

On the Birthday of Bangabandhu

Alam Talukdar

On the birthday of Bangabandhu
Which one is bad
Which one is good
We identify the distinguished avenue.

On Bangabandhu's birthday
The powerful or the powerless
None remains under terms
In Laos Congo Japan China
Are happy in one day
That is Bangabandhu's birthday.

On this auspicious day
We live free from hardship and debt
No more we are subservient
Can anybody live on a lightless day?
Hence, there are waves of happiness everyday
That is Bangabandhu's birthday.

Translation: Mahfuzur Rahman



That Prince of Endless Days

Aslam Sani

He came from the very soil stepping on grasslands
Spreading towards the sky his both the hands,
The dream he dreamt alone in his sleep
Let that be dreamt by all, this desire we keep.
Maybe for this, he sang a new song to us
The prince of freedom in fact he was.

He saw the birds and listened to their songs
And heard the melodies of turbulent waves,
He heard the ballads of farmers and cow-boys
He touched the people at the lids of their two eyes.
Cloud gathered in his chest but the heart was open as noon
He was that prince of the sunny days (as of June).

Leaving mother's lap, disregarding love and affection
He came to the street opening the door (of his own one),
He longed for the very moment of our victory
Ignoring the fear – the death's worry.
He was in fact the mirror of our dreams
And the prince who can be adored through eternal times.

Once setting the sail of the boat, he held its steering
He brought about the dawn by shackles-of-darkness breaking,
He involved himself in fighting with demons and devils
With the hope that his hands the bright sun fills.
It was the billowy history of that Seventy-one
And that prince who had a thunder-roaring tone.

At last a bright sky became visible driving out the cloud
And at the defeat of devils we heard a delightful din and bustle in loud,
We got a new homeland with shocks-sadness and happiness
In smells and songs the feeling of happiness from souls to souls passes.
He roused this very ground of our sweet sleep
As the prince of endless days he remains steep.

Translation: Munshi Jalal Uddin

My Father

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studied in this school. One day, his boat capsized while he was returning from school. My father fell down in the canal water. After that, my grandmother did not allow him to go to that school. He was a little boy, the apple of their eyes, object of love and affection of all family-members; his slightest discomfort brought pains to others. She admitted him to Gopalganj Missionary School taking a transfer certificate from that school. Gopalganj was the place of work of my grandfather. From then on, my father started to receive education at Gopalganj. At one stage, my grandfather was transferred to Madaripur. My father studied at Madaripur during that episode. Later, his teenage days were spent in Gopalganj.

The health condition of my father was quite delicate. The only thinking of my grandmother was therefore focused on how to keep his 'Khoka' well. My grandparents also called him 'Khoka' out of affection. And he was known as 'Mia Bhai' to his peers and villagers. He could associate very easily with the simple village-folks. My grandmother constantly remained busy for improving Khoka's health condition. Milk, posset, butter etc. were therefore produced in the household. Fruits from the garden and fresh fish from the river were always kept ready for Khoka, but my father was very lean and thin since his very childhood; therefore my grandmother regretted why her child did not become plump with nutrition. During food intakes, he preferred ordinary rice, fish broth and vegetables. After taking food, he liked to eat milk-rice-banana and molasses. I had four aunts and one uncle. Of these four sisters, two were older. These elder sisters were always alert so that their younger brother did not face any discomfort. The rest were also younger, but the affection Khoka received from my grandparents was limitless. People who took sanctuary in our house were also numerous. The children of my grandparents' sisters, especially those who had been orphaned, were brought to our homestead by my grandparents in order to groom them properly. Therefore, around 17-18 children were growing up in our house at the same time.

My father was married off when he was ten years old. My mother's age was then only three years. After my mother lost her father, her grandfather gave all his property in her and my aunt's names in writing following their marriages. My aunt was three years senior to my mother. Their grandfather married off the two sisters with relatives and made my paternal grandfather their guardians. When my mother was 6-7 years old, her mother also died. My paternal grandmother then took my mother on her lap. And from then on, she was groomed together with the rest of the children.

