



Victory I Have Seen

(An excerpt from M. R. Akhtar Mukul's *Ami Bijoy Dekhechi*)

TRANSLATED BY MOTIUR RAHMAN

If you ask me exactly when and how the Mujibnagar govt.-in-exile was first assembled, I cannot give you the answer right away, mostly because too many possible answers are floating in the air as I speak. Therefore, it is necessary for us to cast a look back at what triggered the series of political upheavals and resulted in this. From what I could gather sifting through old newspapers and documents, the political situation began to drastically change in East Bengal once Sheikh Mujib announced the Six-Point Demands. It's interesting to see how first, it was all about the concerted efforts of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Khawaja Nazimuddin, Nurul Amin, Fatima Jinnah, even Salam Khan, Sheikh Mujib himself, and Muzaffar Ahmed, all practicing under the safeguard of the National Democratic Front throughout the early 1960's later to have the state power consigned solely to Sheikh Mujib's hand in 1966. The antagonism of the allies of the West or the leftists simply did not work; the great nationalist urge of the Six Points then rendered the previously predominant parties pointless in the public eye. Desperate, Ayub Khan found it mandatory to respond not with diplomatic talks or negotiation strategies for mutual gains but weapons, while the hasty decision of throwing Sheikh Mujib into the jail only backfired and further popularized his political image to that of a living legend. And therein, we see the Agartala Conspiracy Case coming alive, only to see it getting dissolved days later.

On 12 February, 1969, one of the convicts, Sgt. Zahurul Haq was found murdered in Kurmitola Cantonment. On the 18th, The Rajshahi University premises witnessed the death of Prof. Shamsuzzoha as the police opened fire on a silent procession of students. The assassination of Asad, a leading student activist by the police in broad daylight further ignited the mass-upsurge against the Pakistani Govt. and its brutal regime. Outraged, millions of civilians marched together in the city streets dismissing the evening curfews and raised their voices. *The Daily Pakistan* (now known as Daily

Bangla & Weekly Entertainment) as well as *Morning News (Times)* had their respective local branches reduced to ashes. The ministerial residences on Abdul Gani Rd. and the colonies of the officials near Ramna Gate were burnt to the ground. It was a fiery procession of death and at the same time, an undying hope for freedom that took over East Bengal and all that it was. Finally, the young activists from Dacca University, in league with the indomitable leadership of Mawlana Bhashani compelled the Ayub-regime to withdraw the Agartala Case on 22nd February and also release Sheikh Mujib and his coworkers at the same time. I was working as a local journalist back then in Dhaka for the UPI and from my firsthand experience I could realize how the undaunted participants of this collective movement breathed a sigh of relief with Sheikh Mujib coming back to the political scenario.

With a lot of things in his mind, Sheikh Shahab first attended an enormous mass-gathering in the Race Course maydan and declared to participate in the round-table meeting at Rawalpindi, which was quite surprising in itself since Mawlana Bhashani, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto- all decided to boycott it unanimously and expected the same from him, for this was the only way to show their mutual dissatisfaction against the govt., implying a mandatory resignation on Ayub Khan's part. However, Sheikh Mujib thought a better political stance here would be presenting the Six Points again on behalf of the East in an official setting; more forceful and effective this time, it would cause an inevitable downfall of the present govt. since the popular opinion would reinforce Ayub's defeat in the parliament.

At a crucial time like this, Sheikh Mujib proceeded to meet Mawlana Bhashani, a political supervisor and a close friend. Interpersonal affairs as such would remain undisclosed to the public, to Foyez Ahmed and even me as well if it wasn't for the very nature of our profession. We knew it would happen at the late Saidul Hasan's house but was unaware

of what exactly would be the focus of their conversation or how it would go, making it all the more exciting for what was about to come.

As we reached our destination, Mawlana Shahab was already there. The General Secretary, Comrade Toha and some other dignitaries were present as well. Right as the evening took over the house there he appeared in a sharp white Toyota! Placing the last fold of betel leaves inside his mouth our Mawlana stood up and held his friend in a close embrace. In teary eyes, he asked, "Mujibur Mia, how have you been?" And the sincere reply came, "Excellency, the Almighty and your good prayers to Him brought me out, alive!"

Soon, it was their turn to have a long awaited conversation with each other as we gave them some privacy. We could hear them talk from the outside, though. After ten minutes, the doors were open and we were invited to join them; as we walked inside, the Mawlana was saying,

"Mujibur, listen to me, please! Do not go to Pindi!"

