

MUNIR UZ ZAMAN/DRIKNEWS

A few hours before the birth of the new nation, on the evening of December 15, 1971, a microbus covered in mud, drove up to the front of our house. They took my father Dr. Abdul Alim Chaudhury away. On December 18, we found his lifeless body lying in a pool of blood in the Rayer Bazaar brickfield along with hundreds of other leading intellectuals of the day.

Dr. Abdul Alim Chaudhury was an eminent ophthalmologist, a politically active leader of his community. Trained in UK, he came back to serve his country. He was not only a leading ophthalmologist but also leader of the doctor community. Even though he was born into a zaminder family, he dreamt of a classless society where rights of all human beings would be upheld. He was deeply involved in the language movement in 1952 when he was a student leader at Dhaka Medical College. In 1954, he was taken into custody by the then Pakistan Government on the anniversary of the language movement for his political activities. Later in life, he served as the Secretary General of the Ophthalmological Society of East Pakistan and Secretary General of the Ophthalmological Society of Pakistan.

Dr. Abdul Alim Chaudhury was a multitalented personality who was active not only in the political and professional arenas but also in cultural movements. As a student, he was sub-editor at the *Dainik Ittefaq* and the *Dainik Millat*. From his third year in medical college he edited a monthly literary paper Jatrik. He was also the editor of another literary paper Khap Chhara. While studying in UK, he helped found the London based Bangla academy.

He was deeply involved in our freedom struggle. His chamber became an underground meeting place for political leaders and his clinic provided shelter and treatment for injured freedom fighters. He collected money and medicine for the freedom fighters and supplied them to their secret hideouts. He was told about the danger looming over his life but he preferred to stay in the country, saying that if everyone left the country, who would be there to work from within the country. On December 15, just a few hours before the dawn of our independence day, he was taken from his home and killed, along with other intellectuals.

Why were these brilliant people killed? They were not fighters with arms. But they had something more powerful than that. They had ideology, vision, brain and dedication. Ideology that led the way towards the freedom fight. Vision, brain and dedication that could have built a great nation. How could the enemies of our country tolerate the prospect of such a brilliant future for us? Near the end of our war of independence, the Pakistani army and their collaborators, the Razakars, the Al Badrs and the Al Shams realised that they were losing the war. In a final attempt to destroy the nation, under a meticulously planned blue print, they methodically picked up the most accomplished members of the society, leaders of different professional arena, the most progressive visionaries, the leading intellectuals, from their homes and tortured and brutally murdered them. And thus our enemies have successfully managed to cripple our nation forever. I therefore think that the intellectual killing was not only a crime against individuals, but a crime against the whole nation. How can such a big crime go unpunished? I also believe that if we minutely look at the intellectual killings, we