

There Comes The Magnanimous

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15 August is the elegiac day to us. The day of bereavement, sorrow and agonising pain. On that day the nation turned blue in pain by losing the greatest Bengali for all times, the great hero of our struggle for freedom, the architect of independent Bangladesh, the luminary great man Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. 15 August has cast unfathomable shame, humiliation and ineffaceable stigma on Bengalis. That stain can never be erased, never be faded.

Such a day of deception, deceit, killing, treason, and knavery has never come in the life of the nation.

Bangabandhu sacrificed his life for the independence. Before the birth of Bangladesh, his life was under threat for several times. When he established that independent country, even then the independence was not out of danger. The nation had to pay the highest price to protect the freedom brought by the Bengali nation. It was Bangabandhu, who had to pay the price of the independence with his life.

Bangabandhu along with his family and several ministers sacrificed life to protect the sovereignty of the first independent state of Bengalis. He did not inherit a state, he himself founded a new independent country. Not a state, but a republic.

Bangabandhu is the asset earned by many pursuits. Why Bangabandhu has achieved the title of the greatest Bengali personality for all times in the poll of BBC? Many a great personalities, political figures, poets, literary persons, philosophers, scientists, knowledgeable and worthy persons ignited and moved our lives for thousand years; they built the history and civilization by their own merit, innovation, extra-ordinary pursuits and works.

To cite examples, we find the names of the great thinker Dipankar Srigyan-Atish, Sri Chaitanya, Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay, Rashtraguru Surendranath Bandopadhyay, Arvind Ghosh, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, Satyendranath Bose, Meghnad Saha, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan, etc. Sh , Sher-e-Bangla Names of AK Fazlul Haque, Manabendranath Roy, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Satyajit Ray. Each of them has made a valuable contribution in building the civilization of Bengali nation. But none of them organized the Bengali nation. Nor did they establish independent Bangladesh. there lies Bangabandhu's excellence, uniqueness.

We learned from history that an independent Bengal was established in the first half of the sixth century during the fall of the Gupta Empire. Gopichandra, Dharmaditya and Samacharadeva were the kings of this kingdom. But they were not Bengalis. South and some parts of East and West Bengal were included in this independent state of Bengal. In the late 6th century, the Gaur kingdom was established with parts of North and West Bengal. King Shashanka was its first sovereign ruler. The independent Sultanate period of two hundred years (1204-1576), from the

13th century to the 16th century, was a bright chapter in Bengali history. But the Sultans were not Bengalis and that Bengal is not this Bengal.

These are about the monarchy. Bangabandhu founded the People's Republic or the Republic. There is another incident in the history of Bengal when after the death of King Shashanka, the democracy of Bengal was destroyed by disharmony, inner conflicts and repeated attacks by external enemies.

The political wisdom, foresight and self-sacrifice shown by the Bengali nation to get rid of that extreme miserable situation will forever be remembered in history. Once the senior leaders of the country decided to put aside their quarrels and elect a person to the throne and all would willingly accept his lordship. People of the country also happily accepted this opinion. As a result, a man named Gopal was elected as the ruler of Bengal.

After reviewing the history of Bengalis of 1500 years, we have to come to the conclusion that it had not been possible to have an independent Bangladesh before we achieved that in 1971.

It was Bangabandhu who was first to establish the independent nation state of Bengalis, first to give Bengalis a national identity. Bangabandhu rewrote history by establishing independent Bangladesh, a unique event in the history of Bengalis which can be compared to the height of the Himalayas and the magnitude and depth of the epic. Bangabandhu is the creator of the new history of Bengalis, the great hero.

Among the previous and contemporary leaders of Bangabandhu, he was the only leader who dedicated his life-long struggle and pursuit for the establishment of an independent state for Bengalis. Although he was busy to fight for contemporary problems and issues, once he was convinced with the truth during his young time that East Bengal must be liberated, and never did he forget it. That is why he is Bangabandhu.

Bangabandhu went to Agartala at least three times (twice in 1961 and 1962, another time probably after his acquittal in the Agartala case) to seek Indian help in liberating Bangladesh. Moazzem Chowdhury and his associates of Sylhet, wanted to take Bangabandhu to London through India in the style of Netaji Subhash Bose to form a government in exile to carry out the struggle for freedom of Bangladesh. In 1962, Bangabandhu also sent a message to the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru through SS Banerjee, a diplomat working at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka at that time, seeking his help in establishing an independent Bangladesh.

