



**Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**

**Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Bangladesh
&
Frankfurt Book Fair**





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**National Implementation Committee for the Celebration
of the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**

**In collaboration with Ministry of Cultural Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**

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Advisor

Rafiqul Islam
National Professor

Editor

Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury

Editorial Team

Syed Nasir Ershad
Minar Monsur
Shah Ali Farhad
Dipon Debnath

Publication

National Implementation Committee for the Celebration of the Birth Centenary of
the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
International Mother Language Institute (4th Floor)
Shahid Captain Mansur Ali Sarani
1/Ka, Segunbagicha, Dhaka 1000, Phone : +88-02-5530320
e-mail : info@mujib100.gov.bd, www.mujib100.gov.bd

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Tarik Sujat

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22/A/5/1, Happy Homes, Kunipara, Tejgaon, Dhaka 1208
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Editor's Note

We are celebrating the Birth Centenary of the greatest Bangali of all times the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman this year with deep respect and love through various events around the world.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib became the symbol of the dreams and aspirations of the Bangalis through his lifelong struggle, uncompromising leadership and unlimited sacrifice. Under his valiant leadership, Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 through a great war of liberation. He is the founder of the first nation-state in South Asia. His imperishable name has been anointed in the same entity with Bangladesh today. He delivered the song of breaking the shackles of exploitation and the great spirit of liberation, not only to the Bangalis, but also to all the oppressed and deprived people of the world. In the eyes of some he is the Himalayas, in the eyes of others he is narrated as a 'Poet of Politics'. In fact, over the course of history, in the verses of the triumphs of the liberation of the great mankind his name shines brightly today.

Bangabandhu was endowed with extraordinary eloquence and thunderous voice. The UNESCO has included his historic speech on March 7, 1971 in the Memory of the World International Register as World's documentary heritage, in which he gave his decisive call to the nation for the independence. We get to know Bangabandhu as an extraordinary

writer along with his fame as a charismatic leader when we come across three books written by him, 'The Unfinished Memoirs', 'The Prison Diaries' and 'Amar Dekha Nayachin'. These books are not only memoirs or diaries, but also a great source of information on the history of Bangalis. Now, we see that in these books, he not only recorded the events of his life as a leader but also as a visionary politician, accurately and deeply analyzing the turbulent realities of that time. That is the reason why his books are a must read today for any political activist or analyst to know and understand the geopolitics of this subcontinent.

The Frankfurt Book Fair is one of the largest and oldest book fairs in the world. This book fair brings together talented writers, publishers and readers from different countries every year, and Bangladesh is no exception. This year, on the occasion of the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, extensive preparations were made for Bangladesh's participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair. But due to the pandemic of corona, the normal arrangement of this book fair has been straitened; it is being limited to different virtual events. In light of this, the National Implementation Committee, in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the National Book Centre, is going to publish an online Reminiscent Anthology entitled 'Frankfurt Book Fair and Bangladesh' to celebrate the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The writings included in this anthology shed light on the life and work, achievements and glories of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with Bangla language, culture and various aspects of book publication in Bangladesh. A short description about three books written by Bangabandhu and the Secret Documents of the Intelligence Branch on the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is incorporated in this anthology. We are delighted to have been able to print two brief articles of the daughter of Bangabandhu, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, on the premise of finding Bangabandhu's manuscripts- 'The Unfinished Memoirs' and 'The Prison Diaries'- and the process of publishing those in the form of books, which is a significant

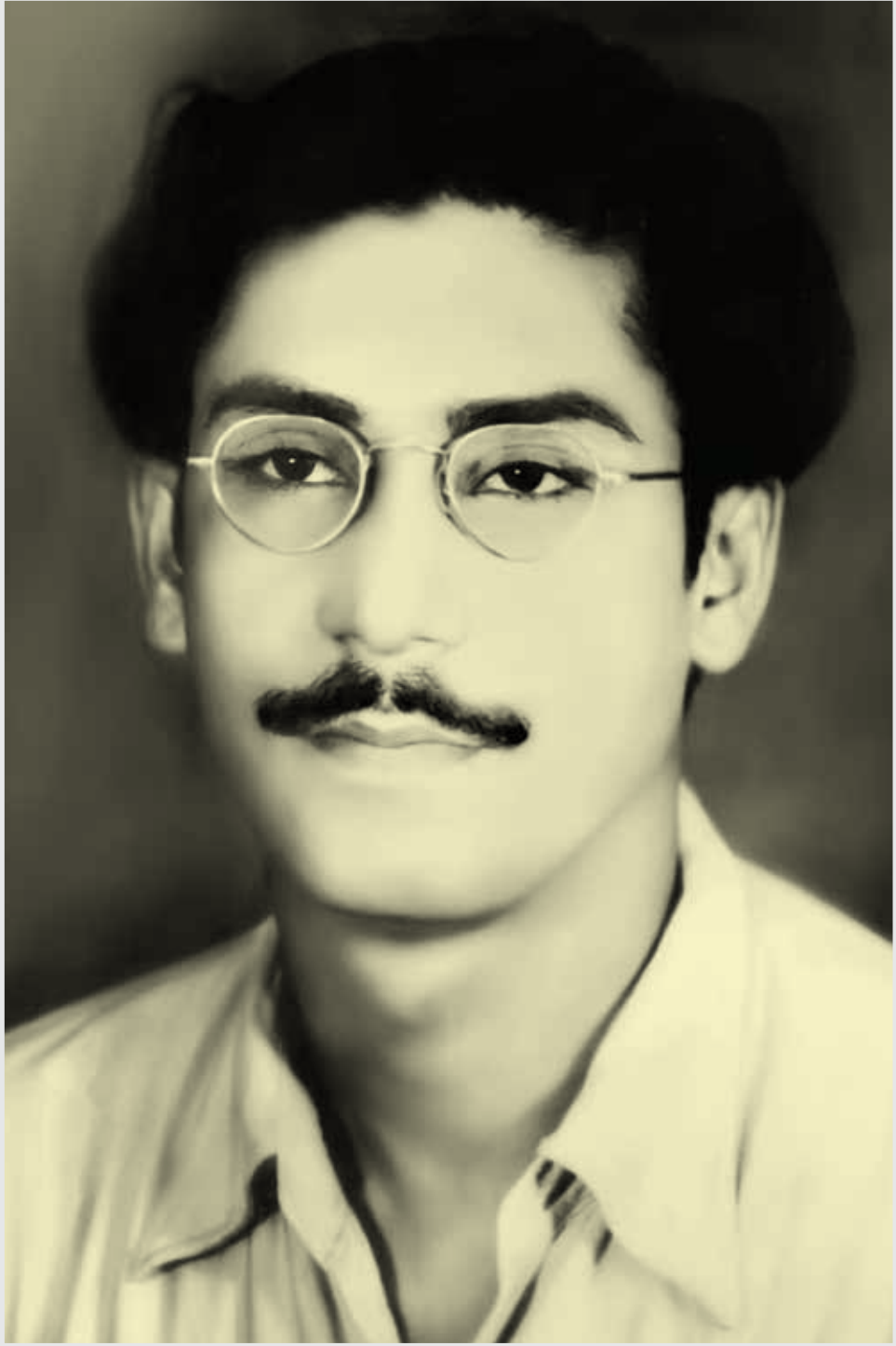
addition to this anthology. Besides, pictures of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, verses of poems and posters published during this Mujib Year have also been attached to this memorial anthology.

