



Freedom fighters of 1971

BANGLADESH

The goal of culture and civilisation

*On the occasion of 46th Independence Day we are publishing a translation of the renowned litterateur and educationist Dr Muhammad Enamul Haq's article titled **Bangladesh: Sangskriti o Sovvotar Loksho**. It was published in early 1972. In this article Dr Haq elucidates the importance of adopting secularism as the state policy of the newborn nation.*

Old, why, ancient as she is, Bengal today is a new country, a new state. Bangladesh today is independent, emancipated from the vicious clasp of the Pakistani military conspiratorial cliques, the true heirs of the Saka and Huna marauders, the successors of Halagu-Ghenghiz-Nadir Shah and the newest versions of Hitler and Mussolini. Bangladesh today is independent, drenched with the sanguine sacrifice of thousands of patriotic youths, bathed in the sacred blood of countless men, women, and innocent children. The emergence of an independent Bangladesh in the global map within a matter of nine months is a wonder of the world, an absolutely incredible chapter in history. Shameful as it is for the barbarous Pakistani military cliques, so is it radiant with glory for the people of Bangladesh of all walks of life bestirred with love of their land and

nation.

Just as it was the Bangali who had to rise to the occasion to achieve the independence of Bengal, so they are tasked with upholding this independence at any cost. 'Golden Bengal' is now a desert, a graveyard, a massive burial ground. It is the Bangalis themselves who must turn it again into 'Golden Bengal'. This, however, is no mean task that might be achieved overnight. The task demands farsightedness, breadth of vision, relentless effort, iron will, and above all unvitiated patriotism. If we fail to strike the right mix of all these elements, the job of restoring 'Golden Bengal' would be unnecessarily delayed. We must put our intellect and intelligence to use in this task. There is no other way.

It hardly needs any reiteration that while intellect and intelligence are faculties of the individual, in the larger scheme of things

they are collective attributes. In collective terms, only the nation can have these attributes; and the repertoire and archive of these national attributes is the culture and civilisation of a nation. Culture and civilisation essentially thus make up the ultimate identity of any nation. For our part, we must assume this identity in the world and take our place in the international community with this very identity. In fact, neither brute force nor religious fanaticism can be the true identity of a nation.

What, then, is our true identity as a nation? With what identity would we mark ourselves out in the international community? These are difficult questions – no doubt. Yet, we resolved them decisively – once for all – on December 16, 1971. As a result we have a new country, a new state, and even new ideas and ideology. Those who have not reconstructed or refashioned

their ideas are either disoriented or ill-fated. We believe that it would not be long before they learn or are bound to learn to think along new lines.

The complicated problem that we have resolved as a nation is the following: our society – which inhabits a particular geographic environment, uses a language evolved from a particular language family, and belongs to a well-defined ethnic group – is 'Bangali' in its social basis. As a community that is defined, consolidated, and well-demarcated by its political identity, we are 'Bangladeshi Bangalis', not 'Indian Bangalis'. In terms of beliefs and rituals, some of us are 'Bengali Hindus', some 'Bangali Muslims', some 'Bangali Buddhists', some 'Bangali Christians', and some are Bangalis with other religious identities.