

(Continued)

Expectations on the Occasion of Four Decades of Bangladesh's Independence

politicians, capitalists, bureaucrats and the military in the two wings of Pakistan after its creation in 1947. It generated the scope for strengthening of regional identity in East Bengal. Nationalism was born in East Bengal from that very sentiment.

I also agree with the analysts of nationalism that the nationalistic movement had commenced in Pakistan immediately after its birth. It is pertinent to mention here that compared to many of my CSP colleagues of the time, I knew a bit more about West Pakistan. That was because I was given posting as the private secretary to the then information minister of the Pakistan central government Khwaja Shahabuddin in 1965. The Indo-Pak war started a few days after I went there. As there was no prime minister of Pakistan at that time and the information minister was the senior-most among ministers, his position was next to the president. I could then know everything about the discussions and decisions in cabinet meetings. And the most influential secretary of the government was Altaf Gawhar. I could observe how the Bengalees were looked at and ignored by the West Pakistani officers. Consequently, when the Pakistanis attacked the people of East Bengal on 25 March 1971, there was no other option for us but to resist. At a personal level, I could not even think of staying on with the Pakistani government.

In the backdrop of the historic 7 March call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then East Pakistan Association of CSP Officers informed all district administrations that we would not cooperate with the Pakistani regime. It may be mentioned here that the non-cooperation movement had started all over the then East Pakistan after the 7 March speech of Bangabandhu. At that time, I was serving as the Deputy Commissioner of undivided Chittagong Hill Tracts district. The CSP Officers Association was then working according to the instructions of the Awami League. Although martial law was in force at that time, the activities of martial law administrator for Chittagong was confined only within Chittagong district. It may also be pertinent to add that arms build-up of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan had started from the very commencement of 1971.

After briefly narrating the significance of 26 March 1971 in the life of the Bengalee nation and the history of Bangladesh, I feel that there are many topics surrounding the Independence Day which could not be properly preserved in the pages of our history over the past forty years. The main reason for this has been the evil attempt by local and foreign anti-liberation conspirators to annul the existence of Bangladesh since the start of the liberation war. While discharging the responsibility of the first cabinet secretary of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at Mujibnagar, we faced numerous hurdles of such a nature on a regular basis. We had to confront the anti-state and anti-liberation-war elements even after emerging victorious by ousting the Pakistanis on 16 December 1971. The assassins killed our



mentioned, so that the future generations are not caught in a web of confusion. And that is, Major Zia never claimed while Bangabandhu was alive or even after he became president by illegally seizing power that he had declared the independence of Bangladesh. He also never said that he was the declarer of independence. Those who had no idea about the liberation war had spread this confusion.

Although many among the sympathetic readers may already know, what our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had said during his address to the nation broadcast over radio and television on 26 March 1972 on the occasion of the first Independence Day of Bangladesh should be mentioned here for the sake of our new generation:

... "Today our problems are mountain-high. We stand at the cross-road of a great crisis. One crore refugees who have returned from abroad, two crore homeless people in the country, the devastated idle ports of Chalna and Chittagong, motionless factories, extinguished power supply, innumerable unemployed, food shortage, rising prices of essential commodities and uncultivated land – we have inherited all these. My government has taken up this challenge by relying on the deep love of our people, their confidence, unremitting courage and incomparable unity. ... We want to build the graveyard-like Bangla into a golden Bangla."

Again, part of the resolution related to the declaration of independence articulated by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 10 April 1972 at the inauguration ceremony of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh is relevant here. It was as follows:

... "You know the history of 25 March. The barbaric invading forces of Pakistan had not obeyed any law on that day. The military of barbaric Yahya were sent out like dogs against

the helpless and unarmed 7 crore Bengalees. If the army had declared war then we could have confronted them. But they attacked us all of a sudden on 25 March. We realized then that our struggle had started. I informed Chittagong via wireless that Bangladesh was an independent and sovereign state from that day. Let that news be reached to all, so that resistance could be built up in all thanas, sub-divisions, districts. I also issued necessary instructions for that."

None else had the legitimacy enjoyed by Bangabandhu as the undisputed leader of Bangladesh. All countries of the world had taken into cognizance the issue of Bangladesh's declaration of independence based on the legitimacy of Bangabandhu. There was no instance of any country in world history where a military commander suddenly came, made a declaration and the land was freed.

Bangladesh achieved freedom in exchange for a sea of blood. The historic call made by Bangabandhu on 7 March and the declaration of independence on 26 March had inspired the Bengalee people of the then East Pakistan with the mantra of freedom. The whole of the Bengalee nation joined the liberation war and brought home the victorious wreath of liberty.