In 1961 Bangabandhu formed an organization called East Bengal Mukti Front for independence, such information is available in Shah Moazzem Hossain's book. He wrote, that Bangabandhu gave him some leaflets printed on behalf of that organization to distribute to halls and other important places of Dhaka University. When he gave the leaflets to Sheikh Fazlul Haque Mani, he slipped them through under the doors of different rooms of university halls.

Before that, in 1960, a detective working at the Pakistan Desk in Delhi's South Block came to Chittagong. He went to Noakhali after visiting Patenga Beach, Halishahar etc. This was also a

part of Bangabandhu's freedom movement. The detective's name was Raj Nirmal Narayan Chowdhury. His home district was in Noakhali.

He was the assistant of 'RAW' Chief Ramnath Kao. The purpose of his visit was to verify the feasibility of using the coastal areas of Chittagong for armed revolution for the purpose to liberate Bangladesh. The then General Secretary of Greater Chittagong District Awami League MA Aziz and later accused in Agartala case Manik Chowdhury were with that detective.

These incidents prove how desperate Bangabandhu was for freedom. The Nucleus, a secret group formed within the Chhatra League in 1962, was not the original secret revolutionary move for freedom. But Bangabandhu had secretly taken various initiatives for independence even before that. We have already shown that. In thinking and armed secret revolutionary movement for freedom, Bangabandhu was ahead of all.

From the last half of 1961, several rounds of meetings were held between Awami League and the declared illegal Communist Party. Journalist Zahur Hossain Chowdhury mediates between the two parties in this regard. Sheikh Mujib and Tofazzal Hossain Manik Miah from Awami League and Moni Singh and Khoka Roy from Communist Party were present in those secret meetings.

In the meeting, Awami League leader Sheikh Mujib proposed to include the demand of independent East Pakistan in the programme. He argued: we cannot stay with them anymore. Therefore, the movement for independent East Pakistan should be built from now; that demand should be included in the program of the movement. But in the meeting, the Communist Party leaders did not agree to Bangabandhu's proposal. They opined, 'In this situation, the demand for an independent East Pakistan is now a foolhardy demand.'

Bangabandhu's politics and struggle can be divided into two parts- one is spatial and temporal, and the other one is permanent. The independence of Bangladesh was the ever-lasting and eternal motto of his politics. When he came to Dhaka from Kolkata after partition in 1947 to start politics, the key persons in the politics of Dhaka among the opposition leaders were his predecessors. They were Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque, his direct leader Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, Shamsul Haque, Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, Aatur Rahman Khan, Abul Mansoor Ahmad, Comrade Moni Singh etc. Bangabandhu's contemporary leaders were Oli Ahad, Khondkar Mushtaque Ahmad, Prof. Mozaffar Ahmad, Mohammad Toaha etc.

In 1970, all leaders were alive except AK Fazlul Haque and Suhrawardy. But in terms of popularity, none of them were equal to Bangabandhu. The popularity of Bangabandhu's leadership reached such a height that he could only be compared with the Everest, the highest peak of the Himalayas. Compared to Bangabandhu, other leaders seemed like dwarfs. For this reason, Bangabandhu is the architect of Bangladesh, the great hero of independence

It was Bangabandhu who awakened the Bengali nationhood, he organised the Bengalis as a nation. Bengalis had the same language, tradition, and culture. After the creation of Pakistan, the Bengalis living in the same geographical boundaries of East Bengal got an opportunity to

organise themselves as a nation. Bangabandhu's 6 points demand in 1966 ushered in Bengali nationalism.

Bangabandhu was also the first man to name East Bengal or East Pakistan as 'Bangladesh'. In 1969, Bangabandhu used the word 'Bangladesh' in a discussion meeting organized on the occasion of Suhrawardy's death anniversary at the shrine of the three leaders.

In the past, there was never an independent country named Bangladesh. The land known as Bangla Mulk, including West Bengal, were divided into different independent separate townships named Bengal, Gauro, Rar, Pundra, Barindra, Samatat, Harikel etc. The creation of undivided Bengal occurred during the British rule when the separated townships or independent states got united. In 1905 the attempt of Bengal partition was foiled by the united resistance of Bengalis. In 1947, Bengal was bifurcated and East Bengal was incorporated into East Pakistan and West Bengal into India. Jinnah's pursuit of binationalism was at the root of the 1947 partition of Bengal. Jinnah Sahib established Pakistan as a separate homeland for Muslims as he described the two main segments of the Bengali nation, Hindus and Muslims as two nations. Although religion can never be the basis of nationality. Despite that, Jinnah Sahib created a strange state in the name of Pakistani nation by uniting the people only based on religious belief who lived thousands of miles apart and whose language, culture, traditions and even skin color were different. But after four and a half months of the birth of the country, Bangabandhu challenged Pakistani nationality by forming the East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League. The formation of Chhatra League was a time bomb which exploded on March 26, 1971 and devastated Pakistan.

