

Special Supplement

National Mourning Day

Wednesday, 15th August 2018

Why Sheikh Mujib....

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declared, “The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for Independence.”

The Bangalis waited for a thousand years for this announcement. For this reason, Sheikh Mujib is the best Bangali of the last one thousand years. It is because he on that day gave vent to the Bangalis’ thousand years’ dream and the desire for freedom that lay dormant in the innermost corner of their hearts. He gave a brave and powerful expression to the demand of the time in the face of the fearful circumstances under which the occupation army’s cannons, guns and gunships might any time start exploding. No other leader in the world history had the courage to utter the declaration of freedom so fearlessly in the face of such a terrible circumstance. It is because of this unique event that he is the undisputed leader of Bangladesh’s struggle for freedom, father of the Bangali nation imbibing its own state spirit and the maker of the state of Bangladesh.

There were many Banglis who were more talented and had more qualities than him;

nevertheless, he is the best Bangali of the last one thousand years and he is the father of the Bangali nation embodying the spirit of a modern state. That is because: firstly, he turned the Bangalis’ thousand years’ dream for freedom into reality through a life-long struggle making all kinds of sacrifices and suffering the pains of imprisonment. Be it art, literature, science, politics or technology — nothing is bigger than freedom. So achieving success in these things, and uniting a disorganized nation step by step through an effective timely plan with a clear political aim and urging them to take part in the deadly liberation war to snatch away freedom from the clutch of an occupation army equipped with modern deadly weapons are not at all comparable to anything.

Secondly, Bangabandhu’s incomparable achievement is the fact that he was able to found a nation-state bringing under the same umbrella of the nationalistic movement the unequal and unintegrated elements of the Bangali nation comprised of the people of four religions and about forty-nine small ethnic groups. Such success is unique.

Thirdly, for the theoretical basis of the state of which Sheikh Mujib is the architect and the neopolitical nation of which he is the father, we can quote the German philosopher Hegel, the greatest thinker of this field. He says, “Man owes his entire existence to the state, and has his being within it alone.” He further says, “The great man of the age is one who can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what its will is and accomplish it. What he does is the heart and essence of his age, he actualizes his age” (Philosophy of Right). Sheikh Mujib turned the will of his age into reality, that means, he actualized his age. That is why, he is the architect of Bangladesh and father of the Bangali nation.

History’s Banga....

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Africa, Ho Chi Minh with Vietnam, Sukarno with Indonesia, Colonel Nasser with Egypt, Yasser Arafat with Palestine. Similarly, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s name became synonymous with Bangladesh. The self-identity of the Bangalis will never be completed without pronouncing his name.

He was the saviour of the Bangalis. In the eternal current of Bangali civilisation and culture, he was the architect of a new resurgence. The flourishing of Bangali nationalism then assumed fuller shape through establishment of an independent state.

After the partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947, the eastern part of Banga became a part of the new state called Pakistan with the name ‘East Pakistan’. From his philosophical standpoint of nationalism, Bangabandhu was vocal in the constituent assembly of Pakistan for calling East Pakistan as East Bengal. On 25th August 1955, he said at the constituent assembly, ‘Mr. Speaker, the government has changed the name of East Bengal to East Pakistan. We place the demand to use the Bangla name. The Bangla name has a history, a heritage. The people of Bangla have to be asked if this name is to be changed. It should be gathered from them whether they give their consent to the changing of that name. As an identity, Bangla was not merely a word; it represented the life-philosophy of a nation. All humans embrace the truth of their nationality after their human identity’. Bangabandhu infused this faith among all the Bangalis.

Language is a principal ingredient of national identity. Bangabandhu also spoke on the question of the honour of Bangla language during different sessions of the Pakistan constituent assembly. On 9th November 1955, he said at a session of the constituent assembly in Karachi, “Sheikh Mujibur Rahman : Honourable Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall have to speak in Bangla. I feel very sorry that this language would not be comprehensible to you, but even then I shall have to speak in Bangla. (Disruptions in between speech) I am sorry that Honourable Deputy Speaker does not understand Bangla. Honourable Mr. Speaker, I thank you immensely for giving me the opportunity to speak in Bangla language”.

