

(Continued)

On This Day of His Passing Away

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was the last notable personality to be added to this sacred list, which includes Ata-Turk Mustafa Kamal Pasha of modern Turkey, Bapuji Gandhi of India and Uncle Ho of Vietnam.

Needless to say, the positions of these saviour men lie above their own names and beyond their state-boundaries. They have become transformed into assets of eternity. On the global map, we got such a person in our midst in a small country of the orient.

THREE

Let us consider the global scenario of 1971. The two most talked about countries then were Vietnam and Bangladesh. In one country, the American forces were carrying out carpet bombings, and in the other an indiscriminate genocide was being perpetrated by the occupying Pakistani army. And resistance took the shape of armed liberation war of the masses in both the states. A question can be asked here, is there any other instance in history where an all-out war of resistance was organized and invigorated by the inspiration of an absent leader mere nine months. Everybody knows Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was captive in a remote West Pakistani jail at that time of Bangladesh liberation war with a death sentence hanging on his head. He was counting his last hours. Then a question of faith comes – what was that inspiration which motivated millions of battling Bangalis to wage a war for their motherland?

In the meantime, some decades have already passed. But we have not forgotten those noble words of faith uttered by Bangabandhu – “Before climbing the gallows, I shall pronounce, I am Bangali, Bangla is my country, Bangla is my language, Joy Bangla”. We repeatedly recollect how that deathless mantra had made us fearless and brave. The man named Sheikh Mujib then no more remains a bodied man with five senses; he gets transformed by representing all our hopes and dreams.

I would like to say in this context that although a mourning day is being observed today, it does not end there. We get the opportunity of looking at him again and again, because he is that father figure who has remained the torchbearer of our forward march.

Another question comes here: in the kingdom of nature, or in the realm of mortal human life, how far the role of destiny is acceptable in worldly existence? Or, what role sudden occurrences play, which do not have any cause and effect relationships? The science of logic does not support such contention at all.

The inquisitive scholars explore and search; certainly, the so-called destiny or sudden events do not work in the making of history or the emergence of great men from its depths. Therefore, it does not happen that one descends from outer-space at an

opportune moment. The place of avatars shall remain in the mythologies, not in history. Our Sheikh Mujib is discussed in this backdrop.

FOUR

There was a gap of five years between his declaration of the 6-point charter of survival for the Bangalis in 1966 and his historic speech before a sea of people at Ramna Racecourse on 7 March 1971. We witnessed within this short span of time his swift rise to the ivory peak of people's love and leadership, just like a meteor. I am speaking from my own experience; starting from the midst of leaders and workers of a political institution called the Awami League, he soon ascended to the position of Bangabandhu (Friend of Banga) in the hearts of the masses throughout this land. Certainly, there is no room for suddenness in history. And with amazing swiftness, a huge transformation had taken place in the chronological context of Bangladesh.

I would like to comprehend, how that fearless leader of teeming millions could issue instruction in such a language, “Build up fortresses in every home. The enemy has to be confronted with whatever you have.” We did not look back since then; we heard his call in an invincible voice of thunder – “You shall not succeed in suppressing seven crore people

.....the struggle this time is for our freedom, the struggle this time is for our independence.” Did he become a superman on that day? May be that was possible. In the meantime, after traversing some distance over time, we now have the opportunity to analyze that 7 March Address of Bangabandhu. There were undoubtedly emotions galore. And people all over the country wholeheartedly wanted such a declaration. But this development did not take place all of a sudden, on a single day. It involved a huge work-load of channelling the sense of deprivation, anger and complaints of the people into a single current through massive organizational effort. In reality, the then history of Bangladesh flowed through the man named Sheikh Mujib during that period.

He was a victim of misrule and had to undergo tortures during the prime years of his life. His work was

directed at upholding the interest of the people in his homeland. The arrest warrants of hostile governments had chased him from one corner of the country to another so many times! Frequent captivity in jails, and sometimes hunger-strikes inside prisons; leading anti-government processions outside in protest against misrule, confronting baton-charges by police, all these had become part of his physical existence. The man Sheikh Mujib had extraordinary organizational capacity, enormous courage and deep love for his countrymen. In return, the countrymen also held him in their heart as Bangabandhu by reciprocating that love.