However, Jinnah established Muslim nationalism in Pakistan. Bangabandhu introduced Bengali nationalism by presenting the idea of mono-nationalism as opposed to Jinnah's bi-nationalism. He argued that no nation can be built based on religion. A common language, culture, tradition is a necessary condition for the formation of a nation. When East Bengal was annexed to Pakistan in 1947, Bangabandhu discovered elements of Bengali nationalism within this geographical territory and found the potentials of Bangladesh which he imagined and envisioned. After that, at first he took initiative to build a nation to establish independent Bangladesh. Bengalis started to be inspired by Bengali nationalist consciousness when they found Pakistanis treated East Bengal (the then East Pakistan) as a colony and found themselves as second-class citizens of Pakistan facing exploitation and discrimination in all aspects of development, business and trade, jobs etc. In the 1960s, Bangabandhu's 6 points demand fanned the fire amid the smoldering discontent of the Bengalis. The demand for autonomy contained in the 6 points is considered charter of independence of Bengalis. Bengalis were reanimated by the spirit of independence as the Pakistani rulers refused to accept the 6 points.

After that, in the 1970's election Bengalis elected Bangabandhu and his party Awami League with an absolute majority as the party secured more than two-thirds of the seats. The Pakistani rulers again refused to accept the people's verdict and started genocide in Bangladesh. When Bangabandhu declared the independence of Bangladesh and called upon the nation to drive away the Pakistani invaders from the soil of Bangladesh, the nation plunged into the liberation war and established Bangladesh by defeating the Pakistani forces. The Pakistani government arrested Bangabandhu from his residence of Dhanmondi 32 on the night of March 25 and imprisoned him

in West Pakistan and tried to kill him. The Pakistani government was forced to release Bangabandhu as their forces lost the war in Bangladesh. Bangabandhu returned to the country on January 10, 1972. From the aforesaid discussion, it can be concluded without any confusion that Bangabandhu is the father of Bengali nation and the founder of independent Bangladesh.

On August 15 the killers of '75 did not kill only Bangabandhu, the father of the Bengali nation, the greatest Bengali of thousand years; they killed Bangladesh, a rose. Because Bangabandhu was not just an individual; he was the symbol of an ideology, the name of a spirit. That ideology is Bangladesh and that spirit is Bengali.

But the killers failed. Because even though Bangabandhu passed away, his ideals of Bangladesh and Bengali nationalism are still alive. Even after 48 years of Bangabandhu's physical death, his ubiquitous influence in Bangladesh is noticeable and is still highly relevant in this country. As long as Bangladesh exists, Bangabandhu will live in Bangladesh.

Who were they? Mushtaq, Chashi, Thakur, Rashid, Farooq - whom we know as killers; behind their personal identity, who were they really? They were also symbols of an ideology.

Or was there a mastermind behind the scene? Who, clean-shaven and dressed in a complete military uniform, was pacing up and down in grave concern at the residence of Cantonment on the morning of August 15 to hear the news of accomplishing the killing mission? It was Ziaur Rahman.

After seizing power, Zia himself revealed that his ideology was 'Bangladeshi nationalism', which was essentially a variation of Islamic or Pakistani nationalism. Before this, Mushtaq had dissolved the state policies of Bangladesh, transformed the slogan of liberation war 'Joy Bangla' to 'Bangladesh Zindabad,' and renamed 'Bangladesh Betar' to 'Radio Bangladesh.' Mushtaq hated everything about Bangabandhu, even his attires too. He tried to introduce a peculiar type of new national attire. Among the four main state principles Bengali nationalism, secularism, and socialism were altered. Those principles were the achievements of the Liberation War.

Bangladesh was founded based on Bengali nationalism; Pakistan's communalism was replaced by secularism; and instead of class inequality and exploitative social structure, an egalitarian society was introduced, which was one of the commitments of the Liberation War. All these were abandoned. After that, what remained was the sheath named Bangladesh, within it there was 'Pakistan.'