This compilation of our virtual memorabilia will further increase the interest of all the readers and the world at the Frankfurt Book Fair to know more about Bangabandhu. I would like to convey my sincere thanks and profound gratitude to the Prime Minister and the distinguished writers of this memorial collection. I would also like to confer my thanks and gratitude to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, National Book Centre, Journeyman Books, Knowledge and Creative Publication Association and finally the officials of the National Implementation Committee office for their relentless support for the publication of this reminiscent anthology.

Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury

Chief Coordinator

National Implementation Committee for the Celebration
of the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



Young Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Brief Life Sketch of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

1920

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in Tungipara village (Now Upazila) under the then Gopalganj subdivision (Now District) of greater Faridpur district on March 17, 1920. His father Sheikh Lutfar Rahman and his mother Sheikh Sayera Khatun had four daughters and two sons. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was their third child.



Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in this house of Tungipara on 17 March 1920

1927

At the age of seven, Sheikh Mujib began his schooling at Gimadanga Primary School. At nine, he was admitted to class three at Gopalganj Public School. Subsequently, he was admitted to Gopalganj Missionary School. Before becoming active in student movements and politics, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had an affinity toward sports like any other teenager. He possessed a special love for football.



Bangabandhu with his parents

1932

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman married Sheikh Fazilatunnesa (Renu). Together they had two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana and three sons, Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel.



Bangabandhu with his Family

1942

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman passed Matriculation examination from Gopalganj Mission School. The same year he got himself admitted into the Islamia College (currently Maulana Azad College), Kolkata. From there he completed his graduation in the year 1947. During that time he used to stay in Baker Hostel in Kolkata.



Baker Govt. Hostel in Kolkata

1943

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became close to Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. That year he was elected councilor of Bengal Provincial Muslim League (Branch of All India Muslim League). He continued to serve admirably in this position till the partition of India.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy

1946

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected uncontested as the General Secretary of Islamia College Students Union. During the communal riots known as 'Calcutta Killing' on 16th August 1946, he engaged himself in maintaining peace and communal harmony, saving lives of many members of both Hindu and Muslim communities even at the risk of his own life.



Young Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy

1947

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman met Mahatma Gandhi during his peace mission in Kolkata. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman joined Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy's move for a United Independent Bengal as a third free state along with India and Pakistan. The move was aborted, however, that became the foundation of the Father of the Nation's vision for an independent Bangladesh.



Young Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Mahatma Gandhi during his peace mission

1948

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took admission in the Department of Law at the University of Dhaka. He founded the East Pakistan Muslim Students' League, the first opposition student organization in Pakistan on January 4. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman plunged himself in overt activities to build a strong movement against the Muslim League's memorandum to make Urdu the only state language of Pakistan. On March 2, a meeting held at Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall approved a resolution placed by Sheikh Mujib to form an All-Party State Language Action Committee. He was arrested along with some colleagues on March 11 while they were demonstrating in front of secretariat building in observance of the 'State Language Bangla Day.' The student community of the country became restive following his arrest. In the face of overpowering student protests, the Muslim League government was forced to release Sheikh Mujib and other student leaders on March 15.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is taking a compatriot to hospital who was injured by police attack while demonstrating in front of secretariat gate for making Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan

1949

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman supported the movement for securing the jobs of the fourth class employees of Dhaka University and their rights. On 19th April, while preparing for a rally in favour of the fourth class employees, he was arrested along with a few other students in front of the Vice Chancellor's house. On 23rd June, East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (currently Awami League) was established and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected as Joint Secretary while he was in jail.