Side by side with receiving education, Abba was very fond of sports. Especially, he liked to play football. He used to go to Chitalmari and Mollarhat crossing the Madhumati for playing. There was a school team at Gopalganj. My grandfather also liked to play. He used to visit the playing-field when Abba played. Grandfather used to tell us the story later: 'Your father was so frail that he fell on the ground after forcefully kicking the ball.' If Abba was standing nearby, he used to protest. We then really enjoyed these episodes. An interesting happening was that matches were played between Abba's and grandfather's teams also. Even now, when I visit those places, I come across many elderly people who speak about Abba's childhood days. There were many photos and papers about these games. The Pakistani invading forces set our house on fire in 1971. As a result, everything was burnt down.

My father was a big-hearted person since his childhood. At that time, the boys did not have that much opportunity for pursuing education. Many individuals used to pursue education by taking 'jaigirs' (a system of getting food and accommodation in exchange for providing tuition to children of the host family). Students had to reach schools after walking a distance of 4-5 miles. They used to come to school eating rice. They had to return home walking a long distance after starving for the whole day. As our house was located in the 'bank-para' area, Abba used to bring them home. He had the habit of taking rice with milk and used to share food with others. I heard from my grandmother that a number of umbrellas had to be bought for my father every month. The reason was that he used to give away his umbrellas to those who could not buy because of poverty; it pained him to see them suffer due to sun and rain. Sometimes, he even used to give away his text-books.

I heard from my grandmother that she used to stand under the mango tree when the school-hours were over. She used to keep an eye on the road as Khoka would be coming. One day she saw Khoka coming with a wrapper on his body, without any Pajama (trousers) or Panjabi. What had happened? He had donated his dress to a poor boy who wore torn and disheveled clothing.

My grandparents were very generous. When my father donated anything, they never scolded him; rather they used to encourage him. There were many other instances of this liberal attitude of my grandparents.

While studying in school, Abba was infected with beriberi disease and his eyesight was gravely affected. As a result, his education had to be suspended for four years. At that juncture,



Bangabandhu with his parents

he had a house-tutor named Hamid Master, who was active in the anti-British movement and remained imprisoned for many years. Later, when Abba had to go to jail at different times and the police came to arrest him, my grandmother recalled the name of that Master Sahib and cried. My grandparents never obstructed any activities of their son, rather they encouraged him. My father's mental horizon flourished in a very open atmosphere. Whenever any task appeared to be just, my grandfather encouraged him instead of opposing.

One of Abba's school-masters set up a small organization; he used to help the poor, meritorious boys by moving door to door and collecting paddy, Taka and rice. Abba used to work with him as one of the prominent and active workers, and encouraged others to do so. Wherever he saw any injustice, he used to protest. Once when he protested an injustice, he became the victim of a conspiracy by government-supporters and had to stay in jail for a few days after getting arrested.

He was very conscious about people's rights during his adolescence. Once the Chief Minister of the united Bengal Sher-e-Bangla came to Gopalganj on a visit and inspected his school. During that episode, the courageous teenager Mujib attracted everybody's attention when he articulated the complaint about leakage of monsoon water in the school-building and succeeded in eliciting the pledge of repairing it.

After passing matriculation from the Gopalganj School, he went on to study at Islamia College of Kolkata. He used to stay there at Bekar Hostel. At this time, he came in touch with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He got actively involved in the Hallway Monument movement. His active participation in politics commenced from that juncture. He passed BA in 1946. He played an active role in halting the riot that started during the partition of India-Pakistan. He used to work by risking his life. My second Fupu (paternal aunt) used to live in Kolkata then. I heard from Fupu, he sometimes worked for two to three days at a stretch without taking any food. When he occasionally went to Fupu's house for enquiring about their wellbeing, she forcibly made him eat something. He never supported injustice. He never compromised on the question of establishing truth and justice even by risking his own life.

He got admitted to the Law Department of Dhaka University after the establishment of Pakistan. At that time, he lent support and actively participated in the movement of class three and class four employees. He was arrested while observing a sit-in demonstration before the Secretariat. He was released a few days later. At this juncture, Mohammad Ali Jinnah gave a declaration about the drafting of Pakistan constitution; when Jinnah announced that Urdu should be the state language of Pakistan, all the Bangalis in the then East Pakistan protested it. The student community actively participated in this movement. My father was arrested during the movement in 1949. I was then of a very tender age, and my younger brother Kamal was just born. Abba did not even get the opportunity to see him.

