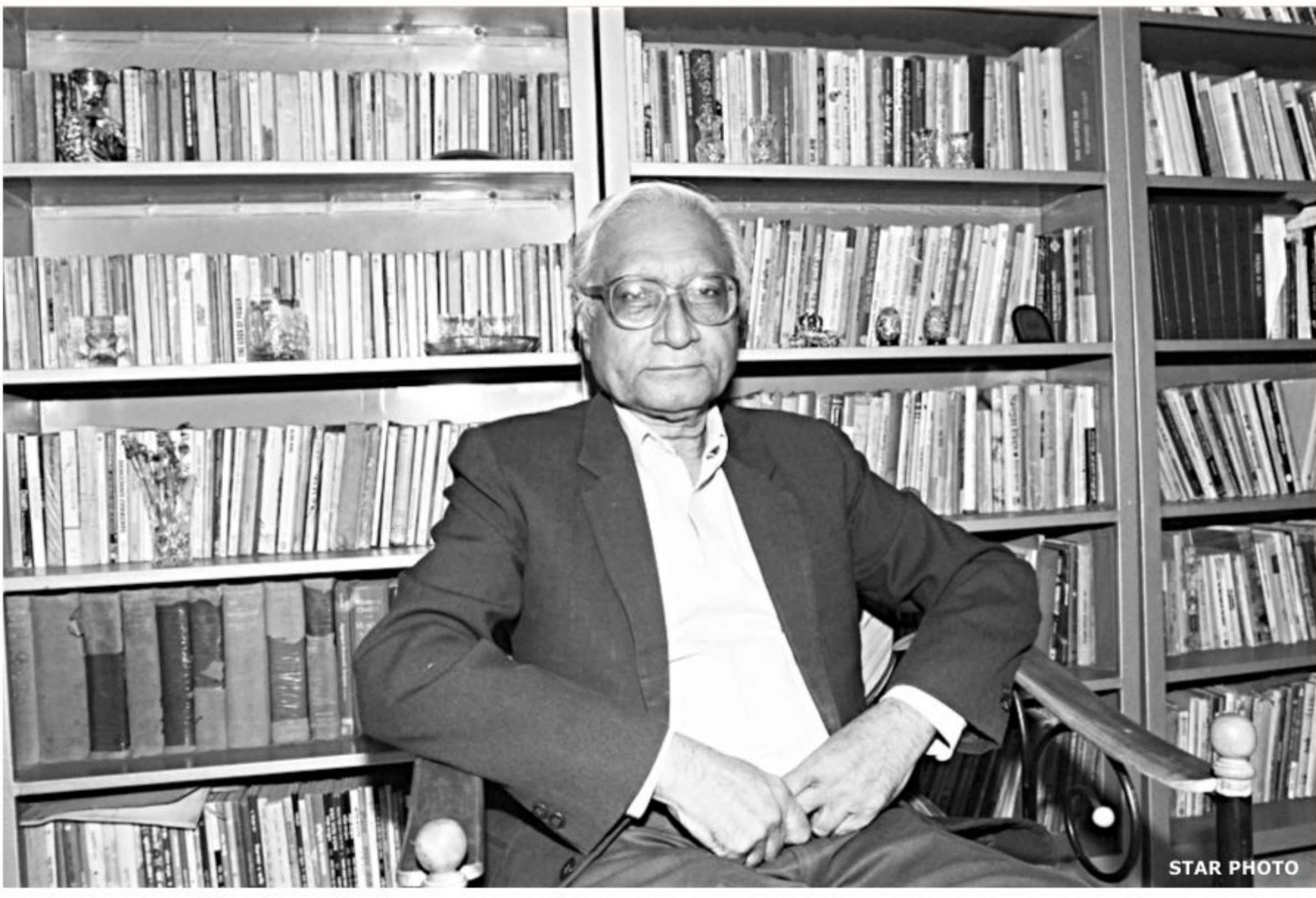


'Propagation of ideas makes one an intellectual'



Serajul Islam Choudhury, one of the leading intellectuals of the country, talks with Rifat Munim of The Daily Star about the role of intellectuals in supporting and stimulating causes of national importance both during the liberation war and at the present time.