The great liberation war for snatching our freedom was a unique kind of people's war in the truest sense. The principal ingredients of the people's war were the support and participation of all classes of people and the huge sacrifices they made. Our Bengalee army and the liberation forces were born from amongst the people. The massive participation of the masses in the liberation war of Bangladesh has been seldom seen in world history. Similar to the Vietcong guerrillas who were present everywhere without any fear, our freedom fighters also maintained their positions in towns, villages, ports, paddy-fields, canals-water-bodies, nooks and crannies. They used to launch attacks against the enemy whenever there was any opportunity. As a consequence, the Pakistani forces resorted to indiscriminate mass-killings, rapes, plunders and setting fire to everything in the Bengalee habitats. Even women-children and the aged had to sacrifice their lives during those assaults. Descriptions of these hellish incidents were published in the western media under the headline, 'Bangladesh: A Thousand Mai Lai'. The pervasiveness of Bangladesh's people's war was incomparable in world history. The spontaneously raised people's forces, semi-military militias, local administration and even the womenfolk stood on the same plinth at a critical juncture of the liberation war. It appears that their contributions have so far remained neglected in the history of Bangladesh's independence war. Of late, the deeds of the female freedom-fighters are, however, being published due to the interventions made by Bangabandhu's daughter; their evaluations are now getting more prominence.

People of all ages had participated in one way or another in the liberation war of Bangladesh. Their contributions were both noteworthy and memorable. Even then, the role and contributions of the womenfolk of Bangladesh, who constitute half of the country's population, must be recalled with reverence. The manner in which the female freedom-fighters nursed their

wounded colleagues was simply unparalleled. Not only care-giving, they used to collect information regarding the positions of enemies and their activities inside the country. They also made arrangements for providing food to the freedom fighters. I humbly recall those great female freedom-fighters on the eve of four decades of our independence.

Bangabandhu had expressed the desire to build a 'Golden Bangla' on the occasion of first Independence Day of the country; he had urged the people to wage a second revolution for materialising that aspiration. Before that programme could begin properly, the anti-liberation forces brutally killed Bangabandhu on 15 August 1975 in order to thwart it; this coterie maintained their grip on power in the country for a long time. The patriotic Bengalee people demolished the blue-print of those conspirators on 29 December 2008. The daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Hasina has taken the initiative to build Bangabandhu's 'Golden Bangla'. She has devoted herself to building a 'Golden Bangla' through her programmes of 'changing days'. The clarion call for the liberation war made by Bangabandhu will achieve fruition if the 'Vision-2021' for building a Digital Bangladesh based on modern science and technology undertaken by our dearest leader of the masses Sheikh Hasina is implemented successfully.

Translation : Helal Uddin Ahmed.

(Continued)

Scattered thoughts on Independence Day

Bangladesh. She is as resolute as her father. She offered the glimpse of hope and people started believing that the true history of liberation war would once again find its due niche.

The formation of people's stage in front of national press became a symbol of solidarity in which civil society and bureaucracy came together and reiterated its vow for freedom. The death of Dr Milon and many others, the collective hatred against the autocrat and the 'people's stage' expedited the end of dictatorship and saw the liberation of democracy.