FIVE

At the fog end of the first decade of the new millennium comes the Fifteenth August of 2010. We are today observing the Mourning Day in memory of the Father-Architect of the Nation. Instead, let us identify the event in a different way; today is the day of passing away of the greatest man in the history of the Bangalis. Needless to say, it is not merely a ritualistic observance. It has more depth. Bangla and Bangalism of a thousand years become manifested here. I propose that we learn from his history. And a question arises within me, was that the final decree of destiny – for the noblest saviour of mortal men? Many of these great men had to perish at the hands of the evil forces from hell.

Here, I want to present some relevant examples. In ancient times, the great guru and guardian Socrates had to commit suicide by drinking hemlock in the Greek city of Athens. From Socrates to Jesus, their famous message had been, “Love thy neighbour”. Jesus was crucified. Let us cross the sea of time and come to France. One of the principal symbols on the eve of the French Revolution – Saint Joan of Arc – was burnt to death in fire. And these were followed by the assassinations of the people's voice of the 19th century – US President Abraham Lincoln, the proponent of non-violence in twentieth century India Mahatma Gandhi, and advocate of the rights of the black people in the USA Martin Luther King. The cruel acts of assassinations had befallen these personalities in different countries of the world. Now, in that list, the latest and brightest addition has been our very own Sheikh Mujib of victorious Bangla.

On this special day today, we remember him, who was the Father, the Architect of this new-born nation. And especially, in the backdrop of the critical times of the present, we repeatedly take inspiration from his unequivocal assertion – “I am Bangali. Bangla is my country. Bangla is my language.”

No more sorrow. Let us today sing the victory-song of this mantra, this conviction.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed

Noblest Man
Belal Chowdhury

They may appear in thousand years, a handful one or two
Their fame spreads all around for good deeds, they themselves
Sanctify their lives – the noble ones, they fill the fallow lands
By cultivating golden crops.

He came in this way by illuminating all ten sides, in the family of Sheikhs
Lying on the lap of his parents at a remote and faraway village,
-We know people age, environments change, and the plant raises its head....

Does the river also grow old? I don't know. But she is always restless, resolute and rebellious
It doesn't take long to realize while listening to the reckless ripples of its waves
In perilous shape its current becomes unstoppable, flowing parallel to the meandering Modhumati....

Beautiful like its own name, Baigar came out of its own heart
Hazy rows of trees donned its dilapidated banks on both sides,
Amid diverse hazards were his confident movements;
There was hunger, poverty, want and a grey picture of nature all around
Observing keenly these pale miserable faces in his early hours
He could realize, 'these numb and dumb mouths shall have to be given speech'.

Rosy smile in abundance shall have to be brought to the faces of the exploited
-And to dedicate himself in that onerous task he had to be
A daring sailor in a vast sea, a fully focused and combative boatman.

His was not the path of compromise; he was a voyager of inaccessible roads
Confronting obstacles at every step, he faced one struggle after another throughout his life
Oblivious of where his wife, children, parents, brothers, sisters and relatives lived.

He belonged to the whole country, the entire nation; he was the loftiest man of the century
With virtues and failings he was a pure Bangalee, generous and unbounded like the blue sky
He could not be moved by the thought of gains or losses, greed or partiality.

Crushing the mountain of barriers he was bent on moving ahead
Lean and thin, his head was forever held high, verily a simple and plain patriot.

Leaving behind an indebted nation, with his kith, kin and companions,
He left us smilingly by dropping his own blood from the heart
-Hoping even then that smiles would appear on the faces of teeming millions.

The people of Bangla are distressed a lot, though they seek very little,
Let them find a little happiness, and laugh to their heart's content
-Only this was his pure, sincere and simple desire.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed

To His Own Destination
Asim Saha

Slowly, came He to the edge of stairs
Still was echoing the praising words from the Muajjin
So quiet, calm the earth was never before
As if no peace prevailed on this earth so far.
Suddenly, with a big bang, at a great pace
Roared the Death,
And vibrated the earth at the sound
Lament and chaos, raised so high that
He couldn't stay cool inside
Came out of the room, in sleeping gowns
Reached the edge of the stairs,
Favorite pipe still in hand,
Surprising rays on his eyes reflected, once,
But again slipped into the dark hole
A deep voice came through the air – “Who?”
Then in olive uniform
Few derailed soldiers with arms
Shouted, “That's he.”
“That's he kill him!”
To his feet, a leaf flew down, as if apologizing
Putting aside the lock of his hair
Said He in deep tone, “What do you want?”
Suddenly an automatic gun shouted out
Fell down he in the pool of blood,
Spreading out the fanatic hatred, echoing, in the air
Leaving the body there
They left the spot at dawn.
Roar of the arms made the sleeping crows
Wake and break the silence of the sky.
Weeping of the chilly wind made the dawn heavy
In still body, before His eyes, came the small river to His memory
Where he jumped into the waiving water in his adolescence
And the soil of the banks cheered at this.
Today hiding face to her bosom he cried and became numb
Oh! (It seems,) lots of dreams to be fulfilled
Days of the youth, days with life
Gone away to the silence living behind the bars,
On the midway, a life, that even stopped embracing the death
To make a Tagore song immortal;
Those who wanted to stop the symphony of one Orpheus
Bloodshed is the ultimate destiny, declared they
Yet he raised his hands, forgave them too
Only the sons and the daughters of the soil
Stood astonished and still in the fields
Putting off the hats lamented they
Southern air flew away their lament
Over the vibrant yet frightened paddy;
Shook the soil of the homeland again
As happened '71 with the brutal boot.
Lastly, the city where he passed his colorful energetic life
Bade him good bye for good
But the river where he played in youth,
And let her know that He would flow on and on
Up to last end on the earth
That Modhumoti lamented, torn herself
She's the only to take him to her bosom
In deep love, with passion
Like an affectionate mother got her lost son back
Lamenting of millions like the murmur of the stream
Broke the silence of the soil of the river banks
On top of the wave, an independent homeland
With her beauty and serenity
Flows on to a destiny, to liberty;
And flooding the sides of Modhumoti in tears
Destiny took Him to His own destination.

Translation: Fatema Zohra Haque

You, The Pole Star
Shihab Sarkar

Darkness fades as decades go by
The fiends of the cruel night crumble into dust
The clusters of poison-fruit fall
One day—rotten and withered and stinking.

You see a maiden path in the dark of the wilds ?

An apocalyptic night of tsunamis swallowed our
dreams in the small hours of *Sravana*,
We've seen the dance of black monsters
in the sun-bathed, wistful Bengal after the war.

But the paws of darkness clawed at my
vitals, they gouged out my eyes
The wind stopped amid groans of the tongueless,
In a grave at Tungipara was lowered the Pole Star,
On the stairs of the 32 echoed the blood-stained boots
The orphaned pair of spectacles lied motionless.

But see, his smoking pipe still exuded a serene warmth.

Then the new star came up in the evening sky
None had noticed it in the sky before,
As the night turned deeper, the star shone brighter
In the morning sky the star keeps shining,
Who'll resist us, primordial darkness has died down
Hyenas won't burst into laughter anymore.

Look, there shines the Pole Star
Rusts get swept away from nightmares.
I take a long, fresh breath

The earth awash with starlight flooding the stifling dark.

Sravana: The second month of the season of monsoon in Bengal.
Translation : Shihab Sarkar himself



Bangabandhu in the Eye of New Generation



I think the killing of the 15th August is an ultimate result of a deep-rooted conspiracy. It is understandable that not only the anti-liberation forces, but also certain international quarters were involved in it. This ignoble killing broke the backbone of the Bangali nation, this is why we have yet not been able to stand straight. If Bangabandhu were alive today, we could have found our Mandela in him, and the country would be transformed into Sonar Bangla as he dreamt of. No conscientious person can still check tears at the thought of the 8-year old boy Russel and the unborn baby of Mrs. Moni (Sheikh Moni).
Nuzhat Chowdhury (Shampa), Assistant Professor, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.



The 15th August killing is totally unacceptable under any circumstances. Because, killing of a nation's father is same as that of killing that very nation.

Azizul Huq, Government Madrasah-e-Alia.



In fact, this ghastly episode is not worthy of any appreciation. It is hard to imagine that the person who presented us the sun of our freedom, had to depart in such an tragic way. He did not get the minimum opportunity to materialize his dream. Surely this is unbearably painful.