Rifat Munim (RM): Internationally acclaimed intellectuals like Edward Said and Noam Chomsky have emphasised the role of intellectuals in spearheading social and political movements. Can we say that our martyred intellectuals, who were killed brutally during our liberation war, had done the same thing that Said and Chomsky are now professing?
Serajul Islam Choudhury (SIC): Not exactly. That's because the role of the intellectuals in the subcontinent has been limited compared to their coun-

terparts in Europe. Historically, here the intellectuals developed as higher education spread.

Before 1947, we did not have a group of intellectuals worth mentioning. We had educated persons such as journalists, but we did not have people who would write about politics, society, economics and other essential issues. They were very few. And that was one of the reasons why there was no intellectual preparation behind the conception of Pakistan. The two-nation theory was basically an absurd idea. Pakistan as a state was not viable, its two main parts being separated by more than 1000 miles of hostile territory. Furthermore, Bengalis constituted about 66% of the population. But the ruling class was from Punjab, which controlled everything and constituted the civil and military bureaucracy, and business. This class was also active in politics. So, we Bengalis had very poor intellectual preparation in 1947 and there were not many people knowing what Pakistan would be like, and whether this would bring the emancipation that people had dreamt of.

After 1947, there was the spread of education and people were getting educated. Then they became aware of what was happening all around the world; political and economic thinking was growing. In spite of this growth in economic and political thinking, the intellectuals could not contribute much. But, what they did was to lend support to the growing movement of the Bengalis, which was really based on Bengali nationalism.

The intellectuals who were martyred were successful in their own fields. They were well known persons and were sympathetic towards this nationalist movement, and that is the reason why they were identified and killed.

RM: How much had they contributed to make people aware of the discrimination between the two wings of Pakistan?

SIC: The economists had contributed to this. One of the things that they brought to the fore was that Pakistan had two economies rather than one. The other significant event was the state language movement in 1952, in which teachers and students participated, but it was mainly a students movement. But then there was an intellectual support given by writers and thinkers to the idea that Bengali should be one of the state languages. The idea was not to have Bengali as the only state language, but to have it as one of the state languages. So, that support came.

And one has to remember too that it was not possible to write against the state during those times. The state was autocratic; and the consequence of dissidence was well known. Sardar Fazlul Karim who was a known communist was imprisoned. There were other people who were categorically silenced by the system.

The state organs, e.g. radio and television, came later. The radio was a propaganda machine, which wouldn't permit people to speak freely and rather aimed at advertising the idea of

one Pakistan. And then there were the patronage given by the state to those who supported the cause of Pakistan. That was precisely why the intellectuals were not able to play their roles adequately.

RM: Given the circumstance in 1971 or in the preceding years, you think that if it was not for the autocratic state and its propagandist media organs, then our intellectuals could have provided more active support.

SIC: Yes, certainly. One also needs to remember, as I said before, that opportunities for the growth of an intellectual culture were very limited during those times. Dhaka was a provincial town. Books of literature, politics were barely available.

Then there was another important factor. The state not only discouraged but also sort of took away the meritorious persons and absorbed them in the civil service. Even those who joined the university later left it to pursue a career in government departments. In fact, the Muslim middle class was growing after the partition and wanted to strengthen its economic base. Yet, this was more or less a service oriented middle class.

Furthermore, there was only one university at the beginning. Having only one university was not sufficient.

RM: If our intellectuals' role was one of sympathy towards the liberation struggle, then why were they identified and killed?

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Is there an exhaustive list?

THE targeted genocide campaign against the martyred intellectuals was launched in two phases: The first one on 25th March and the second one on 14th December. Al-Badr and Al-Shams--associated wings of the Razakars--with direct help from the occupation forces, short-listed and killed the visionaries. All these are now known facts. Even the persons directly involved with the killings have been identified.

However, questions have arisen as to whether an exhaustive list of all the martyred intellectuals has been prepared and officially published by the government or by any other quarter. When asked, researchers on genocide in 1971 could not come up with a decisive answer. There also seems to exist another debate as to the definition of a martyred intellectual: Should only those killed in the said two phases be regarded as 'martyred intellectuals' or those killed in between those phases, for the same reason of lending intellectual support and invigorating the cause of liberation, should also be given the same status?

