

Chhayanaut Sangskriti Bhaban

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tional skills as seriously put to the test as in the War of Liberation in 1971. He made his way to India, to Mujibnagar, where for the entirety of the nine-month war he formed, shaped and disseminated the cultural aspects of the war. It was on his watch that Bengali artistes travelled through the liberated regions and the border areas, inspiring the Mukti Bahini as they waged the war for freedom and giving hope to the millions of refugees who had left home and hearth in search of security.

After 1975, a period he described, as did so many others, as an age of darkness, he did not flinch from the task of carrying the torch forward. There was a song he persistently sang from Tagore. *Ekhono Galo Na Aandhar / Ekhono Roilo Baadha* was the poetry he kept up, to register his assessment of political conditions in the country. It was the song he continued singing during the nine years of military rule by General Hussein Muhammad Ershad.

But all this cultural activity came along with the need to earn a living. And this Waheedul Haque did through pursuing full-time journalism as a vocation. He entered the profession in the early 1950s, driven of course at that young age by the need to sustain a family left bereft by the sudden death of his father. In his career, he went through the Morning News, the Bangladesh Observer, the New Nation and, finally, The Daily Star. It was not the banalities of journalism that concerned Waheed Bhai. His belief was simple, that a journalist had to be a committed member of the larger society he was part of. It was in such a spirit that he wrote his editorials and post-editorials, mincing no words when he thought some individuals or some organisations, including the government of the day, needed to be swatted down as soon as they committed any infractions.

Waheedul Haque was fascinated by science, especially physics, and would spend long hours deliberating on the many nuances and aspects of the subject with his visitors. It was only natural that he did so, for he was a communist — or an abiding socialist. But communism, as he once told a visitor, was a matter of dedication and political education.

Waheedul Haque played with words, made music out of language. Whether it was his column in Bangla or an editorial he wrote in English, there was a charm about it that did not escape his reader. In preserving his style, he was not willing to compromise, just as he was never willing to jettison or bend his political principles to suit the atmosphere of the times he lived in.

This was Waheedul Haque. A complete man, a renaissance man, a thorough political being and a fully committed cultural activist, he added increasingly bigger slices of thought to our sensibilities in his lifetime. In death, he reminds us of what life is all about, or ought to be.

(Waheedul Haque — polymath and aesthete — was born on 16 March 1933 and died on 27 January 2007)

The writer is Executive Editor, The Daily Star.