The bullets of the killers even did not spare the innocent child Russel who, for his age, indeed could be compared with an image of an angel, and at whose sight even a cruel heart would have melted down. I wonder what kind of heart these killers had and how they could indiscriminately kill the men, women and a minor child!
Kamrul, BBA North South University.



The killing of 15th August, 1975 was far more horrendous than the torture meted out by the Pakistani soldiers.

Irene Huda, Industrial Production Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology.

The killing of Bangabandhu was as an attempt to obliterate his contribution to our War of Liberation and even his very existence in it. However, the effort of the killers has failed - the reason being Mujib and Bangladesh are an inseparable entity. The 15th August killing was politically motivated. The successors of Bangabandhu were killed with the sole

motive to wipe out the name of Sheikh Mujib from the soil of Bangladesh. The death of Bangabandhu has been a permanent loss to the nation. It can never be recovered. But I firmly believe it is plausible to implement his ideals by cherishing those in our hearts.
Mir Fazle Rabbi, Mass Communication and Journalism Department, Dhaka University.



To err is human. Bangabandhu might have also committed minor errors. But killing is no solution to any problem. Political killings had also occurred in many parts of the world. But such a gruesome killing of the entire family has never occurred. It is heinous and treacherous to kill the person under whose leadership we achieved our Independence. Moreover, the killing of his family members is absolutely unpardonable. Some innocent people were killed by the savages even before they had attained the age to understand what life was or what politics was. It is not clear to me why one has to die for being born in a political family or one being on a visit to that family. The political history of Bangladesh has been distorted due to the killing of Bangabandhu.

Shilpy Begum, Mass Communication and Journalism Department, Dhaka University.



Bangabandhu's killing is a curse to our national life. He was not a leader of a particular party, rather of the entire nation. He infused the people with the sense of nationalism and self-identity. Without his leadership this country would have remained subjugated until today.

Md. Sobuj Hossain, History Department, Dhaka University.



As a student of history, I would say that the purpose of the 15th August killing was not only to eliminate the person Sheikh Mujib. With his killing an attempt was made to wipe out the ideals of Sheikh Mujib. With a view to achieving their far-reaching objectives, the killers killed the entire family of Sheikh Mujib. The conspiracy which was being hatched immediately after 1971 to banish the spirit of our liberation, had reached its climax with the killing of Sheikh Mujib. I wonder how it has been possible for the Razakars to fly our national flag on their cars! After liberation Sheikh Mujib formed his government in a war-ravaged famine-stricken country. He had a very little time, we possibly would have been spared of the huge problems we confront today. The barbarity in killing the innocent people on

the August 15, was much more savaged than that was in the Middle Age. No religion condones killing of a child. The killers had the idea that if any of his family members remained alive, he or she would get an opportunity to implement Sheikh Mujib's ideals. That was precisely the reason why his family members were killed indiscriminately as a part of their sinister design.
S.M. Rezaul Karim (Reza), Lecturer, Department of History, University of Dhaka.



Islam forbids killing of women and children. Those who caused the killing were surely devoid of any human quality. Had Bangabandhu been alive today, there would not be any political turmoil we are faced with now. By his leadership, he could have made Bangladesh, a land of his dream - the *sonar Bangla*, free of corruption and injustice. We pray to the Almighty for the salvation of the souls of Bangabandhu and others who had to embrace martyrdom along with him.

Abdullah Al Faruk (Apu), Dhakhil Department, Alia Madrassah, Dhaka.



What I have heard about Bangabandhu, I am convinced that he had been an ideal leader. Today I yearn for a leader of his stature.

Kausar Ahmed, Civil Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology.

A leader is needed to develop a country. If we compare the per capita income of Bangladesh and Malaysia in 1971, both the countries stood at the same level. But the picture is different today. Malaysia has gone far ahead of us. Their per capita income has gone up manifold than Bangladesh. That was possible because of a leader like Mahathir Mohammad. I believe Bangladesh needed a leader like him. If Bangabandhu were alive today he could have materialized our expectations.

Asif, BBA, North South University.

The killing of 15th August, 1975 is one of the most gruesome acts in the human history. This killing had critically impeded the nation's economic advancement and social justice. It had left a vacuum in our national leadership. Consequently, Bangladesh still continues to drag on as a third world nation.

Shirin Akhtar, History Department, University of Dhaka.

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