



#PERSPECTIVE

# What is patriotism to you?

It is a topic most of us once wrote essays about in school, and the word still evokes profound emotions in us. In a conventional sense, patriotism is seen as loving your country; standing for the national anthem and saluting the flag in its honour. We love Bangladesh the way we love our mothers, unconditionally, and without needing a reason. And with the July revolution, it could be argued that we have taken a bold step towards understanding the true meaning of patriotism.

Riad Uddin, a July warrior who protested on the streets of Dhaka, shared: "Patriotism is about feeling responsible for your country. It means knowing that you can no longer say 'It's not my problem,' because it is, indeed, your problem. So, you need to fix it."

He also added, "Before the July Revolution, we only used to read about legends in textbooks who brought independence to our country. But having witnessed a historic moment in the July Uprising through my own eyes, I now feel hopeful that if we stay united, we can do what it takes to protect our motherland."

Patriotism does not always require taking to the streets. One can show their love through small acts of kindness,

because loving your country also means loving its people.

Mahjabin Khanam, a teacher, fulfils her civic duty to the country by voluntarily dedicating her free time to teaching street children how to read and write.

"These children are our nation's future, and we cannot let them down. I want to help them. I don't know how far I will succeed, but I will keep trying with all my heart," she said.

Patriotism is also about realising that it doesn't always require grand gestures to show your love for the country and the people. Oftentimes, it could be as simple as planting a tree in your backyard or balcony.

Mohammad Badshah Miah, an autorickshaw driver, shows his love for the people in his own unique way by decorating the three-wheeler he drives every day with small plants inside.

"I just want the people who sit in

my autorickshaw to feel like home. If anyone, taking inspiration from my plants, grows at least one at their home, I will find myself fulfilled," he expressed.

This gesture reminds us that patriotism can grow even from the humblest of places.

It can also be expressed through a deep love for your own culture and language. Sometimes, it is as simple as appreciating the richness of our mother tongue.

Fariya Nowshin Deya, a university student who shares a deep love for the Bengali language, said in this regard, "I find comfort in watching Bangla natoks and reading the novels of Rabindranath Tagore and Humayun Ahmed. It is difficult to explain why, but I love complex Bengali words."

Even from beyond borders, one can still show love and support for their country, whether by sending remittances through official channels, gathering with friends abroad to watch the cricket match in support of their home country's team, or simply practising good work ethics and hygiene etiquette among their foreign colleagues and peers.

Faysal Ahmed Ratul, an expatriate living in Australia, remarked, "You won't truly realise how much your family you live away

from them. In the same way, you won't realise how much you truly love your country until you set foot outside, eat foreign food round the clock, and yearn to come back home."

Sifat Islam Ishty, a senior lecturer at BRAC University who teaches economics, noted, referring to the issue of brain drain, "Patriotism could mean returning to your country with valuable skills that you can use for the advancement of your country". He also added, "It could even mean dedicating your time and effort to any research that helps solve a problem your country is facing."

To me, patriotism is beyond symbolic gestures. Patriotism lies in everyday choices made by a person. It is the realisation that if you don't step up for your country, no one from outside will take on your responsibility. It is about feeling that inner call of duty through your own conscience, even when no one is asking you.

In essence, patriotism is a lifelong pursuit, which means supporting and loving our country even when it is going through difficult times. Despite the turbulence, it means never losing faith in your people and nation.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee  
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed / LS Archive

