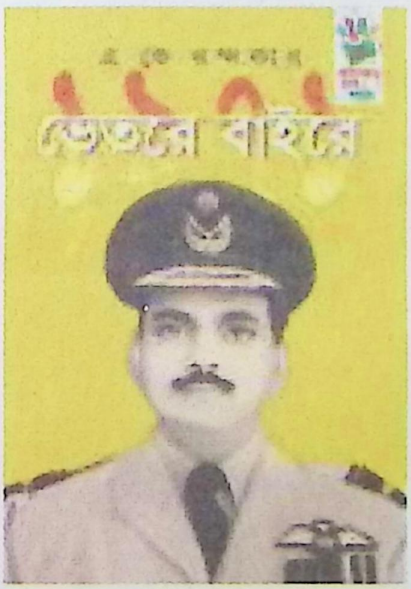
Bangalees that even if Bangabandhu wanted to say what AK Khandker is concocting, the Father of the Nation would not have dared to utter, least so at a public meeting covered by the world media, and with Abdul Karim of Khandker fame listening from his barracks. Or didn't he?

And why should Sheikh Mujib say so? His party, riding on their six-point demand (that tantamount to freedom from the clutches of leech West Pakistani rulers), had just won a landslide 160 seats out of a possible 162in East Pakistan in the 1970 Pakistan elections. It was plain to see that the East Pakistanis were seeking total autonomy following successive tyrannical and extorting West Pakistani regimes, backed by a handful of beneficiary *dalal* East Pakistanis. Awami League's popular vote in all Pakistan was almost 40 per-nt; second was Z. A. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party with nearly 19 percent. But, still the West Pakistanis fired the shots. Our response was decisive; not "Joy Pakistan".



Also in his book, Khandker proclaimed that drunkard executioner, the then Pakistan president Yahya Khan's "greatest mistake" was not visiting the cyclone-ravaged coastal areas of East Pakistan in 1970. An astounded Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed retorted in Parliament how Khandker could rate that insensitive inaction above the premeditated 1971 genocide carried out by the Pak Army on unarmed Bangalees on Yahya's direct order. About the March epic eloquence, Tofail said zealously that after concluding his speech with the slogan 'Joy Bangla', Sheikh Mujib had not uttered a single word.

It took only one book to let the cat out of the bag, but that too only after he had been allowed to slurp all the cream for more than four decades. Where was our 'national intelligence' all this while? Now one of our 'greatest freedom fightrs', a highly decorated air force officer and an organiser of the Forum demanding befitting punishment for the 1971 War Criminals has been demoted to being an 'agent of Pakistan' in Parliament. Lawmakers have demanded that Khandker prove his incredible and unbelievable claim that Bangabandhu uttered 'Joy Pakistan' after 'Joy Bangla', or else be charged with treason, and that his book be banned.

Another theory propounded by Khandker, but why after savouring pro-liberation *laddu* after *laddu*, is that "Sheikh Mujib had given no instructions regarding declaration of the independence before he was arrested by the Pakistani occupation forces on March 25, 1971, and that there was no political preparation for the War of Independence". This is again contrary to historical facts and vouched by living witnesses. Bangabandhu was arrested in the wee hours of March 26 under Pak Army's 'Operation Searchlight' but only after dispatching the declaration of independence.

The struggle for the emancipation of a Bangalee nation was spurred ever since Pakistan's Father of the Nation Muhammad Ali Jinnah declared March 21 1948 at a huge public rally at the Ramna Race Course Maidan (currently Suhrawardy Uddyan) that "Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan", even though Bangalees were by the far the majority, and although more blood was shed in what would become East Pakistan in the Remove British Movement. Then came the language movement 1952, election victory 1954 of a coalition of East Pakistan's political parties, the mass upsurge 1969 against West Pakistan dictator Ayub Khan, Elections of 1970.... So the nation had been preparing, even if involuntarily but for an inevitable 'war' for a long time. Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu said, "The unarmed nation did not take (up) arms overnight".

Mr Abdul Karim Khandker, you have given innumerable speeches as 'a freedom fighter', as Deputy Chief of our Liberation Forces, as Air Chief, as MP, as minister, as Forum chairman, and as a human being, and after all these years and jars of consumed honey you found this the opportune moment to arm the anti-liberation forces and vested quarters with falsehood. But why? People are now suspecting you as the new Mostaq, having "written the book with money from Pakistan's intelligence agency". How pathetic can that be for a nation that has given you so much honour as a 'freedom fighter'?

It is now a week since your book fouled the Bangladesh air. Your silence amidst the understandable public and political uproar is unacceptable. Silence is indeed golden, but not always. It was 'golden' when you (Khandker) kept quiet about your jaundiced inner feelings for all these years. It is not 'golden' when you do not defend what you wrote by taking advantage of free speech.

Your book *"vetoraybairay"* could not have been more appropriately titled. Yes, undeniably, you were IN all those years, and now you are OUT; out in the open too. ■