

When a nation speaks

The unforgettable baritone that transcends time and vision- that would be a paltry description of what Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave to the nation on March 7, 1971 at Dhaka's Suhrawardy Udyan. The historic congregation of almost 10 lakh people at the then Race Course ground (now Suhrawardy Udyan) at the end of the 20-minute speech bore witness to the all defining words: "Ebar-er shongram amader muktir shongram, Ebar-er shongram, shadhinotar shongram," (This struggle is independence, a struggle for freedom).

The generations, which have not witnessed the Liberation War or have not heard the *bojro-kontho* of the Father of the Nation first hand, will be celebrating Bangladesh's 48th Independence Day in a week, side by side with those who have had the opportunity. The historical and political backdrop has been, time and again revisited by scholars, leaders and writers to put forth a fresh perspective in unparalleled descriptive prowess. To mention the whole event by paraphrasing far better explorations is almost like placing a rock in a shelf full of precious stones. Yet every individual tries his or her best to put new meaning into the speech, be it for an interpretation in a modern context or as a history buff trying to re-create the ambience. That is, simply put, the true power of influence of what Bangabandhu created on that very day.

Standing in 2018, where now we have the opportunity to relive the full event in colourised video with high definition audio, the message still retains its original electrifying stance. For a nation that is nearing its 50th birthday, those twenty minutes in 1971 riled the spirits of the people to indomitable heights that will transcend centuries to come.

The extempore speech is now proudly a part of UNESCO's Memories of the World Register. Nominated for inclusion in 2016, the historic speech was finally recommended for inclusion in October, 2017. It is no easy feat as the register includes only the most significant of heritage documents. The speech shares its place in the Memory of the World Register with a total of 427 documents and other heritage collections from around the globe and the collection continues to grow.

For a full list of documentary heritage inscribed to the Memory of the World Register, visit www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register

By Iris Farina

THE VOICES OF NATIONS

There is hardly anyone of the modern world unfamiliar with historical speeches-- from Dr. Martin Luther King or Abraham Lincoln or even older speeches from ancient times by Socrates or Pericles. Volumes after volumes of compilations of the great and famous (and also of the infamous and dreaded) are not only easily available but come with audio and video recordings to present a fully immersive experience. The true power of the spoken word is seen in its full potential where the oration defies centuries and millenniums. Is it the speech only, or is it the power of the writing, or does it come down to how it was delivered? To answer those, it is never too late to revisit the classics of the nation inspiring speeches.

Probably the best-known and most familiar English language speeches have come from both sides of the Atlantic. Be it George Washington to Roosevelt to Nixon, from the plight of women fighting for voting rights to introducing era defining technology-the USA boasts to date a

"The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Lincoln's address did more than memorialise the fallen soldiers at Gettysburg; it accomplished nothing short of transforming the entire meaning of the Civil War. This address is often cited as an inspiration from Pericles' funeral oration (431BC). Like Pericles, Lincoln was a leader during a time of civil war. Like Pericles, Lincoln focused on exhorting the living to live their lives in a way that would make the sacrifice of fallen warriors worthwhile.

Coming to America in the short-lived Kennedy era of the 60's or the Reagan Era in the 80's, there are numerous speeches from those troubled times that formed the great nation and are still quoted to this day.

Looking just across the Atlantic, the speeches from there too have taken their

"To be a king, and wear a crown, is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it's pleasant to them that bear it: for myself, I never was so much enticed with the glorious name of a king, or the royal authority of a queen, as delighted that God hath made me his instrument to maintain his truth and glory, and to defend this kingdom from dishonour, damage, tyranny, and oppression."

World War II in particular led to a number of memorable speeches that have helped the common people as well as those in positions of power to push on in the hardest of times

Winston Churchill, with his strong and reassuring voice in 1940 is remembered time and again for his three phenomenal speeches *Blood, Sweat and Tears, We shall fight on the Beaches, Their finest hour*, which buoyed Britain during some of her darkest hours.

It was also in 1940 when General Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French Forces exhorted the French to not give up hope and to continue the fight against the German occupation.