Following release from prison, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is on the way to attend a party meeting along with father Sheikh Lutfur Rahman

1952

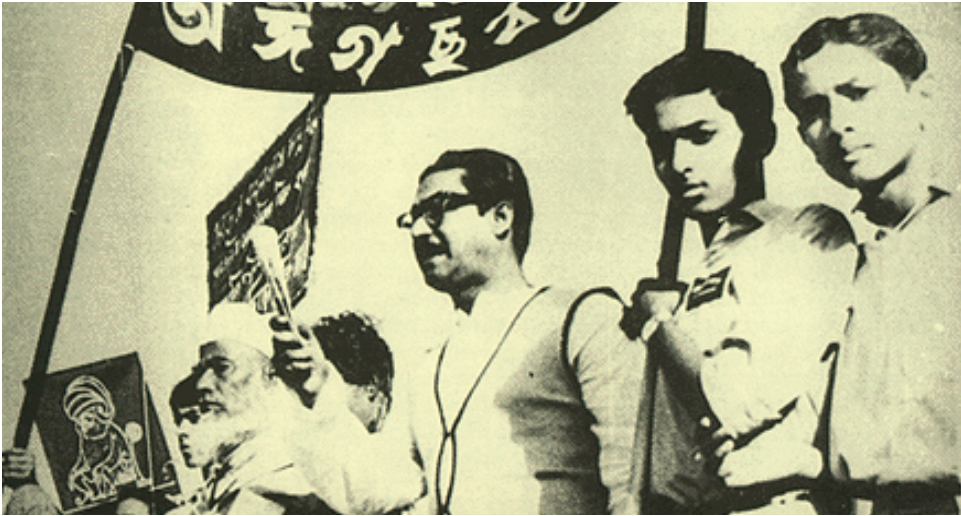
While in captivity, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stayed in constant touch with those waging the movement to realize Bangla as one of the state languages. He issued key directives to make the movement a success even from the confines of his prison. On February 16, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman started a hunger strike unto death that lasted for 11 days and was released on February 27. On February 21, the agitated students came out in strike to establish Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan in defiance of the curfew enforced by the authorities. Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jobbar, Shafiur and many others were martyred when the police fired on a rally. In a statement released from the jail, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman expressed deep sorrow for those who lost their lives and protested against the unjust police firing through hunger strike. The same year, he visited China to attend a peace conference. There he delivered a resounding speech in Bangla, taking the mother language movement to a global audience.



*Young leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is attending the
Asia-Pacific Rim Peace Conference in Beijing, China*

1953

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected General Secretary of the Awami Muslim League and continued to gain prominence as a Bengali leader.



Sheikh Mujib at Probhat Ferry with Moulana Bhashani and others-21 February 1953

1954

The first election in East Bengal was held on March 10. The United Front won 223 seats out of 237. The Awami League was victorious in 143 seats. Sheikh Mujib won the election for the Gopalganj constituency and took oath on May 15 as Minister for Agriculture and Cooperative in the new provincial government. The central government arbitrarily dismissed the United Front cabinet on May 29, and as Mujib landed back in Dhaka from Karachi on May 30, he was immediately arrested. He was released on December 23.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is going to Rajshahi for election campaign by boat along with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy

1955

Under the leadership of the Party General Secretary Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami Muslim League was renamed as the Awami League by dropping the word 'Muslim' to open the doors of the party to all, regardless of religion. This decision was made at the council session of the party during October 21-23, 1955. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was once again elected as the General Secretary of the party.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman taking oath as Minister of Jukto Front Government administered by Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq

1956

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman joined the provincial Awami League government as a minister. He remained in this position for 9 months only. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman voluntarily resigned on May 30, 1957 from the Cabinet in order to continue as the General Secretary of the party to build the organization on a firm footing as a platform of the Bengalis.



First coalition government led by Awami League in East Bengal

1957

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was re-elected as the General Secretary of the Party at its council meeting held during June 13-14, 1957. From June 24 to July 13, he visited China on an official tour.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Mao Tse Tung, Head of State and Chairman of the Communist Party of China

1958

Pakistan's the then President and the then Chief of Army imposed martial law on October 7 and banned all political activities. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested on October 11. Thereafter, he was continuously harassed in false cases. He was released from prison after fourteen months but was arrested immediately at the jail gate.



Military gov of Pakistan arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in false case

1961

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from jail after the high court declared his detention unlawful. He set up an underground network called Revolutionary Council for Independent Bengal comprising leading student leaders in order to work for the independence of Bangladesh.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman leaving the Press Club

1962

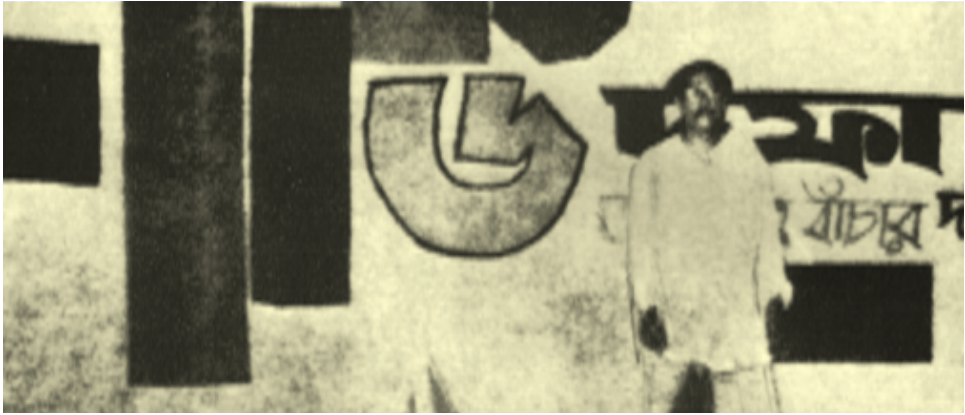
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was again arrested by the Ayub government on 6th February 1962. He was freed on 18th June following the withdrawal of the four year long martial law on 2nd June. He travelled to Lahore on 24th September and with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and with other opposition parties formed the National Democratic Front (NDF).



