

Bangabandhu's Other Name

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and Sheikh Russel, and two daughters – Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana – illuminated the lap of mother Fazilatun Nesa.
Another chapter started in Sheikh Mujib's life in 1940. In that year, Prime Minister of Bengal Sherebangla A K Fazlul Haque and Food Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy came to inspect the Golpalganj School. While they were returning to bungalow after finishing their work, a student named Sheikh Mujibur Rahman obstructed their path. When asked the reason, the student said very clearly without any hesitation that water was leaking through the roof of the students' hostel. So it was not possible to stay in the hostel during monsoon. His empathy and feeling for his compatriots touched the premier. He sanctioned Taka 1,200 for repair of the hostel roof.

This Stairway Rafiq Azad

This stairway goes down up to the Bay of Bengal,
Blood has rolled from this stairway –
From Road Thirty-two
Through the green fields
The stream of blood flows to the Bay of Bengal.

He used to love the fields full of crops,
The wide open eyes were thirsty for birds
Birds were very dear to him –
Forgetting the smell of tobacco he used to look up
To have a glimpse of the trees,
His sleeps were broken by the sounds of birds at dawn.

His bosom was brimful with dreams,
He had a father's heart, eyes wet with affection...
Everything in this land be it trivial or small
Were precious in his eyes –
Only his own life was a trifle to him:
The huge body lies...
Spread over the vast map of motherland.

This soil has become rich with his blood,
He was the most handsome tall-man:
His shadow gets longer and longer
To cover the map with affection, care!
His blood has made this beloved soil fertile
His blood has transformed everything into greenery.

This stairway goes down up to the Bay of Bengal,
Blood has rolled down this stairway –
Spread throughout the homeland of dreams
Over the greenery of crop-fields
This purest blood flows to the Bay of Bengal.

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

Mujib, Your love illuminates the whole universe

Khaled Hossain

Nay, not the power but the soft-heart is your asset,
Your love illuminates the whole universe like the sun.
But those who are the worms of darkness
Why will they endure you?
They don't really know-
Some deaths are mere documents of immortality.
No, you did nothing longing for immortality.
Accountability for humanity haunted you.
You had been in prison-cells for years
For the crime of loving the people and the country.

No, that place is bereft of monsoon rain, moonlit-night,
Blazing noon of Baishakh with flaming Krisnachura and Jarul,
Wife's smiling face, fragrant touch of children's soft hands.
Yet the audacity of your sensation crushed the wall and the roof of the jail.
You felt the stream of people's love in your blood-vessel.
Since you wanted to give them the taste of freedom in such a horrible valley.

You released the word 'freedom' from the prison of sounds and letters
And freed the deprived people of this land.
You knew-
Without staining the streets, the ferry-ghats, the fields and the wilderness with blood
Freedom never embraces.
So you proclaimed: 'The struggle this time is for our freedom,
the struggle this time is for independence'
And your dreams planted the seeds of human's freedom in our hearts.
We perceived, a bare survival is not a life,
How brutal is a life of subjugation!
We are stricken with our mental obsession,
How the boy of low-lying zone, smeared with mud, captured the sky in his fist
and offered it to the people.
No, it is not a magic, it is an extreme human glory.
It is only the accurate eruption of the silent volcano.
We could perceive, we waited for only you for ages, for centuries,
First time, the limits and borders of injustice and oppression were marked.
A new era was created by protest, resistance, revolution and liberation-war.
From a new-born baby to an old man whose one foot is in the grave,
felt an uncommon heart-beat
and a huge pleasure of blame-free life rose in the mind.

Hearing your voice and seeing the sign of your fore-finger
We recognized our directions and destinations, our barriers and duties.
The cosmic-rays of your senses blew a gusty wind in our existence.
We learned to ignore death for our life.

We fought against the demonic power.
The modesty of our mothers and sisters was outraged.
And with the strokes of bullets and bayonets of the enemies
we were afloat in the very flood of our own blood.

War left marks in our split-up bodies, in mills and factories, rivers, bridges, graves,
and hidden sorrows of a childless mother.
But nothing could crush our efforts-
as you are the source of all inspirations, O father!
We got a new birth in 56 thousand square miles.
Blood-drenched fertile land lies beneath our feet,
a clear azure sky over the head overcast with moving clouds full of water

Yes, we have touched the glory of independence only after defeating the enemies.
But where did you hit, father?
Whose throne did we smash?

Those oppressors and religion-mongers spread the black shadow
on the damp soil soaked with tears.
And in absence of our vigilance they grew up like venomous parasites.
They bit you and your kith and kin in the mid-August's night like a cobra.
This universe didn't behold such a thick darkness, such a terrific mercilessness.

Father, you of course committed some offence-
the offence of loving the people of the country.
It was your offence to dream of a liberated society,
to see the expanse of the democracy, to build a secular reality.

