

Sheikh Mujib My... (Continued from previous page)

waters of monsoon. How the weaver-birds built their nest, how the kingfisher went inside water to catch fish, where lay the nest of the magpie robin - the searching of all these were the usual activities of this romping boy. My father was greatly attracted by the sweet melody of the latter's sound. And that is why he liked to mingle with nature by moving around the fields and ghats with small children of the village. He used to teach the little 'shalik' and 'mynah' birds how to speak or whistle after catching them. He used to rear monkey and dog, and they used to do whatever he instructed. Again, he used to give the responsibility of looking after them to his younger sister Helen. He could not tolerate the slightest negligence towards these animals. Sometimes the younger sister was scolded for that reason. There is a narrow canal on the north-western side of our house, which connects with the confluence of the rivers Madhumati and Baigar. A large 'Kachari Ghar' stood on its bank. And the teachers, *pundits* and *moulavi sahibs* used to reside in rooms adjacent to this house. They were appointed as house tutors and my father used to learn Arabic, Bangla, English and Mathematics from them.

The Gimadanga Tungipara High School was built by our ancestors. It was then a primary school, located almost one and a quarter kilometre from our house. Abba (my father) initially 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

Creation of the Past... (Continued from previous page)

Pakistan; and provision for provincial autonomy, although none of these proposals were accepted. The Awami League was banned after the promulgation of martial law in Pakistan in 1958. Mujib was at first jailed and then put under house arrest.

Provincial autonomy was like an obsession for Sheikh Mujib. He lost confidence in the integrity of Pakistan due to the indifference showed by the central government on this issue. It is claimed that Mujib extended support when the leaders of Chhatra League formed two secret organizations during the 1960s with the goal of making East Bengal independent. He raised the 6-point demands as the president of Awami League in 1966 and asserted that the Lahore Resolution was framed with the objective of provincial autonomy. When the government took a strong stand against him on the issue, Sheikh Mujib generated public opinion in its favour by holding public meetings all over East Bengal. He was repeatedly arrested at this juncture, but continued to hold meetings after obtaining bails. In 1968, an initiative was taken for holding the trial of Mujib and 34 others in a special tribunal on charge of a secessionist conspiracy in East Pakistan. The outcome was counter-productive for the Pakistani regime. There was a mass upsurge in East Bengal in support of Mujib's freedom, withdrawal of the so-called Agartala Conspiracy Case and implementation of the 6-point demands. President Ayub was forced to resign, but he handed over power to the army chief Yahya Khan. A conspiracy was then hatched to kill Sheikh Mujib while he was in jail under this case, but that was foiled when he took precautions after getting information about it. An accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case Colonel (retired) Showkat Ali later claimed in his book that the allegations brought against them were true. Sheikh Mujib was accorded a massive reception in Dhaka after getting acquittal from the case and he was conferred the title 'Bangabandhu'. He reached the pinnacle of popularity at that juncture.

The Awami League won absolute majority, which was beyond its expectations, in the first general election of Pakistan held in 1970. But the ruling clique refused to hand over power to Bangabandhu and frame a constitution in accordance with his desire. In protest, the non-violent non-cooperation movement that was built up in East Bengal at Bangabandhu's

(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, 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 became protesting. 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 pregnantwife 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*

urging in March 1971 amazed the entire world. With the exception of cantonments, all entities were run in accordance with his directives. The speech that he delivered in Dhaka's racecourse ground on 7 March has now been recognized as one of the greatest speeches of all time in world history. In the backdrop of popular demand for freedom, Bangabandhu informally declared the country's independence without proclaiming it formally during that speech. He called upon the people to turn their houses into fortresses and to combat the enemy with whatever they possessed. He roared out in a thunderous voice: The struggle this time is for our freedom, the struggle this time is for independence.