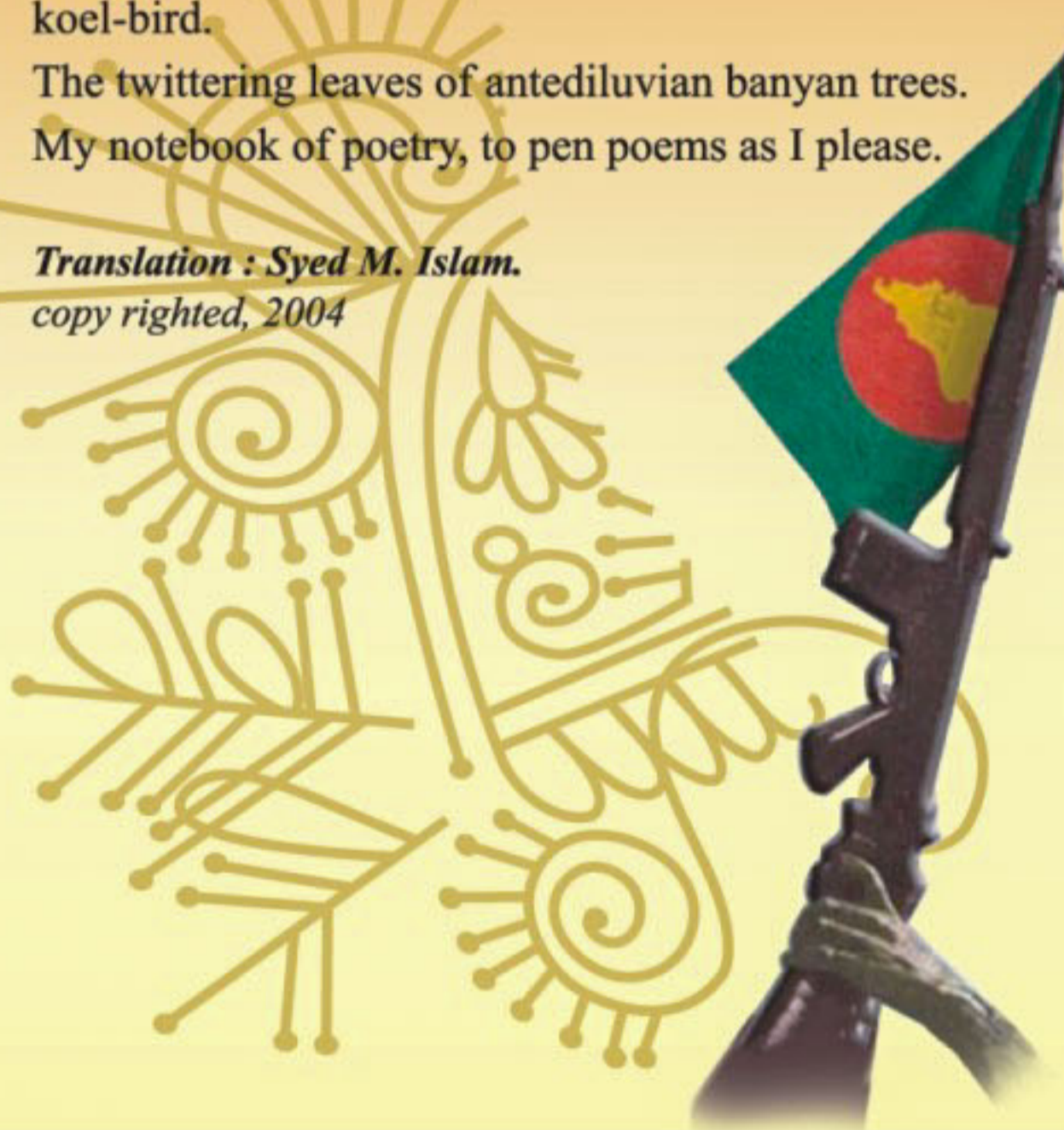
Under the caretaker government, Bangladesh Nationalist Party came to power. This party without any ideology manipulated fundamentalist sentiment to ensure its poll victory. During their reign there was hardly any attempt to highlight the spirit of liberation. As opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina showed her skill as a deft parliamentarian and rekindled the hope of the nation. When she came to power in 1996, expectations over the true acknowledgement of the liberation war ran high. The

**Ode to Freedom**

Shamsur Rahman

Freedom, you're
Rabi Thakur's timeless poetry and everlasting lyrics.
Freedom, you're
Kazi Nazrul, his willowy mane swaying,
rapturous with the joy of creation, a great man.
Freedom, you're
the radiant gathering at Shahid Minar on the
immortalized February 21.
Freedom, you're
the flag-draped, slogan-serenaded boisterous
procession.
Freedom, you're
the farmer's beam amidst his fields.
Freedom, you're
the lightsome swim of a village lass in a pond in
mid-day sun.
Freedom, you're
the sinewy muscle on a young laborer's sun-bronzed,
skilled arms.
Freedom, you're
the gleam in a freedom-fighter's eyes, scanning the
horizon draped in darkness.
Freedom, you're
the crisply-worded, spirited speech of a bright, young
learner in the shade of a banyan tree.
Freedom, you're
the tumult of chats in tea-shops, parks and fields.
Freedom, you're
the roaring swoop of kal-boishakhi across the horizon.
Freedom, you're
the heart of river Meghna, shoreless in Sraban.
Freedom, you're
the soft stretch of father's chivalrous prayer-mat.
Freedom, you're
the ripples on mother's bright sari spread out on the
yard.
Freedom, you're
the hue of henna on sister's gentle hands.
Freedom, you're
the colorful poster, tremulous as starlight in the
hands of a friend.
Freedom, you're
the homemaker's raven hair, luxurious and undone,
untamed and wild in the wind.
Freedom, you're:
the colorful jacket on a lad.
the playful sunlight bouncing off a young girl's supple
cheeks.
Freedom, you're:
The home amidst a flower garden; the warble of
koel-bird.
The twittering leaves of antediluvian banyan trees.
My notebook of poetry, to pen poems as I please.