He again spoke in favour of Bangla at the constituent assembly on 17th January 1956: “Sir, I am drawing your attention to a special privilege motion. Sir, section 29 of the rules of procedure of Pakistan constituent assembly clearly mentions that there are three official languages in parliament: English, Bangla, and Urdu. But Sir, you know that the day’s work schedule has been distributed in only English and Urdu, not in Bangla. I do not know whether you are aware of the subject, or whether it has been done intentionally. ... Sheikh Mujibur Rahman : The proceedings must have been written in Bangla. But the question is, as the three languages have been recognised as official languages, therefore all the three languages should be accorded due honour. If the daily work schedule is published in English and Urdu, then it should certainly be published in Bangla as well, because the daily work schedule is part of the proceedings. ... As the day’s work schedule has been printed in English and Urdu, it should therefore have been done in Bangla as well”.

During his speech at a function in memory of the language martyrs on 21st February 1970, Bangabandhu had said, “I recall today those martyrs who had to sacrifice their lives prematurely during the killing ritual of a repressive regime, for their crime (!) of loving their motherland. ... As long as the sky of Bangla remains, as long as the air of Bangla prevails, as long as the soil of Bangla exists, as long as the Bangalis live, we shall never be able to forget these martyrs. We shall never allow the blood of martyrs to go in vain in any way. This victory has been the victory of seven crore Bangalis, the triumph of the poor masses”.

This pragmatic philosophy equated the soil and people of Bangla with the honour of their mother language. He nurtured the riches of Bangaliness in all spaces of his self-identity. Renowned litterateur Hasan Azizul Haque evaluated this journey of Bangabandhu in a creative manner. “From being an activist in political movements of subjugated Bangla, he gradually became the favourite of all as ‘Mujib Bhai’. After being declared by the masses as Bangabandhu, he provided leadership in the movement for independence. The Bangali nation won their greatest achievement – independence – in exchange for blood. Bangabandhu established a language-based state system through which the door for the eternal flourishing of Bangla language opened up, the Bangali nation-identity became a state-concept. Those who observed him from a close range would be able to say where was hidden the bigness of this man. He could mix with the ordinary people and became companion of their sorrows and happiness by touching their hearts. If he can be looked at judiciously, then it can be realized that

Before the establishment of Bangladesh as a state, the Bangali nation that developed in the several hundred years was merely a race. This race turned into a developed community as a result of their common language and socio-economic life-style. Not only that, this development was possible because of their identical physical, mental and psychological traits. The novel sequence of the great thoughts of various intellectuals also contributed to this development. After the creation of Bangladesh through well-planned struggles for establishing their own rights and freedom for about three decades that race and community got a nation of their own. The main architect of this very nation is Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Because, “In the thousand-year history of Bengal, Sheikh Mujib is the only leader who has in terms of blood, race, language, culture and birth been a full-blooded Bangali. His physical stature was immense. His voice was redolent of thunder. His charisma worked on people. The courage and charms that flowed from him made him uniquely superior in these times” (Cyril Dunn: London Observer). British parliament Member Lord Fenner Brock says, “In a sense, Sheikh Mujib is a greater leader than George Washington, Mahatma Gandhi and De Valera.”

Those who contributed to the making of the Bangali nation in various ages and phases include the contemplator of the Charyapada, yogis, occultists, poets and litterateurs of the middle



his efficient deputy Tajuddin Ahmed and other politicians.

As part of the political struggles of these people against the autocracy and conspiracy of the Pakistani rulers and their exploitation of the Bangalis for 23 years, Bangabandhu with the legal right of an elected representative declared independence in the highest phase of the Bangali nationalistic, non-communal and democratic movement (immediately after the Pakistani occupation forces launched an armed attack on 25th March 1971). Following his arrest by the Pakistani army after that declaration of independence, the Bangladesh Government led by Syed Nazrul Islam and Tajuddin through a 9-month liberation war established a new state called Bangladesh for the people of all religions, communities and small ethnic groups. The establishment of such a secular and modern democratic state in Asia, particularly in the religion-prone, illiteracy-afflicted and poverty-stricken South Asia was rare in history. Having noticed this rare phenomenon, American human-rights theorist Austin Dacey said, “Thomas Jefferson could have learned a lot about secular democracy from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman” (The Daily Star, March 17, 2006).