At midnight of 25 March, the Pakistani army struck the ultimate blow against unarmed Bangalis. Sheikh Mujib made a formal declaration of independence, but he was arrested and then taken to Pakistan. The liberation war of the Bangalis then started. The Bangladesh Government was formed after its leaders took shelter in India; Mujib was declared the president. Bangabandhu was awarded death sentence on charge of treason in the trial held at a Pakistani court; but the Pakistani government could not execute that verdict due to the pressure of world opinion. Meanwhile, the people of Bangla achieved victory in the war fought in Mujib's name. Bangabandhu returned home as a victor on 10 January 1972 after being freed from a Pakistani prison.

Immediately after taking over responsibility as the Prime Minister, he undertook reconstruction of the war-ravaged country, framed the constitution within minimum possible time, reconstituted the administration, brought back the Bangalis stuck in Pakistan, elicited recognition for Bangladesh state from many countries, and got membership of the United Nations. On the other hand, a famine-like situation spread in the country due to foreign conspiracies, and some changes were introduced in the government system. Before the outcome of this change could be visible, the conspirators killed him along with his family; but he could never be removed from the hearts of the people.

Bangabandhu made the people dream about independence; he inspired them to make self-sacrifices for materialising that dream. The world knows that he had led that struggle in 1971; it was not a secessionist movement, rather it was a struggle for emancipation of the oppressed masses, a just war for establishing the right of self-determination. He had created history. □