Mushtaq established Pakistan, and Zia legitimized him under the veil of Bangladeshi nationalism. Actually, Mushtaque, and Chashi, were remnants of the defeated Pakistani forces of '71. They were engaged in a conspiracy to foil Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971 and wanted to keep Pakistan united by forming a confederation. Mushtaq could not succeed due to the vigilance and firmness of the four national leaders Syed Nazrul, Tajuddin, Captain Mansoor Ali and Kamruzzaman.

By killing Bangabandhu, Mushtaq fulfilled his desire to ascend to power. It was Ziaur Rahman who was the man behind the scenes encouraging him to kill Bangabandhu. Bangabandhu did not

appoint him as the army chief, thus enraged, Zia participated in the assassination plot of Bangabandhu.

Zia was a mysterious figure from the Liberation War. Though unwilling, he joined the liberation war and initially served as the Sector Commander of Sector 1 in the Harina Camp in Tripura, India. However, due to suspicious activities, he was removed from Sector 1. There were doubts that during the Liberation War, he was involved in subversive activities. He opposed Mr. Osmani's appointment as the Chief of Staff and attempted to remove the latter from the position. He couldn't succeed due to Khalid Musharraf's opposition. Due to Zia's mistakes in the Battle of Kamalpur, many officers and soldiers of the Bangladesh forces were martyred. After that incident, General Osmani wanted to sack him.

Zia was the highest beneficiary from the assassination of Bangabandhu. He gradually established himself as the Chief Martial Law Administrator, Chief of Army Staff, and eventually became the President, reaching the pinnacle of power. He gradually rehabilitated the key persons who had opposed independence by appointing Shah Aziz as the Prime Minister and Alim and Matin as ministers. He abolished the Collaborators Act, and collaborators, Razakars, and Al-Badr members. He dismantled all achievements of the Liberation War, abandoning the values of the war from all levels of the state and society.

Mushtaq and Zia tried to banish all the signs of Bangabandhu by banning Bangabandhu's name and Awami League. However, despite their efforts, Bangabandhu's legacy remains deeply engraved in the hearts of the people. Such an attempt to erase him was not easy, as he lives eternally in the consciousness of the people. It is proved that martyred Bangabandhu is thousand times powerful than living Bangabandhu. Bangabandhu's name is intertwined with Bangladesh to such an extent that it's impossible to separate them. He is inseparable from the sky, air, rivers, lakes, fields, trees, foliage, flowers, birds, and all of nature in Bangladesh. His presence is deeply felt and cannot be erased.

Those who thought that they brought back the defeated and ousted Pakistani forces of '71 to Bangladesh by killing Bangabandhu in '75, they were living in a fool's paradise. The person who would bring them to justice had already grown up. The daughters of Bangabandhu, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, who escaped the killers' bullets on August 15, 1975 as they were abroad. Sheikh Hasina returned to the country in 1981 with firm determination to bring the killers of her father to justice and to bring back Bangladesh on the right track. First she took the initiative to reorganise Awami League, the political party formed by her father, the party which led the struggle for freedom.

First, she took the initiative to reorganise Awami League, the party created by his father, which led the struggle for freedom. She brought order back to Awami League by organising the frustrated, demoralized, fragmented leaders and workers of the party. With the reconstituted party, she won the elections in 1996 and again from 2008 to the present time and has brought back the spirit of the liberation war at all echelons of the state and society.

Based on the values of the liberation war, she has governed the country and established Bangabandhu at the position of the highest honor and dignity of the state. He was declared the 'Father of the Nation', constitutionally so too. She established Bangladesh firmly on the foundation of the spirit of independence by declaring Bangabandhu's Martyrdom Day as

National Mourning Day, Bangabandhu's Birthday as National Children's Day, 'Joy Bangla' as National slogan; by including Bangabandhu's speech of 7th March in UNESCO World Heritage; by completing the trial of Bangabandhu killing and jail killing, the trial of war criminals.

With the aim of realizing Bangabandhu's dream of turning country into a golden Bangladesh, she has transformed Bangladesh into a developing country. Now she is working relentlessly to transform the country into a developed state within 2041. After establishing Digital Bangladesh, she has now taken a vow to build Smart Bangladesh. Despite the global economic recession caused by the Corona pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, Sheikh Hasina's ability to steer the country's economy on a dynamic and progressive track shows the proof of her leadership's foresight and strength. After the refusal of the World Bank to finance the construction of the Padma Bridge, Sheikh Hasina surprised the world by building the Padma Bridge with our own funds. The construction of Metrorail in Dhaka and Bangabandhu Tunnel in Chittagong are immortal achievements of Sheikh Hasina's government.

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(Translated by Parikshit Chowdhury)

PID Feature