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressing a meeting to protest the Elective Bodies' Disqualification Order (EBDO) imposed by Pakistani military dictator Ayub Khan

1966

On February 5, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented his historic six-point programme known as the 'Charter of freedom of the Bengali nation'. It drew the roadmap for the independence of Bangladesh under the garb of greater autonomy. On March 1, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected the President of Awami League. He travelled far and wide in order to gain support for the programme and was arrested 8 times, with the final arrest on May 8. He was imprisoned for nearly 3 years during this time.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman campaigning for Six-Point

1968

On January 3, the then autocratic Pakistan government filed a case, known as the 'Agartala Conspiracy Case' against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a number of Bangalis (politicians and civil and military officials) on the charge of cessation of East Bengal. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was shown arrested on January 18, while already in jail. Mass movement spread across the country demanding the release of all the accused including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib seen smiling with his daughter Sheikh Hasina after the Agartala conspiracy case was withdrawn and he was released from prison. With them are his wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib and son Sheikh Kamal

1969

The Agartala Conspiracy Case resulted in a nationwide student movement and mass upsurge demanding the withdrawal of the case and the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. With continued pressure from the public, the then autocratic Pakistan government on February 22 was forced to withdraw the Agartala Conspiracy Case and release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others. Afterwards, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was awarded with the title 'Bangabandhu' at a reception of a million students and the masses in a rally organized by Central Student Action Committee at the Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) on February 23. At a discussion meeting held on December 5 to observe the death anniversary of Suhrawardy, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared that henceforth East Pakistan would be called Bangladesh.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was awarded with the title 'Bangabandhu' at a reception of a million students and the masses in a rally accorded to him after his release from jail through mass movement

1970

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman urged his countrymen to elect Awami League in light of the 6-point demand. He chose 'boat' as the symbol to represent Awami League. On 12th November, when a million people died in a catastrophic cyclone in the coastal areas, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman suspended the election campaign and rushed to the affected areas. Awami League achieved absolute majority in the general elections held on 7th December.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed and others are seen among the Awami League leaders after the landslide victory in the election of 1970

1971

On 1st March, following the postponement of the national assembly session by the autocratic Pakistan government only two days before the session was scheduled, every section of the Bangalis stormed the streets in

massive demonstrations. On 7th March, in his historic speech before the millions at the Racecourse Maidan (Suhrawardy Udyan), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called his fellow countrymen to take all out preparations for the war of liberation and independence of Bangladesh and declared in his unique thunderous voice “The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is a struggle for independence.” This speech is recognized as part of the world’s documentary heritage. The UNESCO has included Bangabandhu’s 7th March address in its ‘Memory of the World Register.’ On the midnight of 25th March, the Pakistan army launched its heinous genocide against the unarmed Bangalis. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh in the early hours of 26th March. Immediately, he was arrested from his residence in Dhanmondi and taken to Pakistan. On 10th April, the first Government of Bangladesh was formed announcing Bangabandhu as the President. On 17th April, a six-member cabinet took oath headed by Syed Nazrul Islam, the Acting President and Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister. After nine months of bloody war, Bangladesh was liberated on 16th December.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is delivering historic speech of 7th March

1972

On January 8, the autocratic government of Pakistan was forced to release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from jail under international pressure. On January 10, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned to Bangladesh via London and New Delhi. He was received by millions of grateful citizens and went straight from the airport to the Race Course Maidan (currently Suhrawardy Udyan) where he addressed the nation. On January 12, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took charge as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and embarked on the reconstruction of a war ravaged country. Within a period of three and half years, Bangabandhu laid the foundations of the new republic by putting into place many effective measures.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested on 26th March 1971

1973

Led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League secured 293 seats out of the 300 Parliament seats in the first general elections held on March 7 in the independent Bangladesh and subsequently formed a new Government on the basis of the newly framed constitution. On May 23, the World Peace Council awarded 'Joliot-Curie' Peace Prize to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for his contribution to world peace. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman attended the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit Conference in Algeria.



Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is back to the independent Bangladesh

1974

On September 25, at the 29th General Assembly of the United Nations, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed the world in Bangla. It was the first ever Bangla speech delivered at the UN. Only a few days ago Bangladesh received world recognition by becoming the 136th member of the United Nations on September 17.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was awarded 'Joliot-Curie' peace prize for his contribution to world peace

1975

In the pre-dawn hours of August 15, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of Bangladesh, was assassinated by a handful of army renegades as part of a larger national and international political conspiracy hatched by anti-liberation forces. They murdered in cold blood every member of his family except his daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, who by fortune alone were abroad at that time.

Bangladesh observes the darkest day of the nation, August 15, as the National Mourning Day and remembers the noblest and the greatest Bangali who ever lived through his spirit, ideology, courage and love for the people of his nation.