For one, we have come to know of one Professor named Moazzem Hossain who taught Economics at Bagerhat P. C. College. He not only gave moral and intellectual support but also took up arms and led no less than 500 freedom fighters in several phases across the border to Indian training camps. While returning home from a make-shift freedom fighters' camp in his village, he was shot dead by collaborators and vested quarters on 28th October.

Such tales of sacrifice call for a redefinition of 'martyred intellectuals'. However, in order to produce a

complete list, perhaps we should begin with the current practice and then attempt to broaden it further so as to include all intellectuals across the country.

Below is a list of martyred intellectuals culled from a host of online resources:

Dhaka University Teachers

- A. N. M. Munier Choudhury
- Dr. G.C. Dev
- Muffazzal Hyder Chowdhury
- Anwar Pasa
- Jyotimay Gubathakurta
- Abdul Muqtadir
- S. M. Rashidul Hasan
- Dr. A.N.M. Faizul Mahi
- Fazlur Rahman Khan
- A.N.M. Maniruzzaman
- Dr. Serajul Haque Khan
- Dr. Shahadat Ali
- Dr. M.A. Khair
- A.R. Khan Kadim
- Muhammad Sadeque
- Sharafat Ali
- Ghiasuddin Ahamed
- Ananda Payan

Rajshahi University Teachers

- Prof. Qayyum
- Habubur Rahman
- Shree Sukha Ranjan Samadder

M.C.As:

- Mashiur Rahman
- Amjad Hossain
- Aminuddin
- Nazmul Haque Sarker
- Abdul Haque
- Syed Anwar Ali
- A.K. Sarder

Journalists:

- Sirajuddin Hossain
- Shahidulla Kaiser
- Khondakar Abu Taleb
- Nizamuddin Ahmed
- A.N.M. Golam Mustafa

- Shahid Saber
- Sk. Abdul Mannan(Ladu)
- Nazmul Haque
- M. Akhter
- Abul Basar
- Chisty Helalur Rahman
- Shibsadan Chakravarty
- Selina Akhter

Physicians:

- Md. Fazle Rabbi
- Abdul Alim Chowdhury
- Shamsuddin Ahmed
- Azharul Haque
- Humayun Kabir
- Sulaiman Khan
- Kaiser Uddin
- Mansur Ali
- Ghulam Murtaza
- Hafez Uddin Khan Jahangir
- Abdul Jabbar
- S.K. Lal
- Hem Chandra Basak
- Kazi Obaidul Haq
- Mrs. Ayesaha Bedoura Chowdhury
- Al-Haj Mamotazuddin
- Hashimoy Hazra
- Naren Ghose
- Zikrul Haq
- Shamsul Haq
- M. Rahman
- A. Gafur
- Mansur Ali
- S.K. Sen
- Mafizuddin
- Amulya Kumar Chakravarty
- Atiqur Rahman
- Ghulam Sarwar
- R. C. Das
- Mihir Kumar Sen
- Saleh Ahmed
- Anil Kumar Sinha
- Sunil Chandra Sharma
- A.K.M. Ghulam Mustafa
- Maqbul Ahmed
- Enamul Haq
- Mansur(Kanu)
- Ashraf Ali Talukdar

- Lt. Ziaur Rahman
- Lt. Col. Jahangir
- Badul Alam
- Lt. Col Hai
- Maj. Rezaur Rahman
- Maj. Nazmul Islam
- Asadul Haq
- Nazir Uddin
- Lt. Nurul Islam
- Kazal Bhadra
- Mansur Uddin

Educationists:

- Zahir Raihan
- Purnendu Dastidar
- Ferdous Dowla
- Indu Saha

Meherunnessa Artists, Professionals, etc.:

- Altaf Mahmud
- Danbir Ranada Prasad Saha
- Jogesh Chandra Ghose
- Dhirendra Nath Dutta
- Shamsuzzaman
- Mahbub Ahmed
- Khurshid Alam
- Nazrul Islam
- Muzammel Haq Chowdhury
- Mohsin Ali
- Mujibul Haq

Compiled by the editorial team.

Sources: Bangladesh Genocide Archive, Muktohdhara and Bangladesh 1971.