"Excellency, I promised! I have to!
"Well, neither Bhutto nor I will be there. The whole thing needs only you now!"

"It will happen, anyway! Don't you know me?"

"Ayub must be a dead man as we speak. What's the point?"

"You think I don't know that? At least let me bid him well."

"Mujibur, I repeat, DO NOT go there!"

"Excellency, it's all okay! Just keep me in your prayers as you always have! I will be there- but not for what they want. Trust me."

Well, the next few days can be glimpsed through Ayub's eventual resignation, Yahya's acceptance of presidency, the great cyclone in the East bringing about the death of ten million people and the rise of a bright shining sun in the middle of a brilliant summer sky named Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Motiur Rahman is a lecturer in the Department of English at East West University.



From Tungipara

KAMAL CHOWDHURY

Sitting beside the secluded sepulcher
Praying for the salvation of your soul,
The old folk who shed tears
The sisters of ours who have
Like their fathers, brothers, sons,
Treasured your sacred name
In their hearts with adoration;
The valiant masses who have stood up
Like all the turbulent helmsmen in the Bay of Bengal,
Taking the helms of the exploited.

O the great architect of our independence,
Taking an oath in the name of the Greatest Lord,
To those ancient folk, my vow goes
To those siblings, millions of people, my vow goes.
I will have revenge
At the cost of my blood and diligence,
Witnessed by the soil and people of this world,
For the most ever tragic and heinous murder.

The worker who has just come out leaving behind the swift-moving shuttle;
His helpless beads of sweat have appeared white on his swarthy skin.
want to set him free from all fatigue.
I want to have his eyes filled up with tears of tranquility.
He whom I have seen crying being starved for three days;
My aspirations are for that skeletal peasant;
My rebellion would call him comrade for years to come.

The path that I have embraced, I know, has no gateway
Adorned with flowers nor is life a bed of roses.
That path is blood-stained
Coated with death and temptation.
Like the War of Liberation,
You shall be our indomitable inspiration.
Braving all, I will
Take your Boat to the bank of the coveted river.

A great man you were - but never were a deity.
Those who eulogized you by deification,
Sacrificed their lives many times in meetings, in seminars,
After your demise
None of them is with us today.
Like concubines, they have flanked their new master.
Alas! Such a felony perhaps befits only the Bengalis.

Those who were closer to you- your murderers,
Were they Bengalis?
Or hirelings of a scheming country?
Those who sold themselves to imperialism
Were not our siblings.
Forgetting thousands of tales of our race, fraternity and tradition,
They all have turned attendants to the foreigners.

All my contempt, spite and flame of heart
Are to those villainous murderers named Bengalis.

I have turned my raging vengeance to those murderers.
Behold, the hearts of all true Bengalis are in flames--
We want in our native land, want only
A battalion of robust stalwarts as vigorous as roses.

Have eternal rest, where you were laid to rest.
The great father of the Bengalis,
Let your aura, your endearing voice move us.

Chivalry and towering heroism-
From Tungipara, our villages
Will inherit your gallantry

With the unflagging inspiration of revolution.

Translated by Hossain Ahmed Arif Elahi

POETRY

From Gitabitan

TRANSLATED BY NABILA MURSHID



Monay ki didha rekhe gele cholay Your Faltering Steps

What made you leave hesitatingly at twilight?
What made you falter at the threshold and look back?
Was there anything unsaid in your mind then?
Did a smile break in a corner of your eye as you left?
I think of such things with a trembling heart
Though you live in a far-away heavenly land.
My sorrow ascends with the swans in flight,
And I must beseech you: what was it you had left unsaid?
And did your feelings linger with the jasmine scent?

Aji jyotsna ratay shobai gaechhe bonay On This Spring Night

Everybody has gone to the forest this moonlit night
In the wild intoxicating Spring breeze.
But I am bent on staying behind,
In a solitary corner of my room.
I won't venture out into the windy wilderness.
I'll clean my house with utmost care.
And be wide awake, hoping to hear His footsteps
Perchance he remembers me this day
In this wild intoxicating spring night breeze!

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works there as a psychotherapist.