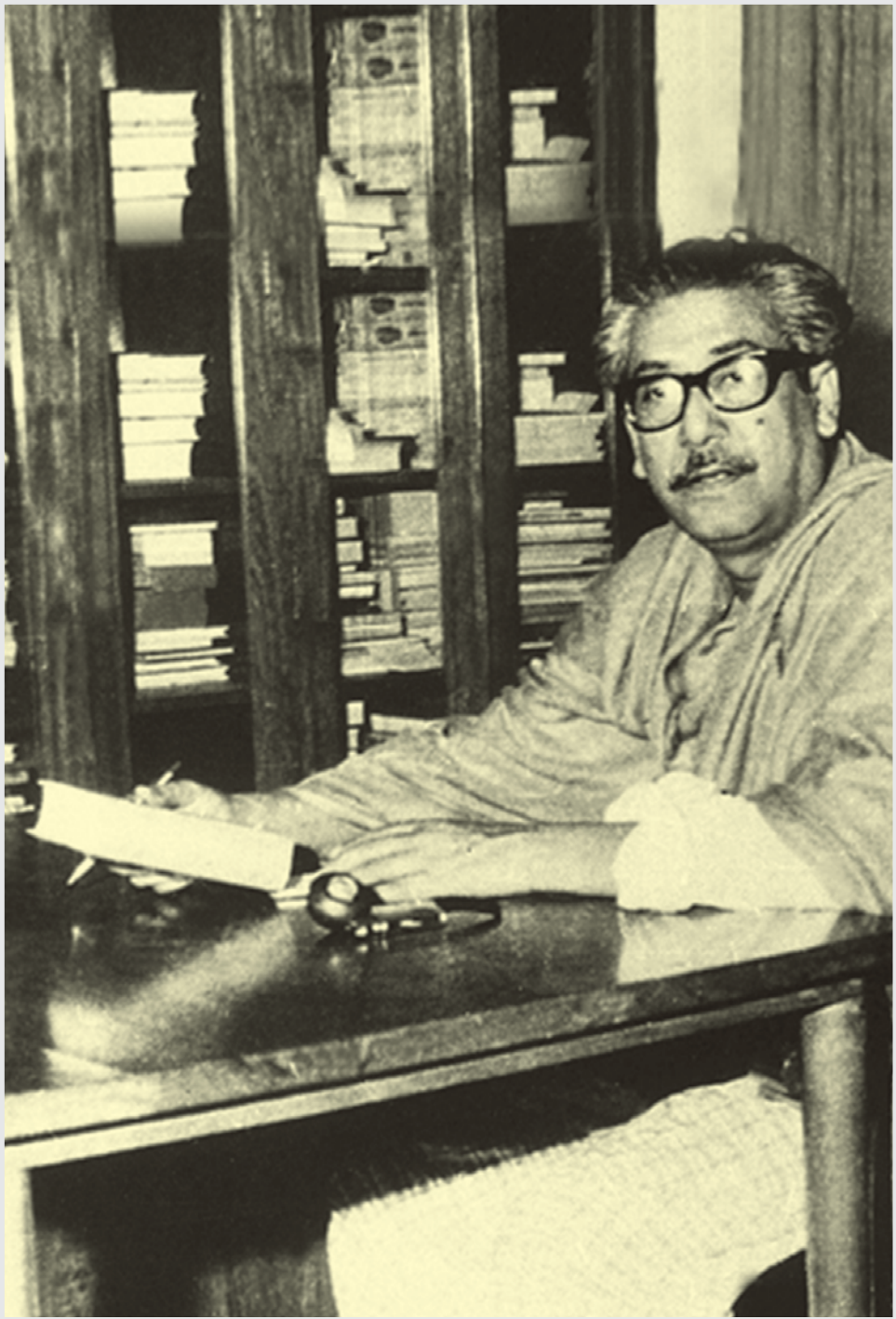


Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed the 29th session of UNGA in Bangla

Source : www.muji100.gov.bd



The name 'Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib' lies vividly in the hearts of all freedom loving people.



As a statesman, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib worked till very late every night in his pursuit of building the Golden Bengal

Memorable Quotes of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

“
No great literature or refined artwork can ever be developed while being detached from the people.

-14th February 1974; Speech delivered at the Bangla Academy”

“
In order to stand tall in the world as an independent nation, the dignity of our language, literature, culture and heritage have to be established at home and abroad.

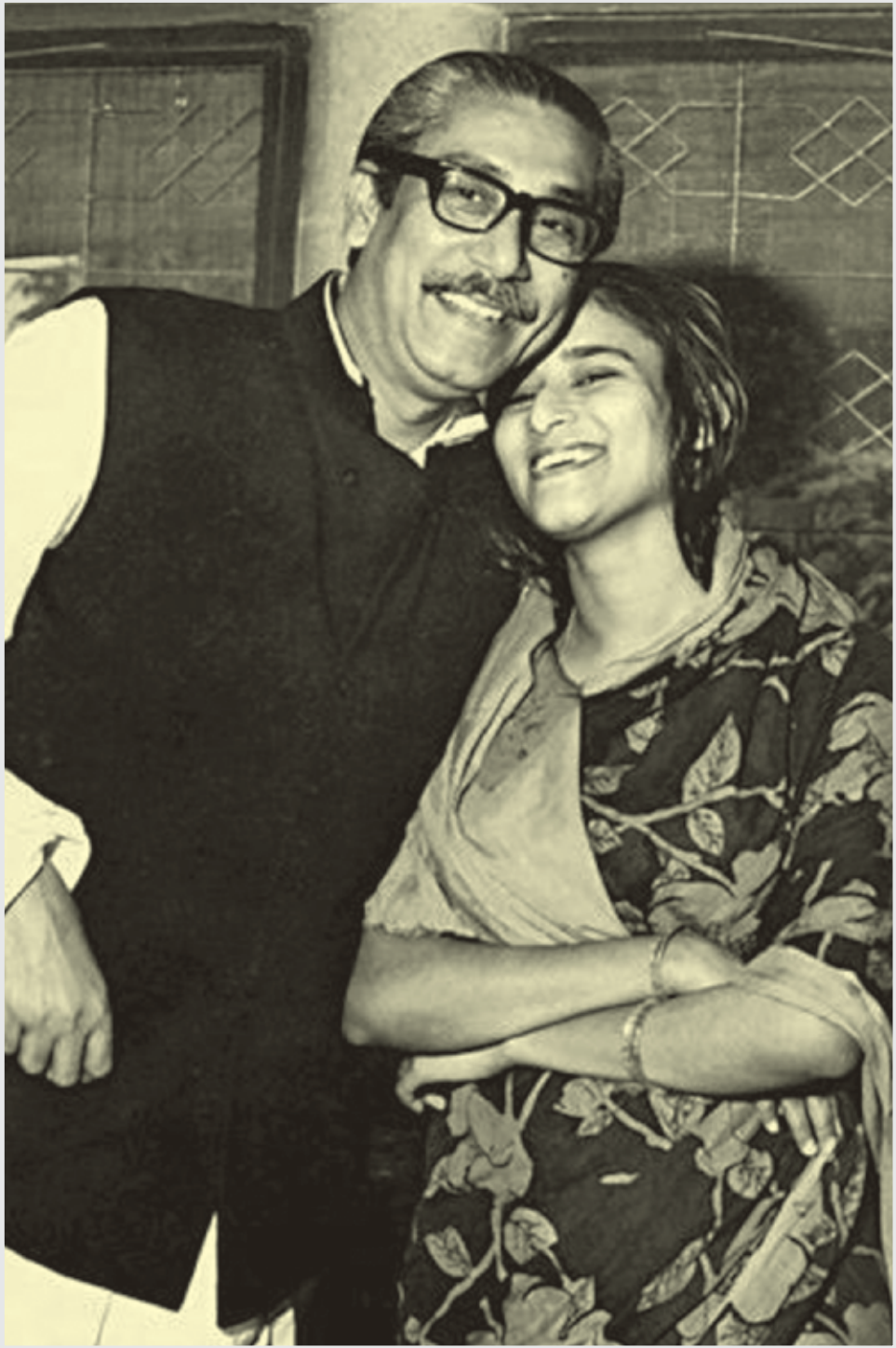
-14th February 1974; Speech delivered at the Bangla Academy”

“
Our literature and culture should not be restricted within the confinement of the city buildings only - the vibrant heart beats of the millions living in the rural areas of Bangladesh should also be reflected in it.

