# TRIBUTE

# Joya Pati - a hero of our times

MD. GOLAM KIBRIA

ER life was dedicated to protecting and promoting her father's legacy during the ongoing massacre and brutal genocide of by the Pakistani regime in 1971. Her mission was daunting. It was to continue the humanitarian work her father Rai Bahadur Ranada Prasad Shaha had envisioned and started through the most remarkable establishments including Kumudini Hospital, Bharateswari Homes at Mirzapur, Kumudini Women's Degree College at Tangail, Devendra College at Manikgonj- all concerns of Kumudini Welfare Trust in the early 20th century (1930's).

Joya Pati was born on September 12, 1932 in Kolkata (Calcutta). She was the second of four children. Her early education was from a prestigious boarding School in Kalingpong. She graduated from London King's College in 1950 and joined Bharateswari Homes, a boarding School, as Principal in 1954 with a view to producing self reliant, viable in every situation, hard working women with dignity as dreamed by her father. In the 1950s students of Bharateswari Homes were well known for their spectacular calisthenics at Dhaka Stadium. They were not mere displays of perfectly coordinated routines - they were statements by young women as confident, capable and talented citizens of the country.

1970 was the time period that paved the way to freedom. After a clarion call of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7 and the declaration of the independence of Bangladesh on March 26 in 1971, the Liberation War

began. Joya Pati came to see her ailing father in 1970 as she was living in London but could not go back because of the war. At that time R.P. Shaha recovered from his illness and resumed his humanitarian work.

But on May 7, 1971, a black day for the Kumudini family and for the country that had declared its independence from an occupying force, R.P Shaha and his son Bhabani Prasad Shaha were abducted by Pakistan army and their collaborators. The days that followed were agonising for the family members and Joya tried everything she could think of to bring her father and brother back.

She went door to door of the foreign embassies, Pakistan Army Head Quarters, government offices, the Red Cross, to find something, anything, regarding their whereabouts. Every effort was in vain. This changed Joya's personal life. She was the only member of the founder's family to take on the responsibility of running the huge operations of Kumudini Welfare Trust. She had to protect the Kumudini Hospital, Bharateswari Homes, Kumudini Women's Degree College in Mirzapur and Tangail. On the other hand, she had to look after the Trust's income generating sectors in Narayangonj to carry on the expenses of these institutions. This became a part of her daily work and often involved risking her life. Thus she had to take her father's charge as Managing Director of the Trust. It was her courage, determination and inner strength that saved the lives of hundreds of patients including injured freedom fighters, doctors, nurses and other workers at Kumudini Hospital and students, teachers and staff of the Bharateswari Homes. Without Joya Pati,



Joya Poti - a life dedicated to humanity.

their Chhot Di, perhaps many of these individuals would have perished or faced inhuman torture.

After the country gained independence, Joya Pati took Kumudini Welfare Trust to a new level, channeling her inner grief of losing her beloved father and brother into upholding the humanitarian work following her father's dream, philosophy and doctrines. She initiated a new era in founding Kumudini Nursing School in Kumudini Hospital in 1973. In 1983, she founded Kumudini Handicraft by organising the war-

PHOTO: KUMUDINI WELFARE TRUST

affected and needy womenfolk of her country to help them out of their financial hardship. In 1984, she founded a Trade Training School for the underprivileged school dropouts so that they would eventually be skilled, efficient members of the workforce. Both of these institutions are in the Kumudini Narayangonj premises. Far sighted and practical, Joya Pati added Kumudini Pharma and Kumudini Garments to the Trust's income generating sector in Narayangonj to meet the growing needs of Kumudini Welfare Trust.

Joya Pati was a successful warrior. She was

someone who could bring the best from her associates. She was a very successful entrepreneur as well as a great mentor. It was she who looked after the founder's family with all the founder's virtues and values. As she delivered her noble duties, her husband Dr. Bishnu Pada Pati, elder sister, Bijoya Khan, sister-in-law, Srimati Shaha, brother-inlaw, Barrister Showkat Ali Khan, language movement veteran Protiva Mutsuddy were always around her to help her with her mission. Her mother, Kiron Bala Shaha was only the core of inspiration, hope and courage in her tiring, hard and risky journey in those days.

