

PARENTS WHO LET GO

The silent sacrifice of July 2024

#PERSPECTIVE



When children face adversity, mothers experience their deepest fears. Fathers respond in their own way. July 2024 witnessed all of this, as it was also a month that reshaped the way families looked at protest and resistance.

The new generation was no longer silent observers. They have learned to rise, resist, and demand justice. The words echoed through the streets, but behind this wave of youth-led protest were homes filled with quiet anxiety. The parents with heavy hearts lived every moment in silent fear. The hours of waiting felt endless. And yet, parents chose to let go. They could have forced their children to stay home, but they did not. They allowed them to join the protests because they felt silence was no longer an option.

On 18 July, Romecha Begum received a phone call that turned her world upside down. Her son, Riad Uddin Ridu — a university student — had been exposed to tear gas fired by police to disperse protesters. She had assumed he was attending his classes that day. Instead, he had joined the protests without informing his parents.

"I was in our village at that time. All I could think was — if only I were in Dhaka, I would have run to his university and brought him somewhere safe," Begum shares.

She called his friends, her relatives, anyone who might reach him, but the fear didn't leave.

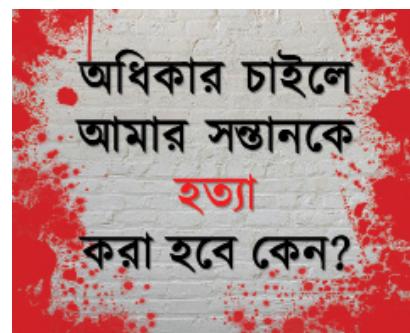
"It was like a weight on my chest that wouldn't go away." And yet, amid fear, came the memories. She remembered

her own glory days, the 1990 protests that brought down Ershad.

"I had been on the streets of Rangpur with my siblings. When I saw these kids, even the ones who got shot, still standing tall, I felt strength return to me."

And Romecha Begum was not alone.

Luthfun Nessa, a teacher by profession and mother of Kibo Mahojenin Khan, a university student, remembers the first time her daughter



joined the protest on 16 July.

"I supported her from the beginning," she said. "Even after the 18 July clashes, I kept supporting her, because she was trying to bring change."

Still, Nessa was worried, and every moment was filled with a prayer. "On 5 August, when victory came, I was in the streets too. But I was proud that my daughter was a part of making it happen."

Luthfun Nessa now believes that by learning to raise a voice against injustice, her daughter has gained a lifelong skill — one that will serve her in the years to come.

Md Abu Yusuf Khan, father of Motaher Khan Tanvir, a Jahangirnagar University alumnus, shared, "I always supported him because I believe if you're doing something for others, for society, not for yourself, then it is the right thing."

Khan was devastated to learn that his son had been hit by five bullets on 19 July, but seeing him wounded and still determined to return to the

streets, shook him. "I was a child during the Liberation War, and I remember carrying water and food for the freedom fighters. He did it because he believed something must change. And I shared his belief," he said.

"Who am I to stand in the way of that kind of courage?" the freedom fighter added.

For Lipi, the mother of Mohammad Mehedi Hasan, the journey was filled with fear and initial reluctance.

She confessed, "I was hesitant at first. There is good and bad in everything. I didn't know if what he was doing was safe. But deep inside, I had faith in him. I knew my son wasn't doing anything wrong. It's just that I am a mother, you know."

Her fear, however, pierced her heart the day he went missing. "It was 26 July when I learned he'd been taken," she recalls, her voice trembling. "I rushed from one police station to another, desperate, but I couldn't find him anywhere."

Hasan had been tracked through a friend and detained by the police. The weight of uncertainty nearly crushed her.

"I was ready to give up everything," she says. "If it meant getting him back, I would have done anything."

Two days later, a call from the DB brought relief to her aching heart. Hasan had been released. He was a changed person, and so was she.

"I didn't want him to go," she shares. "But now I understand. Sometimes, even a mother has to learn to let go."

These stories are not coincidental — they are the voices of thousands of parents and the weight of countless sleepless nights. Behind every protester stood the silent strength of a family. For July 2024 was not just about the youth rising; it was also about families filled with hope, fear, and the painful courage to let go.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi & Minhazur Rahman Alvee
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