-14th February 1974; Speech delivered at the Bangla Academy”

“
The imperialists usually attack the system of education, culture and language when they want to exploit. Because, exploitation would not be easy without destroying those elements.

- 18th January 1974; Speech delivered at the biennial session of Bangladesh Awami League”



Affectionate father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib with his beloved daughter Sheikh Hasina



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's two books titled '*The Unfinished Memoirs*' and '*Prison Diaries*': Excerpts from the Prefaces written by **Sheikh Hasina, Honorable Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.**

“
Twenty-nine years after he had passed away, the autobiography that this great leader had written came into my hands. In what he was able to write we have got the opportunity to learn about many incidents of his passage from childhood to adulthood, his family, and the movements he had become a part of since the time he was a student, his struggles, and many hitherto unknown events of his life. We come across the diverse experiences of his remarkable life in the pages that he had written. He articulates in simple and flowing prose what he had seen, felt and observed in politics. The facts that are revealed by his account of his struggles, his steadfastness and his sacrifices will inspire future generations. Those who have been misled by the fictions of people who distort history will now have the opportunity to discover the truth. This work will provide invaluable information and an authentic account of history to researchers and historians.

** Excerpts from the Preface of the book titled 'The Unfinished Memoirs' by
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*

”

“
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib's only companions in prison were the flora and fauna there, that is to say, those life forms that were free! How beautifully does he narrate here the tale of two yellow birds! I do not have the words to describe the episode retold by him here. He had a pet chicken as well and has written about it wonderfully too. He has described superbly the way the death of the chicken pained him.

The concern Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib showed at the misery and hardship of Awami League workers and leaders in prison indicate his love for them and the intensely heartfelt way he worried about them. He doesn't talk about his own painful situation in these pages. The only thing he describes again and again is his feeling of loneliness.

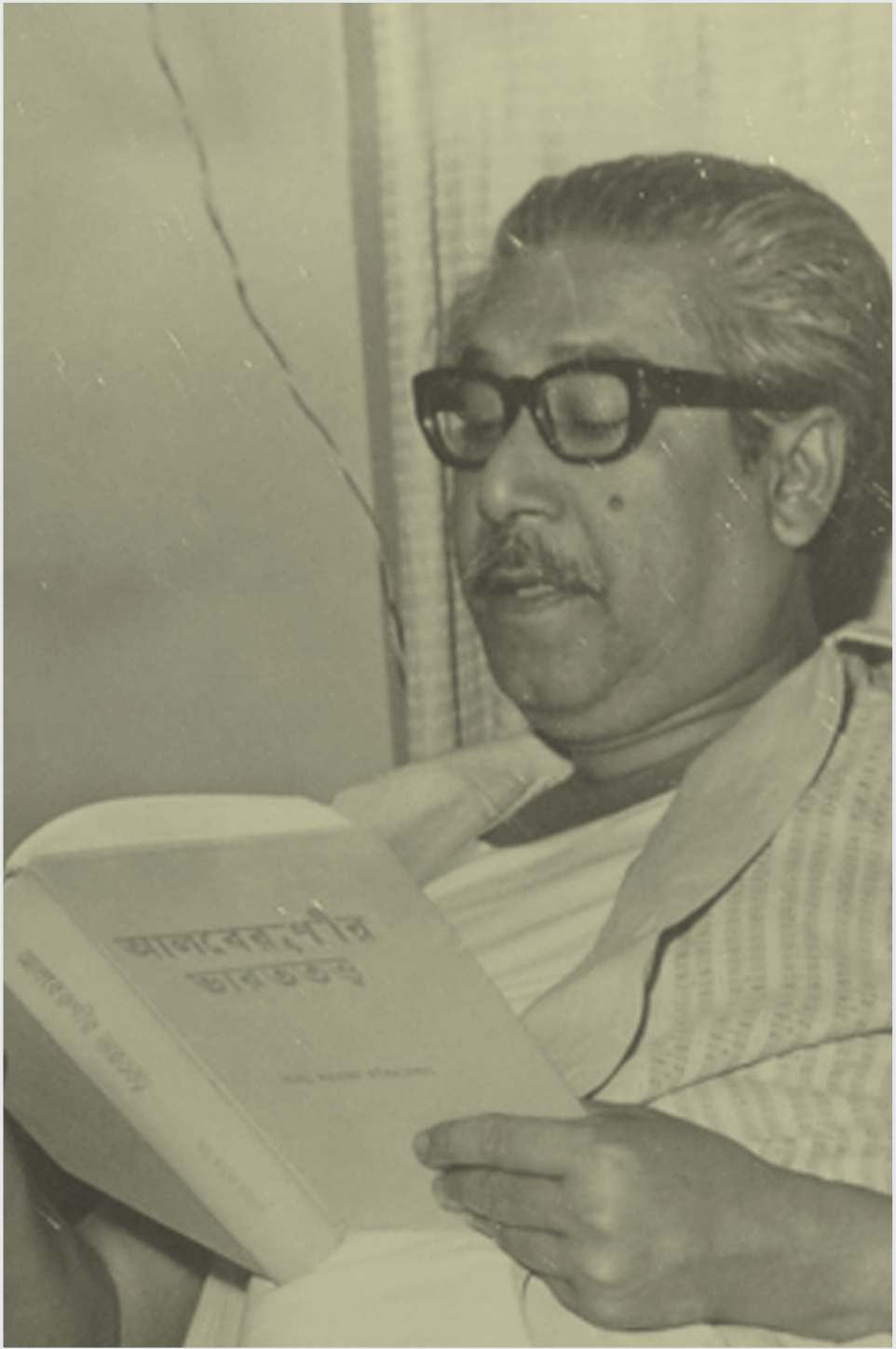
** Excerpts from the Preface of the book titled 'Prison Diaries' by
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*