They wanted to erase all marks of your blood and of your longings-
You are the optimistic father of our existence,
You spread yourself in our time-immemorial and endless senses.
Here people now hear the sound of your soul within a thunder.
Dews on the blades of grass remind us of your home-coming, salty water of your eyes,
the standing white water-lily in the pond, your world-conquering laughter,
the assembly of revolutionary people gathered in any corner of the world - your chest
and their victory - your right hand raised at the Racecourse ground.

You are the brain and heart of Bangladesh, it is you who are the central organ of Bangladesh,
Visibly your body could be torn but you never be exhausted.

Nay, not the power but the soft-heart is your asset,
Your love illuminates the whole universe like the sun.

Translation: Muzibul Haque Kabir

The courage, dedication and fearless attitude of the boy deeply impressed Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He summoned him to his bungalow and was fascinated after talking to him. This experience wielded enormous influence in the political life of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He remained dedicated to Suhrawardy and his ideals throughout his life. The linkage with A K Fazlul Haque also deepened and became more intimate in later years.

After passing the entrance examination from Gopalganj Mission High School in 1942, he took admission in IA class of Kolkata Islamia College. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected general secretary of Islamia College Students Union in the election held in 1946. He obtained bachelor's degree with honours in political science and history under Kolkata University from this college in 1947. He became a worker of the provincial Bengal Muslim League from this period. He was elected a councillor of All India Muslim League in 1943. The Muslim League allotted him the responsibility of Faridpur district during the general election of 1946.

After the political partition of India in 1947, he came to Dhaka in 1948 and got admitted in the law department of Dhaka University. He got involved in the struggle for realizing the just demands of the class four employees of the university. But the authorities did not take it lightly. He was expelled from the university in 1949. At one stage, he was arrested. The Dhaka University authorities withdraw that expulsion order of Bangabandhu on 14 August 2011.

Sheikh Mujib provided leadership and embraced captivity on 11 March 1948 during the first phase of the movement for establishing Bangla as the state-language. He could realize then that the Bangalis could not be emancipated as long as they remained within the queer geographical framework of Pakistan. It was then that he dreamt of an independent Bangladesh.

1949 was especially important in the life of Sheikh Mujib. East Pakistan Awami Muslim League was formed on 23 June that year at Dhaka's Rose Garden. Although he was a political prisoner at that time in Faridpur Jail, the sponsor leaders did not fail to recognise his potential. Even in his absence, they elected Sheikh Mujib as the joint-secretary of Awami Muslim League. After getting released from jail in July 1949, he participated in the movement against food crisis alongside the founder chairman of Awami League Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani. A procession of the hungry was brought out from Armanitola. He was arrested along with Moulana Bhashani and Shamsul Haque from the procession.

The great language movement started in 1952. He was then still in jail. The day which coincided with the budget session of East Bengal Provincial Assembly – 21 February – was declared as the language day. Chief Minister Nurul Amin clamped section-144 on the day. But the student leaders decided to break this embargo at midnight. Sheikh Mujib supported this decision and started hunger-strike along with Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Many including Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar and Shaful embraced martyrdom due to police firing on 21 February. When his health condition deteriorated, Sheikh Mujib was released from prison on 27 February. Moulana Bhashani then appointed Sheikh Mujib as the acting general-secretary of Awami Muslim League by exercising his presidential powers.

Mujib joined the World Peace Conference held in the Chinese capital Beijing in 1952. He was elected the general secretary of East Pakistan Awami Muslim League at its council session held on 9 July 1953. He held this position until he became the president of the party in 1966.

After taking up his new responsibility, Sheikh Mujib concentrated on reorganising the party. He did not hesitate to resign from the cabinet of Ataur Rahman Khan (1956-58) for the purpose. He revived the Awami League through a meeting held at his residence on 25 January 1964. Moulana Tarkabagish was elected the president and Mujib the general secretary of the party.

A national conference of opposition parties was held in Lahore on 5 February 1966. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented the historic 6-point demand at this conference. These 6-points were the charter of freedom for the Bangalis. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected the president of Awami League and Tajuddin Ahmad the general secretary on 1 March 1966. He was imprisoned eight times during the first three months of that year.

The Bangalis became optimistic after the announcement of the 6-points. On the other hand, the Pakistani rulers became fearful. They arrested Sheikh Mujib from the gate of Dhaka central jail in 1968 as number one accused in the so-called Agartala Conspiracy Case. Hearing of this case was completed in 1969. Syed Nazrul Islam was the main defence lawyer in this case. At that time, he discharged the responsibility of acting president of the Awami League as well.