Translation: Professor M Jahurul Islam

the Bangali identity found expression in his manners, eating habits and dresses; most of all in the resonance of his mind, opinion, emotions and feelings. That was why he was hailed by the student community as ‘Bangabandhu’, and this name ultimately became the bonding bridge of identity for the whole nation”.

Bangabandhu’s intellectual views should be mentioned while dwelling on this theme. An international conference was organised by Bangla Academy in Dhaka in 1974. Bangabandhu said during its inaugural ceremony, “We are not poor from the perspective of literature, culture and heritage. Our language has a glorious history of two thousand years. The storehouse of our literature is rich. Our cultural heritage is luminous with its own features. If we are to hold our head high in the world stage as an independent state, we shall have to establish the honour of our language, literature, culture and heritage at home and abroad”. In this context, he further said: “I am not a litterateur, nor an artiste, but I believe people are the sources of all literature and art. It is not possible to create a great literature or a noble artwork by becoming isolated from the people. I have waged struggles by taking people alongside me throughout my life; I am doing that even now, and whatever I do in the future will be done by taking along the people. Dear friends, my appeal to you is – our literature, culture should not remain confined within the concrete buildings of towns. The pulses of the life-force of crores of people living in the villages of Bangladesh should also be reflected by those. If today’s literary conference makes proper evaluation of these, then I shall be most happy”.

In this way, he spoke about upholding the prestige of the mass people. He also articulated the idea of putting humanism into the cultural ethos of the nation. He also dreamt of peaceful coexistence of mankind all over the world. Bangabandhu delivered his speech in Bangla language at the United Nations on 23rd September 1974. He widened the horizon of the Bangali nation-state through his speech in the mother language. On the other hand, he spoke also about establishing peace and justice for the people of the world. To quote: “Mr. President, today while standing at this noble gathering, I share my complete satisfaction with you all, because the 75 million people of Bangladesh are represented at this assembly today. By

marking the completion of the struggle for self-determination, this moment is historic for the Bangali nation. The people of Bangla struggled for centuries to realize the right to live in freedom and survive with the prestige of a free citizen in an independent state; they aspired to live in peace and cordiality with all nations of the globe. Millions of our people made supreme sacrifices for upholding the ideals which are enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. I know, the Bangali nation is fully pledge-bound to build a world conducive for realization of the hopes and aspirations of all humans in order to establish peace and justice”.

The writers of the country have repeatedly reminisced about him in the literature of Bangladesh. The title of a poem by the poet Rokanuzzaman Khan was ‘Poet’. To quote from it:

Green verdant forests, fields, riverbanks, sandy shoals
Everywhere is strewn the homes of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib.
Heaps of golden paddies are produced in the fields of golden land
The smiles of the crops seem to be the laughter of Sheikh Mujib.
When the Bangali dwellings are filled with the sweet smiles of kids,
It appears the eternal Mujib is laughing by becoming a child.
As long as we Bangalis live in this land of Bangla
The independent Bangla will call: Mujib come back home.

The words of the great intellectual Abul Fazal is worth remembering: “The name of Sheikh Mujib is a magical mantra all over Bangladesh. This name brings a wonderful excitement to the minds of all including the educated and illiterates, children and old, and females confined in homes. To them, this name is like a luminous flame of torch in the midst of darkness. Sheikh Mujib is like the hopes of many suns in the minds of the Bangalis. The special contribution of Sheikh Mujib is that he made the Bangalis self-conscious, gave Bangali nationalism a language. He could transmit the wants and complaints, demands and needs, hopes and aspirations to cities and ports, towns and villages, the palaces of the affluent to the huts of the poor. His slogan ‘Joy Bangla’ was like an infallible mantra for the self-exploration and self-discovery of Bangla and Bangalis”.

In this way, Bangabandhu belongs to Bangla and the Bangalis. He is like a luminous light in the lives of the Bangalis. His position in the pages of history extends from Banga to the reality of independent Bangladesh.