”

Sheikh Hasina

Honorable Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was an avid reader of Books



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman : Another name of Bangladesh

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib and Bangladesh

A. K. Abdul Momen

‘Tall for a Bengali, with a shock of a graying hair, a bushy mustache and alert black eyes, Mujib can attract a crowd of a million people to his rallies and hold them spellbound’¹ that’s how Newsweek Magazine on 5th April 1971 tried to describe the charisma of ‘Poet of Politics’ Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The history of Bangladesh is inseparable from the life of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. All his life he walked the way to make the path of his people smooth and prosperous. His speech, his thoughts, his ideals, his visions and his actions revolved around the betterment of the commoners and the down-trodden and the progress of the country.

On 07 March 1971, the poet ascended the stage facing more than two million people at the then Race course maidan (now, Suhrawardy Udyan). The Poet of Politics spoke for about 19 minutes and this, shaped the final struggle of Bengali Nation for independence, honour and emancipation. Bangabandhu so eloquently delineated how the occupiers had been depriving the Nation of its political, social and economic rights since the creation of Pakistan. His voice reminds of a thunder; his directives were as clear as crystal; his demands echoed institution of democracy; his claims were to establish equal rights, justice and fairness.

Bangabandhu addressed his people as 'Thy' [তুমি] He said 'The enemy has to be faced with whatever THY have' [তোমাদের যা কিছু আছে তাই নিয়ে শত্রুর মোকাবেলা করতে হবে] and concluded with, "Our struggle, this time, is a struggle for our freedom. Our struggle, this time, is a struggle for our independence. Joy Bangla!"²

How many leaders in this world did address his people with such confidence, love and affection! Bangabandhu did. He knew where he was placed in the heart of his people. Every word of that 19-minute speech marked with profound significance to the independence of Bangladesh and future course the country would take. The guiding speech marked with confidence, immense love for, and reliance on, his people.

Father of the Nation's life-long fight for democracy, his faith in secularism, his indomitable will for the good of his people derived from his incessant interaction with the people. His political philosophy and the action-plan emanated from the people's desire. 'As a man, what concerns mankind concerns me. As a Bengalee, I am deeply involved in all that concerns Bengalees. This abiding involvement is born of and nourished by love, enduring love, which gives meaning to my politics and to my very being.'³ This excerpt written by Bangabandhu himself in his personal notebook on 03 May 1973 engraves, in reader's mind, the man, the towering personality, the compassionate leader he was to his people. Bangabandhu believed that the nation awaited emancipation from oppression and dominance. His famous Six Point Plan for regional autonomy unveiled in 1966 and his final call for Independence on 7th March 1971 were his intrepid and undaunted will to free the Nation from all exploitation and give them a সোনার বাংলা [Golden Bengal], a prosperous, stable and peaceful Bangladesh.

Immediately after the assumption of stewardship of the country in 1972, Bangabandhu travelled from one place to another only to receive recognition and to pursue economic diplomacy in order to re-build a war-torn country which, he said, needed food for people and employment for the youth in order to fulfill the aspirations of this free nation. Bangabandhu realised that to rebuild Bangladesh from the ruins, he had to pursue a policy of 'friendship to all and malice to none'⁴. These have shown

how this larger than life politician, coming from a humble background in Tungipara, Gopalganj⁵, had carved a niche for himself and his country in the international arena. In a war-torn country with almost no economic structure, Bangabandhu prioritized the need for recognition as an underpinning criterion in order to commence economic pursuit of the country. State recognition, therefore, drove his efforts towards building of relations with countries and regions.

Bangabandhu had laid equal importance to the membership of Bangladesh at major global forums such as, the United Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Non-Allied Movement, Commonwealth, World Bank, IMF, etc. He felt that Bangladesh, with its weak economic structure and an urgent need for major societal adjustment, cannot pursue economic diplomacy alone. He pursued Bangladesh's membership and active role in multilateral platforms in order to get our voices heard and felt. During the first decade of Bangladesh's independence in the years led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh pursued and won recognition from nearly 126 countries of the world as an independent and sovereign country. Simultaneously, it also became a member of the United Nations and all other major world organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Development Programme, etc. It also became the natural leader of the group of Least Developed countries (LDCs). Bangladesh's foreign policy triumphs were also visible in the way the developed countries came to its aid with economic assistance.

His short but decisive political journey from 1943 until 1975 embodied the finest statesmanship, global leadership and vision for a better tomorrow. In that short span of time between mid-January 1972 and mid-August 1975, his great statesmanship, insight and valour enabled Bangladesh to be firmly established in the comity of nations. His pursuit of development, dream of making this country 'Switzerland of the East'⁶ stalled on 15 August 1975, the black day in the history of this nation. It was the beginning of defacing the glorious history of our liberation and the vision of our Father of the Nation.

But, his vision, love for his people and his ideals could not be erased. We, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have been incessantly working to shape the dream of our father's 'Golden Bengal' in reality. The Awami League Party that led the independence struggle of the country is now taking us toward emancipation from poverty, hunger, and unemployment under the leadership of Bangabandhu's daughter Jononetri Sheikh Hasina. As a result, Bangladesh is now considered to be a 'development miracle' of the world. In almost all global indicators of development, we are doing wonder. As per the last report of the UN Human Development Index, Bangladesh is ahead of many countries in areas such as, education, healthcare, widespread vaccination, decline in infant death rate, decline in maternal death rate, resource distribution, gender equality, public security, poverty alleviation, employment creation, decrease in social inequality and use of improved sanitation.