Translation: *Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed*

Here Lies My Bangabandhu

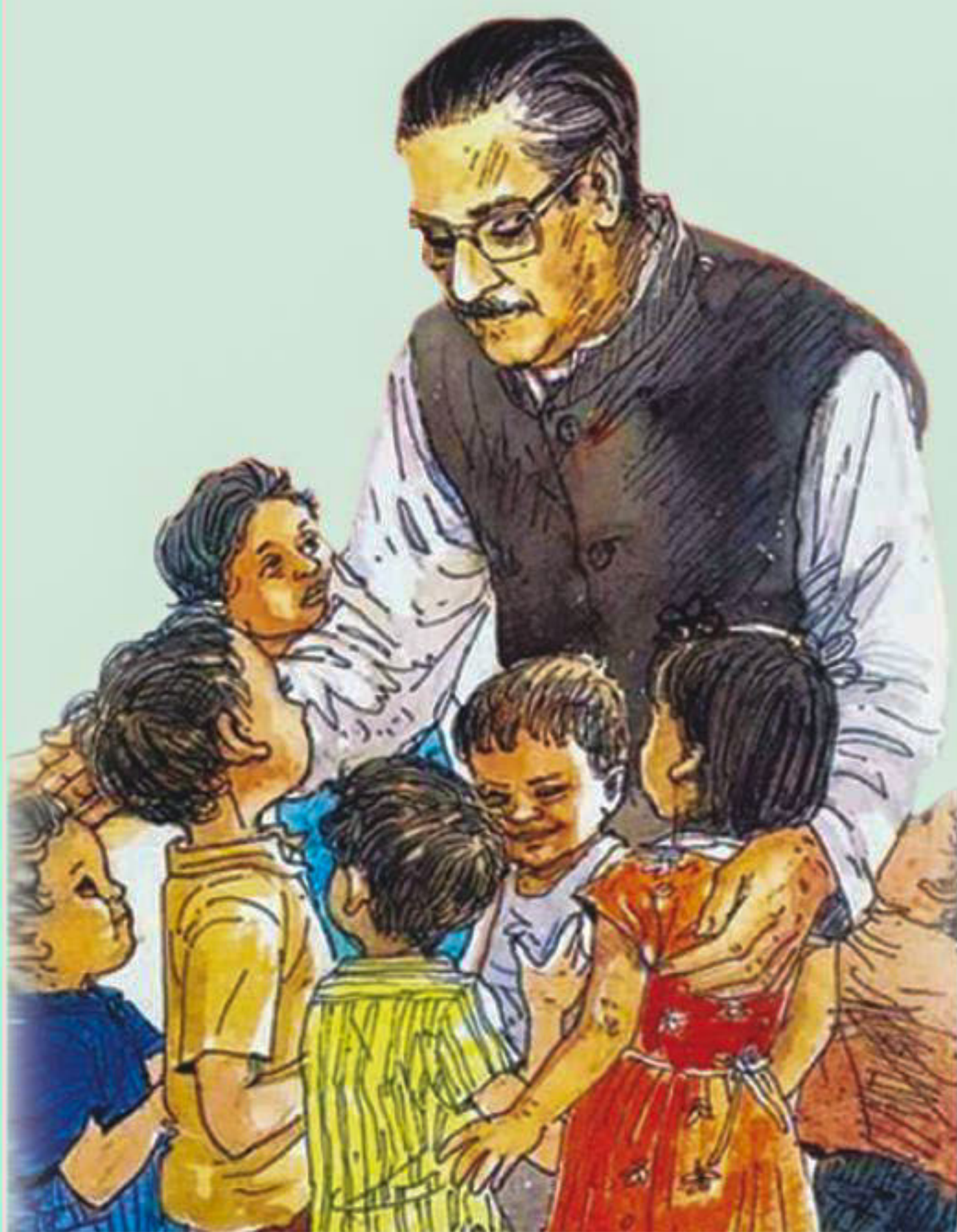
Anjir Liton

In this land we sing songs as we like,
Songs of joy and happiness.
This soil is fertile
That gives abundant crops.
Here the birds and flowers,
Rivers and woods are impeccable.
Among all these beauty and bounty
Lies my Bangabandhu – a great hero.

In this land, we move as we like.
We move forward with indomitable courage.
Here one will find the story of placards and processions
War of Liberation and taste of liberty,
A beautiful flag of an independent country,
A pleasant scene – full of compassion and love.
Amidst all these exists my Bangabandhu – radiant like the sun.

In this land of Bengal we live free.
We speak our dear mother-tongue Bangla.
Deep in our hearts are inscribed names of all martyrs.
Our Shaheed Minar has shaped all our thoughts and feelings.
Amidst all these, one will find my Bangabandhu
Who brought victory for us in seventy-one.

Translation: *Professor Ahmed Reza*



Sanctuary

Faruk Nawaz

Who are they that say, father, you do not exist?
Are they deaf? Are they blind or
Stupid, dullard or oxen with no feeling?
Do not they hear the sweet whistle of magpie Robin? That small bird!
At every dawn it whistles and tells your tales.

Father! Surely you did father this country.
If you were not born, this nation would not have born.
Now, there is my flag, red and green, swinging in the air.
Here is my sweet golden Bangal, my own land;
Here I sing to my heart's content.
Flowing here are hundred rivers – Modhumoti, Padma, Meghna–
How could all these be mine if you did not come?

We passed ages hard in the fire of subjugation.
And then, you came and set us free.
And now this nation walks erect, independent.
You are in the hearts of sixteen crore human being.
Birds are coming flying happily on your birthday;
Sound of anklet in the bush of Minjiri,
Bees dancing around flowers, breeze in the tamarisk trees–
The sea wakes up with waves- all these, because you are with us.

Who say you don't live, who are they?
Are they blind or their eyes closed forever?
Are they stones or short of hearing?
Do not they hear the voice of yours?
The thunderous voice that shook the world,
The voice that still electrifies all around with flashes.

You are in the hearts of people all over the land.
Jingling or rattles through the branches of rain tree
Caused only because you are with us.
Air full of smell of Bathua, falling of flowers of Sajna-
Babla bushes dancing with the touch of gentle air
on both sides of lonely ways- all these
only because you are with us.

Zinnia and Dopatta are in blossom only because you are with us.
Green cuckoo sings dulcetly in the depth of Palas,
only because you are with us.
Towns and cities are enlivened- exciting noise in the village.
Tungipara is mad with tide- like crowd.

You are at your dearest premise, calm and quiet,
Leaving the boisterous Dhanmondi.
Air runs touching the green grass carpet with deep love.
Fragrance of flowers,
chirping of little birds,
And soft sound of waves- all around you.
You hearthe melody of running air- day in, day out.

Tungipara has turned into the sanctuary of our nation.
You are the heart of Bangladesh, the father of the nation.

Translation : *Khairul Alam Shabuj*