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

Elegy: 16 August, 1975

Nirmalendu Goon

A sorrowful silence surrounded me the whole day today.
A bee sat on my chest all day and
Uttered his chronicles of fighting to collect nectar: close by somewhere will
A newborn arrive, for its outcrying mouth the nectar of Blue lotus is longed.
I did not for once shout “Guards! Guards!”
A tired ring finger casted off my extended arms,
So too did the heart-along with ribs splatter around somewhere far...
And yet dreaming of the reddish red tongue of the unborn
I kept my sweet face of blood fuelled repositories.

On every direction was the distressed coffins of close ones.
Both the sleepless eyes of mine were completely overwhelmed the whole of today
Tasting a new slumber. Today was immensely tiring.
The morning sun went as it came, yet I did not tell it to stay back.
Where would I tell it to seat? Amidst the filth of blood and gunpowder
Roses have fallen on the courtyard all day. Its huff
I could not stop. Climbing down my fateline
Red ants flocked, tied and mounted, sometimes though
Bit my skin on instinct, if any blood is there by chance.
I did not fist my palm the whole day, kept it open.
For everyone. I kept my facial features as
Pure as possible keeping my children in mind.
Upon my dead-facial features saying father father
Fell down the selfless first afternoon of Shravan.
For a moment then a dagger turned into a kiss
Touching the coconut leaves came down
Last light before evening fell. From the silent waters of the lake came up
The red lilies like a feisty teenager at dusk
For the last time with a leer gazed..., and then
Dipped onto the flaming waters of the lake.
Before the last-afterglow came alight
My two eyelids set at liberty.

In the evening penetrating a phalanx of alert troops on guard
Stood by my bed that very poet
Whose pen would follow me like a shadow.
He came and bowed before my scathed-engraved chest
Performed a warm embrace on my stagnant body
Touched my grisly flown off shoulder cavity.

What amazing ruth that touch had
I tried with all my life to get up,
But my eyes did not awaken.
I wanted to embrace him,
The hand laid lifeless.
I wanted to scream out and talk,
My vocals remained captive.

No singer sang my favourite Rabindra-Sangeet (Tagore-Musicals)
Nor did any Cleric pray for the mercy of my soul,
My face was not covered by some white-shroud.
Amidst the darkness of the night drenched in tears of a secret eye
The poet shredded like the purity of the water of Abe-Zamzam,
Up until far away from this city, in my native village
A grave for me was prepared.

Translation: Khandker Muhtasim Omar



Road Number 32

Kamal Chaudhury

This house belongs to the father of the nation, this house belongs to all
Named after Mujib, this house belongs to polish and roko-joba blooms as well
This house is the grieving month of August, written only with tear drops
This house embodies our Fatherland, as also his sighs and cries!

This house means the vast waters of the Padma, the Meghna, and the Madhumati
In this house stays forever awake unrelenting courage
Liberator, head held high, like an over-stretched morning
When darkness descends this is the house that drives away all the drowsy feeling

In 1971 this house was as free as the blue skies
The terror of killers, enemy soldiers and razakars
If this house gives us hope and courage we'll stay forever awake
Taking our vows in the name of Bangla Mother, we'll resist and fight

Spurred on by the rage of alluvial deposits collecting over a thousand years
This house stands under the self-sacrificing sun—painted in grand strokes of red and green
This house means dust and mud, soil wet from shower
Under the banyan shade of boundless time we walk and don't cower.

In this house lives Mujib—the lighthouse of the nation
Words of Robi Thakur and Nazrul emanate right from his soul
Comes a great man setting sail to this house
And his boat is kept afloat by the tide of Joy Bangla chants

If he raises his index finger the skies move and so does the country
This house is the stroke of lightning, bringing forth freedom forever
This house is Independence, written with blood
Peoples of the world witness in this house the great ocean

This house is a site of our soul and memory—and the museum for the nation
In this house lives Mujibur, the Father of the Nation
This house is our root, our self-identity
And it stands for Bangabandhu—towering as he does, like the Himalayas!

Translation : Rifat Munim