

Bangabandhu's Dream and Sheikh Hasina's Success

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Dr. M. Shahinoor Rahman



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*Dedicated to
Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*

MESSAGE

My affectionate Dr. M. Shahinoor Rahman, who has completed two successful terms in a row as the honourable Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Islamic University, Bangladesh is the most senior professor of English at the same university. For quite a long time, he has been involved in various studies with me on folk culture and folk literature in Bangladesh. Having taught about folklore research by eminent folklorist and scholar Professor Henry Glassie, Dr. Rahman has developed a deep passion for folklore research which has impressed me. He has also left the mark of his efficacy in organizing seminars, symposiums, and conferences on folklore. Meanwhile, several of his academic and creative books have been published from publishing houses at home and abroad. A significant number of his papers in Bengali and English have also been published in nationally and internationally acclaimed journals.

Dr. Rahman has a devoted respect and passionate love for the Father of the Bengali Nation, the mastermind behind Bangladesh's liberation struggle and the architect of the independent Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This passionate love has continued to inspire him to indulge in long-term studious exploration of Bangabandhu, his politics and his family. I am very happy to know that his studious venture is going to result in several printed books in Bengali and English about Bangabandhu, his family and politics. I think these books have a timely and logical assessment of Bangabandhu's works and achievements. I believe that by reading these books, the present and future generation of Bangladesh will be able to understand more closely the contribution of Bangabandhu's dream and leadership to the independence and progress of Bangladesh.

I hope for the highest success of Dr. Rahman's efforts.



Professor Shamsuzzaman Khan
Chairman Bangla Academy, Dhaka &
Bangabandhu Chair Professor Islamic University, Kushtia

PREFATORY NOTE

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is exceptionally unique among the world's great leaders for his creating an independent country while others are found in the history as great either for ruling their countries successfully and promoting the social and economic status or fighting the internal obstacles and odds within their countries. Sheikh Mujib dreamt of the creation of a country and completed it in his life time, which is a rare example in the world history. From time to time, the world has witnessed a number of leaders who carried out revolutions and movements that brought enormous changes in the social and political dynamics of the world, and above all, in the life of common people. Those iconoclastic leaders surpass the limitation of time and boundaries of shadow lines of their own countries. Bangabandhu was such an internationally recognized iconic leader under whose leadership the most desired independence of Bangalis came true.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of Bangladesh and Father of the Bengali Nation, showed the first sign of being a people's leader since the creation of the undivided Bengal. In the coming years, he grew up to be the leader, he meant to be, and steered his nation to their most glorious moment in its history. He was—from that first sign of leadership till the day he died—a people's leader. To comment on the dynamic leadership of Bangabandhu, Gary J. Bass mentioned, “Mujib's very appearance suggested raw power, a power drawn from the masses and from his own strong personality. He was tall and sturdy, with rugged features and intense eyes.”

Bangabandhu's historic 7 March speech deserves a special mention here. It was extempore, and lasted only 19 minutes, but his each word conveyed the strategic guidance for the final phase of the revolution and instilled patriotic feelings into the minds of Bangalis. This speech has been recognized as one of the most rousing and inspirational wartime speeches in the last 2,500 years in Jacob F. Field's 2013 book titled *We Shall Fight on the*

Beaches: The Speeches That Inspired History. Jacob F Field underlined the rationale for this rating through a collection of extracts from the most inspirational speeches of the last 2,500 years including speeches of leaders like Cicero, Churchill, Lincoln, Mao, and many others.

Bangabandhu made Bangladesh independent not off the cuff in a single day. He moved on decisively with a target to liberating Bangalis from the economic exploitation of Pakistan, and for that he had to be imprisoned more than often by the Pakistani government. He was first imprisoned in his school life in 1938 which was followed twelve more by 1940, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1954, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, and 1971. An analysis of his prison history indicates that during the 25 years of Pakistani rule, Mujib had to spend 12 years in prison and faced death sentences twice. But he accepted all these tortures with a smile in his face only for his love for Bangalis. Gary J. Bass argued, “Mujib's lifelong activism had cast him into jail, making him a hero to the people.”

Truly speaking, Sheikh Mujib and Bangladesh are inseparable. It will not be an exaggeration if it is said that Bangladesh would not have been born as a country if Sheikh Mujib were not born as no other leader of Bengal in its thousands of years' history before Mujib ever thought of the separate existence of Bengal. It was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who first thought of making Bengal an independent state, and he did so. Hence, he has been recognized as the Father of Bengali Nation and also, as the greatest Bengali of all time.

This book is a collection of essays written to commemorate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, consisting of as many as twenty essays which focus on different aspects of his leadership and contribution of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, his worthy daughter, honourable Prime Minister Jononotree Sheikh Hasina and other members of the family to the Bengali Nation. I do believe readers will take interest in reading this book with delight.

INTRODUCTION

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the dreamer and architect of independent Bangladesh. In thousands of years' history of Bengal, it was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who thought of making Bengal an independent state, and he did so. Hence, he has been recognized as the father of Bengali nation, and also as the greatest Bengali of the millennium.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born on 17 March 1920 at Tungipara, Gopalganj under Faridpur district in the East Bengal part of British India. He was the third among six children of his parents, Sheikh Lutfur Rahman and Sayera Khatun. Having Matriculation from Gopalganj Public School, and graduating from Calcutta Islamia College under Calcutta University, he took admission to Dhaka University for a master's degree in Law, but unfortunately and unjustly he was expelled from the university for his involvement in a strike of the fourth-class employees of the university.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman lived a happy conjugal life with Begum Fazilatunnesa, who had been a co-partner not only in his personal life but also in his whole political life. Their family was blessed with two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, and three sons, Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel.

Bangabandhu's political career began at an early age when he was a student. In 1940, he joined the All Indian Muslim Students' Federation, a student wing of the All Indian Muslim League. In 1943, he left the Indian Muslim League and joined the rather liberal and progressive Bengal Muslim League. Here, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came in close contact with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy who acted as a true mentor and guide for him. While he was a student at the University of Dhaka, he established the

East Pakistan Muslim Students' League to reduce the dominance of the All Indian Muslim Students' Federation.

During the Language Movement, Sheikh Mujib played a very significant role as a student leader. On 11 March 1948, he was arrested along with some other political activists for their alleged involvement in the Language Movement. But the Pakistani government had to release him and some other student leaders on 15th March of the same year in the face of a huge upsurge or protest by students. The organisation called Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad arranged a rally at the Dhaka University campus on the occasion of their release, but police intercepted the rally. In protest of this, Sheikh Mujib called a nationwide student strike on 17 March 1948. In meanwhile, sympathetic Mujib got involved in a movement of the fourth-class employees of DU for which he was arrested and expelled from the university.

The decade of 50s was the period of his political upsurge. Gradually, he turned to be a skilled political spearhead endowed with foresight and wisdom. In 1949, Sheikh Mujib left The Muslim League and joined hands with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani to form a separate political party called The Awami Muslim League. He was elected the first Joint Secretary General of the party, and then got the responsibility of the General Secretary of the party in 1953. After winning the victory in the 1954 election, Mujib became the Agriculture Minister of the United Front government. He was also entrusted with the responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. But he resigned the cabinet with a view to strengthening the party. In 1963, after the death of Suhrawardy, Sheikh Mujib became the ultimate leader of the Awami League. He was a stubborn critic of the basic democracy propounded by Ayub Khan. In the national convention of the opposition parties in 1966, he raised the historical 6-point demands, which reflected the outlines of the autonomy or self-rule for East Pakistan. The seeds of the independence for the

Bengalis were sown in this Six-Point proposition. Getting scared by the huge public support for Mujib's 6 point movement, the then Pakistani rulers arrested Sheikh Mujib against the Agartala Conspiracy Case. The whole population of Bengal became furious at this. At this stage, the autocrat had to submit to the public wrath and set him free. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was received by the Central Student Movement Council with a public ovation at the Racecourse Ground on 23 February 1969. There Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was adorned with the title of 'Bangabandhu' in front of millions of people. In the same year, on 5th December, at a public meeting, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman renamed the East Bengal as Bangladesh.

Under the self-motivated and dynamic leadership of Bangabandhu, Awami League fought in the general election held on 7 December 1970 and won a landslide victory in both national and state assemblies, winning 167 seats out of 169 in the East Pakistan for the national assembly. Similarly, the Awami League won 305 seats out of 310 in the state assembly. But the West Pakistan ruling sections were dead against Mujib's policy of provincial autonomy. In order to resist the formation of government by The Awami League, President Yahya Khan began to dally in calling for the assembly session. That very moment Bangabandhu understood that there was no way out but to fight the enemies to put an end to the misrule of the West Pakistani autocratic regime. On 7 March 1971, Bangabandhu announced a civil disobedience movement against Pakistan in the historical speech delivered in a large gathering of over two million people at the Race Course Ground. Bangabandhu, in his speech, urged the people of the East Bengal to turn every house into a fortress and fight with whatever they had to make Bengal an independent state. He, actually, declared the independence of Bangladesh through the speech which he concluded uttering the most impelling words: "The struggle this time is that of our freedom, the struggle this time is that of independence." The whole Bengal went frantic in a furor. Being afraid of this uprising of the

Bengalis under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib, Yahya Khan issued martial law, banned the Awami League and ordered the arrest of Sheikh Mujib. Meanwhile Bangabandhu officially declared the independence of Bangladesh in the dead hour of the fateful night of 25th March 1971, a little earlier before his arrest when the autocratic Pakistani government unleashed a demonic and barbarous genocide while Bangabandhu was arrested and deported to the West Pakistan.

The first ever government of People's Republic of Bangladesh was formed on 17 April 1971 and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was made the President. In his absence, Syed Nazrul Islam carried the responsibility of the Acting President and Tajuddin Ahmed became the Prime Minister. By forming the Bangladesh Armed Forces, the newly formed government thus initiated essential activities to take the fight back to the Pakistan Army. After the passage of nine long months, the moment of victory came wading through the bloodstream of 3 million martyrs. At the Racecourse Ground from where Bangabandhu called for the struggle of independence, the Pakistan Army surrendered to the India-Bangladesh united command. A new country called Bangladesh evolved on the global map.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman headed the first government of this new-born country for a period of three years and a half. His government had to deal with all the numerous problems that a war-ravaged country may confront. Restoring law and order, rehabilitating the freedom fighters, restoring the dismantled communication system, feeding the hungry millions and many other problems altogether almost strangled his administration. But with befitting courage and tremendous care, Bangabandhu strove to encounter all the problems. Meanwhile, utilizing his personal charisma he earned recognition for Bangladesh from the international communities including the United Nations.

Yet, the ghosts of pro-Pakistan conspiracy did not leave Bangladesh and they were awaiting a chance to destabilize the country at any cost. At the dark midnight of 15 August 1975, a group of ill-advised traitor army personnel cherishing antagonism against the spirit of liberation war assassinated the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with almost all the members of his family. Only his two beloved daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, escaped death since they were abroad at that time. This heinous murder brought about an indelible loss in the life of the newly born country. It created a political void which promoted the diminishing of democratic coherence and the continuity of national progress.

Bangabandhu has been officially declared the Father of the Nation. In a recent meeting commemorating the national mourning day arranged by the Bangladesh Mission at United Nations' Organization Headquarters on 16 August 2019, he has been revered with the title 'Friend of the World'.

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FATHER OF THE NATION
BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR
RAHMAN'S SPEECH ON THE DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE AT THE PARLIAMENT

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Prime Minister: Leader of the House): Mr. Speaker, I intend to discuss several issues today through you. Today, we have got the opportunity to sit here as members of the General Assembly. Today, we've been able to ensure the independence of the country and thus Bangladesh is now an independent and sovereign country. The opportunity by which we are working here as General Assembly Members has been facilitated by the commons at the cost of their blood. It was quite long ago when our struggle for independence began. Mr. Speaker, you know that we've earned this independence in lieu of the blood of three million of our brothers and sisters. As members of this Assembly, we must keep in mind their sacrifice. We have to be aware that the bloodshed, in lieu of which we achieved freedom, may not be wasted. Blood has been given in this struggle for independence by millions of our brothers and sisters, innocent common people, farmers, students, workers, intellectuals of the land, the brothers of armed forces, police members, the formerly EPR members, Ansars and Mojahids. Every Bengali, even the public servants also shed blood in this struggle for Independence. The mothers and sisters of Bengal were not spared from the horrible oppression and atrocity that the Army of ruthless barbarian Yahya Khan unleashed. There is no other example in the history of the world of such bestial behavior of the animals of the Army.

Today we remember them; we have to remember those of my colleague members who were victorious in the last elections. Many of them were made captives and subject to brutal killing—their names have also been included in the motion which I have moved through you in this Assembly.

Besides, millions of known and unknown people of this country, millions of Awami League workers have sacrificed life for the cause of independence. Along with this, we have to settle our future work-plan with grateful remembrance of the sacrifice of others who joined the struggle, those who irrespective of party and opinion gave blood and embraced martyrdom.

Mr. speaker, we have achieved freedom today; now I intend to talk about the four pillars which we shall have to keep in front while forming the constitution of our country—nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism. We want to ensure democracy and we have sat in this Assembly with a view to bringing in democracy. For, the constitution that we are going to produce will have the words of the rights of men inscribed on it so that none in days to come can do malpractice with the life and wealth of the people. It is a constitution like this that we have to propose for people. Sitting here today we have to forge, for the sake of our future progeny, a constitution on the basis of four pillars so that they can stand with their heads high in front of the people of the civilized countries of the world. Mr. Speaker, we owe the nation a duty, a tremendous duty. I don't want to elongate my speech. It is alright that we might not discuss the history created by those who struggled for the achievement of the rights of people of Bangladesh but I hereby remember several special leaders who were worshippers of democracy: Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haq, Dhirendranath Dutta killed in the hands of the barbarian Pakistan forces, and Tofajjal Hossain, our Manik Bhai, who fought with his pen. We want to remember them with reverence. I remember all of those who laid down lives, those who passed their lives in captivity. If we do not remember those who struggled to establish democracy in this country, if their history is not written, the future descendants will not know who were behind this struggle.

We had an election last year. It was before this election that we knew, irrespective of the majority of population, they want to

subjugate us as their colony and market. Not only that they unleashed attacks on our culture and language also. They wanted to have us relegated to the status of a colony by striking on our citizen rights. Our struggle continued since then. We knew that we had to carry on the struggle through stages. That struggle gradually reached a culmination. You are aware of the history of the 25th of March. The barbaric Pakistan attacking forces did not care for any convention or law. No matches of their deeds can be found in the civilized countries of the world. You know, there is a rule for warfare in every civilized country. But like a gang of cowards they indulged in a heinous game of atrocity by putting houses to fire, killing even breastfed infants. They ordered: kill whosoever belongs to Awami League, no pity or mercy. We have such documents of their vicious activities that would make one shiver. A paper signed by a General has been to our hands. It directs toward looting; it speaks even of bestial torture. The Barbaric Army of Yahya was set like packs of hounds upon the seventy million Bengalis. If the Army had declared war, we could have confronted that. But all on a sudden, they attacked us on 25th of March. Then we understood that our ultimate struggle had already begun. I declared by means of wireless media that Bangladesh was an independent and sovereign country from that day, wished that the news should be circulated to everyone so that resistance could be built up in every Thana, sub-division, and district. I also gave necessary directions in this regard. We have to be conscious about this matter. The people of the country know that the resistance movement germinated in different regions of the country on the same date. It did not come out of air. If there were no directions then how could the struggle begin in the same moment, at the same time everywhere?

Now if I don't say anything about the Government of India, it would be an injustice to them. When the common people of my country along with their young children walked a long way, leaving their homesteads in fear of life, into India, the people of

India took them to their bosom. I hereby remember with reverence the people of India, those of the West Bengal, Tripura, and Assam, and especially, the Government of India led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, because they took our people to their bosom. I remember those soldiers of the Indian Army who fought alongside our freedom fighters. I remember the people and the Government of Russia who helped us for surety. They protested openly against my arrest and rigorously against the devastation of Bangladesh. I remember the people of Great Britain, those of West Germany, Japan, and even the people of America who supported our movement. I would like to thank all whosoever supported us on behalf of this General Assembly. Russia gave three vetoes even in the UNO; Otherwise, I can't tell what would befall on Bangladesh in consequence of the conspiracy that was brewing there. Those eastern European countries along with Poland especially, who supported us, I want to remember and thank each of them and their people.

Mr. Speaker, tongue fails us to say these things, man turns emotional. So, it is difficult for me also to say these, because I turn emotional. We see hundreds of thousands of our mothers and sisters have been ravished and thousands of our young men are left disabled; we could do nothing for them. They have burnt our villages to ashes; looted our wealth and property, destroyed our roads into pieces; put our currency notes to fire. How many of such oppressions our people had to undergo! It would be injustice if we did not congratulate them on showing such endurance. Again, I want to respectfully remember and thank, through you, all those parties who extended their support to me.

Mr. Speaker, it is our special duty on our part today to provide the nation with a constitution and we'll try to do that as early as possible. I would like to tell the member colleagues, my brothers, who are present here, I want to tell you all that you fought in the open under the trees without food and you had nothing even to wear. The kith and kin of my colleagues have been tormented;

their houses have been burnt. I don't have the ability to provide them with everything that the members do have rights to claim. If we tried to collect microphones from abroad, it would take three months long, it would be too late. The condition that this Assembly house was in, it could provide seats for only three hundred members; today, all of you four hundred and fifty members have sat in the same. If there were none of this Assembly house, I can give this certain assurance that my members would form a constitution even sitting under a tree.

Our people are in so much trouble today. They don't have house to dwell; we can't give them anything; people are suffering. Thousands of people are roaming jobless; we can't provide them with opportunities and facilities. But you can stay ascertained—I again telling you—that it is our duty to form a constitution. According to our program, we'll again sit tomorrow. It is not that we would create a committee only with members from our party; it will be discussed about with all and sundry irrespective of party and opinion so that we can provide an appropriate constitution according to their will. We'll ask for everyone's opinion in this regard. This constitution will emphasize human rights that the people will enjoy lifelong. What have we seen on last twenty three years—maladministration in the name of administration, martial-law in the name of public security, and fraud and deception in the name of exacting the demands of people. And throughout, my life has been targets of blame as an 'agent of Hindustan'. We have to make all out efforts so that these malpractices are uprooted from this country forever and I seek for everybody's cooperation in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, you have become the Speaker of this Assembly. I want to inform you once again that we intend to form a mass-oriented constitution and would like to assure you that you shall have our full support till you remain impartial. We hope that you'll follow your conscience and do your duty obeying the parliamentary conventions. You won't bother yourself about

which party is bigger and which is smaller; you'll judge according to the act of proceedings and do justice. I'll render full support and assistance from the corner of my party.

The motion which was placed here as read out by Mr. Nazrul Islam, will again be placed after correction. Through you, I thank my brethren, members of the house, and you too. I also thank the staff of the Assembly for working relentlessly day in and day out to arrange all this in such a quick time, because I know they have done this in a few days' notice. Finally, I thank the reporters who are working here and want them to prepare clear and beautiful, flawless report, because it will remain as a history. Let this history be not spoilt. With this, I terminate my speech.

স্বাধীনতা ঘোষণা সম্পর্কীয় প্রস্তাব

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান: জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, আপনার মাধ্যমে আমি আজ কয়েকটা বিষয় এখানে আলোচনা করতে চাই। আজ আমরা এখানে গণপরিষদের সদস্য হিসাবে বসবার সুযোগ পেয়েছি। আমরা আজকে বাংলাদেশকে স্বাধীন করতে পেরেছি এবং বাংলাদেশ আজ একটি স্বাধীন ও সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র। আমরা যে আজ বাংলাদেশের সার্বভৌম গণপরিষদের সদস্য হিসাবে কাজ করতে পারছি, সে সুযোগ এ দেশের জনসাধারণ তাদের রক্ত দিয়ে এনে দিয়েছে। আমাদের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রাম অনেক দিন থেকে শুরু হয়। জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, আপনার জানা আছে যে, ত্রিশ লক্ষ ভাই-বোনের রক্তের বিনিময়ে এই স্বাধীনতা আমরা পেয়েছি।

এই গণপরিষদের সদস্য হিসাবে নিশ্চয়ই তাদের আত্মত্যাগের কথা আমরা স্মরণ করব এবং মনে রাখব। আমাদের মনে রাখতে হবে, যে রক্তের বিনিময়ে আমরা স্বাধীনতা পেয়েছি, সে রক্ত যেন বৃথা না যায়। রক্ত দিয়েছে এ দেশের লক্ষ লক্ষ ভাই-বোন, নিরীহ জনসাধারণ। রক্ত দিয়েছে এ দেশের কৃষক, ছাত্র, শ্রমিক, বুদ্ধিজীবীরা, রক্ত দিয়েছে এ দেশের জনগণ, রক্ত দিয়েছে সামরিক বাহিনীর ভাইয়েরা, রক্ত দিয়েছে পুলিশ, রক্ত দিয়েছে ভূতপূর্ব ই.পি.আর., রক্ত দিয়েছে আনসাররা, মোজাহেদেরা। রক্ত দিয়েছে প্রত্যেকটি বাঙালি, এমনকি সরকারী কর্মচারীরাও রক্ত দিয়েছে এই স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামে। নিষ্ঠুর বর্বর ইয়াহিয়া খানের সেনারা যে অত্যাচার করেছে, জুলুম করেছে, তা থেকে বাংলাদেশের মা-বোনেরা পর্যন্ত নিস্তার পায়নি। লক্ষ লক্ষ মা-বোনকে নির্যাতন করা হয়েছে। এই পশু সেনাদের আচরণের দুনিয়ায় ইতিহাসে আর কোথাও নাই। আজ তাদের কথা আমরা স্মরণ করছি, স্মরণ করতে হয় আমার সহকর্মী সত্যবৃন্দের কথা, যারা সেই

গত নির্বাচনে নির্বাচিত হয়েছিলেন। তাদের অনেককেই বন্দী করে নির্মমভাবে হত্যা করা হয়েছে - তাদের নামও এ প্রস্তাবে রয়েছে যে প্রস্তাব আমি আপনার মাধ্যমে পরিষদে পেশ করেছি। তাছাড়া এই দেশের জানা-অজানা লক্ষ লক্ষ লোক, আওয়ামী লীগের লক্ষ লক্ষ কর্মী স্বাধীনতার জন্য জীবন দিয়েছেন। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অন্যান্য যাঁরা আমাদের এই সংগ্রামে যোগ দিয়েছিলেন, দলমত নির্বিশেষে যাঁরা স্বাধীনতার জন্য রক্ত দিয়েছেন, শহীদ হয়েছেন, তাঁদের ত্যাগের কথা কৃতজ্ঞতার সাথে স্মরণ করে আমাদের ভবিষ্যৎ কর্মপন্থা গ্রহণ করতে হবে।

জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, আজ স্বাধীনতা আমরা পেয়েছি। এর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আমি চারটি স্তম্ভকে স্মরণ করতে চাই, যেগুলোকে সামনে রেখে আমাদের দেশের সংবিধান তৈরি করতে হবে। জাতীয়তাবাদ, গণতন্ত্র, সমাজতন্ত্র ও ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতা। আমরা গণতন্ত্র দিতে চাই এবং গণতন্ত্র দিতেই আজ আমরা এই পরিষদে বসেছি। কারণ, আজ আমরা যে সংবিধান দেব, তাতে মানুষের অধিকারের কথা লেখা থাকবে, যাতে ভবিষ্যতে কেউ জনগণের জানমাল নিয়েছিনিমিনি খেলতে না পারে। এমন সংবিধানই জনগণের জন্য পেশ করতে হবে। আজ এখানে বসে চারটি স্তম্ভের উপর ভিত্তি করে আমাদের ভবিষ্যৎ বংশধরদের জন্য এমন সংবিধান রচনা করতে হবে, যাতে তারা দুনিয়ার সভ্য দেশের মানুষের সামনে মাথা উঁচু করে দাঁড়াতে পারে। জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, জাতির কাছে আমাদের একটা কর্তব্য রয়েছে, একটা বিরাট কর্তব্য আছে। আমি আমার বক্তৃতা বড় করতে চাই না। কিন্তু বাংলাদেশের গণতান্ত্রিক অধিকার আদায়ের জন্য যারা সংগ্রাম করে ইতিহাস সৃষ্টি করেছেন, তাদের সেই ইতিহাস আজ এখানে পর্যালোচনা না করলেও চলবে। কিন্তু বিশেষ কয়েকজন নেতার কথা স্মরণ করছি, যারা গণতন্ত্রের পূজারী ছিলেন; যেমন, হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী, শেরে-বাংলা এ. কে. ফজলুল হক, বর্বর পাক বাহিনীর হাতে নিহত ধীরেন্দ্র নাথ দত্ত আর কলম দ্বারা সংগ্রাম করেছেন সেই জনাব তোফাজ্জল হোসেন-আমাদের মানিক ভাই। এঁদের কথা শ্রদ্ধার সাথে আমরা স্মরণ করতে চাই। স্মরণ করি ১৯৪৭ সাল থেকে আজ পর্যন্ত প্রত্যেকটি আন্দোলনের সময়যারা জীবন দিয়েছেন, যারা কারাগারে জীবন কাটিয়েছেন। গণতন্ত্রকে এ দেশে প্রতিষ্ঠা করার জন্য যারা সংগ্রাম করেছেন, তাঁদের কথা যদি স্মরণ না করি, তাদের ইতিহাস যদি লেখা না হয়, তবে ভবিষ্যৎ বংশধররা জানতে পারবে না এই সংগ্রামের পিছনে কারা ছিলেন।