Joya Pati is an icon of inspiration for the men and women of this country. It was she who dedicated her life for the sake of the humanitarian works in the Kumudini family. She went on retirement giving charge of the Managing Director to her nephew Rajiv Prasad Shaha, grandson of R.P Shaha in 2000.

Joya Pati was not only the MD of Kumudini Welfare Trust; she was the legendary guardian of the Kumudini Family. She died on December 9, 2016 in a hospital in London leaving her family, friends, colleagues, employees and all those people who have been touched by her dedication and love for humanity, bereft and in shock. She was the living source of inspiration for the Kumudini family. May the Almighty be with them to shoulder the irreparable loss that they must now bear. May their Chhot Di, as they address her with affection, rest in eternal peace.

# The triumvirate of the Diplomat, the Journalist and the Artist

# The power of the media during Bangladesh's Liberation struggle

MIR AHMED

IPLOMACY, journalism and artistry are three powerful, yet sometimes confrontational tools in the world of international relations. With the rise of the Syrian crisis in Aleppo, we observe the severe distrust between international diplomats and journalists, while we observe celebrated artists voice their dissent over the hypocritical nature of the two former professions. Whether this is mere ideological hostility or the truth, it is not for me to decide. However, what is certain is this: the collective efforts of an American diplomat, a British-Pakistani journalist and a group of renowned artists fundamentally reshaped the course of Bangladesh's struggle for freedom on the international scene. The Blood Telegram was by far the

strongest formal resistance towards the American policy of supporting the Yahya Khan regime against the Bengalis. In a strongly worded cable sent to the US Secretary of State on 6th April, 1971, erstwhile US Consul General to Dhaka, Archer Blood, expressed his office's opposition towards Nixon's policy concerning Bangladesh. President Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger directed military and diplomatic support towards the Pakistani military establishment as part of their larger Cold War politics. In his telegram, Blood stated that 'Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the

West Pakistan dominated government

and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact against them.' The cable ended with the powerful statement 'We, as professional civil servants, express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected'. Signed by 20 members of the Diplomatic staff, the Blood Telegram, as it later came to be known, was seen as the most vocal

expression of dissent in the history of the US Foreign Service. This motivated protests and outspoken condemnations from American intellectuals including Senator Ted Kennedy, who subsequently led a global struggle on behalf of the Bengalis. Blood was recalled soon after his telegram reached the White House, nevertheless his message created the environment for the Bangladeshi movement to garner international support. Nixon and President Yahya Khan were pressured by the UN and the mass global population aware of the situation, to bring an end to the genocide. Nixon and Kissinger were as a result heavily criticised by the domestic media who cited Blood's telegram as representative of the common belief of apprehension

towards Bangladesh. Journalists pointed out the severity of the genocide and mass emigration taking place from Bangladesh, whilst criticising the world's lack of response to the humanitarian crisis. In what became the most influential piece pertaining to the war, journalist Anthony Mascarenhas' article titled 'Genocide' was published on the front page of the Sunday Times on June 13, 1971. Mascarenhas pointed out that according to a senior Pakistani official,

the Yahya regime was 'determined to

concerning the White House's policy

cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of secession, even if it means killing of two million people and ruling the province as a colony for 30 years.' In exposing the scale of the brutality undertaken by the Hanadar Bahini, Mascarenhas' article helped to turn world opinion against Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister Indira

increasing protests around the world against the actions of the Yahya regime, and wholehearted support for the Bengali people.

From a larger picture, Mascarenhas' Pakistani descent made his article even more powerful to the world. It showcased the critical point that it was not the Pakistani people, rather its

and consequently created the basis for the international community's final push to tackle Pakistan's policies.

August 1, 1971, saw former Beatles lead guitarist George Harrison and Indian sitar maestro Ravi Shankar organise the famous 'Concert for Bangladesh'. A star studded lineup comprising the likes of Bob Dylan,

performances represented. Funds were raised for the Bangladeshi refugees, along with organisations such as UNICEF providing tangible support to the relief programme. It set the precedence for humanitarian aid projects in the future, and the subsequent rise of international campaigns in favour of Bangladesh's struggle for freedom. Harrison's song 'Bangla Desh' became an iconic statement of social mobilisation and awareness in favour of Bangladesh. Billboard described it as 'a musical appeal to help our fellow man' that 'should find immediate and heavy chart action'. It went beyond merely being number 1 in the charts. Rather it became a summarising call for the world to intervene and assist the Bangladeshis who were suffering the wrath of genocide. It pivoted Congressional leadership to openly oppose President Nixon's pro-Pakistani policies. And it surely left a big place for Harrison in the hearts and minds of the Bengali people.