The whole country including Dhaka exploded with strikes and violent protests by students. The country was shaken by baton charges and tear-gas shells of the police, curfews and section-144. The roads reverberated with the slogan of 'Joy Bangla'. At last, the government offered to release Sheikh Mujib in parole in order to enable him to participate in a round-table meeting. But he declined. Ultimately, Ayub Khan was forced to withdraw the Agartala Conspiracy Case. All the accused in the case including Sheikh Mujib were released from jail.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was accorded a huge public reception at the Dhaka Racecourse on 23 February 1969 under the aegis of Central Students Action Council. On behalf of the students and the public, the chairperson of the meeting student leader Tofail Ahmed awarded Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – the undisputed leader of the Bangali nation – the title of 'Bangabandhu'.

The general election of Pakistan was held on 7 December 1970. The Awami League captured 167 National Assembly seats out of 169 in East Pakistan and 199 Provincial Assembly seats out of a total 310.

Bangabandhu administered the oath of people's representatives at a rally in the Racecourse on 3 January 1971. He rejected Bhutto's demand for two prime ministers in the two provinces of Pakistan. President Yahya mentioned Bangabandhu as the future prime minister of Pakistan on 14 January. But despite convening the session of the National Assembly on 1 March, he postponed it for an indefinite period. There were storms of protests all over the country. Strike was observed throughout the land on 3 March. The non-cooperation movement started then.

Came historic 7 March. There was a flood of million people at the Racecourse ground. Everybody was waiting for Bangabandhu's directive. He delivered his historic speech, and said: 'the struggle this time is for freedom, the struggle this time is for independence'. This speech was not only a unique speech encompassing life-long realizations of the greatest leader of the Bangali nation for all times, it was an unforgettable and ineradicable epic for all freedom-loving people of the world irrespective of location or time; it was justifiably a

Magna-Carta and in effect a declaration of our independence.

Yahya came to Dhaka on 15 March for discussion. The discussion continued up to 25 March morning. But he went back to Pakistan secretly without finishing the dialogue. The Pakistani military junta launched a barbaric attack against innocent civilians on the night of 25 March. They carried out a genocide. Bangabandhu got news from confidential sources on 25 March morning that a crackdown was imminent in Dhaka. He ordered his party-leaders and others to go into hiding. But he remained in his Dhamondi residence. He was arrested on the midnight of 25-26 March. Before that, he made a formal declaration of the country's independence in the first hours of 26 March. He made arrangements for sending this message through the wireless transmitters of T&T and EPR, so that the declaration reached all concerned. It reached Zahur Chowdhury of Chittagong very soon. He and MA Hannan took steps for distributing it throughout the city through cyclostyle copies of the translation. Gradually, it reached all district and sub-district towns and got disseminated in the process. The main headline in The Guardian and The Times newspapers on 27 March 1971 was: Civil war starts after declaration of an independent republic in Pakistan's eastern wing by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The soldiers of Bangabandhu's ideals then secretly went to India. There, the government of independent Bangladesh was constituted with Bangabandhu as the President, in his absence Syed Nazrul Islam as the Vice-President, Tajuddin Ahmad as the Prime Minister, AHM Qamruzzaman, M Mansur Ali etc. as ministers. This government took oath at the mango garden of Boidyanathala in Meherpur on 17 April. The government-in-exile strove to organize and direct the liberation war as well as develop contacts and elicit support for the government. Finally, after nine months of a bloody



Bangabandhu with his parents

struggle and the blood-bath of 3 million martyred Bangalis, the sun of freedom rose. The country achieved final victory on 16 December 1971.

The Bangladesh government then created public opinion in the international arena in favour of Bangabandhu's release from captivity. He came back to Bangladesh via London on 10 January 1972. The Daily Ittefaq wrote: "The great man is coming, there is thrill all around". The Daily Purbodesh wrote: "The door has been broken, the luminous one is coming". Bangabandhu arrived at the racecourse ground of Dhaka. Millions of people ceremonially welcomed the Father of the Nation with tearful eyes.

Bangabandhu then engaged himself in nation-building. The constitution of the newly formed state of Bangladesh was framed in 1972. Under Bangabandhu's directive, this constitution ensured the human rights and fundamental freedom of all citizens of the country. It was clearly mentioned in Article-27 of the constitution: "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law". Article 28(2) said: "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life". Article 28(3) said: "No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort or admission to any educational institution". The 1972 constitution handed over to us by Bangabandhu was one of the most outstanding among the best constitutions that existed in the present-day world.