গত বছর নির্বাচন হল। সেই নির্বাচনের পূর্ব থেকেই আমাদের জানা ছিল যে, বাংলাদেশ জনসংখ্যা সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ থাকা সত্ত্বেও তারা আমাদেরকে কলোনী এবং বেকার করে রাখতে চায়। শুধু তাই নয়, তারা আমাদের সংস্কৃতি ও ভাষার উপর আঘাত করছিল, আমাদের নাগরিক অধিকারের উপর আঘাত করে আমাদেরকে

কলোনী করে রাখতে চেয়েছিল। আমাদের সংগ্রাম তখন থেকেই চলছিল। আমরা জানতাম সংগ্রামকে ধাপে ধাপে এগিয়েনিয়ে যেতে হবে। এভাবে সংগ্রাম এগিয়ে আজ চরম সংগ্রামে পরিণত হয়েছে। ২৫শে মার্চ তারিখের ইতিহাস আপনাদের জানা আছে। সেইদিন বর্বর পাক হানাদার বাহিনী কোন আইন-কানুন মানে নাই। কোন সভ্য দেশে তাদের কাজের তুলনা পাওয়া যায়না। প্রত্যেক সভ্য দেশে যুদ্ধের একটা নিয়ম আছে। কোনরূপ ওয়ার্নিং না দিয়ে অতর্কিতে কাপুরুষের মত বাড়িঘরে আঙুন লাগিয়ে, দুধের বাচ্চাকে পর্যন্ত হত্যা করে তারা এক জঘন্য লীলায় মেতে উঠেছিল। অর্ডার দিয়েছিল আওয়ামী লীগের লোক, যাকে পাও, তাকেই হত্যা করো, কোনরূপ দয়া-মায়া নাই। তাদের জঘন্য কাজ-কারবারের এমন সমস্ত ইতিহাস আমাদের হাতে আছে, যা দেখলে শিউরে উঠতে হয়। আমাদের হাতে একজন জেনারেলের দস্তখত করা কাগজ এসেছে। তাতে লেখা আছে 'লুটপাট কর'। এমনকি পাশবিক অত্যাচারের কথাও আছে। বর্বর ইয়াহিয়ার সেনাবাহিনীকে অসহায় ও নিরস্ত্র সাত কোটি বাঙালির উপর কুকুরের মত লেলিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছিল। সেনাবাহিনী যদি যুদ্ধ ঘোষণা করত, তবে আমরা সেই যুদ্ধের মোকাবিলা করতে পারতাম। কিন্তু তারা অতর্কিতে ২৫ শে মার্চ তারিখে আমাদের আক্রমণ করল। তখন আমরা বুঝতে পারলাম যে, আমাদের শেষ সংগ্রাম শুরু হয়ে গেছে। আমি ওয়ারলেসে চট্টগ্রামে জানালাম বাংলাদেশ আজ থেকে স্বাধীন ও সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র। এই খবর প্রত্যেককে পৌঁছিয়ে দেওয়া হোক, যাতে প্রতিটি থানা, মহকুমায়, জেলায় প্রতিরোধ সংগ্রাম গড়ে উঠতে পারে। সেই জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় নির্দেশও দিয়েছিলাম। এই ব্যাপারে আত্মসচেতন হতে হবে। দেশবাসী জানেন একই তারিখে দেশের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় প্রতিরোধ আন্দোলন শুরু হয়েছিল। এটা হাওয়ার উপর থেকে হয় নাই। যদি কোন নির্দেশ না থাকত, তবে কেমন করে একই সময়ে, একই মুহূর্তে সব জায়গায় সংগ্রাম শুরু হলো?

এখন যদি আমি ভারত সরকারের বিষয়ে না বলি, তাহলে অন্যায় করা হবে। আমার দেশের জনসাধারণ যখন প্রাণ ভয়ে ঘরবাড়ি ছেড়ে, ছোট ছেলে-মেয়েদের নিয়ে পায়ে হেঁটে ভারতবর্ষে যায়, তখন ভারতের জনসাধারণ তাদেরকে বুকে টেনে নেয়, ভারতের জনসাধারণ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের জনসাধারণ, মেঘালয়, ত্রিপুরা এবং আসামের জনসাধারণ, বিশেষ করে, শ্রীমতী ইন্দিরা গান্ধীর সরকারকে শ্রদ্ধার সঙ্গে স্মরণ করছি। কারণ তারা আমাদের জনসাধারণকে বুকে টেনে নিয়েছেন। স্মরণ করি ভারতের সেনাবাহিনীর ঐ সমস্ত জওয়ানদের, যারা আমাদের মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের পাশে থেকে সংগ্রাম করেছে। আমি স্মরণ করি রাশিয়ার জনসাধারণ ও সরকারকে, যারা নিশ্চিতভাবে আমাদের সাহায্য করেছেন। তারা প্রকাশ্যে আমার শ্রেফতারের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ করেছেন এবং বাংলাদেশে ধ্বংসলীলা করার বিরুদ্ধে প্রবল প্রতিবাদ করেছেন। স্মরণ করি গ্রেট বৃটেনের জনসাধারণকে, পশ্চিম জার্মানীর

জনসাধারণকে, জাপানের জনসাধারণকে, এমনকি আমেরিকার জনসাধারণকে, যাঁরা আমাদের আন্দোলনকে সমর্থন করেছিলেন। যাঁরা যাঁরা সমর্থন করেছিলেন, তাদের সকলকে আমাদের এই গণপরিষদের পক্ষ থেকে ধন্যবাদ জানাই। এমনকি জাতিসংঘে রাশিয়া তিনটি ভেটো দিয়েছিল; তা না হলে সেখানে যে ষড়যন্ত্র চলছিল, তাতে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থা কী হতো, তা বলতে পারি না। যে সমস্ত পূর্ব ইউরোপীয় দেশ আমাদেরকে সমর্থন দিয়েছিল, বিশেষ করে, পোল্যান্ড, তাদের প্রত্যেককে এবং তাদের জনসাধারণকে আমি এই পরিষদের মাধ্যমে ধন্যবাদ জানাতে চাই এবং স্মরণ করতে চাই।

জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, এসব কথা বলতে গেলে ভাষা আসে না, মানুষ ভাবপ্রবণ হয়ে যায়। সেজন্য এগুলি বলা আমার পক্ষেও কষ্টকর। কারণ, আমি ভাব প্রবণ হয়ে যাই। আমরা দেখতে পাই আমাদের লক্ষ লক্ষ মা-বোনদের অত্যাচার করা হয়েছে এবং আমাদের হাজার হাজার ছেলে পশু অবস্থায় রয়েছে, তাদের জন্য কিছুই করতে পারি নাই। আমাদের বাংলার গ্রাম-কে গ্রাম জ্বালিয়ে পুড়িয়ে ছারখার করে দিয়েছে। আমাদের ধন-সম্পত্তি লুটপাট করে নিয়ে গেছে, রাস্তাঘাট ভেঙ্গে চুরমার করে দিয়েছে, আমাদের কারেন্সী নোট জ্বালিয়ে দিয়েছে। এরকম কত নির্যাতনই না আমাদের লোককে সহ্য করতে হয়েছে এবং তারা যে সহনশীলতা দেখিয়েছেন, সেজন্য তাদেরকে যদি আমরা মোবারকবাদ না জানাই তাহলে অন্যায় করা হবে। আর যে সমস্ত দল আমাকে সমর্থন করেছে তাদেরকেও আপনার মাধ্যমে ধন্যবাদ দিতে চাই এবং শ্রদ্ধাভরে স্মরণ করতে চাই।

জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, আমাদের সামনে আজকে বিশেষ কর্তব্য হলো জাতিকে একটা সংবিধান দেওয়া এবং যত তাড়াতাড়ি হয়, সেই সংবিধান দিবার চেষ্টা করা হবে। আমার সহকর্মী ভাইয়েরা, যারা এখানে উপস্থিত আছেন, আপনার মাধ্যমে তাদের সবাইকে বলে দিতে চাই যে, আপনারা গাছ তলায় বসে যুদ্ধ করেছেন, না খেয়েযুদ্ধ করেছেন, পরনের কাপড়ও ছিল না। আমার সহকর্মীদের আত্মীয়-স্বজনের উপর অত্যাচার করা হয়েছে; তাদের বাড়িঘর জ্বালিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। মেম্বারদের যে অধিকার পাওয়ার আছে, সে অধিকার পুরাপুরি দেবার ক্ষমতা আমার নেই। যদি মাইক্রোফোন বিদেশ থেকে আনবার চেষ্টা করতাম, তাহলে তিন মাস সময় লাগত, 'অনেক দেরী হয়ে যেতো। এই এসেম্বলী ভবন যে অবস্থায় ছিল, তাতে মাত্র ৩০০ মেম্বারের বসার জায়গা ছিল; আজকে সেখানে ৪৫০ জন বসেছেন। যদি এই এসেম্বলী ভবনও না থাকত, তবে গাছতলায় বসেও আমার মেম্বার সংবিধান রচনা করতেন। এই সুনিশ্চিত আশ্বাসটুকু দিতে পারি। আজকে আমাদের জনগণ কী অসুবিধায় আছে। তাদের থাকার মত ঘর নেই; আমরা কিছু দিতে পারছি না; মানুষ কষ্ট করছে। হাজার হাজার লোক বেকার হয়ে ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে; তাদেরকে

সুযোগ-সুবিধা দিতে পারছি না। অর্থ নাই, জনসাধারণকে সুবিধা করে দিতে পারছি না। কিন্তু আপনি নিশ্চিন্ত থাকতে পারেন - আপনার কাছে আবার বলছি যে, আমাদের সামনে কর্তব্য হলো সংবিধান তৈরি করা। আমরা প্রোগ্রাম অনুযায়ী আগামীকাল আবার বসব। শুধু যে আমাদের দলীয় সদস্য থেকে কমিটি করব তা নয়; দলমত নির্বিশেষে সকলের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করা হবে, জনগণকে যাতে তাদের ইচ্ছা অনুযায়ী একটা সুষ্ঠু সংবিধান দেওয়া যায়, এই উদ্দেশ্যে সকলের মতামত চাইব। এই সংবিধানে মানবিক অধিকার থাকবে, যে অধিকার মানুষ চিরজীবন ভোগ করতে পারে। আমরা গত তেইশ বছরে কী দেখেছি - শাসনতন্ত্রের নামে অশাসনতন্ত্র, জনগণের নিরাপত্তার নামে মার্শাল-ল, জনগণের দাবী আদায়ের নামে প্রতারণা। আর বাংলাদেশের কথা উঠলেই “হিন্দুস্থানের দালাল” এই ধরনের কথা সারা জীবন শুনে আসছি। সে সব যাতে এদেশ থেকে উঠে যায়, সে জন্য সর্বাঙ্গিক চেষ্টা করতে হবে এবং সে বিষয়ে সকলের সহযোগিতা কামনা করছি।

জনাব স্পীকার সাহেব, আপনি এই পরিষদের স্পীকার হয়েছেন। আবার আপনাকে জানাতে চাই যে, আমরা একটা গণমুখী সংবিধান তৈরি করতে চাই এবং সেই সঙ্গে এই আশ্বাস দিতে চাই যে, আপনি যতক্ষণ নিরপেক্ষ থাকবেন, আমাদের কাছ থেকে পূর্ণ সহযোগিতা পাবেন। আপনার কর্তব্যটুকু আইন ও আপনার বিবেক অনুযায়ী এবং পার্লামেন্টারী কনভেনশন মেনে পালন করবেন এই আশা করি। আপনি কোন্ দল বড়, কোন্ দল ছোট, তা দেখবেন না; কার্যপণালী বিধি অনুযায়ী বিচার ও ইনসারফ করবেন। আমার দলের পক্ষ থেকে আপনাকে পূর্ণ সমর্থন ও সহযোগিতা জানাব। এখানে যে প্রস্তাব দেওয়া হয়েছিল, নজরুল ইসলাম সাহেব তা পড়েছিলেন, আবার সংশোধন করে তা পেশ করা হবে। আপনার মাধ্যমে আমার সদস্য ভাইদেরকে ধন্যবাদ দিচ্ছি এবং আপনাকেও ধন্যবাদ দিচ্ছি। তারপর এসেম্বলীর কর্মচারীরা রাতদিন পরিশ্রম করে এত তাড়াতাড়ি যে এই বন্দোবস্ত করতে পেরেছেন, সেজন্য তাদেরকেও ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি। কারণ, আমি জানি তারা মাত্র কয়েক দিনের নোটিশে খুব পরিশ্রম করে এই বন্দোবস্ত করতে পেরেছেন। তারপর আমি ধন্যবাদ জানাই এই রিপোর্টকারীদেরকে, এখানে যারা কাজ করছেন। তারা যেন পরিষ্কার, সুন্দর করে রিপোর্ট তৈরি করেন, তাতে ভুল-ভ্রান্তি যেন না হয়; কারণ, এটা একটা ইতিহাস হয়ে থাকবে; এই ইতিহাস যেন নষ্ট না হয়। এই কথা বলে আমার বক্তব্য শেষ করছি।

**BANGABANDHU: THE PORTRAIT OF A
VISIONARY LEADER**

BANGABANDHU: THE PORTRAIT OF A VISIONARY LEADER

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the greatest Bengali of all times because he has secured a place for us in the world map. He has endowed the Bengalis with the gift of a permanent address. Bangabandhu or the Father of the Nation—by whatever name we call him, his humongous inspirational appearance occupies the lane of our memory whenever we tend to think about anything in the context of Bangladesh. Bangabandhu has not become the father of the Nation in a single day. Moreover, you cannot instigate a nation into a self-sacrificial struggle with a two-minute radio message only. On the eve of the advent of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu was able to assume the generation's dream and structure it into a singular goal of freedom by gradually transfusing the dream into the sensibility of the commons. It was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman whose visionary directions made it possible for the Bengali nation to stand tall on solid ground of self-confidence and wading through a sea of blood, reach the shores of freedom keeping their colours aloft in 1971. His heartfelt dreams, his epic life's work, his promises all melted into a singularity to churn the spirit of Bengaliness.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in all respects, was an example of the most complete Bengali in the millennium-long history of Bengal. As renowned journalist Cyril Dunn puts it, "In the thousand-year history of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib is the only leader who has, in terms of blood, race, language, culture and birth, been a full-blooded Bengali. His voice was redolent of thunder. His charisma worked as magic on people. The courage and charm that flowed from him made him a unique superman in this time." Following Bangabandhu's declaration of the independence of Bangladesh on March 26, 1971 *Newsweek*

Magazine on April 5 analysed, “Tall for a Bengali, with a touch of graying hair, a bushy moustache, and alter black eyes—Mujib can attract a crowd of million people to his rallies and hold them spellbound with great rolling waves of emotional rhetoric. He is a poet of politics. So, his style may be just what was needed to unite all the classes and ideologies of the region.”

Since the 1960s, one of Bangabandhu’s major political objectives was the emancipation of the people of Bangladesh. To that end, the establishment of a mass-oriented idealistic political organization was a priority which was accomplished by the formation of Awami League. Bangabandhu wanted the organization to become an open public forum, which would give rooms for all Bengalis to be united and create a national consciousness. The Awami League, by means of Bangabandhu’s unique organizational efficacy, became the main political platform in Bengal within a limited span of time from its inception. The aura of his strong personality did not allow the seedlings of small contentions inside the party to turn into huge poison trees. It was possible because his character had equal shares of both tolerance and sensitivity. Once someone came into contact with his mesmerizing personality, he could not follow anyone else. The evidence of this is that the numerous people from every nook and corner of Bengal who once gathered under the Awami League flag following his clarion call, have not turned their backs on him in their lifetime. It was Bangabandhu himself who shaped Awami League into the largest political organization in Bengal.

When the Awami League stood confidently on a rock-solid foundation under the auspicious leadership of Bangabandhu, the Bengali nation gradually became aware of its self-identity and became antagonistic towards subservience. Bangabandhu emerged as a shining star in the darkling sky of the fate of Bengal, through the 48-52 Language Movement, the movement for political autonomy and socio-economic rights in the wake of

the 54's elections, the cultural resistance movement throughout the 60s, the student movement against the 62's Sharif Education Commission report, and the Six-Point demand movement of 66 to ascertain a future of development for the people of Bengal, who were the most oppressed and sidelined part of the population for decades. The main stream of freedom remained like an undercurrent in the 6-point demand he had raised in 1966, which earned an unhesitant spontaneous support of the pan Bengalis through the mass upheaval of 1969 and the election of 1970. In a country where a group of people demanded their separate individual currency and a separate militia, the demand for independence became obvious and did not need a proclamation.

The formulator of Six-Point Demand, Bangabandhu appeared as the chief spokesman of East Pakistan because he was able to make this dream public. The unconditional support of the Bengali nation made his political position so strong that Ayub Khan and his associates got scared and adopted a policy of keeping him in prison. Bangabandhu deemed his personal life worthless against the task of protecting the nation from exploitation. In return, the people of East Bengal out of affection conferred upon him the title "Bangabandhu" (February 23, 1969). Prior to the struggle for liberation, Bangabandhu had restored the bravery of the Bengali nation which had earlier been long under the clutch of subservience. The 19-minute-long fire exhaling speech he delivered addressing the swaying ocean of a crowd at the Racecourse Ground on 7 March 1971, was an in ornate but heartfelt one, in which he assumed himself as one among all common Bengalis and addressed them, "O brothers mine!" His upward raised finger at the Racecourse Ground taught Bengalis to be outspoken in protest and rock-solid in resistance. His ultimate proclamation, "This time the struggle is for our freedom; this time the struggle is for independence" set the course of action on the part of all Bengali people.

But the official call came in the dead of night at the first quarter of 26 March as Bangabandhu, just before getting arrested by the Pakistani Army, declared the independence of Bangladesh. This was not a mere announcement of some emotionally charged statements to the world; it was a growling roar of a long-trampled nation on the eve of the establishment of its self-identity. This roar befittingly resonated from the mouth of the nation's greatest son casting a magical spell and binding the whole nation with the thread of a single goal which made the advent of the sun of independence in the bleak sky of Bengal thus making a new epoch for the Bengalis. This achievement was never easy. The brave and inspiring leadership needed to reach this glory was found by the Bengalis in Bangabandhu. So, despite being detained during the liberation war in a West Pakistan prison, he was a constant and ceaseless source of inspiration for the freedom fighters, the unrivaled General of our liberation war.

When he returned from the Pakistani prison to a free Bangladesh in January 1972, his role also changed. This time, he became a visionary statesman. He had to confront thousands of problems. The reconstruction and economic development of a war-torn country had never been easy. But Bangabandhu had never showed back to struggle. He used all his power and abilities in the new struggle to turn Bangladesh into a golden one. His first major initiative at this stage was to give the nation a constitution. The constitution which was written in 1972 following the directions of Bangabandhu and having democracy, economic socialism, secularism and Bengali nationalism as the four core principles is a unique milestone in the history of Bangladesh.

Soon after independence, Bangabandhu initiated the nationalization of mills, factories, banks, insurance and other financial institutions to strengthen the economic foundation of the country. He established state-owned Sonali, Janata, Agrani, Rupali, Pubali, and Uttara Banks by integrating the banks of Pakistan era. To ensure that farmers did not have any difficulty in

getting loans, he established the Bangladesh Krishi bank and expanded its branches to the rural areas. He created a specialized industrial bank to develop and create employment in the economy through greater investment in the industrial sector. During this time, the establishment of small and cottage industries was given the utmost importance by Bangabandhu. As part of this, BSCIC was established in 1974.

With a view to establishing Sonar Bangla, the government of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave the highest priority on poverty alleviation in the first national budget. The budget was designed to put the annual development programme (ADP) in a way that would increase the credibility of local administration. Bangabandhu started to take steps to eliminate poverty by implementing five-year plans. Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) was formed on his order. The establishment of BRAC was also approved in 1972.

In addition to the establishment of various financial institutions, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also played an outstanding role in the development of the country's infrastructure. Almost all the bridges and culverts across the country were destroyed during the war. After independence, the government initiated their reconstruction as well as the construction of many new ones. The Meghna Bridge and the Kanchpur Bridge were built during Bangabandhu's rule. He also planned to construct the largest bridge of the country on Jamuna which he could not implement himself but has later been constructed in reverence of his dream.

Bangabandhu also took various initiatives to enrich the fuel and energy sector. Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources Corporation (currently known as Petrobangla) was established. The government took ownership of five large gas fields from their foreign owners. The search for oil, gas and mineral resources

began by dividing the entire country into eight blocks. Besides, the largest thermal power station was established at Ghorashal.

The new country's sovereignty was not ruled out by Bangabandhu. His government formed the BDR and ensured border security. To further enhancement of the practice of democracy, the voter age limit was reduced to 18 years. That is, Bangabandhu worked tirelessly to give the newly independent country Bangladesh a solid ground to stand up firmly. Bangabandhu cherished the boundless dream of developing his war-torn country into 'Sonar Bangla' in his heart. But to our great misfortune, he did not have enough time to make his dream come true. He was not given the time required to build an edifice of prosperity on ruins during the post-war period. Alas! On 15 August 1975, he was brutally killed along with his family members by a band of derailed members of the Army. What a cruel irony of fate! He had to receive bullets from the killer's cruel gun deep into his heart instead of love and gratitude what he had done for Bengal and Bengalis. Yet we cherish the belief that the murderers could not kill Bangabandhu's spirit, profound personality and his legacy, which are continuing through the auspicious personality and leadership of his worthy daughter, the honourable Prime Minister, Jononetree Sheikh Hasina.

BANGABANDHU'S 7TH MARCH SPEECH:
POETRY OF THE HEART

BANGABANDHU'S 7TH MARCH SPEECH: POETRY OF THE HEART

I will begin with an excerpt from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's own 2011 7th March commemoration Seminar speech at Osmani Smriti Auditorium: তিনি বলেন, “যতদিন বাংলাদেশ থাকবে ততদিন এ ভাষণের চেতনা ও আদর্শ আমাদের সকলের কাছে প্রেরণার উৎস হয়ে থাকবে। তিনি বলেন, এ পর্যন্ত অনেকেই ভাষণটির ভিন্ন ভিন্ন দিক ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন, তবে কাব্যিক ছন্দের এই ভাষণের গুরুত্ব ও মাহাত্ম্য জাতীয় ইতিহাসের বিগত ৪০ বছরেও হারায়নি।” Her insight is amazing, as she points to a hitherto unnoticed aspect of the address under discussion. She indicates her hunch that the inner beauty and worth of the epoch-making speech are still waiting to be explored like the gold fields of Australia. She means to say that Bangabandhu's celebrated 7th March speech has been searchingly dissected and analyzed by a lot of intellectuals from political or strategic points of view but its inherent appeal to the heart as against the head will ever remain fresh and engaging. She wants us to understand that it is not a mere prosaic exposition of a situation or a program of action but a unique blend of head and heart leaving a haunting fascination that compels us to return to it time and again. This is an example of what is meant by ‘medium is the message’. The message here is conditioned by the medium, so much so that we cannot separate the one from the other. Bangabandhu spoke hardly 20 minutes, point by point, without mincing words. The কাব্যিক ছন্দ refers to the rhythm that emanates from his unalloyed emotion. He used every day language and commonplace dialect of common men, almost Wordsworthian. His voice was moving and booming, as usual. His words came out in a ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’, or as the old ‘Pearl’ poet said ‘as wallande water got out of welle’. His vibrant words ring in our ears each time we remember them. That is why the international periodical ‘Newsweek’ portrayed

Bangabandhu a 'Poet of Politics' in its cover story of their 5th April 1971 issue. The magazine wrote: "Tall for a Bengali (he stands 5 feet 11 inches), with a touch of graying hair, a bushy moustache and alter black eyes, Mujib can attract a crowd of million people to his rallies and hold them spellbound with great rolling waves of emotional rhetoric. He is a poet of politics. So, his style may be just what was needed to unite all the classes and ideologies of the region," (Poets of Politics).

Many a hypocrite with an empty gift of the gab can deliver a long and tedious harangue. But Bangabandhu's ambient sincerity of purpose radiating from his short talk captured and hypnotized the audience. His self-confidence was of a type that rocked mountains. It swayed the audience. They discovered their own hopes and aspirations in his words. They identified themselves with the speaker. Herein lies his difference from a demagogue like Cleon, Alcibiades, Glenn Beck, Joseph McCarthy or Mark Antony in 'Julius Caesar'. A demagogue is an opportunist rabble-rouser seeking to whip up the emotions, passions and prejudices of the unsuspecting masses to gain power or to promote his self-interest. But he is spurned as soon as his tendentious motives are exposed. On the other hand, Bangabandhu's popularity, respect and homage have stood the test of time. Question does not arise. He had no selfish agenda. He could talk effortlessly and without premeditation because he did not distance himself from 'the other'. He took himself for a man among men and shared their common feelings and aspirations. He empathized with them. He bound the common man to his soul with 'hoops of steel' (1.3.63), in Shakespearean phraseology. If Arthur Clutton-Brock, the famous essayist of 'On Popularity', would evaluate Bangabandhu, he would class him with those gifted with 'intimate popularity' issuing from 'instinctive liking' That is why, his speech was so affective. He plighted his life with the fate of the common man and found "reason to lament what man has made of man" (Wordsworth). We will see below that his life and the emergence of Bangladesh are co-eval and inextricably

intertwined. In a sense, he is more of a nation-builder than may others who go by that name. He laid down his life for his vision and mission. He is, indeed, a martyr to his cause.