He was continuously in captivity until 1952. At that time, my mother used to reside at my grandparents' house along with us me and my brother. Once Abba was brought to Gopalganj in

connection with a case. Kamal had then learned to speak a bit. But he had never seen Abba, nor did he know him. When I was repeatedly rushing to Abba and calling him 'Abba, Abba', he only looked on in amazement. There was a big pond in Gopalganj thana, beside which was a large open field. We brother and sister used to play there, ran around to catch grasshoppers and occasionally came back towards Abba. After gathering many flowers and leaves, I sat down with Kamal for playing on the veranda of the police station. He suddenly asked me, 'Hasu Apa, please allow me to call your Abba as Abba.' When I recall those words of Kamal, I cannot hold back my tears. Today he is no more alive, we have none to call 'Abba'. The bullets of the assassins not only snatched away Abba, they did not spare even my mother, Kamal, Jamal and little Russel. Sultana and Rosy, newly-married wives of Kamal-Jamal, were also not spared; the colour of henna in their hands had mingled with the blood of their hearts. The murderers did not stop there. They killed my lone uncle Sheikh Naser, youth leader and my cousin Sheikh Moni, his pregnant wife and my playmate of childhood days Arzu. These killers simultaneously attacked Abdur Rab Serniabat (husband of my aunt), his thirteen-year old daughter Baby, ten-year old son Arif. Even the four-year old son Babu of Mr. Serniabat's eldest son Abul Hasnat Abdullah was not spared by the murderers. Colonel Jamil, who had rushed towards our house after waking up to save my father's life was also killed. What kind of barbarous cruelty was this? My second Fupu is still crippled due to bullet-wound.

On that day, Kamal sought permission to call my father as 'Abba'; I instantly took him to Abba. I told Abba about him. He fondled Kamal very affectionately taking him on his lap. None of them are alive today. Hi! Today my mind craves to call 'Abba'. I yearn intensely for the affection of my mother, company of my brother; but I cannot get them back even if I cry ceaselessly. None of them would respond. Their lives have been cruelly silenced forever by the bullets of the assassins, won't they face trial?

[Collection: Sheikh Hasina Rachona Samagra, published in 1991]

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

He was for us

Sujan Barua

We shall sing the song of new tune by opening our heart
In new languages shall we write poems and lexicons,
We shall play, roam, and fly on the train of wind
We shall dance like peacock spreading our mind's plume,
We shall bathe and row the boat shaking the banks of river
We shall blossom in the garden just as other flowers bloom,
We shall paint pictures with the colour of our dreams
Some of us would be doctors and scientists, others artists and poets.

Let our journey be without fear and hurdles
Let nobody suppress or subjugate us,
One person had waged that struggle relentlessly
He had staked his life thinking about our future,
He was our dearest leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
We shall sing, sing only the songs of his victory and virtues.

Because of him today we walk holding our head high
Because of him today we speak in Bangla,
Because of him today we are citizens of this free land
Because of him today our all sides are open and wide,
Because of him we have crossed the darkness of thousand years
Because of him today we are floating on this tide of dazzling light,
Because of him we could discover ourselves like this
Because of him we got the 'Bangali' identity and name,
Because of him we got a flag as the sun painted on green
And we got this map abounded with shades, love and affection,
Got a national anthem that is melodious, enchanting
The song 'Amar Sonar Bangla' is so dear to us!
Whenever we sing this song in chorus together
We seem to hear the clarion call of the Father of the Nation –
'Say by putting your hands together: we love Bangla
Fear not, I am in close proximity alongside you'!

I hear and obey his message everyday as I tread my path
He is forever alive in our memory which never fades,
He shall remain as his deeds are unfading, immortal
Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Mujibur Rahman.

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

Huge like Dream, Sacred like Faith

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divisive policy. This division was founded on faiths and religions. It should be expressed clearly: many considered it to be a two-nation theory. Many could not understand it then, it could not facilitate decent singing in a chorus, the orchestra would not resonate properly, and the rhythm would be broken repeatedly.