Translation : Syed M. Islam.
copy righted, 2004



shameful Indemnity Bill was revoked and the nation was relieved of a long standing curse. The murderers of Bangabandhu were tried under existing law of the land.

My scattered thoughts began with a reflection on Independence Day. While the day was observed amid festivity and sincerity between 1972 and 1975, the celebration seemed rather lackluster following the political changeover in 1975. The inglorious and toned down celebration under different post-75 regimes require detailed analysis, which cannot be sketched here in limited space. However, the poisonous roots planted by these regimes need to be uprooted on Independence Day 2011.

The party that led to the freedom of the nation is now in power; the daughter of the man who administered the birth of the nation is now in power. This is the month that takes pride on historic 7th, this is the month when Bangabandhu was born, and this is the month of independence. With the Prime Minister, who is as passionate and patriotic as her father, one can feel the multi-dimensional nuance of independence this year. This is the month when all freedom loving people must unite under one platform and materialize the nation's dream. This includes trying of all listed war criminals by 2012.

Joy Bangla. Joy Bangabandhu.

Translation : Dr. Shamsad Mortuza.



great leader, the declarer of independence and the architect of Bangladesh Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, while he was the President of Bangladesh. They usurped power by killing the legitimate president of Bangladesh; they exerted all their might to execute the blue-print prepared by Pakistan and some middle-eastern states. These countries have been making vile attempts to sow the seed of communalism in the minds of the people in order to change the history of Bangladesh and dim the heritage of our independence by distorting the history of liberation war.

I deem it necessary here to say a few words in order to remove the confusion regarding the declarer of independence. The reality of the liberation war was that it started on the very night of 25 March. Captain Rafique fought the Pakistani army on that same night in Chittagong. The declaration of independence by Bangabandhu was announced through mike at Chittagong in the morning of March 26. At noon of the day, Mr. Hannan along with Jahur Ahmed Chowdhury read out the declaration on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman over radio. Before Mr. Hannan, Dr. Shafi had also read out the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu. After this, some other people also read out Bangabandhu's declaration. But the main announcement was made by Mr. Hannan. What should be noted here is that Major Ziaur Rahman did not come out of the cantonment at that time. That was because the Pakistani army had ordered Ziaur Rahman to release arms from the ship 'Swat' on that day. Before Major Ziaur Rahman had reached the dock, the Pakistani military had killed and wounded many workers by opening fire when they tried to resist. The then Major Khalequzzaman told Zia that he might be ambushed if he went to the dock. Ziaur Rahman therefore revolted against the Pakistan army instead of going to the dock. The leaders of Chittagong Awami League and some staffs of Kalurghat radio station, especially Belal Mohammad, had reached agreement on broadcasting Bangabandhu's declaration of independence through the voice of an army officer; they succeeded in getting the consent of Major Zia for reading out the declaration. I heard the announcement made by Zia on 27 March afternoon while travelling to Rangarh. Although Major Zia initially broadcast Bangabandhu's declaration of independence in his own name, he immediately corrected himself while reading out the declaration next time. The question of legitimacy was paramount in making this correction.

I look at this aspect of declaration of independence in two parts, one of which was formal and the other informal. Anybody can read out the informal declaration, but that does not get legal validity. The broadcast of the declaration from Kalurghat was informal. Bangabandhu had declared independence in a political language from the Ramna racecourse ground on 7 March. That speech of Bangabandhu was the inspiration for our liberation war. The formal proclamation of Bangladesh's independence was made on 10 April 1971. The government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was formed and sworn-in on 10 April 1971 by the elected members of the national and provincial assemblies at Mujibnagar, the first capital of Bangladesh. After that, the government gave formal approval to the declaration of independence made by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 26 March 1971. The title of this declaration was 'The Proclamation of Independence'. It formed the basis for framing the constitution of Bangladesh in 1972.

The following two sections of the Proclamation of Independence deserve special attention:

"Whereas in the facts and circumstances of such treacherous conduct, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of the 75 million people of Bangladesh, in due fulfillment of the legitimate right of self-determination of the people of Bangladesh, duly made a declaration of independence at Dacca on March 26, 1971, and urged the people of Bangladesh to defend the honour and integrity of Bangladesh."

"We further resolve that this proclamation of independence shall be deemed to have come into effect from 26th day of March, 1971."

Information on the issue of declaration of independence contained in the above paragraphs shall remain as a clear guideline for our future generations.

One thing must be said here, and that is the legal inception of the state of Bangladesh had occurred on 10 April 1971. Another thing should also be