In another seminar organized by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust at Engineers' Institute, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina repeated her conviction that Bangabandhu's words would never become archaic or obsolete. We renew our patriotism every time we hear them. She urged all concerned to *project* significance of the historic March 7 speech of Father of the Nation to the new generation. Describing the speech as an important event of our national history, she said the young generation will be inspired with patriotism after learning the history of Bangladesh's independence through Bangabandhu's landmark speech of 7th March. She said the appeal of the speech that inspired and united the Bengali nation to fight for achieving the country's independence is perennial. "As many times as we hear the speech, we find ourselves anew and discover our distinctive identity every time," she added. She said the Bengali nation gets strength when they learn the country's true history from the speech in which Bangabandhu gave directives to the nation to get ready for war to achieve independence. It is an epitome of the concept and ideal of Bangladesh and hence its relevance is co-equal with the very existence of Bangladesh through all time to come. That is why; she says it will go down in history as a perpetual source of inspiration and vitality for generations to come. Hasina wants to emphasize that Bangabandhu's 7th March speech is not a period-piece. Its importance and relevance have not worn with the passing of the event of 7th March 1971. It may be mentioned that she reiterated the same sentiment in her 2013 7th March Seminar speech again at Osmani Smriti Auditorium where she says that the March 7 is an outstanding day for the nation as Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech on the day that determined the history of the nation. She also says that the spirit of the speech can never be fizzled out.

Professor AMS Arefin Siddique in his admirable ‘Analysing The Greatest Speech of The Greatest Bangali’ has appreciated Bangabandhu’s oratory in these words: “Although the historic 7 March speech was an extempore one, what was noticeable about it was that annoying repetitions and hesitations in framing words as observed in such speeches were totally absent. It was possible for Bangabandhu alone to deliver such an unostentatious, direction-giving, poetic speech without any break and without taking any help from notes while standing in the middle of a sea of people. This speech was literally a revolution—which culminated in our liberation war and freedom. Such spectacular application of words was truly an amazing event” (The Daily Asian Age, 7 March, 2016).

To some political analysts, the speech raised him to the height of a statesman and clearly brought together various strands of thought that the Bengalis happened to experience at that time. The speech touched the sentiment of the common people of the country so much that it is still heard throughout the country on 7 March every year.

Renowned scholar Dr. Jacob F. Field’s world famous informative and documentary book *We Shall Fight on the Beaches: The Speeches That Inspired History* published in December 2013 treats Mujib’s 7 March speech as the most admirable and charismatic acumen for the schools of thought and intellect. The book further informs that the speech of 7 March by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman effectively declared Bangladesh’s independence and inspired the nation to fight for their most adorable thing that is the liberation. Because of that mythic power of the speech, it has been designated as one of the most rousing and inspirational wartime speeches in the last 2500 years. More importantly, it is realized that the speech delivered at the Race Course Ground (currently Suhrawardy Udyan) encouraged the Bengalis to start their nine-month long struggle for freedom.

Dr. Field’s book is named after a small segment of Winston Churchill’s address delivered in 1940 as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The speech of the Premier aroused the sensational feelings of the British at such a time when they got

almost lost and disillusioned in the face of the Nazi forces. Thus, it is vividly realized that the words of a leader during wartime act as a powerful weapon to create a golden history in the world.

However, Churchill's 4 June 1940 speech at the House of Commons ran:

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. (Field)

The stated words are the objective correlatives of Bangabandhu's 7 March speech. Churchill was working for the security of independence, whereas Bangabandhu worked to secure independence. The fact that the British feared that their country would be under German domination but Bangabandhu was trying to free his country from the foreign yokes.

The speeches in the anthology have been arranged chronologically, with no pretense to ranking. In all there are 41 speeches. Bangabandhu's speech is placed on page 201 under the caption: 'The Struggle This Time Is The Struggle For Independence'. Indeed, Dr. Field has captured the essential spirit and thrust of Bangabandhu's address as shown in the caption. The following list of 30 samples from the contents page of the book shows Bangabandhu's name appearing alongside the 41 wartime stalwarts in the whole history of mankind. The chronological list of the speech includes:

- 431BC Pericles
- 326BC Alexander the Great
- 218BC Hannibal
- 48BC Julius Caesar

1066 William the Conqueror
1095 Pope Urban II
1187 Saladin
1453 Emperor Constantine XI
1588 Elizabeth I
1653 Oliver Cromwell
1783 George Washington
1794 Robespierre
1805 Napoleon Bonaparte
1860 Garibaldi
1862 Bismarck
1865 Abraham Lincoln
1917 Lloyd George
1917 Lenin
1917 Woodrow Wilson
1936 Emperor Haile Selassie
1939 Hitler
1940 Churchill
1940 de Gaulle
1941 Roosevelt
1941 Stalin
1943 Goebbels
1945 Ho Chi Minh
1948 Golda Meir
1971 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
1987 Ronald Reagan

More citations with regard to the implications of 7 March speech are critically analogous when the world leaders of valuable experiences come up with a strong sense of connotations. Fidel Castro, the former Cuban political leader, terms the speech of 7 March as the documentary war strategy. The legendary leader of South Africa Nelson Mandela mentions that 7 March is a fundamental document of independence. Yet Marshal Tito, the Yugoslav statesman, puts that it proves through the speech of 7 March that the West Pakistan has no legal basis in East Pakistan.

In fact, East Pakistan is Bangladesh. Besides, Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate in Economics, recognizes the speech as the valuably spontaneous speech not only for Bangladesh but also for the whole world (Mahmud 7).

It is unequivocally proved that Rabindranath Tagore's talent and insights are projected through his most creative genres and as a result of which he is recognised as the World Poet. Similarly, it is now established that the thunderous voice of the 1971 Race Course Maidan has overflowed the national boundaries and resonates with the history and heritage of the whole world. Unlike other famous speeches of the world, Bangabandhu's speech of 7 March remains the best heard and most attractive in which three millions of people irrespective of religion, caste and colour turned up and got overwhelmingly fascinated through its magical power (Imam 25).

What is the genesis? How was it that an independent Bangladesh could be conceived and given birth to out of a communal, bigoted and militarily panoplied state like Pakistan? Incredible as though it may seem it is factually true that the story is the same as the story of one man's life, and he was none other than Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It seems he was the saviour sent by destiny to save people groaning under alien despotism. Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury (2015) quotes British journalist Cyril Dunn: "In the thousand-year history of Bengal, Sheikh Mujib is her only leader who has, in terms of blood, race, language, culture and birth, been a full-blooded Bengali," (The Independent).

In the western world, the democratic states are mingled with the spirit of nationalistic initiatives and their leaders are unquestionably called the founding fathers. Kamal Atatürk is called an architect of Modern Turkey accordingly. And it is logically apparent that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the founder of the Bengali nation-state and Father of the Nation of the Bengalis. But as a matter of fact, Sheikh Mujib is more remarkable than either Atatürk or Gandhi.

When the British left the subcontinent in 1947, the very existence of the Bengali nation as a cultural entity faced a calculated threat of extinction. The new rulers of the new state of Pakistan of which East Bengal was a wing started calling the wing "East Pakistan" and the inhabitants "Pakistanis". Uttering the word "Bengalis" amounted to sedition. By pushing a thousand-year history into the shadows, the term "Bengali" was obliterated. This was officially adopted by proclaiming Pakistan as One Unit with two provinces - West Pakistan and East Pakistan. The first man to rise in defence of the Bengalis, their history and their heritage, was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On 25 August 1955, he said in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly at Karachi:

"Mr. Speaker, you will see that they want to place the word "East Pakistan" instead of "East Bengal". We have demanded so many times that you should use Bengal instead of Pakistan. The word "Bengal" has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after the people have been consulted. If you want to change it, we must go back to Bengal and ask them whether they accept it. So far as the question of One Unit is concerned, it can come in the Constitution. Why do you want it to be taken up just now? What about the State Language, Bengali? We will be prepared to consider One-Unit with all these things. So, I appeal to my friends on that side to allow the people to give their verdict in any way, in the form of referendum or in the form of plebiscite." (<http://hrshimul.blogspot.com/2008/>) But sadly enough Sheikh Mujib's demand was ignored and the chronicle of exploitation, discrimination and deprivation continued. With the passage of time an agitation for parity gained a momentum. It must, however, be admitted that the foundation of the war of our independence lay in the Language Movement that began in 1948 in which Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a councilor of the Muslim League since 1943, actively engaged himself. The ongoing movement evolved through shaping of political demands for inclusion and equal access to opportunities and against all forms of perceived exploitation of the Bengali people by the West

Pakistani despotic rulers. The grievances crystallized into the Six-Point Program put forward by Bangabandhu for the emancipation of the Bengalis. Undoubtedly, the Six-Point Movement was a Bengalinationalist movement in East Pakistan spearheaded by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which eventually led to the liberation of Bangladesh. The book of Archer K. Blood (2017) has clearly emphasized the significance of Six-Point demands.

Bangabandhu's mountainous personality with unyielding commitment was once again proved when he, in support of the justified demands of the Dhaka University Class Four employees, sympathized with them in their movement for fulfilling their lawful demands. The then authority of the university illogically imposed a fine on him. Being a brave leader of all people, Bangabandhu rejected the process of injustice with a clear sense of contempt. He was expelled from the university. But justice was accomplished when an injunction order was made by the Syndicate of the Dhaka University authority on 14 August 2010 to withdraw the expulsion order (Mawla 52). But in his lifetime Bangabandhu did not compromise with the authority. Strength of his rock like personality is easily recognized in his famous and resolute statement during his student life at the University of Dhaka, "I didn't claim any unfair demand; my demands were fully justified. Giving bond and fines means to admit guilt, which I will not do." The boldness of this statement reveals his capability as a great leader and his struggle against all kinds of injustice to human beings.

It is known that immediately after Field Marshal Ayub Khan promulgated martial law in 1958, Bangabandhu determined that the country must have been liberated. He was harassed and imprisoned time and again in the name of the Public Safety law. The notorious Agartala Conspiracy Case, which was earlier established on the charge of waging a war against the state, was withdrawn in the face of mass upsurge in 1969. He was the hero of the hour. The Central Students' Action Council at a mammoth reception in his honour at the Race Course Ground publicly

conferred on him the moniker Bangabandhu (Friend of Bengal). Sheikh Mujib's step was towards the recovery of Bengali identity.

On 7 March 1971 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his extraordinary speech in front of millions of people at Race Course ground at a key point of the history of Bangladesh. In his 19-minute speech, Bangabandhu announced: "Ebarer sangram amader muktir sangram, Ebarer sangram, swadhinatar sangram" (The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation, the struggle this time is for independence). This was the speech that created a nation. He clearly stated that he was bitterly disappointed by the repeated betrayals and treacheries of the Pakistan government and there was absolutely no point in continuing the link with that state any longer. The book *Poet of Politics* (2019) compiled by G. Mawla underscores the speech of Bangabandhu.

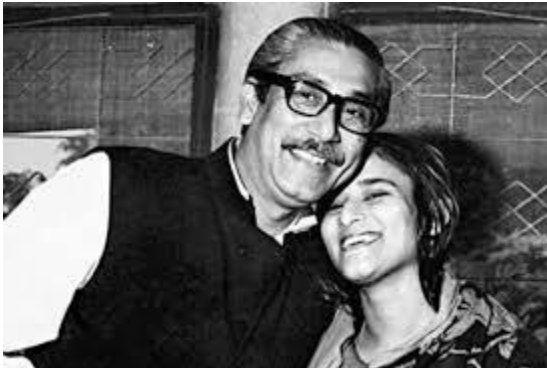
Mysterious enough, the speech entails the description of an epic for the Bangalees and Bangladesh where a national hero acts and universal thematic aspects for emancipation are fathomed without any alliteration. It is now recorded as a "world heritage document" in the "Memory of the World International Register" of the UNESCO. It was so argumentative, insightful, subtle and didactic and was very much characteristic of stability, peace and rights for the Bangalees. The address is more powerful than that of Abraham's Gettysburg speech and irrefutably compared to Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" (Mahmud 65).

It is, now, an imperative that the address of 7 March imprints a world of love for all human beings encompassing the concepts of no discrepancies in all religions. Since he spoke of the people, as generations would pass, Bangabandhu remains the culmination of all sorts of intellectual and emotional feelings. Referring back to the music and the rhythms that have been created in Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* each line of the speech functions as a source of contemplation and serious study. It is almost impossible to deny that each word of the address is to restore the confidence of

the underprivileged and to become oblivion of all problems of the Bengali nation.

On 7 March 1971, Bangabandhu settled the religious dispute by declaring the secular thoughts for the people. Therefore, the speech is the strongest document for politics. It is thought to be a tool for social justice. The pronouncement of “Joi Bangla” is derived from a poem “Purna Abhinandan” composed by Kazi Nazrul Islam and dedicated to the heroism of Purna Chandra Das of Madaripur. Basically, the slogan “Joi Bangla” refers to a protest against all sorts of tortures and suppressions (Alam 303). He pragmatically articulated his messages through the speech before the colossal throng that he gradually made in him from the common people. He was every moment with the river of Jamuna, Meghna and Padma. Bangabandhu kept himself with farmers of the land and their actual needs (Morshed 15). Thus, it is overtly understood that his pastoral experiences are intertwined with the relations of the existential philosophy like Jean Paul Sartre.

Deshratna Sheikh Hasina, Bangabandhu’s daughter and 4th-time Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has pledged to rapidly implement vision and missions in conjunction with the ideology of her reverend father.



Bangabandhu is with her worthy daughter Jononetree Sheikh Hasina

Looking forward to the Golden Jubilee year of the country’s independence 2021, she declared in her December 2008 election

manifesto a vow to build "Digital Bangladesh" by 2021. It also envisaged a "knowledge-based society" with ICT and global connectivity at an affordable cost. A comprehensive policy on electricity and energy has been adopted. Economic usage of oil, gas, coal, hydropower, wind power and solar energy are being executed. The "Digital Bangladesh" program has been further bolstered in her present premiership by augmenting it to "Vision 2021 through 2041" to materialize Bangabandhu's "Golden Bangla" and subsequently Bangladesh will be classed as a poverty-free, hunger-free, and illiteracy-free middle income country by 2021 and as a prosperous developed country by 2041. Bangladesh is now one of the economically emerging nations of the world. It has become a role model for its success in the sectors like health and family welfare, education, women empowerment, Power and Energy.

The sources of the formation of Bangabandhu's speech made on 7 March is not to be taken as sudden outburst for independence but to be examined as the culmination of hard-earned political challenges and commotions that he underwent with fortitude. The psychological construction, the political conscience and the intellectual texture of the Father of the Nation must be entitled to a few indisputable factors of his life. It is, therefore, accepted that the speeches and statements of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are the sources of historic documents for securing social, political, economic, cultural and religious rights.

The poetically chosen words of Bangabandhu on 7 March 1971 are very suggestive of the foundations for heroic achievements of Independent Bangladesh. The epigrammatic sentences which Bangabandhu made in his extempore speeches were tinged with the visionary outputs for Bangladesh. The witty mode of delivery, as millions of people experienced at Race Course ground, formed the constitutional basis and emergence of this country. What Bangladesh as a country stands now and will appear in the future relies philosophically on his speech. However, it has been

anticipated that the crux of the 7 March speech of the Father of the Nation worked as an elixir of social sustainability, economic prosperity, communal integrity and human development and been recorded as the best piece of address in the last 2500 years of time.

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**BANGABANDHU
THE LEADER OF HUMINITY**

BANGABANDHU THE LEADER OF HUMINITY

Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the jewel of the people of Bangladesh and the refuge of our hope, has paid tribute to her father in her own book titled *Sheikh Mujib my Father*. There she describes her father's village in the following way: It is a picturesque village on the bank of the river Baigar. The name of that village is Tungipara. The river Baigar meanders down to the Madhumati River. The Baigar is one of many tributaries of the river Madhumati. There is Greenery of palm, tamal and hijal trees on both sides of the river. The melody of the Bhatiali song echoes in the voice of the boatmen. Singing birds and Murmuring River create a wonderful enchanting atmosphere.¹ This description is applicable to almost all the villages of our riverine and evergreen Bangladesh. And the darlings of rural Bengal grow up on the floor of such a tranquil and affectionate area. While growing up, they learn the first lesson of love from the nature. That love is manifested in all its forms, from the warmth of the playground to the fellowship of the workplace. Such was one special one who learnt to love everything of Bengal in every way and spent all that love for his beloved Bengali people. He is none other than the father of our nation, the dreamer of a separate independent, sovereign nation-state for the Bengalis, the planner, the guide, the creator, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He grew up immersed in the nature and culture of Bengal. In the words of Sheikh Hasina:

My father spent his childhood jumping into the river in Tungipara, smearing the dust of the bucolic path, getting wet in the rain mud. He was inquisitive about how the weaver built a nest, how the kingfisher fish dipping into the water, where the magpie nested. The melody of the magpie fascinated my father very much. And so, he liked to walk in the fields with the little boys of the village and mingle with nature. He used to teach

the starling chicks to talk and whistle. He fed monkeys and dogs, and they did what he told them to do. ... he could not bear any neglect of these pet birds, animals.²

His affection for all these children of nature made him affectionate to the people around him; and he proved this many times in his childhood and adolescence. Sheikh Hasina, while talking about the childhood of her father, heard from her grandmother, remarked that Bangabandhu was very kind-hearted since childhood. He used to go home with his poor and often starving friends who came from far and wide to study at school and used to eat with them the meal allotted to him. They (Bangabandhu's parents) had to buy a couple of umbrellas every month for him because he would give away his own umbrella when he saw someone poor who could not afford to buy an umbrella. He would give the umbrellas away thinking that there would be trouble in the long sun and rain for those poor souls. He even used to give away his textbooks to others from time to time. He never hesitated to give his clothes to a poor teenager.

This character of altruism really led Bangabandhu's life towards its true purpose. This characteristic strengthened another of his qualities. That is the ability to make quick decisions and stay with those decisions until they work out. That courage was manifested when for the first time that teenage boy stood in front of the top leaders of the country without hesitation and spoke to them without fear. In 1936, the then Prime Minister of the Haq-League Coalition Cabinet, Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque and his Minister of Commerce and Labor, the popular Muslim League leader Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy came to Gopalganj to inaugurate an exhibition. In accordance with the Congress, the local Hindu reactionaries boycotted the visit and tried to cause trouble. Although not yet active in any political organization, Mujib, just a young boy, thought the arrival of the leaders auspicious for the local masses. That is why, he stood up against the sabotage and intrigue with the help of his classmates and

friends and succeeded. After the inauguration of the exhibition, Mr. Suhrawardy visited the Mission School. Young Mujib and other students warmly received him and demanded renovation of the half-demolished building of the school. This daring courage of a small boy fascinated Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He wrote down Bangabandhu's name and address in his notebook, talked to him about various issues in broken Bengali, went back, and sent a letter of thanks.³One thing is easily understood by analyzing this fact. That is Bangabandhu's innate ability to get close to any person. Without trust and love for human beings, it is not possible for one to acquire this quality. Mujib's thoughts on the people around him attracted Mr. Suhrawardy and he himself kept in touch with young Mujib and gave him the first lesson in politics.

Bangabandhu's tendency to sacrifice personal interest for the sake of people was further ignited by the activities of his home-tutor, Hamid Master, MSc, an anti-British humanitarian activist. In Bangabandhu's own words: "Master Shaheb formed a 'Muslim Charity Society' in Gopalganj, by which he helped the poor boys. He used to collect rice as alms from all the Muslim families. On Sundays, we would collect rice in bags from houses and sell it to pay for the poor boys' books and exams and other expenses. He used to fix the jagir (area) in turn. I had to do a lot of work with him. Tuberculosis took him away all of a sudden. Then I took responsibilities of the service association and managed it many days."⁴

Bangabandhu took the lesson of public interest from his life and held it as a vow of life. That is why, when a terrible famine broke out in Bengal in 1943, he forgot about his study and started a fierce struggle day and night to put a handful of food in the mouths of the destitute people. It was such a time when World War II was raging havoc all over the world and the British rulers in India had confiscated all the warehouses to supply the troops. Bangabandhu's political mentor and leader, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, was then the Minister of Civil Supplies and was

trying to bring as much food as possible through negotiations with the British government. At that time, in response to Bangabandhu's dubious question, Suhrawardy said that even if he could not save everyone, he would try to save at least some. His speech was a great source of inspiration for Bangabandhu and his associates. So, he was into saving people as if they had bet his life. Bangabandhu stated: "I opened langarkhanas (alms-house) in the Muslim League office, in the Calcutta Madrasa and in many other places. I worked all day, and at night I would return to the Bekar Hostel, and sometimes I would sleep on the table in the League office."⁵ As Bangabandhu was able to discover the people-friendly form to follow under the leadership of Shaheed Sahib, he started dreaming of transforming the Muslim League into a people's organization out of the pockets of the depopulated Nawabzads: "Under the leadership of Shaheed Sahib, we, the middle class people of Bengal, wanted to turn the Muslim League into a people's league, an institution of the people. The Muslim League did not become an institution of the people until then. The institution was of the Zamindars, Jotdars, Khan Bahadurs and Nawabs."⁶

The treatment of the people of Bengal by the central British government in the context of the famine of 1943 put Bangabandhu in front of a harsh truth. He realized that as long as her own people did not rule Bengal, the condition of the people would continue to decline. The miserable condition of Bengal under the British rule burned him from inside: "The British waged the war and the Bengalis starved to death; nothing was short in Bengal. When the East India Company occupied Bengal with the help of the traitor Mir Jafar, Bengal had so much wealth that a merchant from Murshidabad could buy the whole city of London. I have seen with my own eyes the plight of Bangladesh that the mother is dead and her child is licking her breast in thirst."⁷ It is this realization that points the way for Bangabandhu's future career; the liberation of the Bengalis from

the shackles of colonial rule and exploitation became his only meditation. He was a staunch supporter, activist of the Pakistan movement, but his dream was to have two independent sovereign Muslim states in the East, and West based on the Lahore resolution. So, when the country was partitioned in 1947, his dream was shattered and it did not take long for him to realize that the Bengalis had not been liberated.

In 1947, the country was divided. On that day, nothing was left unclear that the so-called freedom came to colonize Bangladesh, to enslave the people of Bengal. As far as I remember, in 1947 I had an informal meeting at Sirajuddaula Hostel on Park Road in Calcutta After passing BA from Calcutta, I came to Dhaka. After witnessing the political scenario in Decca, I could realize that the Bengalis were doomed. I took an oath that day; the people of Bengal must be liberated. So, 1947 was the beginning of our struggle.⁸

Ignoring the frowning of the Pakistani state apparatus, Bangabandhu was the first person to speak out for Bengal, Bengalis, their history and heritage. In the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 25, 1955, he said,

Sir, you will see that they want to place the word 'East Pakistan' instead of 'East Bengal'. We have demanded so many times that you should use Bengal instead of Pakistan. The word 'Bengal' has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after the people have been consulted. If you want to change it, we have to go back to Bengal and ask them whether they accept it.⁹

This feeling of Bangabandhu for Bengal and Bengalis was gradually growing in proportion to the exploitation of West Pakistanis. He was one of the first prisoners of the language movement. When he was arrested on March 1, 1948, he was still a student of Dhaka University. Ocean of sympathy was ever

flowing in his heart for every Bengali for the rest of his life. In return for always being vocal for justice, he had always suffered personal losses. He was expelled from Dhaka University in 1949 for his active participation in the movement of the fourth-class employees. As a result, his student life ended prematurely. But this loss could not deviate him from his purpose. Our uncompromising great leader endured victimization and imprisonment many times. But never was he derailed. He sacrificed everything for the liberation of Bengal and Bengalis. The Bengalis also saw in him their savior and that is why, the Pakistani Junta, who had plotted to frame him in the Agartala conspiracy case in 1969, succumbed to the mass uprising. On the Racecourse Ground, the people of Bengal adorned their favorite ferryman with the title of 'Bangabandhu'. Regarding this event, journalist Cyril Dunn said,

In the thousand-year history of Bengal, Sheikh Mujib is her only leader who has, in terms of blood, race, language, culture and birth, been a full-blooded Bengali. His physical stature was immense. His voice was redolent of thunder. His charisma worked magic on people. The courage and charm that flowed from him made him a unique superman in these times.¹⁰

However, Bangabandhu himself was most satisfied with his identity as a common man and he knew for sure that there was no artificiality in his love for people. That is why he could tell the American journalist, Mr. Frost, without hesitation:

I'm a human being. I love humanity. I'm a leader of this nation, and my people love me and I love them. There is nothing I expect from them now. They have given everything for me because I was ready to give everything for them. I want to make them free. I have no objection to die. I want to see them happy. I become emotional when I feel the love and affection my people gave me.¹¹

Invading foreign powers have repeatedly stood in the way of the individual existence that the inhabitants of the Gangetic delta have long sought to live with. Bengalis had to put chains of subjugation on his feet repeatedly. Bangabandhu has given back the lost sense of rights to the Bengalis. The indestructible consciousness of the free-spirited Bengali was ingrained in his sky-scraping heart. He transmitted that consciousness into the heart of every Bengali. That sense of self-right has given the Bengalis the direction of liberation, has taken them to the fragrant port of freedom, where every Bengali child can stand proudly and shout in her/his own language to express her/his existence. That is why; Bangabandhu is the father of this nation.

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**BANGABANDHU'S HOMECOMING:
SHADES OF MEMORY**

BANGABANDHU'S HOMECOMING: SHADES OF MEMORY

Bangabandhu's homecoming is of the most important historical significance. 15 days after the complete liberation of Bangladesh from the grip of the Pakistani intruders on 16 December 1971, the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned to his native land on 10 January 1972. The day is remembered by the Bengali nation as Bangabandhu's 'Homecoming Day'. Many leaders across the world have different histories of returning home from abroad owing to exile, revolution etc. But Bangabandhu's homecoming has obliterated all other events of the kind. 49 years ago, on this day, the beloved leader of the brave Bengali nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from Pakistani captivity and set foot on the war-torn ground of the independent and sovereign Bangladesh. Bangabandhu's return to the country made the victory in the war of independence complete.

On January 10, after reaching Dhaka, millions of people gleefully greeted him with spontaneous welcome notes from the airport to the Race Course Ground (currently, *Suhrawardi Udyan*). At 5 p.m. on that day, he addressed about one million people gathered in the Race Course Ground. At one point in the 19-minute long speech, he said, "A grave was dug up beside my cell. I was ready. I am a Bengali. I am a man. I am a Muslim—a Muslim dies once, not twice."

On the night of 25 March 1971, the Pakistani forces arrested Bangabandhu from his Dhanmondi 32 residence. For the entire nine months of the war of independence, the Pakistani dictators kept him in the darkness of the prison-cell in Layalpur, Pakistan. While Bengalis were fighting in the battle grounds for freedom, their pathfinder leader was waiting for imminent death as

condemned in a farce of a trial arranged by the Pakistan military junta. Bangabandhu spent most of his political life in prison, so prison was never a place of dread for him. After the Bengalis won the final victory in December, world leaders, especially the then Prime Minister of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, raised voice demanding the release of Bangabandhu. The defeated Pakistani regime was forced to release Bangabandhu giving way to international pressure. He then returned victoriously to his Bengal, which got independent following his call, as the heroic leader of the brave Bengalis.

On January 10, Bangladesh capital Dhaka turned into a sea of people, after the return of Bengali nation's eye-candy Sheikh Mujib. In a column describing the day, veteran journalist, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, comments that Bangabandhu was blinded by the tears of emotion when he had a bird's eye view of the torrents of people on the streets of Dhaka when he returned Dhaka from Pakistan via London and Delhi. Indian diplomat Sashanka Shekhar Banerjee was a sojourn in the entire 13-hour long flight from London to Dhaka. He later recalled: "After being released from prison in Pakistan, Sheikh Mujib arrived at London's Heathrow Airport. I was a fellow traveler to escort him to Bangladesh from Delhi on the advice of Mrs. Indira Gandhi." On 9 January 1972, at 6:00 am Bangabandhu reached the VIP lounge at Heathrow Airport. He was welcomed by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Officer Ian Sutherland and Indian High Commissioner to London, Apa B. Panth.

Ian arranged for Mujib a meeting with British Prime Minister Edward Heath. And Apa B. Panth facilitated his communication with Indian Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi. Indira-Mujib telephone conversation lasted for 30 minutes. "After an hour, Indira Gandhi again talked to Bangabandhu." With the consent of Mrs. Gandhi, Sashanka Banerjee accompanied Bangabandhu en-route independent Bangladesh. The First Secretary of the Indian High Commission, Bed Marwa, the foreign minister of the post-

independence Bangladesh government Kamal Hossain and his wife Hamida Hossain were also with them. ‘They sat side by side in the plane. The favorite aromatic Erin more tobacco and the famous pipe adorned the table in front. The delighted Mujib seemed all eagerness to return home.

“In a drenched voice he said, ‘Independent Bangladesh, my Bangladesh.’ He gave thanks for the long-term cooperation. He said, ‘Banerjee, this time I want a special favour.’ I said, ‘Of course, if it’s within my ability.’ He said, ‘We need to send Indira a message before meeting her in Delhi. The withdrawal of Indian Allied Forces from Bangladesh has to be done by 31 March 1972.’ He said that he had spoken to the British Prime Minister about this. Bangladesh will have no more obstacles for getting recognition from the British government if the Indian Allied forces leave.

“The plane has started flying again after refueling from the Middle East. Bangabandhu squinted at the milk-white clouds. After a while, he stood up and began to sing, ‘My Bangla of gold, I love you.’ His eyes got filled with water. He said, ‘Banerjee, you too. Let’s take a rehearsal.’” They sang the song together. Bangabandhu tried to hide the tears and said, “The war-torn country is awaiting a more intense struggle to move forward. My only strength to boost courage in my chest: the common people of my country.” To the surprise of Sashanka, Bangabandhu suddenly said, “This song will be the national anthem of Bangladesh. Tell me how it will fare.” Sashanka Banerjee responded, “Then, for the first time in history, Rabindranath Tagore will be the author of the national anthems of two countries.”

We become certain about two things from Banerjee’s description. Bangabandhu was very much aware from the very beginning about the issue of retaining the free and sovereign status of Bangladesh by the removal of any foreign influence over the

Bengali nation. And on his way home, with an undetermined inspiration, he decided to take the song ‘My Bangla of gold’ as the national anthem of Bangladesh, for this was the song which surged up spontaneously in his mind and voice at that moment. Sashanka Shekhar Banerjee again said, “The message of West Bengal Chief Minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray came in asking him to halt at Kolkata on the way to his country—the people of Kolkata want to see Bangabandhu.” He expressed gratitude and said in a return message that he was grateful for the support of the people of Kolkata in the struggle for independence. But he was impatient to return to Dhaka via Delhi. However, he would come to Kolkata soon. “After sending the message, Bangabandhu said, ‘The path seems never-ending. The free skies, people, nature all are calling me. I can’t explain how it feels!’ “In Delhi, Sheikh Mujib was welcomed by the then Indian President V. V. Giri, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Foreign Minister Sardar Sharan Singh and many others. At the Presidential Palace, he was entertained with the *sandesh*, *samosa*, *singara* and Darjeeling tea brought from Kolkata. In the Mujib-Indira meeting, the issue of the withdrawal of Indian troops from Bangladesh in three months was discussed.

“10 January 1972. The superhero of the independent land Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, alighted off the plane in Dhaka at noon. The rippling crowd and their chants of slogans filled the whole atmosphere. The voices rose skyward: ‘Joy Bangla’, ‘Joy Bangabandhu’, ‘Joy muktijuddha’. All the way from the airport to the Paltan Ground—a humongous ocean of people. That was an unprecedented moment, relishing the joy of freedom and the return of the great leader. The visual of the Great Leader Bangabandhu’s homecoming is still fresh in the eyes.” That day of nineteen seventy-two is as it were a living one in the description of Sashanka Banerjee.

Deb Mukherjee was a young officer at the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time. He later served as The High

Commissioner of India in Dhaka. Recalling the day of Bangabandhu's homecoming, Mukherjee tells BBC Bangla in an interview that many were very anxious about Sheikh Mujib for several weeks before the event because many were sceptical about whether he was alive in Pakistan's prison. As Deb Mukherjee reports, during his halt at Delhi, Sheikh Mujib gave a warm speech congratulating India for her support in the Bangladesh war of independence. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujib spoke on the same stage that day.

In that speech, Sheikh Mujib thanked Indira Gandhi for her diplomatic role in building international public opinion during the Bangladesh war of independence. He said, "The people of Bengal would never forget the help and sympathy that you're Prime Minister, your government, your army, and your people have extended to my people in distress." He added, "Even a couple of days ago, I was in a dark cell in West Pakistan. Mrs Gandhi has left no place in the world to try to ensure my protection. I'm personally grateful to her." It was the first meeting of Bangabandhu with Indira Gandhi although he spoke to her over telephone the previous day when he was in London. Deb Mukherjee thinks that the first meeting with Indira Gandhi laid the foundation of the Indo-Bangladesh relationship. According to him, relations between Bangladesh and India were disrupted for many years after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

For the entire nine months of liberation war, Bangabandhu remained imprisoned in Pakistan, but the powerful words of his historic speech on March 7 were smeared in the heart, in the spirit, and in the existence of the completely Bengali nation as much as they are now. Following the orders of Bangabandhu, the brave Bengalis fought against all odds to bring the country to the brink of freedom. Had Bangabandhu not been brutally killed by the conspirators on August 15, 1975, Bangladesh would have progressed ahead towards becoming a Malaysia or a Singapore long before the current rapid progress under Sheikh Hasina's able

leadership. At that deadly night of August 15, the two daughters of Bangabandhu, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana were saved due to their staying abroad. The post 1975 governments did their utmost not to let Sheikh Hasina return home from exile and therefore, on 17 May 1981, she had to return to the country enduring a similar challenge like her father. The situation in the capital Dhaka was still as overwhelming with a huge gathering of people as the homecoming day of Bangabandhu.

The homecoming day of Bangabandhu is celebrated every year as a symbol of trust and reliability in the life of the Bengali nation. Hence, the day is very important to the Bengali nation as a beacon of inspiration towards the entanglement with the country in any situation. Wading through a sea of darkness, as the sun of a new day returns with new light and hope, so returned Bangabandhu to us on 10 January 1972. The day will be written forever in the history of Bangladesh and the Bengalis in indelible letters.

BANGABANDHU: THE MAN
OF GENERAL PEOPLE

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The eye-candy of the people of Bangladesh, their last resort of hope, honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has duly rendered homage to the memory of her father with a splendid book, *Sheikh Mujib Amar Pita* (Sheikh Mujib is My Father). In this book, she talks about her father's village in the following way: "A beautiful village picturesquely situated on the River Baigar. The village is called Tungipara. The Baigar River has made a crisscross way down and fallen into the Madhumati River. The Baigar is one of the many branches that the Madhumati has. Both the banks of the river are vegetated with the greenery of palm, ebony, and Indian oak trees. The tunes of the *Bhatiali* songs fly from the distant lips of boatmen on the oar; the sweet chirping songs of birds and the murmuring of river's ripples create a magical atmosphere as never before."¹ This description may apply to almost all the villages of the marshy, lush, and river-splashed country Bangladesh. And under the affectionate and loving veil of nature grow up the fondled children of rural Bengal. As they grow up, they acquire the first lesson of love from this nature and the love is reflected in all forms beginning with the affection of the playground to the fraternity of the workplace. Such a loving son of the rural green learned to love in all its forms and has spent all the love of his repertoire for his beloved Bengali people. He is none other than the dreamer, planner, guide, and creator of an independent and sovereign nation for the Bengalis, the father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He grew up from his childhood drenched in the spirit of nature and the culture of Bengal. In Sheikh Hasina's description:

My father spent his childhood jumping into the river at Tungipara, smearing the dirt of the path, getting soaked in the rain. How the baya-weaver made houses on tree

tops, how the kingfisher fish dipping into the water, where the magpie robin's nest would be found, the sweet sound of the robin, would attract my father. And so he loved to roam around the fields and streets along with the little boys and be one with the nature of the village. He would catch little martin and mayna nestling sand would teach them to talk and coo. Monkeys and dogs were kept as pets; they did whatever he would tell them to do. ... He could not bear with any negligence towards these pet birds and animals.²

His relentless pull towards these children of nature also made him compassionate to the people around him, which he showed so many times in his childhood and adolescence. Sheikh Hasina heard about her father's childhood from her grandmother and relates that Bangabandhu was very kind-hearted from his very childhood. He would return home with his friends coming to school from a distance and would enjoy along with all of them the milked rice allocated for him. They had to buy several umbrellas every month owing to nothing but his magnanimity—some boy, very poor, could not afford to buy an umbrella, he would give him his umbrella so that the poor boy would not suffer sunlight or rain in the distant way home. Even he would donate away the textbooks also. Sometimes, he would not hesitate to give a poor young man even his clothes.

This characteristic feature of selflessness actually led the life of Bangabandhu to its true purpose. This feature strengthened another of his qualities, i.e., the ability to make quick decisions. Not only taking quick decisions, but he dared to work in light of the decisions also. The courage was revealed when the suburban young man did not falter to stand in front of the country's top leaders for the first time in his life and speak to them without fear. In 1938, the then Prime Minister of the Haq-League coalition cabinet, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haq and his Minister of Commerce and Labour, the popular Muslim League leader Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, came to the town of

Gopalganj to inaugurate an exhibition. Local Hindu reactionaries incited by Congress party boycotted the program and conspired to cause troubles. Though not yet active in any political organisation, Mujib considered the visit of the leaders good for the local people. Therefore, he, along with his classmates and friends, stood up against the conspiracy and succeeded to nullify it. When Mr. Suhrawardi visited the Mission School after the launch of the exhibition, he was given an ovation by Bangabandhu and companions and demanded the refurbishment of the half-broken school building. His unembarrassed courage impressed Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He took down the name and address of the student in his notebook, talked to him about various issues in pidgin Bengali and sent him a letter of thanks.³ If we analyse the event, it becomes very easy to understand that Bangabandhu had an inborn ability to develop intimacy with anybody. It is not possible to get hold of this virtue without love for and confidence in people. Mujib's feelings for the people around him attracted Mr. Suhrawardi who himself maintained contact with the young Mujib and gave him the first lessons in politics.

The tendency to give up personal end for the sake of people was further intensified by the work of his tutor, the anti-imperialist, kind-hearted Mr. Hamid, MSC. In Bangabandhu's narration:

My tutor established the Muslim Welfare Association, a society to help poor students in Gopalganj. He enlisted our help to collect alms from all over the Muslim part of town for this cause. We used to go from door to door every Friday for this. He would then sell the rice and, with the money collected, help students buy books and meet examination and other expenses. He would also search all over the town to find houses where these boys could stay, paying for their lodging by tutoring the children in the families. I had to do a lot of work for him. But he died suddenly of tuberculosis. I then took over the society and looked after it for a long time.⁴

Bangabandhu learned the lesson of benevolence from his life and he adapted it as a life-long mission. That is why, when the famine in 1943 broke out and devastated the whole Bengal, he indulged in a hard struggle for bringing a handful of food to the mouth of the poor people, forgetting his studies. It was such a time when the world was shaken by the destruction of the Second World War and the British rulers of India took over all the warehouses to provide supplies with the soldiers. Bangabandhu's political guru and leader of the party, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, then became the Minister of Civil Supplies and was trying to make a truce with the British government and accumulate as much food as possible. In reply to a dubious question posed by Bangabandhu, he said that he would definitely try to save lives of at least some people if not all. His words were a source of inspiration for the Bangabandhu and his companions. It seemed that they intended to stake their lives on saving people's lives. As Bangabandhu narrates, "We opened quite a few gruel kitchens. We would try to give the poor at least one meal a day. We opened such kitchens in the Muslim League Central Office in Calcutta and in the city's madrasas and other places. I used to work throughout the day. Finally, at night I would return to the dormitory or go to sleep on a table in the League office."⁵ Since Bangabandhu could discern his coveted benevolent avatar in the leadership of Mr. Suhrawardi, he began to dream about taking the Muslim League out of the clasp of the secluded Nawabs and turning it into a mass-oriented Organization: "Under Mr Suhrawardy's leadership, we wanted to make the Muslim League the party of the people and make it represent middle-class Bengali aspirations. Up to this time, the Muslim League had not become an organization that was rooted in the people. It used to serve the interests of landlords, moneyed men, and Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs."⁶

In the backdrop of the famine of 1943, the treatment of the people of Bengal by the Central English Government made Bangabandhu stand out against a cruel truth. He realized that the condition of the people of Bengal would only deteriorate until they were self-governed. The poor state of Bengal under the rule

of the exploiter Englishmen burned him to the core: “When the East India Company had annexed Bengal following Mir Zafar’s betrayal in the eighteenth century, Bengal was so rich that a wealthy businessman of Murshidabad had enough money to buy the city of London. And now I saw what we were reduced to: mothers dying in the streets while their babies still suckled; dogs competing with people for leftovers in garbage dumps; children abandoned by their mothers who had run away or sold them driven by hunger.”⁷

This realization paved the way for Bangabandhu’s future activities; the liberation of Bengali from the shackles of colonial rule became his dream and preoccupation. He was a vocal supporter and activist of the Pakistan Movement but his dream was to have two independent sovereign Muslim states in the Eastern and Western regions based on the Lahore Proposal. So when the partition was enacted in 1947, his dreams were shattered and he did not delay in realizing that Bengalis had not been emancipated:

The country was divided in 1947. It did not remain unclear that the so-called independence came to turn Bangladesh into a colony, to enslave the people of Bengal through exploitation. So far as I can remember, we conducted an in-house meeting in the Siraj ud-Daulah Hostel at Park Circus. ... Returned from Kolkata after passing BA examination and went to Dhaka. The political air of Dhaka made it clear that Bengalis were done for. That day I took the vow—we have to emancipate the people of Bengal. It was 1947 when our struggle began.⁸

Bangabandhu was the first person to raise voice in favour of Bengal, Bengalis, their history and tradition in the face of the glare of the Pakistan State Machinery. On 25 August 1955, he said in the Assembly:

Sir, you will see that they want to place the word 'East Pakistan' instead of 'East Bengal'. We have demanded so many times that you should use Bengal instead of Pakistan. The word 'Bengal' has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after the people have been consulted. If you want to change it, we have to go back to Bengal and ask them whether they accept it.⁹

Bangabandhu's feelings of this kind for Bengal and the Bengalis were gradually increasing proportionally to the exploitation of the West Pakistanis. He was one of the first prisoners of the language movement. He was still a student of Dhaka University when he was arrested on 1 March 1948. An invisible current of compassion for all the Bengalis flowed in his heart throughout his life. He gleefully endured every kind of personal loss in lieu of his ever-staunch support for justice. He was expelled from the Dhaka University in 1949 for his active participation in the movement of fourth-class employees instigated by this spirit of justice and thus his student life was cut short untimely. But this loss could not drive him away from his goals. This great uncompromising leader time and again endured torture and imprisonment but never got derailed from his objectives even for a while. He dedicated himself and everything he had to the efforts towards the freedom of Bengal and the Bengalis. The Bengali mass also found their saviour in him and for that reason, the plot of Pakistani junta to trap him in the Agartala Conspiracy Case had to face a debacle defeated by the mass upheaval in 1969. Journalist Cyril Dunne says in this regard:

In the thousand-year history of Bengal, Sheikh Mujib is her only leader who has, in terms of blood, race, language, culture and birth, been a full-blooded Bengali. His physical stature was immense. His voice was redolent of thunder. His charisma worked magic on people. The courage and charm that flowed from him made him a unique superman in these times.¹⁰

However, Bangabandhu felt most comfortable to be identified as a man and he knew for sure that his love for people was not artificial. So he was able to tell the American journalist, David Frost, unhesitatingly:

I'm a human being. I love humanity. I'm a leader of this nation, and my people love me and I love them. There is nothing I expect from them now. They have given everything for me because I was ready to give everything for them. I want to make them free. I have no objection to die. I want to see them happy. I become emotional when I feel the love and affection my people gave me.¹¹

The intruding foreign forces repeatedly raised barriers in front of the people living in the Ganges delta who always tended to keep alive their unique existence by living with their own history and culture. The Bengalis had repeatedly to wear chains of subjugation around their feet. Their sense of rights had to diminish repeatedly because of this subjugation. It was Bangabandhu who returned the Bengalis their lost sense of rights. The undying spirit of the freedom of Bengal filled the sky like width of his heart. He transfused that spirit into the heart of every Bengali. The spirit of their rights has given the Bengalis the direction towards independence, delivering them to the coveted port of freedom, where every Bengali can stand with his proud mantle into the sky and shout in his own mother tongue to declare his existence. That is why, Bangabandhu is the undebated Father of the Bengali Nation. The Bengali nation is celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation this year. The year 2020 has been declared Mujib Year. Our sincere hope is that the lesson of sacrificing everything for the love of mankind which Bangabandhu has taught us at the cost of his own life will be an inseparable aspect of the celebration of the Mujib Year 2020.

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BANGABANDHU: THE BORN-FIGHTER

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The Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was the born-fighter with essential characteristics. If one asks what the basic characteristics of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had, the answer will certainly be: it was his fighting spirit. He was a man who fought all along his life to win rights and justice for his people.

The truth of this answer will be proved if we just have a glance on his checkered life history. It will not be an exaggeration if we call him as the most charismatic leader in the history of the sub-continent in the second half of the twentieth century, who organized rebellions against the British colonial rulers in India, led the Bengalis of East Pakistan in their resistance to the unjust actions of the post-colonial Pakistani government and finally established Bangladesh as an independent country in the World Map. .

Besides these breakthrough achievements made by him in our national history, there are many other incidents that exemplify his inborn fighting spirit sharpened by the national and political consciousness and patriotic zeal.

Mujib's fighting spirit was distinctly visible from his childhood. He did not even hesitate to stand against his father for the sake of his people -- the poor and hunger-driven peasants of his village. He showed the first sign of his future revolutionary leadership by distributing rice from his father's own stockpile among the famine-stricken peasants of his area to the dismay of his father, Sheikh Lutfor Rahman, a small landholder and a record-keeper in the local court.

Sheik Mujibur Rahman was born on March 17, 1920 in Tungipara village under the then Gopalganj sub-division (presently district) of Faridpur district in the eastern part of the

province of Bengal in British India. An extroverted sports-loving young man, Mujib, was well liked by his teachers and friends although he could never distinguish himself in his studies. He had gone through an eye surgery for an optical ailment that kept him out of school for a long period of four years. But after the operation, he not only recovered his clear eyesight and returned to his studies but also gained far-sightedness about the world around him. His fight for justice for Bengalis and leadership qualities started to be visible from this period of his life.

As a charismatic leader, Sheik Mujib has always played a pioneering role in the fight of people for their rights. He epitomized anti-colonial leadership in the Third World by organizing dissent and rebellions against the British Raj and rose against the injustice and exploitation by the power-wielders from West Pakistan (present Pakistan) against the Bengali population of East Pakistan (present Bangladesh). Before leading the independence movement against Pakistan, Sheikh Mujib had fought a lot to seek justice for his Bengali people. In 1952, he had played a leading role in the student movement demanding to make Bangla—the mother tongue of Bangalees—the state language of East Pakistan. The government of Pakistan subsequently conceded the demand under public pressure but not before a number of Bengali students had been killed by the police.

Sheikh Mujib was always in the forefront in achieving the milestones of our decades-long fights to attain autonomy and independence. He sought for justice and rights for Bangalees both in the Pakistan National Assembly and in people's uprisings on the streets. In the first general election of Pakistan held on March 10, 1954, the Mujibs' United Front spearheaded a landslide victory against the Muslim League, the party, which had led to the creation of Pakistan and was often equated with Pakistan itself. He was given the charge of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest when the new provincial government was formed. But

within a few days, the central government arbitrarily dismissed the United Front Ministry. Mujib was arrested once again. The 1954 incident reiterated what Mujib had suspected before—that Bengalis were not going to receive their rights without a fight.

In 1957, Mujib became the undisputed leader of the Awami League, after fighting against party hegemony. He defeated Aaur Rahman in the struggle for the party Presidency after Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, the Founder-President of the party, resigned. Mujib's stand on the language issue and his later open challenge to certain orders of the martial law projected him as an undaunted fighter for human rights. Sensing that Mujib was organizing another mass movement, the central government ordered his arrest on a trumped-up charge of corruption in 1958 when he refused to comply with the new law (Elective Bodies Disqualifications Order of 1958) that asked all Pakistani politicians to refrain from political activities for six years. By now, Dhaka jail had become a second home to Mujib; he spent a number of years during the pre-and post-independence periods there.

Mujib made extensive grass-root-level tours in East Pakistan between 1960 and 1962 defying the martial law ban against political activities. Bangalees appreciated him for his uncompromising commitment to equality and justice. For his increased visibility as a Bengali nationalist and for his defiance of the military, Mujib was again jailed in 1962 for six months. After the promulgation of the second constitution by the Pakistani military ruler, General Ayub Khan, the same year, Mujib came out of prison, began preparations for a mass upsurge against the Ayub regime, and waited for the opportune moment to start it. The opportunity came after the 1965 Indo-Pak war in which East Pakistan, with its Bengali majority, was practically left defenseless by the central government. In November 1965, Mujib worked out a Six-Point programme for enabling his party to secure political and economic justice in a federal system. The

programme also emphasized that a separate military for East Pakistan was to be raised and maintained in order to contribute to national security.

Mujib's programme was rejected by the leaders of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (composed of the leaders of the combined opposition party who had unsuccessfully challenged Ayub in the election of 1964) at an all-party meeting in Lahore in February 1966. Undiscouraged, Mujib quickly decided to start a mass movement based on his programme. In 1966, he was once again arrested, and in 1967, the central government brought a charge of treason against him in the Agartala Treason Case. However, in the face of a nationwide mass upsurge, the Ayub regime withdrew the conspiracy charge against Mujib and others. Mujib was set free unconditionally on March 2, 1969, and Ayub resigned power after the mass upsurge of 1969.

Under the Legal Framework Order of another Pakistani military ruler Yahya Khan, who took over power from Ayub Khan, the dates for national and provincial elections were set. At that time, one of the greatest natural calamities in the history of Bangladesh hit the coastal areas of the country. Marked as the November cyclone of 1970, it claimed half a million lives and rendered three million people homeless. But Yahya's government remained kind of indifferent to the cyclone-hit victims, a fact that changed the course of Pakistan's political history. The people of Bangladesh rejected the pro-Pakistan parties and their candidates, and Sheikh Mujib's Awami League won a landslide victory, securing an absolute majority in the Assembly. This was unacceptable to West Pakistan's military and political elites. As a result, the Assembly was indefinitely postponed by President Khan on March 1, 1971, two days before the first session was to convene. This infuriated Bangalees, and a spontaneous mass movement against the military erupted. Mujib tried to turn the rising public anger into a non-violent and civil disobedience movement.

During the three-week long, Mujib ruled East Pakistan as the de facto head of government. On March 7, 1971, Bangabandhu delivered the historical speech of freedom, which bears the best testimony of prudent fighting spirit of the great leader. It was this speech that imbued the heart of Bengalis with an overwhelming surge of patriotism and the great leader's fighting spirit was transmitted to millions of Bengalis.

A last effort to negotiate a peaceful settlement failed on March 23. On midnight of March 25, 1971, the military crackdown on the Bengali autonomy movement began, resulting in the arrest of Mujib, the round-up of suspected nationalists, and a general disarming of the Bengali police and Bengali members of Pakistan's armed forces. The crackdown, accompanied by senseless killing of Bengali police, soldiers, and civilians, served to harden Bengali resolve to fight the Pakistan military to the last. Although Mujib remained in a West Pakistan prison awaiting execution for alleged treason, his name became a symbol of inspiration and strength for Bengalis everywhere.

After the alliance comprised of freedom fighters of Bangladesh and Indian armed forces defeated the Pakistani army in East Pakistan on December 16, 1971 and the power in Pakistan was transferred from the military junta to civilian leaders headed by Zulfikar Bhutto, Mujib got free. On January 10, 1972, he returned to Bangladesh as a hero. Promptly he took charge of the new nation and inspired the people to rebuild their war-torn country. His initial success as an inspirer, as an integrator and as a consensus-builder was reflected in the first general election of the new nation in 1973, when his Awami League Party secured another landslide victory.

Earlier in 1972 Mujib, popularly called Bangabandhu (friend of Bengal), had given the new nation of Bangladesh its first constitution. It incorporated four basic principles of state policy: democracy, socialism, secularism, and nationalism; together they

were called Mujibism. The first step which Mujib took in order to ensure quick economic recovery was to nationalize all banks and major industries, most of which were owned by the West Pakistanis.

Using his new power, Mujib tried to bring fundamental changes of Bangladesh's political, economic and administrative structure through political centralization and administrative decentralization. But before he could see his dream of "golden Bengal" come true, he and most members of his family were assassinated in a pre-dawn coup staged by a handful of stray junior officers of the Bangladesh army on August 15, 1975.

Bangabandhu was a personality who would rather break than bend before his opponent. He always considered and declared openly that death is better than subjugation. He was irrevocably true to his word till he breathed his last. When the assassins pointed guns at him, he did not stop to tell right on their face, raising his famous index finger, this was not the right thing that they were doing, and they would have to face its consequence in course of time. Of course, the last words of the farsighted leader have become true. Most of the killers have been brought to trial by the government of his illustrious daughter, the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and were sentenced to death. As a fighter, Bangabandhu fought always without any real arms or weapons. Sheikh Hasina is also continuing to lead the country with the same fighting spirit to reach the goal of 'Sonar Bangla' or 'Golden Bengal' as dreamed by her father.

**BANGABANDHU: CHIEF PILOT
OF LIBERATION WAR**

BANGABANDHU: CHIEF PILOT OF LIBERATION WAR

The Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was the chief pilot of liberation war. It is true that Bangabandhu was not present among us in December 1971 when victory smiled on the Bengalis but his invisible presence, his words and his guidance led us relentlessly through the long nine months of liberation war along the path to great victory. Those who have experienced the events of 1971 by themselves must remember who was the source of solace in those difficult days of roaming haplessly with their lives in hand, across the fields, through the jungles and exiled as refugees away from home in order to save lives from the attack of the intruding forces; who was the source of the explosive energy of a nation in those fire exhaling months of building defense and launching guerrilla attacks against the attackers. He initiated all the people irrespective of literate-illiterate farmers, workers, intellectuals, students and other identities in the great spirit of freedom of the motherland making obsolete the ideals of ethnicity, religion and caste.

The successful non-cooperation movement and experience of autonomy before the struggle for liberation enriched Bangabandhu. He transfused the inspiration amassed from this success into the whole nation. Though the Pakistani government captured Bangabandhu in March 1971, just at the outset of the liberation war, his motivation was the main driving force behind the war, without which the possibility of victory in December would have been far away. The key to the great victory lied in the efforts of Bangabandhu to ignite a unique dream in the heart of a nation and to initiate that nation in the spirit of sacrifice.

Those who saw the liberation war of 1971 must remember that Bangladesh practically became independent at the beginning of the non-cooperation movement launched by Bangabandhu and

from then on the country basically ran under his direction. The direct resistance struggle or liberation war started in the night of March 25, after the crackdown by Pakistan forces, according to Bangabandhu's directives in the radio-message transmitted from the Kalurghat transmitter at Chattogram. So, it can be said that the liberation war of Bangladesh is not a separate incident in the history of this country. Our liberation war was the last armed chapter of the long haul of our struggle for emancipation which ended with the final defeat and surrender of the intruding forces, resulting in the creation of a new country called independent sovereign Bangladesh on the world map.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sowed the seed of freedom in people's hearts and nourished it to make it a flowering and fruit-yielding tree. We cannot consider his contribution any less only because he was not physically present during our liberation war. In recognition of his life-long struggle and successful visionary leadership in the making of the Bengali nationhood and the advent of the independent Bangladesh, the nation gave him the titles 'Bangabandhu' and the 'Father of the Nation' respectively on the eve of the liberation war and after the independence. The '*Panchapita*' mentioned in the Indian epistemology is the general epithet for five fatherly identities which are—the progenitor, the saviour, the dame-giver, the master and the feeder. Considering Bangabandhu's political weltanschauung at least two identities can be applied to him—the master and the saviour. On the basis of these two identities, he is certainly the Father of the Nation. Bangabandhu taught the people of this country the ways to the struggle for emancipation from colonial and neo-colonial rule, regime and black laws at every level of their tumultuous life. Again, with his true leadership he made the people take a brave and uncompromising stance for the cause of the nation in the face of the tyrannical oppression inflicted as a reaction to such initiation to emancipation. He uttered the message carrying the ultimate inspiration: "Remember, as we've given blood, we'll

give far more. We'll get the people of this country emancipated, Insha Allah!" This is the utterance of an undaunted saviour, of a great leader. The message has worked like a life-giving mantra for the freedom fighters to free the nation from all the confusion, conflict and fear on the eve of jumping into the battle frontier.

The contribution of the Indian allied forces to the victory in the liberation war of seventy-one is immense and unmistakable. Yet, it is not desirable that a foreign army unnecessarily remains inside a newly independent self-respectful country even after the country becomes independent, no matter how friendly it is. Soon after his release from Pakistani prison in January 1972, Bangabandhu personally requested Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, to withdraw the Indian Army from Bangladesh. In respect for Bangabandhu's grand personality, Mrs. Gandhi withdrew the Indian troops within the specified time frame, without any further debate. Thus, by making the country completely free from foreign troops, Bangabandhu made our freedom satisfactorily complete.

On May 3, 1973, Bangabandhu wrote in his personal notebook, "As a human being, I think about the whole human race. As I'm a Bengali, whatever associated with the Bengalis makes me think deeply. The source of this constant connection is love, eternal love, love that makes sense to my politics and existence." In order to understand the most successful political leader in the millennium long history of the Bengali nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, one has to recognize him in the light of the above confession. He wanted to give the people of this country a gift of a country owned by them and developed in a democratic way and organized through social equality, combined with economic, political and cultural freedom. He succeeded in achieving this fixed goal of his life but for the worst misfortune of Bangladesh and Bengali nation, he could not lead the country for long owing to the world capitalist conspiracy.

Bangabandhu corrected the historical mistakes of 1947 by making the advent of Bangladesh possible in 1971. Denouncing the infamous Bi-nation theory, amassing the bifurcated spirit of the divided Hindus and Muslims under the flag of the united Bengali nationalism, and alongside associating Buddhists, Christians and other ethnic peoples, he formulated a homogeneous Bengali nation and transformed it into an explosive superpower. His amazing presence of mind was identified by Nigerian General Yaqub Gawai who once asked Bangabandhu, “The united Pakistan was a strong country. Why did you move to tear it apart?” Bangabandhu answered wonderfully. He said, “Listen Your Majesty the President, you may be right. Undivided Pakistan might have been strong. Perhaps the undivided India had been stronger. But the united Asia is far stronger than all of them, and the strongest would be the world if it is united. But your Excellency Mr. President, you can’t have everything as you wish!”

**TRIBUTE TO BANGAMATA
BEGUM FAZILATUNNESA MUJIB**

TRIBUTE TO BANGAMATA BEGUM FAZILATUNNESA MUJIB

Bangamata Begum Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib is always remembered with deepest respect for her immense contributions to the Nation. It is universally acclaimed that behind every successful man there is a woman. This saying is essentially true in the life of the harbinger of the freedom of Bangladesh, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. With reference to the long drawn struggle for the country's liberation, to the efforts of building the nation and to the weal and woe of Bangabandhu's life the graceful name which is pronounced with utmost respect is Bangamata Begum Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib whom Bangabandhu called Renu. Whenever we talk about Bangabandhu and his achievements, her inescapable presence seems obvious as an ever-inspiring factor. Therefore, it was Bangamata Begum Mujib herself who contributed most to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's development from Khoka to Mujib, from Mujib to Bangabandhu and from Bangabandhu to the Father of the Nation.

Although the mainstream historiographers of Bangladesh have by far remained astonishingly silent about Bangamata, the Father of the Nation himself has affectionately and respectfully mentioned her name on numerous occasions in his *Unfinished Memoirs* and *Prison Diary*. From *The Unfinished Memoirs*, we understand that Bangamata was only three and her elder sister was five when they lost their father. Their mother died just two years after her father's death. Their grandfather Sheikh Md. Abul Kasem took the responsibility of bringing up these two orphan sisters. It was according to the intention of Bangamata's grandfather that she was married to Bangabandhu. In *The Unfinished Memoirs* Bangabandhu commemorates the event in the following manner:

When I got married I must have been around thirteen years old. After Renu's father died, her grandfather called my father and said, 'You will have to marry off your eldest son to one of my granddaughters. This is because I intend to bequeath all my property to my two granddaughters.' Renu's grandfather was my father's uncle and I had to marry her because of my father's command. (p. 6)

Bangamata began to live with the family of Bangabandhu when her mother died and she found a true mother in her mother-in-law Sayera Khatun. In fact, she was a mere child during her marriage and she practically grew up along with her husband and his siblings amid various childhood games and merriments.

It was only after Bangabandhu had passed his entrance examination in 1942 and got himself admitted into the Calcutta Islamia College when Bangamata began to engage herself into her family responsibilities. Bangabandhu was already tied himself with politics by then and it was apparent that Bangamata rendered her absolute services to his nation building. She gradually became the core of courage and inspiration that gave Bangabandhu relentless hope to strive forward with the cause of the betterment of the people of Bengal. Bangamata was the woman who forsook every personal desire in favour of Bangabandhu's political career. She never wanted to fulfill any personal wish, rather, she tried to save whatever amount of money she could and would give her savings to her young husband to meet his political expenses. She continued doing the same throughout her life. To quote Bangabandhu, "Whenever I went home she would give me whatever she managed to raise so that I could meet my expenses. She would never say no to me and would not spend any money on herself." (*The Unfinished Memoirs*, p. 26). She was so dedicated to the political mission of Bangabandhu that she did not hesitate to even sell her ornaments to bear the expenses of the party when Bangabandhu used to be detained in prison.

Bangabandhu had to remain in prison for almost 12 years in his political life, and Bangamata bore the burdens of raising the family, educating children, looking after party activities, caring for hundreds of party workers. She did all these without any complaints and with a motherly manner.

From the very beginning of their conjugal life, Bangamata could not enjoy Bangabandhu's close presence for a long time at a stretch because of Bangabandhu's busy political schedules or his imprisonments but the undercurrent of their conjugal love was so strong that they became real soul mates to one another. They lived through the toughest times relying on their mutual trust and respect. It was the Bangamata from whom Bangabandhu would draw immense inspiration and, sometimes, suggestions also. When Bangabandhu remained out of home, Bangamata used to read books of different kinds and would discuss the subject matters of those books later with him. These discussions sometimes turned into political ones and thereby Bangamata shared her thoughts regarding the conditions of people and state and even the political tactics with Bangabandhu. When Ayub Khan Regime in 1969 wanted the imprisoned Bangabandhu to join a meeting in Lahore on parole, it was Bangamata who forbade Bangabandhu from accepting that and accordingly, Bangabandhu refused the proposal. It was proved to be a momentous and historical decision because this decision was followed by the mass upheaval of 1969 which got Bangabandhu free from prison and made him the unanimous leader of the people of Bangladesh.

Bangamata Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib was the most perfect companion for Bangabandhu to wade through the dangerous heaves and sways of his tumultuous life. She was perhaps the only reason behind Bangabandhu's becoming an author also. It was the Bangamata who inspired Bangabandhu to write memoirs and keep diaries to avoid monotonies of prison life. She even sent notebooks to his prison cell regularly. This has been a great boon

for the nation that Bangabandhu has left his memoirs and diaries for our generation so that we can get a glimpse of the true history of the time through the struggle for the liberation of our land and people.

Bangamata was the woman who sacrificed the most beautiful moments of her life at the altar of people's freedom. She was the great heart who conquered all of her sufferings to establish the rights of Bengalis. She never came under limelight, never cared for self-aggrandization; rather, she remained the true companion, chief adviser and main well-wisher of the Father of the Nation. On the occasion of her birth anniversary, I would like to pay homage to her memory. Salute, Bangamata.

**WISHING SHEIKH REHANA
MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY!**

WISHING SHEIKH REHANA MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY!

I wish Sheikh Rehana many happy returns of the day. Happy birthday to our sister Sheikh Rehana on this day 13 September. Sheikh Rehana is the younger daughter of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib and the beloved sister of our honourable Prime Minister Jononetree Sheikh Hasina. Sheikh Rehana is very gentle, amicable and dependable with modesty and generosity. She is a proud mother of a scholar son Radwan Siddiq Bobby, a consultant to United Nations Development Programme and two daughters - Tulip Siddiq, a politician of British Labour Party and elected Member of Parliament and Azmina Siddiq Rupanti who are very well educated with familial, cultural, social, institutional, national, political, ethical and moral knowledge. She speaks little but works a lot in all respects.

Sheikh Rehana is a person who has continuously been inspiring her elder sister honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, to serve the people of the country since her childhood, especially since 1975. The blackest and the saddest day in the history of world civilization as well as in the history of the nation of Bangladesh is 15 August 1975 because of the great tragedy of brutal assassination of Bangabandhu and his family members. The vested quarters killed the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with his family members with a view to destroying the democracy, Bengali Nationalism, secular spirit and the spirit of liberation war. Fortunately, two daughters of Bangabandhu had been out of the country (in Belgium) on the day 15 August 1975. For this, Bangabandhu's worthy inheritors Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana survived and established Bangabandhu's ideology and the philosophy of Bengali nationalism in Bangladesh.

Sheikh Rehana is of great inspirational strength for our worthy Prime Minister Jononetree Sheikh Hasina. Both sisters depend on each other and share the same ideas with each other for the greater interest of the nation. It is as if a very common feature of Sheikh Hasina's leadership. In the time of hardship and despair, Sheikh Rehana encourages her beloved sister to enlighten the nation with profound leadership and enormous courage. The Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina turns to be a very dependable savior in the skirmish of a dreadful phase of the fate of Bengali Nation. Being proud citizens of an independent country, we have chances to know Sheikh Hasina in numerous manners, especially at the time of crisis and adversity. We enthusiastically watch her how courageous she is. Jononetree Sheikh Hasina repeatedly appears to be our only hope. Each adversity has observed how stable each of her decisions given is. She has ascertained all the people of the country of security in hardship. Nobody is parallel to her not only within the country but also in the global arena. Certainly, the media of the world has been making such analysis for a long time. Sheikh Rehana is always with our Prime Minister in taking all these important steps for the betterment of the country.

None can possibly give a statement with a certainty that the democratic politics in Bangladesh has always followed a direct road. Soon after killing the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August 1975, the military rulers adopted the style of those in earlier Pakistan to govern Bangladesh, which had once been created in consequence of a great war of liberation. After the brutal killing of Bangabandhu, Ziaur Rahman, who had taken power illegally, wanted to convert Bangladesh into a country following the Pakistani strategy.

In the early eighties, Awami League elected honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the heir of the blood and politics of Bangabandhu the president of Bangladesh Awami League through a national conference. After taking over the responsibility

of the party, Sheikh Hasina returned to her own country overlooking the angry frowns of Zia's Military rule. It means that it is natural for her to steer the nation during disaster. Sheikh Hasina is the name of a dazzling flare that survived in the midst of fatal grenade charges. She has devoted herself to the wellbeing of the poor working-class people of Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina's means to achieve the welfare of the people. She is as strong-minded to shape the *Sonar Bangla* following Bangabandhu's dreams as is she also a representative of a substantial democratic and non-communal secular Bangladesh moulded in the freedom struggle. Sheikh Hasina's political motto is "to upgrade the status of people's lives."

We are very fortunate that we have a very profound and rare leader like Sheikh Hasina who is at the same time very visionary, workaholic and honest per excellence. None will probably believe how a leader like Sheikh Hasina could assume the role of the helmsman in a third world or a developing country without observing the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Hasina. She has taken electricity to the homes of those shot down for demanding electricity. Even after the World Bank's withdrawal of funding, she has turned the building of the Padma Bridge into a reality. She has shown the people of the world that Bangladesh is a very capable country.

It is not merely the sincerity or honesty, which is Sheikh Hasina's strength. She believes in showing that we can do; it means that the Bengalis can. Sheikh Hasina regularly states one line: since we won the victory through a war of liberation, no triumphant nation can bow down and lose. This is the *magic* of Sheikh Hasina. This is the slogan, which has made her a world leader in the 21st century. Hundreds of millions of people like me cherish a very strong belief that Sheikh Hasina shall surely set her trend of achievement in the global context.

Sheikh Hasina's most affectionate sister is Sheikh Rehana who is tirelessly playing a very vital role in inspiring Sheikh Hasina to go forward with the advancement in all sections of the nation. On this day of Sheikh Rehana's birth, let us wish her long life and sound health with full of joy and prosperity.

**A PRAYER ON THE BIRTHDAY OF OUR
JONONETREE SHEIKH HASINA**

A PRAYER ON THE BIRTHDAY OF OUR JONONETREE SHEIKH HASINA

In the year 1971, when Bangladesh achieved the immortal boon of independence wading through a sea of blood, there was only one superstar in its political skies obliterating others with its glare and greatness. That superstar was none but the undisputed hero of our liberation, the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. With all the expanse of his humongous heart, he loved Bengal and the Bengalis and hence, spent every drop of his sweat to take the war-torn young country to the ways of gradual development. He left no stone unturned in the effort to make Bangladesh stand up tall upon its own potential. But the brutal bullet of the killers did not spare him enough time to fulfill his dream. Yet there has risen in the firmament of the nation's fortune, another superstar, Jononetree Sheikh Hasina to offer before the world's eyes the hope of Bengal—continually waning away by far under tantalizing torments—refurbishing it in its greenery and charms once again by upholding the spirit and inspiration of the Father of the Nation. She has also been carrying the legacy of his blood. Over the past decade, she has guided Bangladesh to reach such an escalating platform of development that the Asian Development Bank has recently declared Bangladesh the fastest growing economy in the Asia-Pacific region surpassing China, Vietnam and India. In any international forum, when the development of Bangladesh becomes a topic, the person who is credited as the metaphor for the recent economic development of Bangladesh is none other than the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Bangabandhu and the successful materializer of Bangabandhu's dreams.

The word "Hasina" has its origin in the Arabic root Husn (حسن) which means the most pious, the most precious, the most beautiful. We are lucky that our most efficient leader is truly worthy of her name. 28th September is the birthday of such a

competent, capable and successful daughter of Bangabandhu. On this day in 1947, the girl that shone like bemusing moonshine in the lap of the Mother of the Nation, Fazilatunnesa Mujib, is still flooding the whole nation with the same calm, gentle, magical light of persistence and promise. Along with deepest respect and heartiest congratulations on her auspicious birth anniversary, we wish to be dipping into the same moonshine of her personality for a long time ahead.

With a vicious mission to kill the Father of the Nation along with all the members of his family, when the military uniform-clad assassins jumped into his Dhanmondi 32 residence, Sheikh Hasina could have been killed besides her father and the rest of the family at the fateful night of August 15, 1975. But her lot was differently written. She was in Europe with her younger sister Sheikh Rehana. Perhaps, God saved her that day to grab hold of the boat of the post-Bangabandhu Awami League. Perhaps, God chose her to be the benevolent future superstar in the political sky of Bangladesh.

The military junta's misrule has long thrashed Bangladesh after the assassination of the nation's father in 1975. Bangladesh has lagged behind miles. With the rise of political corruption, the basic rights of common people have been eroded. Poverty rose to a tremendous height. Bangabandhu's dream has been choked and suffocated. But dreams cannot die. So, the dream of Sonar Bangla lived along. Bangabandhu's daughter, Sheikh Hasina, has carefully nurtured her father's dream in the core of her heart. To materialize that dream, she ignored the bloody glare of the military regime and returned to her homeland, took the responsibility of Awami League and restored it to life. She took the driving seat of Awami League and created a huge mass movement and dragged the dictator down from power. Quite like her father, she also wants the true liberation of the people of Bangladesh—from hunger, from poverty, from injustice, from oppression. As a result, people gave decisive mandate to her leadership in the elections of 1996. In response, Jononetree has

shown how to awaken an ailing country with the magic wand of development.

On April 2, 2004, the Jamaat-BNP killer circle opened fire targeting Sheikh Hasina's car convoy at Gournadi, Barisal. But the biggest attack by far was unleashed on August 21 that year in front of the Awami League central office at the Bangabandhu Avenue in country's capital Dhaka. The Dhaka Mahanagar Awami League held a rally in front of the central office of the party that afternoon to protest the bombing by militants across the country and police brutality in Gopalganj. Sheikh Hasina, the Chief Guest of the rally, arrived at the venue at around 5 p.m., and announced the start of the protest rally after a 19-minute speech from a platform built on a truck. As soon as she finished her speech and began to get down from the platform, a grenade attack began on the stage. Within a minute and a half, 11 powerful grenades exploded. 12 people were killed at the scene and 12 more perished later in the hospital. About 400 people, including Sheikh Hasina herself, were injured in the attack, many of whom had to accept lifelong disability.

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of our leader, the question may pop up why I am so worried about the old issues like assassination attempts on her, while everyone would be making a social media buzz with colourful and attractive delineation of her extraordinary achievements. I am worried, and there are so many reasons for that. Jononetree Sheikh Hasina is the only hope for the nation. Coming to state power four times including the 1996 election, the stability and equilibrium she has ensured in politics and public life by means of innumerable programs and projects is unique in the world. She can only be compared to herself. That is to say, in the current socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh, there is no alternative of Sheikh Hasina as a leader of state. It is our sacred duty to keep her well, healthy, and safe.

On the auspicious occasion of the birth anniversary of the beloved leader, we pray for her long life with sound health.

Honourable prime Minister, may you remain like a canopy of blessings over our heads. Wish you every happiness and success.

Happy Birthday, O Deshratna, O the leader of the common mass,
O the brainchild of Democracy!

**SHEIKH HASINA'S ASHRAYAN:
PREMIER'S PROJECT BEYOND PRAISE**

SHEIKH HASINA’S ASHRAYAN: PREMIER’S PROJECT BEYOND PRAISE

‘Ashrayan’– a Bengali word meaning literally ‘to provide a shelter’ or ‘a home’, Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, has recently said that she believes the gifting of homes to the homeless and landless people of Bangladesh under her government’s Ashrayan Project-marks the biggest festival in the Mujib Year, the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Giving home to the homeless is always praised generously and considered as one of the greatest benevolences and virtues in all the cultures and religions around the world including the ones followed in Bangladesh. And the Prime Minister, a well-cultured and deeply pious person herself, felt the need of the time at the very core of her heart. As the head of the government of a country with a large population of homeless people, she realised that there would not be a better gift than a home to a homeless person, and that will also be the best homage to his illustrious father at the end of his birth centenary year.

The Premier handed over, under the Ashrayan Project-2, the keys to the new homes for 66,189 homeless families via video conference on January 23, 2021. It is the largest government housing project in the world so far, and certainly one of the most remarkable development projects implemented during the three consecutive terms of Sheikh Hasina.

Speaking at the event, which was joined by people from 492 upazilas, Sheikh Hasina said, “When these people start living in these houses, the souls of my parents will be in peace -- the souls of millions of martyrs will find peace -- because my father's goal was to put a smile on the faces of these people.”

Bangladesh, a small country located in South Asia, is the eighth-most populous in the world, with a formidable population of 160 million. But homelessness in Bangladesh is very much prominent. Five million people live without any housing at all and 124 million live in seedy and dilapidated huts and mud houses in rural areas and unlivable, thickly crowded slums in the towns and cities.

Poverty and homelessness have an intertwined relationship; circumstances of poverty — such as debt, lack of education, poor mental and physical health and disability — are some of the most common underlying causes of homelessness in Bangladesh.

The homeless population in Bangladesh, especially women abandoned by their spouses and too poor to provide for themselves, are exposed to many instances of violence, drug abuse and sexual assault. A study conducted in 2009 found that 83% of homeless female respondents were assaulted by their husbands, male police officers and other men in their vicinity. 69% of the male respondents used locally available drugs, such as heroin, and two-thirds of injecting drug-users shared needles.

Despite all these grim realities, regional homelessness in Bangladesh has reduced and poverty rates have dropped during last few years. According to the Bangladesh Poverty Assessment conducted by the World Bank Group, the country halved poverty rates since 2000. More than 25 million people were lifted from such conditions.

Under the Ashrayan Project-2 of Bangladesh Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's government to help the homeless to become economically independent, a total of 297,886 families have been rehabilitated. The first two chapters of the scheme were efficaciously completed in 2010 and the final chapter is projected to be completed by June 2022 with the rehabilitation of about 900,000 homeless people in the country.

As many as 66,189 of around 8,75,000 shelterless people were given homes under the programme in line with Hasina's declaration that no one will be left homeless in Mujib Year.

Each of the 66,189 homes is a two-room house with a kitchen, toilet and balcony. The houses are costing the government Tk1.75 lakh each for construction under the project. A four-member family can easily live in such a house.

“Being able to give homes to so many people in one day is a huge achievement. Not one person will be without a home in this time of the Mujib Year and the Golden Jubilee of our Independence,” Sheikh Hasina declared. The designs of the houses under the project were chosen by the Prime Minister herself. Each of the houses includes two bedrooms, a balcony, a kitchen and a toilet with the provision of electricity and drinking water. The government also moved to provide the families with jobs to sustain themselves. Along with homes, they will be given ownership of the lands, with the government's handing over of the land registration deeds to each of the families.

The Prime Minister said that her government has been working to improve the living standards of homeless people through the eradication of poverty since the beginning of her administration. She further stated that the course of listing vagrant people throughout the country was under progress and till date around 280,000 people have been identified as homeless in the country. She also hoped that her government would be able to provide homes to these people within the next two years and eight months.

Of them, 210,000 homes will be provided under Ashrayan 2 Project, 50,000 under Cluster Village Project and the remaining 20,000 under the project taken by the Bangladesh Bank to rehabilitate homeless people, she added. The Prime Minister said the government has also taken a pilot project in eight upazilas in eight districts to rehabilitate all homeless people.

When it comes to the question of fight against vagrancy, non-government organizations such as Habitat for Humanity have provided Bangladeshi homeless people with affordable housing, drinking water and hygienic sanitation system, training in construction technology and even disaster mitigation. In Dhaka, Habitat Bangladesh commenced its first urban project with the refurbishing of three slums. With the help from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Organization supported 9,000 people through housing construction and renovations; this included the construction of water pumps, drainage systems and walkways, as well as bathrooms and community toilets.

As urbanisation takes place, projections point towards more than half of Bangladesh's poor households living in urban areas by 2030. But this requires sufficient housing and transmuted more slums into civilly habitable households and communities.

Sheikh Hasina's government's draft of a National Urban Policy aims at ensuring sustainable urbanisation. The policy visualises a decentralised urban development; a place where the central and local governments, private sector, civil society and people from all sections of the Nation have important roles to play. The seventh Five Year Plan of the country proposes allocating resources to address urbanisation through the Annual Development Programme, though a possible urbanisation plan is still in progress.

Even further, educating and empowering the populations migrating to, residing in the cities, expanding the female labour workforce, fighting poverty and consistently innovating will help this Nation achieve its goal of becoming an upper-middle-income Nation by 2021. It is important to continue investing in projects and policies that are helping fight homelessness in Bangladesh. Remarkable progress has been made in this regard.

As a coastal and riverine country, Bangladesh is a land of numerous landless and homeless people since time immemorial. Its coastal areas are frequently devastated by cyclones and riverine lowlands are inundated regularly by monsoon flood. Besides, river erosions also devour many households and land plots in riverside areas. All these disasters, along with many other socio-economic factors are largely responsible for making people homeless.

Our honourable Prime Minister, Jononetree Sheikh Hasina, has put her finger in right button at the right moment providing so many people with their own homes under her biggest-ever Ashrayan Project. We must be very much optimistic that under the able and foresighted leadership of our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, the day is not far ahead when each and every inhabitant of Bangladesh will be able to call it as the real home country with his or her own home standing in its soil, as affectionately as a mother waits for her beloved child.

**THE FORMATION OF AWAMI LEAGUE
OPENED A WINDOW TOWARD
THE INDEPENDENCE OF BANGLADESH**

THE FORMATION OF AWAMI LEAGUE OPENED A WINDOW TOWARD THE INDEPENDENCE OF BANGLADESH

The formation of Awami League in the history of the advent of Bangladesh is an epoch-making event, which has been influenced by the long cherished culture and humanistic sensibility of the people living in the Padma-Meghna-Jamuna washed delta. We can only conjecture whether Bangladesh could be brought to the state of an independent country if the political organization called Bangladesh Awami League, which accompanied Bangladesh from the beginning of its history, were not founded. But it is now historically established that, as Bangladesh Awami League has evolved through time and events, since its inception it has gradually inspired the Bengalis to seek self-determination, to be more conscious of their rights, and finally to assume sovereign power in their own land. The great architect of independent Bangladesh, the greatest Bengali in history, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, cherished from his student life a dream of a unique political identity for his own land and people. That very dream actually laid the foundation of his political philosophy, and the organization called Awami League became the playground for the accomplishment of the dream. Therefore, the history of Bangladesh is, in some way or other, the history of Awami League also.

From Bangabandhu's recollection of the political dilemma of Bengal during the partition of India in his *Unfinished Memoirs*, it becomes obvious that both Congress and the Muslim League leaderships in Bengal were in favour of holding the integrity of Bengal. But the central Congress and Muslim League leaders were different in opinion. The Congress Party did not want to lose Kolkata and the chief goal of the Muslim League was to establish a single independent Muslim state. The Muslim

majority of Bengal, the people of East Bengal, accepted Muslim League's monopoly in plain belief that their initiatives would improve the lot of the Muslim population of the sub-continent. As a result, the Pakistan Movement gained a stranglehold in East Bengal. Thereafter, the first disillusionment of Bangabandhu and his contemporary student leaders occurred in August 1947 when the leaving British Raj poured cold water on their desire of ultimate freedom for the people of the subcontinent as they broke Bengal into two and affixed the Hindu major western part with India and the Muslim major eastern part with Pakistan. The eastern part of newly formed Pakistan became known as East Pakistan and was immediately turned prey to discrimination because West Pakistan became the center of administration although it had a minority of population, the capital city was established there, and the control of Muslim League basically fell into the grasp of the West Pakistanis. After that, the authoritarian West Pakistani leadership prepared to declare Urdu as the official language of Pakistan, bypassing the legitimate right of Bengali, which was the language of the majority. The people of Bengal did in no way accept this decision. However, the East Pakistan Muslim League leadership was clearly divided on the issue of the state language, which allowed the government to inflict aggressive repression upon the Language Movement.

As an inevitable consequence of these events, there arose a widespread mutual suspicion and conflict leading to breakdowns in the Muslim League mainly in the East-Pakistan region. According to the *Unfinished Memoirs*, the division between the supporters of Khwaja Nazimuddin and Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy became open and the central leadership of the Muslim League recognized the supporters of Khwaja Nazimuddin as Muslim League workers thus making it impossible for the supporters of Suhrawardi to stay with. At this time, Bangabandhu felt that the Muslim League was intent on establishing a one-party rule thereby prohibiting people from

getting justice. In this situation, when a conspiracy was shaped with a view to holding Mr. Shamsul Haque, even after winning in the elections, from sitting in the National Assembly, a conference was called on 23 June 1949 with the former League workers of Bengal. The detained Bangabandhu was also asked to give his opinion. He promptly returned, “There is no point in pursuing the Muslim League any longer. This party has now become the establishment.” He also said that he would not continue student politics anymore; rather he would indulge in mainstream politics because tyranny would prevail over the country unless an opposition party was not created.

The vexed government barred over the availability of a suitable place to house the conference. Finally, it took place at Rose Garden owned by Kazi Humayun Rashid amid the august presence of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haq, Mawlana Bhashani and other veterans, and a new political party titled ‘East Pakistan Awami Muslim League’ was formed. Mawlana Bhashani was made its president and the detained Bangabandhu was given the responsibility of Joint Secretary. The inclusion of the word ‘Muslim’ in the party title created disturbance in Bangabandhu’s conscience because he had thought that a non-communal organization would be formed in the independent land, but he had nothing to do with it while he was in prison. However, the political activities of this newly founded organization showed clear evidences of its non-communal attitude. In just a few years of its formation, the organization helped the Language Movement reach its zenith. One of the main purposes of this political party was to preserve the honor of Bengali language and culture.

With this goal in mind, the leaders agreed during the formation of United Front prior to the 1954 general elections that no communal organization would participate in the elections—a decision widely appreciated by the commoners and thus leading toward a fabulous victory of the United Front in the 1954 elections. After this victory, the Awami Muslim League, in the

1955 Council session, exempted the word of 'Muslim' from its title and evolved into Awami League, a completely non-communal secular political organization with open access for all citizens. In the General Secretary's report during the Council, Bangabandhu stated that the Awami League leaders and its workers have not been able to breathe a sigh of relief for a day since the formation of the party and that Awami League's strong stance against the oppression and injustice of oppressive regime led to a new spirit of new consciousness, new hope, enthusiasm and an ironclad vow for standing up against oppression.

That is, Awami League became the popular political organization whereby the people of Bengal, the victims of long-term abusive misrule by the intruders, could stand collectively and muster up courage to dream of freedom. Under the brave and voisionary leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Awami League was able to realize the dream of liberation by long agitation, non-cooperation, and finally expulsion of the intruder Pakistanis after an ultimate victory in the nine-month-long bloody liberation war in 1971. So it can be said that the Awami League, which was established on the anniversary of the fall of Bengal's independence in the Mango grove of Palashi, brought the sun back to the sky and performed its historical duties properly. And today, the Awami League, led by Bangabandhu's daughter, the Honorable Prime Minister Deshratna Sheikh Hasina, is steering Bangladesh through all odds toward its destination of a golden future.

**THE SIX-POINT MOVEMENT AS
GENERATING THE ROADMAP TO
FREEDOM**

THE SIX-POINT MOVEMENT AS GENERATING THE ROADMAP TO FREEDOM

7 June 1966 became one of the most important days in the history of the advent of Bangladesh since it witnessed a morbid bloodshed from the bosoms of Bengali patriots owing to the unleashing of fire on the people's agitation in support of the historic 6-point programme. Despite the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's earlier declaration of the 6-point programme on February 1966 in Lahore, the 7th of June is observed every year as the 6-point programme day as a tribute to the sacrifice of the people. The 6-point programme is not a document to signify the autonomy of the Bengalis only; it has revived their dormant desire for freedom. The roadmap for the struggle for liberation of Bangladesh originally evolved from these Six-Points churned up by Bangabandhu. It was a historically prophetic decision of Bangabandhu at the crucial moment of the Bengali Nation.

Six-Point programme bears so much significance in the history of Bangladesh that it is reverentially called the charter of freedom or the *Magna Carta* for Bengali people. The issues included in the statement of demand were – creating provision in the constitution for a Federation of Pakistan in its true sense based on the Lahore resolution, keeping the federal government's sole responsibility restricted to only two fields: Defence and Foreign Affairs, introduction of two separate freely convertible currencies for East and West Pakistan, vesting the power of taxation and revenue collection with the federal units, maintaining two separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of each of the two units, and creation of a separate militia or paramilitary force for East Pakistan. Looking attentively at the demands summarized above, one unfailingly notices the notion of an urge to foreground

the separate autonomous identity of particular people, Bengalis, living in the East Pakistan specifically, lurking in every line of the statement. Therefore, the initiating role of Six-Point demand in the history of the rise of Bengali nationalism is quite clear and obvious.

It was a testament documenting the call for equity and justice against the unlimited exploitation of Bengalis concerning political, administrative, economic and defence related rights by the West Pakistanis for 18 years beginning from 1947 to 1965. Despite being majority of the population, Bengalis were deprived of equal political rights by far. The Bengalis were not appointed in the administration. About 60% of foreign trade was in East Pakistan but almost all the money was spent for the West. The foreign currency reserve was in West Pakistan and the foreign debt burden was on East Pakistan. The Bengalis were not enrolled in the army for many ridiculous reasons. These historical facts, which formed the bedrock of the Six-Point programme itself played the background rationale in the rock-solid support for it.

Bangabandhu's 6-Point Programme terrified the smug Pakistani regime so much so that he was subsequently arrested on the pretext of giving a repulsive statement and was kept imprisoned for long 33 months from 8 May 1966 to 22 February 1969. This was the longest prison term in Bangabandhu's 14-year long prison life. In spite of unbearable struggles, he did not give up the Six-Point Programme since he earnestly believed that it was the only way towards the emancipation of the Bengalis as a nation. His staunch belief in the movement enabled Bangabandhu to endure all sorts of dejections and deprivations in the aloofness of his prison life. Even when he was not physically present in the movement scene outside, he passed restless times about the progress and outcome of the movement. By the way, of messages and letters, he tried to stir up the commitment of his compatriots to organize and boost the movement further. Such was his

passion for the Six-Point Movement and perhaps he could never think of a reversal of his stance regarding it. So, he could say without a tinge of hesitation in his heart, "I shall walk along the roads lonely with it if need be. Because history will prove that this is the right path for the liberation of Bengalis."

The then Pakistani military ruler Ayub Khan got vexed by the Six-Point demand and threatened to respond to the Six-Point in the language of weapon. But the people of the East Pakistan as a whole stood firm under the leadership of Bangabandhu in the same belief that the Six-Point movement would free them from the age-long deprivation and oppression. Therefore, the Pakistani regime could not suppress the Six-Point movement by using propaganda, false information and intimidation. So, they adopted the measures of atrocity to rein the movement. Eleven people, including Manu Mian, Shafique and Shamsul Haque, were gunned down by the police and paramilitary EPR on June 7, 1966 in Dhaka and Narayangonj during a hartal called for the release of Bangabandhu and other leaders detained for launching the Six-Point Movement.

The authoritarian atrocities did not put out the flame of the movement rather set it ablaze and spread all over the land. Gradually, students, political workers and commoners joined hand to procreate a huge mass-upheaval in 1969 to defy any hindrance to get their leader out of the bars of prison. The influence of the Six-Point movement is so deep-rooted in the slow but steady progress towards solidarity that its originator earned the title 'Bangabandhu' and an undisputed mandate in the subsequent 1970 general election. This reward from the people gave Bangabandhu the necessary courage to declare the non-cooperation on 3 March 1971 and subsequently, pinpointed the focus of public movement to the ultimate single-point by stating in his epoch making historic speech of 7 March at the Race Course ground that the struggle this time meant to be directed towards freedom and liberation.

In this way, the Six-Point movement primarily awoke the sensibility to self-consciousness and independence among Bengalis and worked as a binding force to be united as a nation and in due course, demand for national independence. So, the Six-Point movement day recurs every year to re-enkindle the spirit of unity and solidarity as well as to remind the present leadership how Bangabandhu has set the standard of commitment in serving the welfare of his people. We are glad that his worthy daughter who sits atop our current leadership, honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina follows the footprints left by her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and shows the same commitment to serve the welfare of the population of present Bangladesh. We hope, the spirit of Six-Point movement will continue to inspire all of us to remain patriotic forever.

GRUESOME 21 AUGUST AND
A DAUNTLESS LEADER

GRUESOME 21 AUGUST AND A DAUNTLESS LEADER

During her premiership in the period of 1996 to 2001, when Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina was leading the country towards a peaceful socio-economic prosperity by virtue of a supreme application of her leadership capabilities, just at that moment, BNP, slyly influenced by the anti-independence Jamaat quarters, plotted to gain power by hook or by crook and cunningly hacked the result of the elections. After the formation of their government on 1 October 2001, people supporting the pro-independence spirit including members of the minority community began to suffer savage and brutal persecution and simultaneous threats so that they might not expose these hideous activities to the media or seek for justice. Within weeks, people came to realize that the days ahead were going to be unbearable.

The common people saw in stark surprise and awe that the miscreants who had once planned to kill their beloved children, to ravish the honour of their mothers and sisters, took the state power in the sovereign independent Bangladesh. The Jamaat-e-Islami aggression engulfed BNP in such a way that militancy surged up even under the supervision of the state. Bengalis came to know the names of militant organisations like JMB, Bangla Bhai, HUJI and others. In some areas, the terrible memory of the atrocities of 1971 returned as the persecution in the name of religion grew apace. Exploding bombs in 500 places across the country at the same time, the pro-Pakistan groups seemed to announce that they were now ready to unleash attacks on the sovereignty of Bangladesh. But interestingly, these attacks were not directed to BNP or Jamaat-e-Islami workers, but fell upon the people who cherished the spirit of freedom and as members of opposition party strove to struggle for restoring democracy. The brutal grenade attack on 21 August 2004 on an Awami League

rally with a view to decimating the people's leader Sheikh Hasina was a devastating example.

In fact, the BNP-led coalition government was so unsuccessful in its governance in comparison to that of the precursor Awami League government that they knew their own public support waned to the lowest owing to the movement organized by the opposition Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina to restore the rights of food and voting. As a result, a free and fair election would certainly hand over Awami League a great victory. Awami League's victory would mean not the loss of power but a rigorous implementation of their avowed promises to bring the killers of Bangabandhu and the war criminals to trial and punishment. The fear had upset Jamaat-e-Islami while BNP had actually lost its self-control and turned into a pawn in the hand of Jamaat-e-Islami. Their only objective was to turn Awami League void of its leaders. Hence, they hatched the blueprint of an apparent terrorist attack.

The party rally ended on August 21 at around 5:40 pm in front of the Awami League office on Bangabandhu Avenue. After finishing her speech from a hoodless truck, Sheikh Hasina strode to the corner of the truck to climb down the ladder. It was right at that moment one of the most brutal and despicable inhuman incidents in Bangladesh politics took place. Grenades exploded one after another with a loud boom. Blood flowed all around. The deadliest attack in the history of Bangladesh's politics took toll of 24 lives. Among them there was the then Awami Mohila League chief, Ivy Rahman. The image of the expressionless face on her body with dismembered lower part, published in the news dailies, was actually a symbol of the morbid face of our country relentlessly tortured by the BNP-Jamaat cycle. On that day, several hundreds of Awami League supporters were wounded in the grenade blast, from which they are still suffering. Mohammad Hanif, the first elected mayor of Dhaka City, died a year and a

half after succumbing to a fatal battle with the pain caused by the splinters.

16 years have passed after that. But the bloodstain of that afternoon is still alive in every Bengali's heart. The honourable Prime Minister Jononetree Sheikh Hasina, who was then the opposition leader, had a narrow escape from death in the grenade attack at Awami League's anti-terrorism rally that day. But one of her eardrums was torn which led to a permanent damage of her hearing ability.

But despite accelerating the process of proper investigation and trial of the horrific attack, the ministers and MPs of the then four-party coalition government began to speak out against the Awami League. It was said that the Awami League had carried out the grenade attack to gain the sympathy of the people. Even standing in the National Parliament, the opposition did not hesitate to blame Awami League. A scandal of Indian support was also spread around. Even the judicial commission of Justice Zainul Abedin claimed that there was no militant group behind the attack and that the blast was carried out by the intelligence agencies of the powerful country across the border with the help of fugitive terrorists. One Joj Mia from Noakhali was set up as the self-confessed attacker, although later on, his own mother revealed that it was a fake arrangement. Most regrettably, the people of the country came to know that the then head of government also forbade the intelligence agency from investigating the matter. The then Prime Minister formed a committee comprising military-civilian officers of her preference to investigate the August 21 killings. However, the report of the committee was never brought to light.

Even after being arrested from Badda area of the capital on October 1, 2005, Mufti Abdul Hannan, the top leader of the banned militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad, gave details to the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) about the incident along with a

confession regarding his involvement in the August 21 grenade attack. But there were no visible efforts to file a case against him or to record a deposition from him in the court. The then coalition government did not take any action to arrest the grenade-attackers and associates who had been mentioned by Mufti Hannan. Therefore, since the administration showed no willingness to bring the self-proclaimed attackers to justice, it became clear to one that the attack had been carried out under BNP-Jamaat administrative supervision.

But history never forgives the wrongdoers. The army-backed caretaker government came and started investigating the grenade attack case in 2007. A total of six militants, including Mufti Hannan and his associates, gave depositions in court in November 2007. From an analysis of their statements, came out the details of the grenade attack including the names of the front-line attackers and their associates, the plan, and the supply of grenades. Later, the former Deputy Minister of the last BNP-led coalition government, Mr. Abdus Salam Pintu was arrested on January 17, 2008. From the investigation, it was revealed that the militants had a planning meeting at the former Deputy Minister's house in Dhanmondi just three days before the attack took place. Mufti Hannan also admitted this in the court statement. The investigating officers had no doubt that the former Deputy Minister's brother Maulana Tajuddin had supplied the grenades brought from Pakistan for the attack.

The trial began in June 2008 against 22 people including Mufti Hannan. But for some unknown reasons, the trial was delayed. Later in 2009, Awami League came to power, investigated the case further and in 2011, 32 more were indicted with supplementary charge sheets. The final verdict came on October 10, 2018. The court sentenced 19 people including former Home Minister Lutfuzzaman Babar and Deputy Minister Abdus Salam Pintu to death; 19 people including Tareq Rahman, Haris Chowdhury, and former MP Kaikobad were sentenced to life

imprisonment. The verdict proved that the then ruling BNP-led coalition government had carried out that savage and brutal attack on August 21, 2004 using banned militants to destroy the ideals and blood legacy of the harbinger of the freedom of Bangladesh, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Bangabandhu's worthy daughter, the honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, carries along within her personality the inheritance of his leadership. She has devoted herself to the benefit of the country and the nation keeping his father's ideals aloft. But along the way, the daughter of Bangabandhu had to endure many reproaches and obstacles. Those Jamaat oriented groups who spoke the Bengali tongue but wanted to put the alien Urdu language on top of it during Pakistani regime and the subsequent liberation war, called the freedom seeker Bengalis Hindu and kafir, and still dream of annexing Bangladesh again to Pakistan have always been active in the political life of this country in some way or other. One of the ultimate goals of the people's leader, the honourable Prime Minister Shaikh Hasina's life is to implement the coveted dream of Bangabandhu by putting those war criminals to trial on the soil of this country, who have never been repentant for their roles in 1971, rather, have felt proud and bluntly tended to justify themselves. This is because there is a strong conflict of reactionary communalism with the spirit reared by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Along this dangerous path of upholding the ideals of the Father of the Nation, she has been prey to life-threatening attacks again and again. She might be in power or outside it, Bangabandhu's daughter and the inheritor of his leadership Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has always been made target of the retaliation of fundamentalists and pro-Pakistani sects. But very like her father, she could not be derailed from the grueling and gruesome orbit of her own duty with threats of life.

In fact, the month of August has given Sheikh Hasina as much strength to carry along, to the next generation, the spirit that

Bangabandhu infused in the hearts of the people of his times, as it has inflicted pain and bereavement upon her and all the Bengalis. She has forgotten to care for her own life and uprooted one after another the seditious felons and thus ensured justice for the deprived who had been waiting for years. The proper judgment and punishment of the killers of Bangabandhu, the war criminals, the rising militants, the planners and perpetrators of the August 21 grenade attack has been possible in Bangladesh, only by virtue of honourable Prime Minister's rock-solid patriotism, her unshakable faith in the spirit of liberation, and very like her father, her unfathomable love for Bengalis in general. We firmly believe, these unique features of her leadership will continue to lead Bangladesh to the golden height of peace and prosperity.

LEADERSHIP THAT GIVES
THE NATION HOPE

LEADERSHIP THAT GIVES THE NATION HOPE

It's not magical, nor something very astounding. Such is she. It is as though a very common feature of her leadership. In the face of the darkness unleashing disaster, her leadership cracks the lightning to cut through the darkness. It is she, the Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who appears as a dependable savior in the skirmish of a terrible turn of the nation's fate. The people of this country generally have the opportunity to know her anew at the moment of appalling disaster. Three hundred and forty million eyes of hundred and seventy million people watch with awe how fearless she is. She is again the lighthouse of hope. Every disaster has witnessed how firm each of her steps taken against them is. She has assured hundreds of millions of people of safety in adversity. None comparable to her can be found in the country right now. Of course, the world media has been doing such analysis for a long time. That's what the rating agencies have been saying for some time already.

No researcher can probably state with a certainty that the democratic politics in Bangladesh has always followed a straightforward route. After killing the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15th August 1975, the military rulers adopted the style of those in earlier Pakistan to govern Bangladesh which had once been created in consequence of a great war of liberation. After the brutal killing of Bangabandhu, Ziaur Rahman, who had taken power illegally, wanted to convert Bangladesh into a country following the Pakistani strategy.

In the early eighties, Sheikh Hasina, the heir of the blood and politics of Bangabandhu, was elected president of Bangladesh Awami League through a national conference. On taking over the responsibility of the party Sheikh Hasina returned to the country

ignoring the angry frowns of Zia's Military regime. That is, it is natural for her to steer the nation through during the time of disaster. Sheikh Hasina is the name of a dazzling flare that survived in the midst of fatal grenade charges. She has dedicated her life to the welfare of the poor working class people of Bengal. Her political philosophy means nothing but the wellbeing of the people. She is as determined to build the *Sonar Bangla* following Bangabandhu's dreams as is she also a representative of a liberal democratic and non-communal secular Bangladesh molded in the freedom struggle. Sheikh Hasina's political motto is "improving the standard of people's lives."

World Population Clock says that almost 8 billion people living in the world are now facing war conditions under which everyone is confused about their life and death. It is a war that has turned the most powerful countries of the world—engaged in ransacking the social systems of the whole world—having the latest military prowess like hundreds of thousands of nuclear bombs, fighter jets, submarines, and weapons of so many ranges, into hapless failure in front of these invisible giants of micro-organisms. There are processions of corpses all around us. All the power of the so-called super powers is useless today.

According to World meter, the Corona epidemic has claimed 87,000 lives in the United States, the most powerful country in the world along with affecting more than 1.45 million. Again, around 0.27 million people have been affected in Spain of whom around 28 thousand died. In Italy, more than 223,000 people have been affected and 31 thousand died. Similarly, in France, around 179,000 people have been affected and more than 27 thousand died. More than 174,000 people have been affected in Germany, and nearly 8,000 died in the country. The number of victims in Russia has gone up by a million. The virus, which is widely spread in 212 countries and regions, is not giving up on anyone. Global projections say that 1 billion people could be infected if cooperation is not extended to countries like Afghanistan and Syria. Meanwhile, global infections are among around 4.52

million people, and 0.3 million have died. Since there is no medical treatment of the disease, the world is looking forward to invention of vaccines to slacken the pace of its spread. Concerned scientists don't have a moment to waste.

Meanwhile, tentative vaccine tests on human body have been done on several occasions. Yet by looking around, reading news and from hearsay, no indication whatsoever bearing any good news about the availability of vaccine of any sort before September is available.

The country's first ever Covid patient was found on March 08, 2020. Since then, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has reported 298 deaths and nearly 19,000 infections by far. Bangladesh has been preparing since the Wuhan outbreak in December 2019. When the corona virus disease became increasingly fatal across the world, one of the most efficient disaster management countries in the world, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took control of the pilot's seat in our country. She has taken the decision of a countrywide lockdown, announcing general holiday sat all government offices, school-colleges, educational institutions except the offices under the health ministry. Besides, she initiated food aid for low-income people, the deployment of armed forces alongside the civil administration to monitor the observance of hygiene and social distancing regulations, strengthening relief programs to ensure food assistance to the poor, the day-labouring people, increasing the number of tests for comprehensive corona detection, setting up dedicated corona hospitals and isolation centers. She is doing all these—alone. Of course, she has a team. I'm talking about her loneliness because the role of the commander in chief in any war is the most crucial thing. That's the rule. Earlier, the Prime Minister announced an incentive of Tk. 72,000 crore for the production industry. Later, that amount has been increased to around Tk.100 thousand crores. Such incentives have covered many more areas.

While others have voluntarily secluded themselves in personal hideouts, she has kept her office open. A self-appointed sleepless Sheikh Hasina has been continuing the task of coordinating the rampage of activities for fighting corona. People of the country are much relieved to see her doing frequent video conferences with government officials and thus giving them proper instructions. Similar conferences with the Asian leadership are also going on with a view to protecting the people of South Asia by subjugating the covid-19.

It is a great fortune of Bangladesh that the people of this country have found a rare leader like Sheikh Hasina who is at the same time visionary, workaholic and honest per excellence. No one would possibly believe how a leader like Sheikh Hasina could assume the role of the helmsman in a third world or a developing country without observing the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

There is no way to count how many hundreds of people the USA and the UK have killed collaboratively in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Vietnam. Those mighty ones are biting dust in dealing with corona virus. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had to take resort of ventilation in the ICU of the hospital when he was infected with corona. Fortunately, he survived this time. We learn from the media that a huge number of dead bodies have been left on the streets of the Latin American country of Ecuador. The cremation centers in China have been continuously burning for days—busy in just burning the dead. Only the Almighty knows what happened. However, the mass media has reported on the basis of satellite data that the Chinese sky has provided such evidence.

When our ears are burdened with such news that the powerful capitalists of this country after accumulating huge heaps of money through corruption are making Canada and Australia their second home; that they are not paying the workers their dues, that the so-called “representatives of people” are stealing the grains

for aid, the US magazine *Forbes* praises the Prime Minister highly. The *Forbes* article says, “Bangladesh, a country of some 161 million people, led by Sheikh Hasina, is no stranger to crises. She was quick off her feet standing up to this one, with a response the World Economic Forum called 'admirable'.” Lauding the Prime Minister's initiative to tackle corona the article states that Sheikh Hasina being the Country's longest officiating Prime Minister took necessary initiatives of bringing back the stranded Bangladeshis from China in early February. After the first corona virus infection was detected in early March, he shut down educational institutions and ordered the online operations of non-emergency business affairs. Then she setup the screening devices at the international airports to see if anyone is carrying the covid-19 symptoms. About sixty-five hundred thousand people were screened, 37,000 out of whom were sent to quarantine immediately. These are initiatives that the UK has not yet been able to implement according to the mentioned article.

The way Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has jumped in along with her administration to confront the coronavirus can only be compared to the indisputable leadership of the father of the nation during the liberation war and the Mujibnagar government led by him. The people of this country are grateful to her for her courageous confrontation of Covid pandemic in the midst of such great adversities, since she knows that fear does not suit her. At the same time, the Prime Minister has also taken measures in advance so that the corona pandemic may not mar the speed with which she had earlier been pushing the wheels of economy forward, improving the quality of people's lives. She has, by this time, provided 50 lac different classes poor people cash taka before Eid and she will continue standing by the side of the poor providing them necessary support till the departure of COVID-19.

Sheikh Hasina has taken electricity to the homes of those who were shot down for demanding electricity. Even after the World Bank's withdrawal of funding, she has turned the building of the

Padma Bridge into a reality. She has shown the people of the world that Bangladesh too is capable.

It is not just sincerity or honesty which is the power of Sheikh Hasina. She believes we can do; the Bengalis can. Sheikh Hasina frequently repeats one line: since we got our victory through a liberation war, no victorious nation can bow down and lose. This is the *magic* of Sheikh Hasina. This is the motto which has made of her a world leader in the 21st century. Hundreds of millions of people like me cherish a firm belief that Sheikh Hasina will once again set her trend of success high in the global arena.

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP
TOWARDS A HEALTHY HIKE

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS A HEALTHY HIKE

Bangladesh shares a common socio-political heritage with its biggest neighbour, India. The people of the countries are from common ancestors and they participate in similar cultural activities. So, it is presumable that despite being torn apart by geo-political boundaries, the people of the two countries cherish more affinities than detachment, for which India invested tremendous efforts for the cause of the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, and Bangladesh has always been very thankful to India for such a significant role during the liberation war. There have been minimal disturbances and discrepancies in India-Bangladesh relationship since then, and a strong fraternal unity has kept the two countries tied in sweet harmony for decades. Especially, after the advent of the Awami League Government led by the well competent daughter of Bangabandhu, the honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the second time in 2008, the relationship between India and Bangladesh has become so strengthened that even changes in the political scenario of India and rise and fall of parties to and from power have not been able to mar or stain the bilateral relationship between the two neighbours. Instead, it has been cemented farther towards having a rock-solid foundation.

It is really wonderful that the present Bangladesh Government under the able and judicious leadership of Bangabandhu's worthy daughter Sheikh Hasina has been able to settle so many issues with India, which remained unsettled since its liberation. In the last twelve years, the India-Bangladesh relationship has undergone a complete change in comparison to that during the previous governments. None would have conjectured about the pacts, treaties and MoUs that both Bangladesh and India have signed in order to settle issues and to work together towards a

promising and prosperous future in these few years. Exchange of enclaves between both countries, allowing India transit through Bangladesh highways, giving permission of using the Chattogram and Mongla sea-ports, settlement of marine boundary, joint ventures against terrorism, bilateral trade and commerce, assistance in railways and aviation transport, easing up visa processing and so on are the worth mentioning areas in which we see wonderful progresses that concern both the countries.

The government of India has categorically applauded Bangladesh's zero tolerance attitude to terrorism, and expressed solidarity with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's relentless efforts to keep peace, security and stability in the border area and bidden fair to work together to uproot any kind of terrorism from this region. It is mentionable in this regard that the foreign ministers of both the countries had extended successful talks on forming intensive assistance on the part of both governments against fundamentalist groups of any sort, terrorists, black marketers, fake-note dealers and other organized criminals.

Both the countries are intent on making the process of travel for people on both sides simple and easy. Bangladesh government has already made an appeal to their Indian counterparts to remove all sorts of restrictions for Bangladeshi citizens while entering India by highways or railways. The Indian government has made a promise to remove the restrictions gradually.

India, with utmost priority, took a favourable decision with a view to relaxing visa limitations for the people of Bangladesh above sixty-five years of age and below thirteen years of age in the year 2014. They were allowed five-year multiple entry visas as against the one-year visa available earlier. In 2018, under the Revised Travel Arrangement (RTA)-2018, freedom fighters were added to the list to get the same facilities. In return, Bangladesh also relaxed visa rules promising five-year visas for students, senior citizens and patients. They also made provisions so that

Indians would be able to enter the neighbouring country in private cars under the BIMSTEC agreement.

Both the countries celebrate the exchange of enclaves between them with a view to settling the long debated India-Bangladesh international border issue, which needed 42 long years to settle. It is a glorious example of deep fraternity between the two countries and friendly attitudes of the ruling governments e.g., BJP in India and Awami League in Bangladesh. BJP-led Indian government showed its honesty and courage to pass the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) Bill on 07 May 2015 and consequently a fruitful agreement called the Land Boundary Agreement was signed by the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Premier Narendra Modi in June 2015. On 01 August 2015, India and Bangladesh exchanged control of some 162 pockets of land formerly known as enclaves. The move was branded as akin to the fall of the Berlin Wall by politicians across the world, and it boosted the India-Bangladesh relationship farther ahead.

With the settlement of mutual land-border issues, both Bangladesh and India have agreed to create a stable, peaceful and crime-free borderline between them and have emphasized proactive and effective frontier management in this regard. In a summit in October 2019, the two Premiers agreed that any loss of lives at the border areas is unexpected and avoidable, and they promised to make the border-keeping forces of both the countries work together in this regard.

Both leaders have highlighted the need to develop mutual transport facilities to enhance economic cooperation in the north and eastern states of India and other regions with Bangladesh. Both countries have agreed to introduce standard operating system rules for transporting goods from Chattogram and Mongla ports in Bangladesh to other parts of India including northeast India. Again, they are thinking seriously about the huge potential of transporting goods through the inland waterways and coastal

areas. A decision has been made to start a water-transport trade route through the Dhulian-Gargari-Rajshahi-Doulatdia-Aricha along the inland rivers. The Daudkandi-Sonamura route will also be added under the protocol. The transport of goods using the maritime ports of Bangladesh will immensely increase financial benefits of both countries. So, both countries have seriously taken the matter.

A road transport agreement called BBIN MVA among India, Bangladesh and Nepal (and Bhutan as observer) was signed on 15 June 2015 in which all the countries agreed for allowing passage of motor vehicles carrying people and goods of other participants through their motorways. As active major participants in this treaty, India and Bangladesh have shown profuse interest in finalising the protocols for the enactment of the treaty. Accordingly, representatives of the countries met in New Delhi last February to finalise the draft protocols. At the meeting, Additional Secretary to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Vikram Doraiswami stressed the need to expeditiously finalise the passenger and cargo protocols.

Bangladesh and India have far railway transits across the borders and they are used for the passage of freight trains carrying different food items and raw materials between the two countries. In the current Covid-19 situation, railway is being considered to be very effective for cargo transportation. As a matter of fact, Bangladesh has by far imported 50 locomotives and 120 passenger coaches from India which is also eager to help Bangladesh develop its railway infrastructure. This year, India has handed Bangladesh ten Broad Gauge diesel-based locomotives funded by the Ministry of External Affairs, India, as a part of commitment made last year between India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh has already begun using locomotives for transporting onions from India.

Last year the Prime Ministers of the two countries inaugurated a project of importing large quantities of cooking gas from Bangladesh to Tripura by truck. This is expected to increase the energy business across the border. In the meantime, Bangladesh's trade across Indian border has gone past 1 billion US Dollars which is an effect of India's initiative of importing tax-free and quota-free Bangladeshi products in the Indian market. The total amount of trade between India and Bangladesh stood at \$10.25 billion in 2018-19.

India and Bangladesh have been intensely banking on their healthy bilateral relationship in the development of mutual trade and commerce. Sometimes they are collaborating in some fields so that both the countries can be benefitted from those projects. There is an instance of Bangladesh's signing the paper for purchasing electricity of 718 megawatts from Reliance Power of India over the next 22 years. On the other hand, Reliance makes plans to finance almost \$1 billion to structure a regional plant by 2022 to deliver electricity. The plant will be built at Meghnaghat in Narayanganj.

Therefore, the reciprocal mode of relationship between Bangladesh and India continues to be healthier over the years and the governments of both the countries are very mutually eager to carry on with this relationship farther ahead. When Bangladesh Prime Minister met her Indian Counterpart in a top-level meeting in October 2019, they both promised to work together as members of different international organisations including the UNO and to increase partnership to keep regional peace and harmony and to make collaborative observation into the possibility of signing an extensive CEPA between the two countries in near future. This has been possible for the sincerest eagerness from the corners of both the leaders of the two vibrant neighbours. We hope the healthy relationship between the two countries will continue increasing further in the days to come.

**THE UNFINISHED MEMOIRS:
SPECIMEN OF A MUST-READ**

THE UNFINISHED MEMOIRS: SPECIMEN OF A MUST-READ

As long as the Ganges, Padma, Gouri and Jamuna continue to flow
Your achievements, O Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will shine and glow!’

One of the greatest Bengali minds and most influential fiction-writers in Bengali literature Annada Shankar Roy uttered these glowing words about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman about half a century ago.

Annada Shankar was a son of Bengal and was a Bengali in that context although he was not a son of the Bangladesh soil. His homestead was situated in the Hooghly district of West-Bengal. As a Deputy Magistrate of British India, he spent the major portion of his career in different districts of the then East-Bengal. From that time, he came to know about the soil and people of this land very closely. He also noticed the rise of the young leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, from the very beginning. The gist of his deep observation about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came out in the above two lines that he wrote during the liberation war of Bangladesh.

This story of how Sheikh Mujibur Rahman evolved into the true leader of the people of Bangladesh has been related to us by Bangabandhu himself in his incomplete autobiography. This three-hundred-page book called *The Unfinished Memoirs* bears a shining testimony to the tremendous sacrifice, retaliation, torture and humiliation that he had to endure in the course of his becoming a true people leader. The only matter to regret is that his autobiography ended all on a sudden. He did not get much chance to finish it in his ever mobile and busy life. While the politics of the region was gradually getting complicated with the participation of various actors and agents as the West Pakistanis and their Bengali accomplices began to spread a new regime

keeping alive the former colonial method of exploitation in the country just freed of British-domination, and while the Mujib of mere Gopalganj locality was gradually becoming the Mujib of the whole Bangladesh, the book ends abruptly.

In 2004, four notebooks with the handwriting of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came into the hands of his daughter, Awami League President and Honourable Prime Minister, Deshratna Sheikh Hasina. The notebooks were very old; the pages were very thin and scrappy and the writing was obscure in many places. From a reading of these notebooks they came to know that the notebooks encapsulated Bangabandhu's unfinished autobiography which Bangabandhu began to write in the middle of 1967 to dissipate the monotony of a prison life in Dhaka Central Jail but could not finish. This book presents on one hand the author's lineage, birth, childhood, education, social and political activities and at the same time delineates a host of historical events experienced by him like famine, Bihar and Kolkata riots, the partition of 1947, the Kolkata-centric and later pan-Indian politics of provincial Muslim Chhatra League and central Muslim League respectively, the post-Partition politics of East Bengal upto 1954, the misrule of provincial and central Muslim League governments in East Bengal, the language movement of 1952, the establishment of the Awami League, the creation of the united front followed by the victory in elections and formation of government, the riot at Adamjee, the discriminatory rule and palace conspiracy of the Pakistan Central Government etc. There is the description of the writer's prison life, of parents, children and above all, of his wife Fazilatunnesa Mujib, who was a constant force in his political career. The book has assumed a special dimension with the description of the author's travel to China, India and West Pakistan.

The reader will be able to know in minute details, as he goes through the book, the description of formative stage of a young man born into a rural household in a remote village on the

Madhumati gradually growing up to become the undisputed leader of the common people of Bengal. The reader will know how Bangabandhu surpassed every leader from whom he had taken the lessons of politics to become the most prominent and pioneering leader of the land. This book will provide a faithful report of the evolution of a person who began his political career as an activist of the Pakistan movement based on communal two-nation theory, into the creator of a non-communal country, Bangladesh.

The Unfinished Memoirs of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was first published in Bengali with the title *Asamapta Atmajibani* in June 2012. The lovers of Bangabandhu at home and abroad have translated the book in many other languages of the world. Till now the book has been translated into English, Urdu, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, French, Hindi, Turkish, Nepali, Spanish, Assamese, and Russian languages.

This book is a must-read for educated persons in this country, school and college-goers, every leader and activist irrespective of party and opinion, and above all, every member of the party founded by Bangabandhu himself, Bangladesh Awami League and its sister organizations. Happily, on February 27 this year, Supreme Court lawyer Tanjim Al Islam has sent a legal notice to the Secretary of the Department of Secondary and Higher Education under Ministry of Education, Chairman of the Bangladesh University Grants Commission, the Director General of the Department of Secondary and Higher Education and the Chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, urging them to take necessary steps for the inclusion of *The Unfinished Memoirs* in their respective curricula.

In the Notice, Tanjim Al Islam said that the book has to be included in part, if necessary, at higher secondary and in full at the university level as a textbook for every student, so that the

new generation may learn the true biography of the great leader on the one hand, and may be inspired to build a Bangladesh after his dream by adopting the ideal of Bangabandhu. And the autobiography of Bangabandhu can be one of the best sources for knowing about the true nature of his ideal. We appreciate this proposal and support it wholeheartedly.

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a politician. Writing was not his profession or hobby. He started writing especially at the request of his wife and in order to pass the boring inactive time of prison life. Even the four notebooks for writing memories on their pages were supplied by Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, upon whom the nation conferred the title 'Bangamata'. Bangabandhu's prose style is not figurative because he was no professional writer. But his ordinary utterances puffed with the warmth of his inner core directly touch a reader's heart, very much like his speeches which have got a permanent place in the hearts of millions of his listeners. You must read the book to know the country and its people from the viewpoint of Bangabandhu. This book has to reach each and every house in Bangladesh.

Fortunately, the Father of the Nation himself wrote his story in four notebooks during his prison life. The book should also be read to eradicate the confusion of people whom the vested quarters deliberately misled with wrong information about Bangabandhu. As long as the rivers Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Surma and Karnafuli continue to flow and as long as Bangladesh lives, *The Unfinished Memoirs* will continue tell people the tales of the dreams and ideals, the struggles and movements, the pains and sacrifices of the greatest leader of the history of Bengal and greatest Bengali of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

THE GREATNESSES OF BANGABANDHU

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Late Lord Archibald Fenner Brockway aka Baron Brockway, a British socialist politician and anti-war activist once commented, “In a sense, Sheikh Mujib is a greater leader than even George Washington, Mahatma Gandhi and de Valera,” (Huq and Raju).

I’ll rather say, he was not greater but the greatest of all those and many other leaders, and not in a sense but in different senses. Why, I’m going to explain later.

First of all, let us have a glance on the lives and deeds of the three great leaders from the United States, India and Ireland, whom he was compared with. All of them were predecessors to Sheikh Mujib and led some or other movements and revolutions and wars in their respective countries and became victorious in the long run. Among them, Washington and Gandhi are considered as the ‘Father of the Nation’ in the U.S. and India respectively, as Sheikh Mujib is also the same in Bangladesh. But de Valera aka Éamon de Valera, though he was one of the leading political figures of his country’s War of Independence, was jailed for participation in anti-colonial uprising, and after independence served several terms as head of government and head of state, with a prominent role introducing the Constitution of Ireland, but he was never conferred with the title ‘Father of the Nation’.

On the other hand, George Washington led Patriot forces to victory in his nation's War for Independence and presided over the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which established the U.S. Constitution and a federal government, and served as the first President of the United States from 1789 to 1797. He has been called the ‘Father of His Country’ for his manifold leadership in the formative days of the new nation. But he never was a political activist engaged in movements after movements to realise some or other demands of people, never spent days after days and nights after nights behind the bars and never took parts in fights against colonialism.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known popularly as Mahatma Gandhi (Gandhi the Great Soul), the anti-colonial nationalist and political ethicist, employed non-violent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British rule and in turn inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. He was also thrown frequently to jail by the British colonial rulers, as the Pakistani neo-colonial rulers in disguise of a so-called independence did to Sheikh Mujib. Gandhi could not be called a true people's leader as the people from some casts, creeds and communities of India did not support him. Besides, he did not contest or take any post in the government of the then newly-independent India, before he was assassinated five months after India had achieved freedom. So, it can be said without any hesitation that Bangabandhu's popularity was far wider than that of Mahatma Gandhi, of course, within the periphery of our national boundary. Actually his popularity was unprecedented. It can be remembered that he and other candidates from his party, Awami League, won 198 seats in the Provincial Assembly of the then East Pakistan after contesting the general election of 1970.

There are many other great personalities who have also made the similar remarks about Bangladesh's founding father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. One of them is Ved Marwah, former governor of Indian states of Manipur and Jharkhand.

He wrote in his remark while recounting his memory with Bangabandhu "I have met many charismatic personalities during my service career, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and many world leaders, but I must say that among them he (Sheikh Mujib) was the most charismatic personality I had ever met," (Momin).

Recalling Bangabandhu's historic meeting with late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi Airport, Marwah also wrote, "Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by nature was a very reserved person. But this occasion was an exception. I had not

seen a bigger smile on her face. She was smiling and prancing like a young girl. One could see an immediate personal rapport had developed between the two,” (Momin).

Many other globally renowned personalities also praised Sheikh Mujib beyond limit. They spoke highly about his charismatic leadership, sky-high personality, indomitable courage and unconditional respect and commitment for the nation.

Many of them described Bangabandhu as an institution, a movement, a revolution, an upsurge and above all, the main architect of the Bengali nation's freedom from a long subjugation. His March 7 (1971) historic speech is being regarded as the essence of an epic poem like a few such speeches delivered by the world leaders of Bangabandhu's status.

During his first ever-meeting with Bangabandhu at the Algiers Non- Aligned Summit in 1973, Cuba's unparalleled leader Fidel Castro at once hugged Bangladesh's Father of the Nation and spoke out in an utter emotional expression, "I have not seen the Himalayas but I have seen Sheikh Mujib. In personality and in courage, this man is the Himalayas. I have thus had the experience of witnessing the Himalayas,” (Neazy).

On hearing the news of Bangabandhu's assassination, former British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, wrote to a Bengali journalist, "This is surely a supreme national tragedy for you. For me, it is a personal tragedy of immense dimensions,"(Sarkar).

Journalist Cyril Dunn once said of him, “In the thousand-year history of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib is the only leader who has, in terms of blood, race, language, culture and birth, been a full-blooded Bengali. His physical stature was immense. His voice was redolent of thunder. His charisma worked magic on people. The courage and charm that flowed from him made him a unique superman in these times,” (Father of Nation).

Famous British journalist, Sir Mark Tully, had the opportunity to meet Bangabandhu from a very close quarter. He could discover

the greatest charisma of a human being in the good person of a Bangalee. Tully wrote, “I attended several public meetings addressed by Sheikh Saheb. He had a wonderful voice that could mesmerise the crowd. I could feel that from the reaction of the people, when Sheikh Saheb used to address public meetings,” (What Others Say).

The greatest journalist of New Egypt, Hasnein Heikal (former Editor of The Al Ahram and a close associate of late President Gamal Abdel Nasser) said, “Sheikh Mujibur Rahman does not belong to Bangladesh alone. He is the harbinger of freedom for all Bangalis around the world. His Bengali nationalism is the new emergence of the Bengali civilization and culture. Mujib is the hero of the Bengalis, in the past and in the times to come,” (Sheikh Mujib Stands).

The factors worked behind Bangabandhu’s becoming a great leader are his superb oratory, overwhelming mass support, and above all his unique conception of Bengali Nationalism, which brought all the people of Bangladesh, irrespective of religion, caste, colour or creed under his capable and time-oriented leadership.

Some persons are born leaders and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was one of them. If we notice minutely his life, we will find that he had always been played a role of leader whether it is in the educational institution, playfield, or in different social and political aspects. Yes, it is also a proved fact that he was politically conscious from his early childhood. His profound eloquence helped him considerably to climb upward the ladder of leadership before and after the colonial eras.

Late S. M. Ali, eminent journalist and the founding editor of The Daily Star, wrote, “His (Sheikh Mujib’s) entry into the student politics in Dhaka University where he was admitted to the Faculty of Law did not create much of a stir. But he was noticed soon because he was a good orator and because he enjoyed the backing of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, the former chief

minister of undivided Bengal, who were already mobilising his forces against the autocratic rule of Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan,” (Bhowmik).

All along his life, whether he was in ruling power or an opposition leader, or simply an activist in the street, Bangabandhu delivered numerous speeches, bearing the proud marks of his eloquent oratory. Some of his speeches have become non-removable from people’s mind and our national history, and the speech of March 7, 1971 is at the top of those speeches. This speech was the ultimate eruption of his volcanic personality, which gave birth to a new nation. The speech is the best signature mark of Bangabandhu’s role as a true people’s leader.

Thus, Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech deserves a special mention. It was extempore and took only 19 minutes to deliver, but each word conveyed the strategic guidance for the final phase of the revolution and instilled patriotic feelings into the people. David Ludden argued, “This speech inspired a popular revolution.” The speech was rated as one of the world's best speeches. In his 2013 book, *We Shall Fight on the Beaches: The Speeches That Inspired History*, Jacob F Field underlined the rationale for the rating through a collection of extracts from the most inspirational speeches of the last 2,500 years, including speeches of leaders like Churchill, Lincoln, Mao, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, (Field).

It is matter of great pride and happiness for us that UNESCO has recognised the 7th March Speech of Bangabandhu as part of the world’s documentary heritage. The historic speech of the Father of the Nation has been included in the Memory of the World International Register, a list of world’s important documentary heritage maintained by UNESCO, (UNESCO).

The strongest possible mass support was another important factor behind Mujib’s emergence as a capable leader of time. From the very beginning, Bangabandhu understood and followed the nerves of the mass people. Renowned author, professor of politics

and international affairs, and reporter Gary J. (Jonathon) Bass, while referring to a cable from the US Consulate in Dhaka, mentioned, “Mujib's very appearance suggested raw power, a power drawn from the masses and from his own strong personality. He was tall and sturdy, with rugged features and intense eyes,” (Ali).

In this regard, S. M. Ali wrote: “While the leftist student leaders of the early-'40s quietly disappeared from the scene—some had gone underground, a few had changed their views and some had quitted politics—Sheikh Mujib slowly built up his mass support, established his own credentials as a leader who was not afraid to go to jail and developed a keen awareness of the smoldering sense of revolt among his people,” (Ali).

He was a leader who hated to go underground when a warrant issued against him on some political ground though it was a common practice among other popular political leaders of his time, specially the leftist ones. He deeply disliked this type of hide and seek game. His attitude was to stand face to face with the problem or opponent. That was why, he had to stay almost half of the 25 years of Pakistani regime behind the bars.

More than a dozen times, he went to prison, starting in 1938, followed by 1940, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1954, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968 and lastly in 1971. An analysis of his prison-history indicates that during the 25 years of Pakistani rule, Mujib had to spend 12 years in prison and faced death sentences twice. Gary J. Bass argued, “Mujib's lifelong activism had cast him into jail, making him a hero to the people,” (Khan).

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was truly a rare personality in the contemporary history. He was a statesman -- handsome, charismatic, confident, popular, simple, farsighted and patriotic.

Newsweek Magazine on April 5, 1971, following the declaration of independence on March 26, 1971, wrote: “Tall for a Bengali (he stood at 5 feet 11 inches), with a touch of graying hair, a bushy moustache and alter black eyes -- Mujib can attract a

crowd of million people to his rallies and hold them spellbound with great rolling waves of emotional rhetoric. He is a poet of politics. So, his style may be just what was needed to unite all the classes and ideologies of the region,” (Azad).

Time Magazine, on January 17, 1972, wrote: “The history of the Indian sub-continent for the past half-century has been dominated by leaders who were as controversial as they were charismatic -- Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Jawaharlal Nehru. Another name now seems likely to join the list, Sheikh Mujibur (“Mujib”) Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh,” (Azad).

The great Bengali novelist Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay said: “From the ocean of time, the eastern part of Bangladesh – otherwise, known as East Bengal or East Pakistan -- is emerging with a new spirit, a new aura, in a new magnificent figure. She is borne up on the head, deity-like, by the 75 million people of East Bengal. Their leader is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the friend of Bengal. A historical conflict has drawn to a close and a new chapter is being written,” (Azad).

Mujib was indeed a popular leader who had reached the pinnacle of political fame and authority by the hard work of ceaselessly addressing the people’s problems, and not by whining about his own misfortunes.

James J. (Jeremiah) Novak, a writer, who has lived and traveled in Asia for thirty years and was Resident Representative of The Asia Foundation in Bangladesh from 1982 to 1985, and has been a columnist and reporter for numerous newspapers and magazines, said: “Sheikh Mujib brought an immediacy to the political environment. He never tired the people by sophisticated ploys or half-measures. He had no love for the government office,”(Azad).

Regarding Sheikh Mujib’s personality, Novak wrote: “As for the Sheikh, hard work shaped his style. Indefatigable, he walked across fields from village to village, and mingled with the people, sharing their rice, dal and salt, remembering names, praying at

mosques, sweating in fields, visiting flood sites, weeping at funerals and milads. He empathised mightily, instituted sympathetically and reached out and touched -- not golf clubs and club chairs but the people's sweaty hands. He knew what the people believed because he could explain things not only in terms they could understand but in one they respected. Knowing that they believed he did not need to lie," (Azad).

With the historic 'Six-Point' demand and mass uprising in 1969, Mujib turned into an invincible leader. The 1970 election, in which Awami League won a landslide victory, was a clear indication that the people of West and East Pakistan mandated Mujib to implement the 'Six-Point' programme. At that time, Sheikh Mujib became a household name in Bangladesh. In our lifetime, we have seen no other leader in country and abroad who enjoyed so overwhelming amount of popularity. According to some of the current writers, the main factors behind Bangabandhu's becoming so widely popular and beloved by the people were his charisma and courage and his genuine devotion and affection to his people. It is the last factor which is probably the most crucial. Bangabandhu was a genuine people's leader. It was his love for his people and empathy for his people's sufferings that made him strive for their freedom.

His popularity which reached the stratosphere could not diminish his love for the common people. Till his last breath, he never forgot his real source of power – the ordinary man and woman of Bangladesh. It was his tremendous love for the people that made him eschew his official residence and continue to live in his residence at 32 Dhanmondi Road. Unfortunately, that made things easier for his killers. There can't be an iota of doubt that he was the most charismatic political personality the Bengali nation has ever-produced. One did not just meet but they circumnavigated around the aura the man exuded. Taller and bigger than the average Bengali, possessing a supremely confident visage and the manner in which he carried himself contribute towards making him a man among men.

Alongside towering international personalities like Fidel Castro, Marshal Tito, Henry Kissinger, Andre Marlaux, Curt Waldheim, Ne Win, Colonel Gaddafi, Motubo, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, never looked out of place or intimidated. In fact, with the ever-present pipe in hand it was often who looked the more impressive. The famous British journalist, Sir Mark Tully, had the opportunity to meet and closely observe the Father of the Nation from close quarters. He found him to possess great charisma. "“I attended several public meetings addressed by Sheikh Saheb. He had a wonderful voice that could mesmerise the crowd. I could feel that from the reaction of the people when Sheikh Saheb used to address public meetings," (Momin).

But Bangabandhu’s best gift to us is his ‘Bengali Nationalism’. It is a form of nationalism that focuses on Bengalis as a singular nation and Sheikh Mujib was its main proponent. Bengali Nationalism is one of the four fundamental principles according to the original Constitution of Bangladesh. It was the main driving-force behind the creation of the Independent nation state of Bangladesh through the 1971 liberation war. The people of Bengali ethnicity speak Bengali Language. Apart from Bangladesh, people of Bengali ethnicity live across the Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and some parts of Jharkhand known as united Bengal during the British period. After the 19th century's Bengal Renaissance occurred in Bengal, it then was the four decades-long Bengali Nationalist Movement led first and foremost by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that shook the region which included the Bengali Language Movement, the Bangladesh Liberation War and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Poet and journalist Muhammad Nurul Huda writes Sheikh Mujib “is incomparable because he was courageous, and it was his moral and physical courage combined that was unprecedented in the annals of our historic political struggle. Come to think of it, the man spent almost the best part of his youth in prison for the liberation of his people. The way he conducted himself while confronting the overbearing and scheming top Pakistani military

brass in Dhaka in March 1971 spoke volumes of his courage and sense of honour. The persons who have seen the transcriptions of those historic meetings bear testimony to his bravery and candidness,” (Momin).

It was his unconditional love and devotion to Bangladesh and Bengalis earned the unforgettable title ‘Bangabandhu’ for him, which means ‘Friend of Bangla (Bengal)’. Bangladesh and its people have not yet found a better or greater friend than Bangabandhu in any other leader. He remains as the paramount icon of the benevolent leadership not only in our country but also in the subcontinent and some other parts of the world. That the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will shine is widely admired by scholars and in Bengali communities in India and across the world for denouncing the military rule and that what he maintained was 'ethnic discrimination in Pakistan', and for leading the Bengalis’ struggle for rights and liberty. In a 2004 poll conducted on the worldwide listeners of BBC's Bengali radio service, Mujib was voted as the ‘Greatest Bengali of All Time’ beating out the Noble Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore and others. Bangabandhu lives truly in the heart of his people.

Bangladesh and Bangabandhu are one and inseparable. The Father of the Bengali nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s name will shine like the brightest star amid the names of many other fathers of the nations of the world including George Washington of United States, Peter 1 of Russia, Sun Yat-sen of China, Sir Henry Parkes of Australia, Miguel Hidalgo of Mexico, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, William the Silent of the Netherlands, Einar Gerhardsm of Norway, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Carlos Mannel of Cuba, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk of Turkey, Dr. Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia, Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia, Mahatma Gandhi of India, Don Stephen Senanayake of Sri Lanka, and many others. As a nation, we can be truly proud that we have a leader and father figure who is incomparable in the world.

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BANGABANDHU AND
LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

BANGABANDHU AND LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has the pioneering contribution to the Language Movement. A huge amount of information has been excluded or not included in essays, articles and books published on this contribution. Bangabandhu had been imprisoned during that time for causing the displeasure of the government by his stance in favour of Bengali language. Soon after the creation of the State of Pakistan in 1947, the Western regime consciously conspired to impose the minority language Urdu as the national language on Bengali population. But Sheikh Mujib was at the forefront of those who first stood up against this malicious attempt. A lifelong lover of the mother tongue, this great leader played a unique role in the struggle for establishing Bangla as the State Language—first, in the formation of the movement in 1947, taking the movement to the streets and embracing imprisonment in 1948, later as a member of the Assembly. As president of independent Bangladesh, he upheld Bangla as a language to the world. Till his death, he worked relentlessly in the progress and development of Bangla and spoke about the demands of it and its speakers.

After the birth of Pakistan in 1947, a number of political activists gathered at the Siraj-ud-Daula Hotel in Kolkata to determine what to do about East Pakistan. There, it was decided to form a non-communal political movement and organization in Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was associated with that process from the very beginning. The Democratic Youth League was formed at the East Pakistan Workers' Conference held in Dhaka on September 6 and 7, 1947. Some proposals on language were adopted at the conference.

In this context, Gaziul Haque wrote in “Bhasha Andolone Bangabandhur Bhumika” (Bangabandhu’s Role in the Language Movement), “The proposals adopted in the conference committee were read out by the then student leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The proposals were “Let the Bengali language be made the medium of writing and the language of court and legislation in East Pakistan. Let the issue be left to the public to discuss and decide what will be the national language of whole Pakistan. And let the decision of the people be taken as final.” The demand for language was thus first uttered in Bangabandhu’s voice. (“Bhasha Andolone Bangabandhur Bhumika”, Gaziul Haque; *Bhasha Andolan O Bangabandhu* (Language Movement and Bangabandhu), Bangabandhu Research Centre; February 1994).

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman joined the language movement directly after returning from India to the then East Bengal. At the outset, he participated in the State Language Movement activities of Tamuddun Majlish. Dr. Mazharul Islam, author of Bangabandhu’s first biography, said in this regard, “Sheikh Mujibur Rahman supported and assisted this Majlish in many activities related to State Language Movement. (*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib*, Mazharul Islam; Agami Prokashoni, Dhaka, 1993, p. 104)

In December 1947, fourteen leaders of the Language Movement, including contemporary politicians, first formulated a manifesto with 21-point demands, including the claim for language. The second among the 21 demands was “We want Bangla to be the State Language”. The historic manifesto was published in the form of a small booklet called *State Language - 21 Point Manifesto - Historical Document*. It is recognized as a historical document in the history of the Language Movement. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s contribution to the preparation of this manifesto was undeniable and he was one of the signatories to it.

In this context, Dr. Syed Anwar Hossain, Professor of History, Dhaka University, said, “The publication and promotion of the booklet within three to four months of the creation of Pakistan, bears evidence that a disillusionment of Pakistan-related dream began to shape up among the people of then East Pakistan. All those in whose name the booklet was circulated were dedicated activists involved in the Pakistan Movement in the past. One of them was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Faridpur (now Gopalganj), who later led the creation of Bangladesh as Bangabandhu (*Rashtrabhasha—21Dafa Ishtehar—Oitihashik Dalil*: Shaykhul Bari; rep. January 2002).

The Workers’ Camp at 150, Mughaltuli, was the meeting hub of progressive students and political activists at that time. Workers’ camp workers presented to the nation the discriminatory aspects of Pakistan, including their attitude to the Bengali language. The activists of the Language Movement gathered here regularly and various action plans to make Bangla the State Language were taken from here. Leaders like Sheikh Mujib, Shaukat Ali, Kamruddin Ahmad etc. were the life-force of the camp. Bahauddin Chowdhury writes, “Even after Pakistan was established in 47, 150 Mughaltuli continued to be the womb of dissenting politics. Leaders like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Zahiruddin and Naimuddin from Kolkata first gathered at 150 Mughaltuli. (150, Mughaltuli: Bahauddin Chowdhury; Jankantha Eid Volume, 2008).

On January 4, 1948, the East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League was established under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. One claim of the 10-point demands presented at the founding of the League was for making Bangla one of the State languages of Pakistan. On February 26 of the same year a strike was observed at educational institutions at the call of Tamuddun Majlish. As part of the programme, a public gathering under the chairmanship of Tamuddun Majlish Chief Professor

Abul Kashem at the premises of Dhaka University. Students of Dhaka University, Dhaka Medical College, Engineering College and Engineering School boycotted classes and joined the gathering in groups. Sheikh Mujib also played a leading role in this strike. In this context, Dr. Mazharul Islam writes, “It is noteworthy that Sheikh Mujib led the march in the entire management and management of it. All progressive student leaders, including Sheikh Mujib, deeply felt the need to build an all-out movement to establish the demands of the Bangla language. (*Bhasha Andolan O Bangabandhu*, *ibid.*, p. 19-20)

Along with the Sangram Parishad leaders Sheikh Mujib also participated in the movement and made a joint statement. On March 2, 1948, the Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad was reconstituted at a joint meeting of Tamuddun Majlish and the Muslim Chhatra League at Fazlul Haque Muslim Hall. The meeting was attended by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Shamsul Haque, Oli Ahad, Muhammad Toaha, Abul Kashem, Ranesh Das Gupta, Ajit Guha, etc. among others. Sheikh Mujib was particularly active in the formation of this council and his role was as strong as it was far-reaching.

On March 11, 1948, an all-out general strike was observed demanding Bangla to be the State language. This was the first successful strike in the country in the history of the Language Movement and after the establishment of Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib was arrested and tortured by the police for leading the strike. In his book *Jatiya Rajneeti: 1945 thekey 1975* (National Politics: 1945 to 1975), language activist Oli Ahad wrote, “Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to Dhaka from Gopalganj on March 10 to participate in the movement. The young Sheikh Mujib was so encouraged by the March 11 strike and the strike programme re-streamed the course of his life.

In his book *Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: Jibon O Rajneeti* (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: Life and Politics) published by the Bangla Academy Monaem Sarkar comments, "This was his first arrest in the politics of independent Pakistan." A statement was released in the media on March 1, 1948 in order to turn the March 11 strike a success. It was signed by Professor Abul Kashem (General Secretary of Tamuddun Majlish), Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Member of East Pakistan Muslim League Council), Naeemuddin Ahmed (Convenor of East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League) and Abdur Rahman Chowdhury (leader of the Pakistani delegation at the Southeast Asia Youth Conference). The importance of this statement is immense in the history of national politics and the State Language Movement. Bangabandhu's captivation on March 11 was a turning point in his political career. Bangabandhu's comment on the significance of March 11 in the history of the State Language Movement is mention worthy, "The State Language Movement started on March 11, 1948, not on February 21, 1952. (Daily Azad; 16 February 1971)

On March 15, 1948, the then Chief Minister of East Bengal Khawaja Nazimuddin signed an eight-point agreement with the Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad. Before signing the agreement, the contract was shown and approved by the prisoners of the Language Movement detained in jail. Sheikh Mujib along with other prisoners saw and approved the terms of the agreement. As a result of this historic agreement, Bangla language was first recognized as a medium of education. Language Movement activists, including Sheikh Mujib, were released from prison under the terms of the agreement. On March 16, 1948, a general student meeting was held at The Bottala of Dhaka University to speed up the language movement. The meeting was presided over by newly released leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On March 17, 1948, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Naeemuddin

Ahmed at the call of the East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League at the foot of the Banyan tree of Dhaka University. Sheikh Mujib participated in the meeting. On that day, strikes were observed in educational institutions across the country. The Bangla language movement spread as a mass movement across East Bengal owing to the hard work of youth leaders like Sheikh Mujib, Tajuddin Ahmad, Mohammad Toaha, Naeemuddin Ahmed, Shaukat Ali, Abdul Matin, Shamsul Haque etc. The whole Bangladesh trembled with public meetings, processions and slogans. Posters showed along the streets, from wall to wall, "We want Bangla as the State Language." In 1949 also, Bangabandhu was arrested twice for participating in various programmes of the Language Movement.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was jailed during the explosive days of 1952 Language Movement. Though personally absent from political programmes, he regularly kept in touch with the agitators and provided necessary instructions while sitting in jail. In this context, language activist Gaziul Haque wrote in his memoirs: "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman remained captivated in various jails till February 1952 after his arrest in October 1949. As a result, it was not naturally possible for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to actively participate in the Language Movement in '52. But from jail he used to keep in touch with the agitating leaders. Those who led the movement, such as Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Qamaruzzaman, Abdul Momin, all admitted in one sentence that Bangabandhu used to send instructions about the movement from jail and later during his stay in the hospital. Noted journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury wrote in an article "Ekushe niye kichu smriti, kichu kotha" (Some Memories of Twenty-first of February, Some Words), "Sheikh Mujib sent notes to several Chhatra League leaders before and after going to Faridpur jail on February 16, 1952 to give necessary instructions for the movement."

National leader Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy took his stand against the Language Movement of 1952. He made a statement in favour of making Urdu the State Language. The Language Movement could have suffered a lot if Suhrawardi had been firm in this position. Prompted by this idea, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman played a special role in changing Mr. Suhrawardi's views and acquired his support in favour of Bangla. Bangabandhu himself said in this context, "We came across great trouble after the publication of Mr. Suhrawardi's language related statement. So, I went to Karachi to meet him in June that year, and explaining the situation I asked him to make a statement in support of the Demand for Bangla language. As a result, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy eventually made a statement supporting Bangla as one of the State languages of Pakistan."

That statement was published in the weekly Ittefaq on June 29, 1952. In the same year, a statement by Maulana Bhasani was published in the Daily Ittefaq magazine. In the statement, he said, "If Sheikh Mujib had not been able to change the views of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy in favour of Bangla language, not only the Language Movement but also the future of the Awami League would have been uncertain." On April 27, 1952, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the acting General Secretary of the party, addressed the District and Subdivision Representative Conference of the All Party Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad as a representative of the Awami League.

Even after 1952, Bangabandhu continued working on securing the honour of Bangla language. His contribution to the success of the Language Movement is also undeniable. He played very crucial role in the Legislative Council in the context of giving Bangla the status of the State Language, the usage of Bangla at all levels, and the commencement of Bangla as the medium of daily Parliamentary procedures. Bangabandhu also played a significant role in celebrating the first anniversary of 21st of

February in 1953. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was at the forefront of all the movements, processions and leadership that day. Addressing a public meeting at Armanitola playground, he called for February 421 to be declared martyrs' day and demanded that Bangla be made the State Language immediately.

The United Front was formed on December 4, 1953, using the spirit of the Language Movement of 1952. The first claim of the 21-point demand made by the United Front was 'Rashtrabhasha Bangla Chai.' (We want Bangla be made the State Language!). In 1954, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman contributed to the development of contemporary politics and Bangla language as the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Cooperatives of the United Front Government. Later on, Sheikh Mujib was able to reiterate the same demands in a more elevated accent. On the question of State Languages mentioned in the draft constitution in the Parliament session on February 7, he said, "In East Bengal, we do not understand the official languages to be the State languages speak. Therefore, the words used in the draft constitution have been used to serve vile purposes."

Reminding the fact that 56 per cent of the people of Pakistan speak Bangla, he said, "There can be no cheating on the question of State Language. The people of East Bengal demanded that Bangla also be the State language." In the Assembly session on February 16 also, he demanded that Bangla be made the State Language. In view of this, on March 23, 1956, the first constitution of the Government of Pakistan recognized Bangla as one of the State Languages of Pakistan.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman worked towards the development of Bangla and the introduction of it at all levels as a dedicated servant of the language. The first constitution of independent Bangladesh was authored on December 16, 1972. It was the first constitution written in Bangla in the history of the

world. The then President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman adopted Bangla as the official Language of the State in this constitution. The pioneering role that he played by delivering his speech in Bangla at the United Nations Organization on September 25, 1974, will forever be written in gold on the pages of history. This was the first successful initiative to establish the status of Bangla language in the World Assembly. On March 12, 1975, during his tenure as President, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman issued a government notice for the introduction of Bangla in official procedures. It says, "Bangla is the official Language of the State for the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Bangla is our national language. Yet, it is with great regret we follow that even after three years of independence, most office documents are being written in the foreign English language instead of the mother tongue. It is difficult to believe that one who does not have love for his mother tongue has love for the country."

Today, Bangla language has spread around the world crossing over the borders of the country. On November 17, 1999, UNESCO declared February 21 the International Mother Language Day. Today, all the states of the world do not only celebrate the day, but also remember the historic sacrifice of Bengalis for their mother tongue from 1947 to 1952. We have achieved the independent-sovereign Bangladesh by indulging in an all-out struggle bearing the spirit of the struggle that began on that day for the honour of the mother tongue under the brave leadership of Bangabandhu. It is a historical fact that our dear freedom has come down the path of the continuous movement to establish the rights of Bangla language. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, the central hero and architect of Bangladesh's independence, himself said, "Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty are far-reaching consequences of the Language Movement" (Daily News,

February 21, 1975). From the beginning to the end of this thread of movement, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman played the role of a leader with foresight and gave us the opportunity to emerge as an independent nation on earth.

Bangabandhu's contribution to the recognition of Bangla language and the independence of Bangladesh has to be acknowledged for historical necessity. The denunciation or depreciation of Bangabandhu means that our history tradition is above all a disservice to our nation and existence. Bangabandhu is no longer in this world, but every time we look at the History of Bangla language, Bengali nation and Bangladesh, this great leader returns to our memory.