There would be a conceptual error if it is called a two-nation division; because the definition of a nation is not determined by faith, religion or community. The real basis of the Pakistan state was religion. We can also recall the naming of this divisive state by Chowdhury Rahmat Ali. The word Pakistan was the summation of 'P' from Punjab, 'A' of Afghan region, 'K' of Kashmir, 'I' of Indus and 'Stan' of Baluchistan. Why like this?

The Muslims were the majority in these territories. Those people who took into account the talent of Chowdhury Rahmat Ali in giving that name, those who became very eager, vociferous and excited about keeping that name for the new country, they did not notice absence of one ingredient in it. Or, they kept quiet despite understanding; they thought: would everybody understand it? Would everybody conceive it?

What was that ingredient? It was: the eastern wing of the country was not included in the naming of Pakistan. It had no attachment or connection with the country's name. But, the population of this region was greater; a notable majority. Or, the subject can be considered from another angle. Maybe they thought there was no need to fulfill the essential precondition of geographic unity or indivisibility in building the state. Because, the territory would not remain, it would go out of Pakistan. People cannot be ultimately held together with the unity of faith

alone; this unity cannot be the inviolable logic for living together or staying in the same house, or eating from the same kitchen.

Now we can understand how true this factor was. Despite unity in manners and faiths, so many countries have been torn apart, one coming out of the other. Sometimes, more than one country have been born.

Bangabandhu could realize this truth before anybody else; he understood it best and comprehended it most clearly. Because of this understanding, there was no flaw in his vision – neither in election, nor in raising the demand for forming the government, nor in voicing allegation against the Pakistani President Yahia Khan about not keeping his word, nor in directing the masses, nor in issuing directives to the countrymen, nor in freedom struggle and the final and unwavering declaration of independence, nor in rehabilitation and development programs in war-ravaged and tyranny-hit scorched earth of the independent country, nor in diplomatic designs, nor in forging friendship with the hostile and doubting elements. In between, there was practice and patronisation of art and literature. In the meantime, many national institutions were built and constituted.

More and more interlinked deeds brought him the infinite glory and honour of being the greatest Bangali of all times.

As he brightened the horizon with one deed after another, he reminds us – "You are nobler than your deeds/That is why the chariot of your life/leaves behind your achievements/Again and again."

That is why the world-famous leader of his time Fidel Castro feels happy to tell the society – I have not seen the Himalayas, I do not have the urge even to see it as I have seen Mujib.

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed



15 May 1954, Sheikh Mujib takes oath of office as Agriculture & Forest Minister in the Jukta Front Cabinet

Ever Bright Ever Glorified

Delwar Bin Rashid

You are talked of in every house from Teknaf to Tetulia
You, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, are the heart of Bangladesh,
An undaunted hero.

You, becoming the successor of Titumir, Suryasen and Isha Kha,
Urged all Bangalis raising your fore-finger with firm conviction to become one.

On hearing your historic speech on March 7 at the Racecourse maidan
The dream of Independence was aroused in Bangalis' bubbling blood-red eyes.
Your announcement 'The struggle this time is the struggle for independence' spread on
Crossing the cities, hubs and towns to villages after villages.

Fire flew through the stream of blood of the bold heroic Bangalis
Who saved the dignity of mother Bangla joining the War of Independence unitedly.
Darkness disappeared with your call, a red sun rose in the east sky.
On your call, all the gardens how so many they were
Blood-red roses blossomed in all-over there.

On your call, waves rose in the heart of Padma-Meghna-Jamuna
On this call Catkin and Palas-Simul got the touch of freedom.
The Bangalis were inspired with new dreams and aspirations with your call
You are an unfaded name in the hearts of Bangalis,
You live in every heart with an inexhaustible love.

You are the endless hope of farmers, the eyeball of workers
You are alive in the poems and songs of Bangla, as the source of Bangalis' dreams and aspirations.
You are 'Joy Bangla', the Independence, and the songs of victory
You are ever bright and ever glorified in the hearts of Bangalis
You are Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Translation: Munshi Jalal Uddin