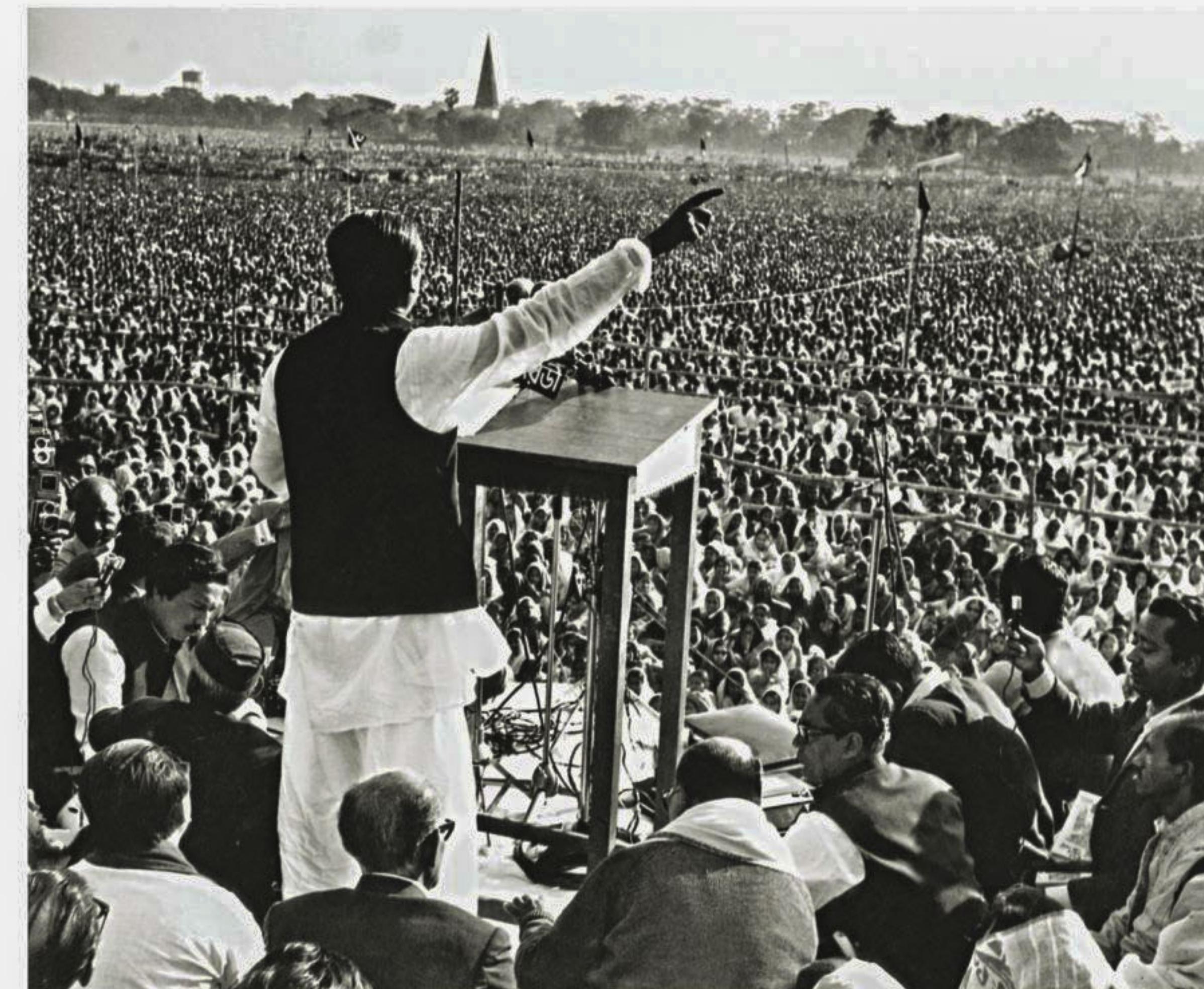
"This war is not limited to the unfortunate territory of our country. This war is not over as a result of the Battle of France. This war is a worldwide war. All the mistakes, all the delays, all the suffering, do not alter the fact that there are, in the world, all the means necessary to crush our enemies one day. Vanquished today by mechanical force, in the future we will be able to overcome by a superior mechanical force. The fate of the world depends on it."

Coming to the Indian subcontinent, Mahatma Gandhi's "Quit India" (1942) speech pioneered the tactics of non-violent civil disobedience as the people of India were engaged in their own fight for liberty.

"I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle's French Resolution while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I invite you today."

Public speaking is gift to those who can fully appreciate and be inspired to do more than their being from the orator. But audiences have transformed, they are not bound to a single place nor are they the ones who sat in solemn silence as one person or group spoke. In that sense, the true power of the words lies with context, intonation and the final delivery.

By Iris Farina
Star Lifestyle extends its thanks to freelance photographer Nizamuddin Haider for sharing the photo taken by his father Jalaluddin Haider.



speech set that will live on with the English speaking world.

While Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" (1963) speech is quoted verbatim from the "I have a dream that one day..." segment, another memorable segment lies in the beginning of the speech.

"We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilising drug of gradualism.

Now is the time to make real the promises of Democracy.

Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.

Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children.

Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood."

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (1863), famous for its last line, is more powerful as a whole.

place in world history.

Queen Elizabeth I of England is well known for two of the finest speeches in leadership in the world.

Her 'I have the heart and stomach of a king' (1588) contains the key sentiment of Elizabeth's reign: the only way a woman could assume leadership without contradiction was by combining in herself the attributes of King and Queen.

"I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any Prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm, to which, rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field."

Her other speech, "To be a King" (1601) has been known for generations as the 'Golden Speech' - worthy to be written in gold.