The above events unitedly represent the wills, wishes, passion and altruism of diplomats, journalists and artists in supporting the humanitarian aspect of Bangladesh's bloody war of

independence. The 1970s represented a revolution in the world of the media, both from a journalistic and public opinion point of view. Blood, Mascarenhas and Harrison used this new phenomenon to support the Bengali resistance through the symbolic power of activism. As Bangladesh celebrates our 45th year, we owe them our gratitude and everlasting appreciation. They are truly the friends of Bangladesh.

The writer is an undergraduate student of Economics and International Relations, The University of Toronto

by Mort Walker

Email: aftab.ahmed@mail.utoronto.ca



George Harrison and Bob Dylan at the concert for Bangladesh in 1971.

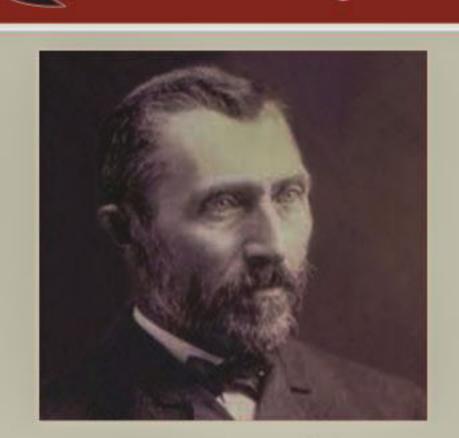
Gandhi credited Mascarenhas' piece as being the persuader for her 'to prepare the ground for India's armed intervention'. In response to Mascarenhas' article, celebrated guitarist George Harrison and sitar maestro Ravi Shankar organised the 'Concert for Bangladesh' on August 1, 1971, in New York. Harrison and Shankar's initiative reverberated onto

military and political leadership, which was to blame for the ongoing crisis. He pointed out the systematic genocide of minority groups such as Hindus, the mass graves in East Pakistan's villages and the open admittance of genocide by the Pakistani military. It thus became a symbolic voice of the media's opposition to Yahya Khan's policies

PHOTO: AFP

Eric Clapton, Ali Akbar Khan and others, in resemblance with the efforts of Senator Ted Kennedy, gained traction in the USA and amongst the international media. Billboard, the American entertainment brand, described the performances of the artists as the best ever in their careers, not simply because of the songs, rather because of what their

# Quotable Quote



**VINCENT VAN GOGH DUTCH POST-IMPRESSIONIST PAINTER.** 

It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is well done.

### **CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**DOWN** 

1 Golf goal

2 Spanish cheer

3 Famed pharaoh

4 Gather together

5 Salon sound

6 Robust

7 Shrewd

8 Race timer

9 In addition

10 Night flyer

18 Old market

24 Disney dog

25 Writer Rand

30 Aegean Island

17 Halloween haul

21 Island greeting

19 Inner sense of time

16 Valleys

22 Send in

33 Witch

35 Spigots

36 Throw off

42 Young buck

## **ACROSS**

- 1 Bleaching chemical 7 Regarding
- 11 Smith grad 12 Put away
- 13 Store business 14 Hammer or sickle
- 15 Accelerated
- 17 Urban fleet
- 20 Fighting
- 23 In past years
- 24 Bitter brew 26 Silent assent
- 27 Caustic stuff
- 28 Huck's pal
- 29 Rehearsals 31 Letter before psi
- 32 Marina sight 33 Casual talk
- 34 Blackout thief
- 37 General feeling
- 39 Ignoring ethics 43 Formerly
- 44 Target at a party
- 45 Stir-frying needs
- 46 Blotto
- 37 Do yard work 38 Lennon's wife 40 Un-refined 41 Had a meal

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## **BEETLE BAILEY**

# YOU HAVE TO BE ON A LEASH IN THE wow! TOWN PARK,

# ON THE LEASH

## **BABY BLUES**

YEAH, I NOTICED.

DAD, THERE'S BIRD POOP ON YOUR

CAR.

# by Kirkman & Scott IKE THAT WOULD EVER HAPPEN,

CAN WE CLEAN IT OFF? I DON'T WANT TO BE KNOWN AS THE BIRD POOP CARGIRL.