The Name of the Beloved

ABDUL LATIF

TRANSLATED BY JOHN DREW

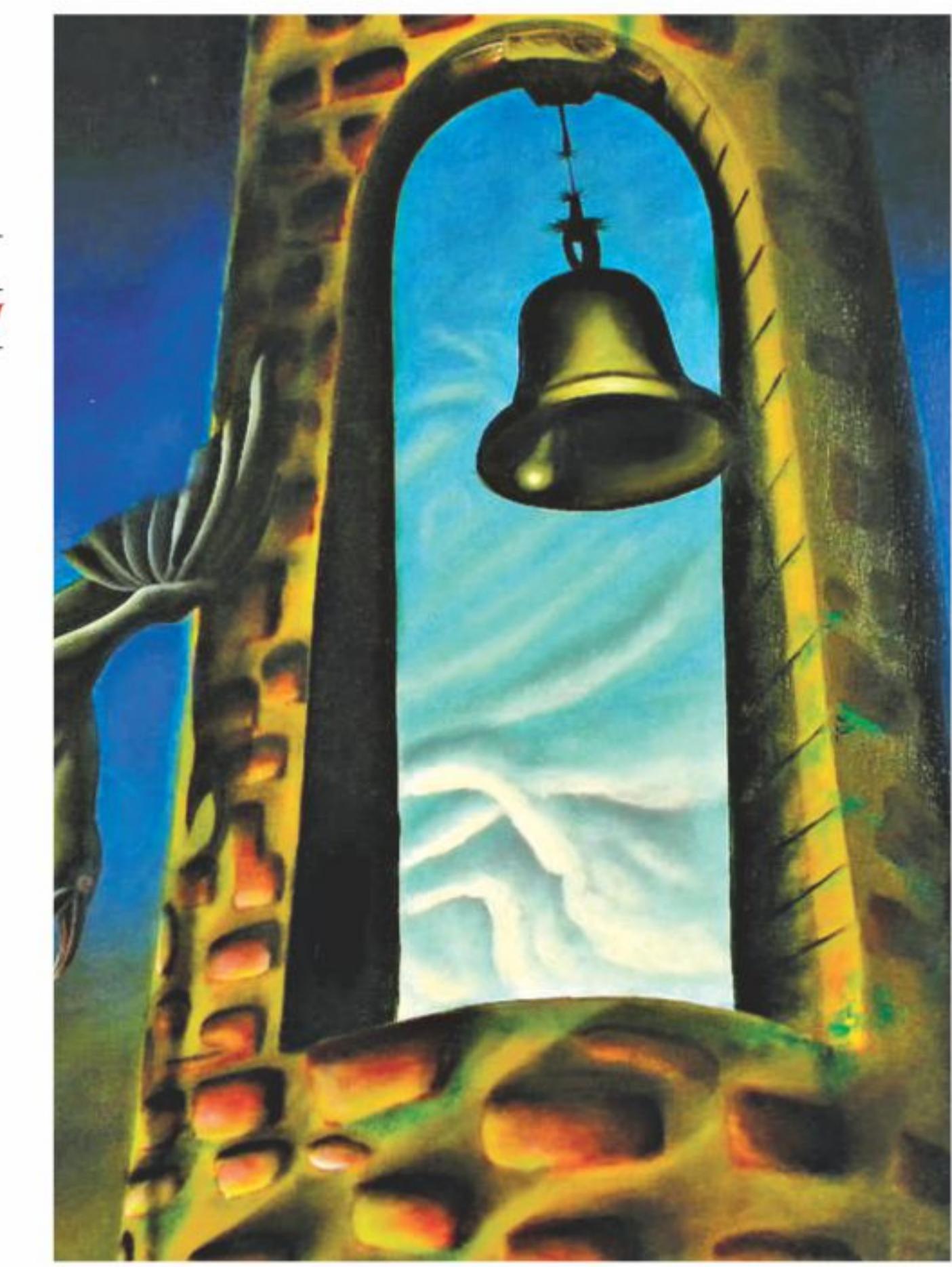
Tell me, Bell,
How is it you resound
To the Beloved's sound?

Flung into flames,
I was born out of loss,
Carved out of iron,
Fired by the smith:
Melted and shaped
Till my skin blistered.

Oh, the pain of separation,
Blow after hammer blow!

Placed on a slab,
Head knocked off,
Patterns etched
All over my skin.
Allah be praised!
A hook was driven
Into my heart
And in my mouth
A gong was hung.

Only then,
The Bell intoned,
Could I give tongue
To the Beloved's name.



John Drew is a poet, scholar and cricket aficionado who has taught English literature and creative writing at universities in several countries. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at ULAB.