The Awami League again formed the government following the general election of 1973. Bangabandhu discharged the responsibility of the head of Bangladesh Government for around three and a half years. He had to work amid tremendous adversities and devastations. Transition from this situation was not very easy. Some ambitious and derailed members of the army who were subservient to anti-independence forces assassinated Bangabandhu along with his family-members on 15 August 1975. The victims included 26 innocent people including Bangabandhu's wife Begum Fazilatun Nesa, his only brother Sheikh Abu Naser, Bangabandhu's eldest son Sheikh Kamal, second son Sheikh Jamal, youngest son Sheikh Russel, daughters-in-law Sultana Kamal and Rosy Jamal, leading organizer of the liberation war Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni and his pregnant wife Begum Arzu Moni, leading organizer of the liberation war Abdur Rab Seraniat, his younger daughter Baby Seraniat, youngest son Arif Seraniat, grandson Sukanta Abdullah Babu, nephew Shaheed Seraniat, Abdul Nayeem Khan Rintu, chief security officer of Bangabandhu Colonel Jamil as well as on-duty police officers and staffs.

The Battle of Karbala remains as an example of appalling barbarism committed in the history of mankind. Not only Muslims, all religious people cry when they recall that terrible cruelty. That pain and sorrow can never be forgotten. The barbarism of 15 August had crossed even that brutality. The forces of Yazid did not kill women and children at Karbala. But even women and children were not spared by the murderous villains of 15 August.

Man can be killed. But the spirit of struggle, the call and urge for freedom which he transmitted among the common people can never go in vain. The epic of freedom, equality and emancipation that he wrote through life-long struggles even at the cost of his own life can never perish. His place is in the heart of all freedom-loving people irrespective of place and time. As during his own time, he will continue to inspire the oppressed, deprived, exploited and freedom-loving people; he will plant infinite courage and intense desire in their hearts to break the shackles of servitude. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was in a real sense the name of a revolution. And our liberation war and independence was the outcome of that revolution.

This is why the revolutionary leader of Cuba Fidel Castro told Bangabandhu: "I have not seen the Himalayas; I am watching Sheikh Mujib. I have now seen the Himalayas". In fact, the position and presence of Bangabandhu is similar to the tallest mountain peak of the world. The realization of poet and writer Annadashankar Ray was fully correct. We also hold the view:

*"As long as the Padma Jamuna Gouri Meghna flows,
Your deeds will always remain, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman".*

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

He is our Strength, he is our Inspiration

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enchanted his heart and soul is humanity. It is the humanity that guided him gradually to the direction of eternal stream. This humanity revealed to him the just, the true and the highway of uncompromising struggle for the rights. And he strode in that direction without any hesitation. Like a zealous archeologist, he has drawn out from the womb of eternal time, an almost forgotten image of a nation covered by dust. It has been mentioned earlier that great men have emerged as Issues of History rowing against the adverse streams. In his case it was no exception either. Day after day this man fought standing up against all adversity, war, meanness, narrow religious outlook and racism. Personal interest never touched him. Jealousy or greed never put him off his track.

From the very day he embraced the political consciousness in his heart, he thought that the clue of self-identity of Bangali as a nation must be found out. This national identity has to be established in the spectrum of history. And for this a geographical land is required. Except him no one else has ever felt so deeply for the Bangali, an independent state for them. He did not only feel, but also outlined a great movement to make the call of his heart to be happened in reality.

For that he had been thrown repeatedly into the dark cells of prison, came face to face with death. But on the question of ideals, on the question of movements, on the question of liberation of humanity, he did not compromise even a least. And in this way that Sheikh Mujib of Tungipara gradually became a part of history as Mujib bhai, Bangabandhu, the Father of the Bangali Nation, the founder of the Independent Bangladesh.

But his opponent never stopped conspiring. Sometimes openly, other times

secretly – every moment they embarrassed him, bothered him, offended him but never ever could defeat or demolish him. And for this, covering face at the dark of night the atrocious assassins killed him along with his whole family. But they could not understand that the child of eternity can never be bulldozed.

One of the most brutal genocides of human history that took place in August 15 of 1975 could not separate Bangabandhu from his beloved Bangladesh or Bangalis so forth. Rather, emerging more robust day by day, he has eventually become the guide for the entire global human community.

It is for this fact that each year 15 August, like a light house to the Nation, radiates inspiration, courage and strength to walk on the path of the truth and just, the ideal and rationale and the strife and liberty.

Bangladesh today stands face to face with a very harsh and destructive reality. The sweet wills are almost exhausted at the poisonous breathings of the serpents. The network of conspiracies of the evil forces is spread out in every direction. To destroy the dreams of Bangladesh evil forces are constantly active. Religious blindness, narrow-mindedness, jealousy and meanness are geared up to destroy our existence. Under these circumstances we all, the soldiers of Bangabandhu's dreams and ideology, every torch-bearer of the spirit of Liberation War must unite and take oath to stand up against the evil forces. All must unite within towards a single goal demolishing all the walls of distrust within us. The ideology of Bangabandhu is our strength, we can attain emancipation by following his footsteps, his dreams are our inspiration. Let every 15 August return to us as the symbol of our own power.

Translation: Fahmida Ayesha