has gone to drive away the pigs  
The water lily is yet  
to spring in the water below

My brother I feel cold  
Wrap me with your warm fold  
The severed head lies buried in sand  
Flows the Padma and Jamuna  
Vermilion is gone from the forehead  
Yet the blood soaked colour fly  
From bullet hit hand.

Pouish is not Pouish alone. It smells in this month  
It is a month of return to oneself  
The ant too has returned home  
Sitting on sweet soft grass  
He has seen with contempt the bloody boot and the sharp weapon  
What a shame in surrender  
From March to December  
After crossing a vast river and a wide open sky  
Touching the Race course soil he says  
This country is mine

Translated by Abdul Hannan

## Independence and Bangladesh

Asim Saha

Any of you, please do not come to me to tell the story of freedom  
Please do not narrate to me about that fiery afternoon of 7 March  
How an immortal voice rang out from inside those roaring waves  
And the earth trembled at that burst of thunder which pierced the sky!

In the afternoon that day, I was also with you at Ramna, a brave youth;  
In the sunlit ground on that day, people were streaming inside from noon,  
The peasants of villages, the factory workers, middle-class people,  
Prostitutes from the brothels of Rathkhola and Kandupatti, shy housewives,  
Poets, brave writers, journalists, intellectuals, party leaders and workers  
Even audacious prisoners who had escaped from jails  
As if all clouds in Bangla's sky had come down as rain on the bosom of Ramna.

And millions of people were drowning in unending processions  
All streets-ports, highways of Dhaka, the whole park of Ramna.  
In everybody's voice was echoing only a single  
Immortal slogan - 'Joi Bangla' (Victory to Bangla).  
In their hands were sharp tools of many colours and shapes,  
It seemed as if the flame of fire rising from the perilous lava of Vesuvius  
Would suddenly devour the whole world.

There was no tiredness in waiting, the fire was blazing fiercely within burnt ribs  
The intense moments of expectation were passing by bit by bit  
That royal prince had not yet arrived then -  
At whose call the rivers-fields, villages-habitats, markets and ports of Bangla  
Rushed to a pasture after waking up from a slumber  
The grass-flowers had come, a girl came alone  
Holding in her hand in amazement the scented wreath woven by countless roses  
Looking at the stage while floating in a current of people;  
A teenage boy had come to the TSC crossing alone and was  
Singing a song of rejuvenation for Bangla.

At that very moment, amid the excited slogans of million voices  
Through the waves of a sea, in an indomitable style  
Climbed on stage that dearest prince of ours.  
He was wearing a white *panjabi* and a spotless *pyjama*,  
And his body was covered with a bright black coat  
Like the next of kin.  
With hairs brushed backward, and that resolute expression on face,  
The moment he stood before the microphone  
The sky and air of Bangla resonated with the earth-shattering cries  
Of a million people which shook the whole ground.

Then the silence of a calm river descended on that afternoon pitch of March.

What song will soar from that voice - it was that kind of wait  
The silent moments were passing by,  
The souls were trembling with doubts, the eyes were getting wet in tears;  
At that very moment the beloved voice uttered those heartrending words  
In a thunderous tone:  
"The struggle this time is the struggle for our freedom,  
The struggle this time is for our independence."  
We were free since then, from then on  
The word 'freedom' filled our sky and earth, the world and the solar system  
Spread towards the midnight of 26th March, and after that came 16th December  
Our Victory Day.  
Like a sunrise emerged on the world map  
The name of a new homeland:

Bangladesh  
Bangladesh  
Bangladesh.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed