

15 August Tragedy: Roadmap to Sonar Bangla

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The barbaric assassination of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975 represents an epic tragedy. He embraced shahadat at the fajr time but we the 85 million orphaned Bangladeshis lost the beacon and the reason for living. Following on the Newtonian Third Law of Motion "To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction", the brutality sprang an eternally forceful flow of kinetic energy. The energy has, after the dark period 1975-96, ushered in a new sunrise in the dauntless, innovative and patriotic eldest child of the father of the nation, Sheikh Hasina. So started the difficult but definitive nation building, the welfare state of Sonar Bangla.

In February 1969 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the trusted, resolute and undisputed leader came out of the jail of Pakistani Junta courtesy the volcanic uprising called the Ganaobhuttan against



Bangabandhu in eternal sleep

the ill famous Agartala case. The student-people throng at the then racecourse ground ordained the greatest Bangalee ever as Bangabandhu on 22 February 1969. Earlier, the Sheikh formulated and announced the six point programme on 5 February 1966 in Lahore, the citadel of the Pakistani aristocracy. The six point programme, the Magna Carta of the Bangalees contained, inter alia, the provisions for two-economy-one-country proposition and delineation of all subjects except external affairs and defence to the federating units including and particularly East Pakistan. Separate currencies, independent external trade relations, a paramilitary force of its own and exclusive rights on the foreign exchange earnings and revenue collection were also incorporated.

The rulers of Pakistan had by that time become mortally afraid of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and were convinced that the six point programme in the mould of the Lahore Resolution of 1940 meant a defacto Independent Bangladesh. The ferocity of the oppression and arrest / jailing kept on increasing the determination of Sheikh Mujib.

A vocal supporter of 'larke lenge pakistan' in the 1930s and early 1940s, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's disillusionment started because of the ruthless suppression of the language, culture and freedom of expression for the socio-economic rights. Mohammed Ali Jinnah and his East Bengal accomplices, Khawaja Nazimuddin, Fazlur Rahman and others not only wanted Urdu to be the only state language of Pakistan but even conspired to write Bangla with Roman / Arabic alphabet. According to the language heroes Oli Ahad and Gaziul Huq, Sheikh Mujib was the key organizer on March 11, 1948 of the thunderous picketing in front of the Secretariat Building in support of mother tongue Bangla as a state language.

The birth of Chatra League in March 1948 and of East Pakistan Awami Muslim League on 23rd June, 1949 provided the organizational framework for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to carry forward his struggle for the autonomy of the Bangalees. Mujib's now famous statement as a young member of the Pakistan National Assembly in 1955, "Honorable Speaker, I notice the people around call us East Pakistanees. Never so, we are from East Bengal which has a rich tradition, culture and heritage. You cannot change the name 'Bengal' without our consent (Sree Pranab Mukherjee, the President of the Republic of India : The Coalition Years). A reading between the lines reveals Mujibian way of initiating independence movement. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman concluded in 1947 that it would be difficult to stay with the "Mauras". The government of Pakistan appointed Aziz Ahmed of West Pakistan as the Chief Secretary of East

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Special Supplement

The National Mourning

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Bengal to the supersession of his senior and vastly superior Bangalee Golam Morshed. The Chief Secretary Aziz Ahmed was then writing Annual Confidential Reports on the Bangalee Ministers for the rulers in Karachi. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's resolve for the achievement of an independent Bengal never weakened but he sometimes changed strategy. In 1963, Sheikh Mujib indirectly dialogued with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister through Sree Sachindra Sinha, Chief Minister of Agartala. He thereafter abandoned the idea of an unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) and of forming up a government in exile in London. Then came the weapon of six point programme and the clamour for the rights of East Pakistan still within a united country.

The general election of 1970 presented an opportunity for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Checkmate Yahya-Bhutta unholy alliance. President Yahya's desire to become an "Elected President" prompted him to induce Bangabandhu to accept the election under LFO with "one man one vote" formula. He knew, a general election in Pakistan without the participation of Bangabandhu and his Awami League would be waste paper basket bound. Bangabandhu on the other hand, jumped on the opportunities as he was reasonably sure, Bangalees will support his now proverbial six points programme. Bangabandhu's bait to Yahya Khan was the chance for him to become the President of Pakistan in preference to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. It worked until Bangabandhu captured absolute majority in the



The Father of the Nation is praying to Almighty Allah for the peace of the country and the people

Pakistan National Assembly (162 out of 300 seats) frightened Yahya Khan to surrender to Bhutto machinations.

The glorious struggle for liberation and the independence war was fought in the name of and led (in absentia) by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Bangalee Freedom Fighters fought valiantly in the front and in guerrilla warfare tactics as appropriate. The people (65m) who did not seek shelter in the friendly neighboring country were inspired by and charged with the spirit of independence declared by Bangabandhu on 7th March 1971. There is no parallel in history: an entire population took to heart Sheikh Mujib's categorical announcement of March 07, "..... the struggle this time is of (economic) emancipation; the fight at this round is for independence." On the dawn of 26 March 1971,

they jumped on the occupation army at unleashing the genocide. The entire people heeded Sheikh's clarion call, "..... build a fort in each house and with whatever weapon you have, jump on the enemy" and engaged in warfare with bamboo, boat oar and axes against the well-equipped occupation forces. Another such instance of showing loyalty to the charismatic leader is difficult to find.

UNESCO has rightfully enriched its treasure of human heritage by accepting the 7th March speech as an integral part of it.



United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim meets Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

The Teachings, Ideas and the Environment

The Father of the Nation during his childhood saw in his father Sheikh Lutfor Rahman a person of honesty, integrity and defender of the just cause. "My son is doing the right things, he is fighting for our independence. I am very proud of him even if he has to go to jail for his patriotic activities" told the father Sheikh to the complainers. The mother, Saira Khatun was a model of faithfulness as she refused to leave the village house and the properties left to her custody. Head Master Babu Rasnirajan Sengupta and one of the house tutors Kazi Abdul Hamid transmitted good values to Sheikh Mujib. Begum Fazilatun Nesa Mujib was a tower of strength throughout. Confidence with which Bangabandhu ascended the zenith of success perhaps originated in 1938. The Bengal Premier AK Fazlul Huq and Minister HS Suhrawardy visited Gopalganj and explicitly recognized the leadership quality of young Mujib. In the Islamia College, the enlightened Professor Sayeedur Rahman and the progressive General Secretary of Bengal Muslim League Abul Hashim animated the patriotic thoughts to Sheikh Mujib. He was also impressed by the trio, Mayor Chittaranjan Das (Deshbandhu C.R. Das), Deputy Mayor HS. Suhrawardy and the Chief Executive Officer Subhash Chandra Bose (Netaji) in their pro-poor policy and an absolutely non-communal stance: 60% of all new recruits would be Muslims until parity was achieved. Hands-on experience in providing relief to the 1943 famine stricken and the forceful stand against the communal riots in 1946 prepared Mujib for public service.

To the young Mujib, Netaji provided the magic for defeating the British Raj without the arms. Since 1937, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would sing the motto of the Bratachari Movement of Guru Saday Dutta, an approximate translation reads: Never harbor hatred and jealousy in your mind. Let not others wealth makes you greedy. Shere Bangla's Krishak-Praja stances impressed Bangabandhu all the while. Suhrawardy was his political guru without any doubt. Rebel Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was an idol.

Contrary to the hate campaign by the defeated detractors, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the independent Bangladesh for three years seven months with remarkable efficiency, courage, innovation, foresight and love for the poor. The constitution passed by the National Assembly within nine months, an exceptionally modern-scientific-mother tongue oriented education policy, a masterly crafted Five Year Plan (1973-78) strongly advocating growth with equity, a spectacular revival of the economic growth (7.8% GDP growth in 1974-75), espousing the cause of "my sincere friends in peasants and workers" and "friendship to all, adversity to none", cooperatives for eliminating economic rent are only some examples of Sheikh Mujib management success. We hail him and rededicate ourselves to repay the blood debt to him by completing the ongoing work of a welfare state in Sonar Bangla. No doubt, BAKSAL would have long ago transformed Bangladesh to glorious heights of prosperity. □

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