In 1972 in a war-ravaged country, 78% people used to live below the poverty line; now, less than 20% live below that line and less than 10% live below extreme poverty line. While less than 4 percent of female workforce was actively engaged in economic activities in 1972, now more than 40% of women workforce contribute to the dynamic economy. Father of the Nation believed in agricultural revolution and dream of self-sufficiency in food. His daughter has gifted the nation with a country full of agricultural produce, aqua resources and industrial balance. In 1972, the country used to produce 1.1 million tons of food grain and now, although arable land has drastically reduced, yet it produces over 40 million tons of food grain a four-fold increase making it a self-sufficient country. In addition, now, we export many items, meeting our internal demands.

Bangabandhu worked incessantly to make all the sectors of a war-ravaged country into self-sufficient economic areas; his daughter's Vision-2021 and vision-2041 promises a developed country status; her Delta plan 2100 is a reflection of her father's vision beyond horizon.

History has always been shaped by the forces of extraordinary leadership; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, had made

the history of our country. The achievement of freedom for his people was the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's lifelong work. In his unshakable pursuit of it, he created history that we all are proud of.

Tagore made 'Bangla' language known to the world by winning Nobel Prize in Bengali literature as early as 1913, Bangabandhu made Bangalee and Bangladesh known to the world. Father of our Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman knew how to fight for rights, justice and freedom. Starting from our fight for mother tongue in 1948 through 1966 to 1971, Bangabandhu was the undisputed leader.

In 1947, the British left India and two independent countries namely India and Pakistan were created. Pakistan was composed of Muslim majority areas of East and West Pakistan separated by over 1000 miles apart. Except religion, nothing else was common between people of two Wings. Since independence in 1947, West Pakistani leadership continued to exploit East Pakistan and its people, and it became a 'cash cow' for Pakistan. They started subjugating and depriving East Pakistan, culturally, socially, militarily, politically, economically and from jobs and business opportunities. On those days, income from jute, tea, fish etc., the exports of East Pakistan used to pay the bills of West Pakistan. Young Sheikh Mujib opposed such exploitation and demanded justice and equity, and therefore, out of 24 years of partnership with Pakistan, he spent nearly 14 years of his prime age in the Pakistani jails. With a view to eliminating him, President Ayub Khan launched a conspiracy case against him but as millions of people marched on the streets and paralysed the Pakistani administration in East Pakistan, they were forced to let him go free. Soon President Ayub Khan was toppled and military General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan usurped the powers. On assumption of powers, he had to arrange first nationwide election in Pakistan in which Sheikh Mujib's Party, the Awami League won majority Parliamentary seats. In East Pakistan, his Party won 167 seats out of a total of 169 seats. Naturally, legally, he should form the Cabinet. But Pakistani military in collaboration with the majority Party of West Pakistan that secured only 80 seats denied him responsibility. People of Bangladesh could not take such insult and injustice and on the directives

of 'Bangabandhu' (friend of Bangalees and Bangladesh), they paralysed the country and nearly 99% percent of all East Pakistanis joined a non-cooperation movement. At this, Pakistani military junta on 25th March 1971 at midnight let loose a 'genocide' on the unarmed people of then East Pakistan and killed, as per Western media, nearly 25,000 people on that night. As they let loose a genocide, Bangabandhu proclaimed independence of Bangladesh at the wee-hours of 26th March before Pakistani military arrested him for treason. Since that day, at the call of Bangabandhu, thousands of young people, students, farmers, workers, labourers, teachers, professors, doctors, educationists including Police, Border Guards, Ansars and later on, a handful of Bengali military joined our 'War of Liberation'. At this struggle, 10 million people had to take shelter in neighbouring India, 30 million out of 75 million were dislodged, 200,000 young women and girls were dishonoured by the occupying Pakistani forces and nearly 3 million were killed. Bengalees fought to establish democracy, justice and independence. With the support of India, finally after 9 months and 10 days, the Joint Forces of Mukti Bahini and Indian Army won the war and 93,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered to the Joint Forces on 16th December 1971 in Dhaka.

On 15th August 1975, a group of conspirators killed him and his 16 family members. Two of his daughters were abroad and therefore, escaped death. The military Government following the killing granted indemnity "to the killers". If we let the absconding killers of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman go unpunished, our aspiration for wiping out the 'Culture of Impunity' from the society will remain unrealized. The Nation will only be relieved if we can bring the scot-free killers to justice during this Mujib Year. Our pursuit to bring back the murderers to Bangladesh and ensure justice to the heinous crime committed on the Black Day of 15th August 1975 will continue until we succeed in ensuring justice, rule of law and good governance.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.

Long live Bangladesh

Footnotes :

1. Newsweek, 5 April 1971
2. Bangabandhu's historic speech given on 07 March 1971 at Race Course maidan in Ramna, Dhaka
3. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Unfinished Memoirs, (UPL, Dhaka 2013)
4. Bangabandhu's interview available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM8hVBOaba8>
5. Father of the Nation's place of birth
6. Rashid, Harunur (28 March 2011). "Our foreign relations over last four decades". The Daily Star. Retrieved 15 August 2017

Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen : Member of Parliament and Foreign Minister of Bangladesh



Bangabandhu and Bangalee Culture

K M Khalid

Bangalees cherished for an independent state since time immemorial. This dream was not fulfilled until 1971. It is Bangabandhu who succeeded to make it happen. One of its many reasons is that he was not only a political activist but a cultural activist as well. He could unite all the people of the country irrespective of race, caste, creed and religion. He brought together the people of Bangladesh on the basis of their cultural identity, not on their religions. Bangalee Nationalism has grown into a culture-oriented nationalism because of him. Professor Fakrul Alam, translator of Bangabandhu's writings, very rightly said, "Bangabandhu had come closer and closer to the view that Bangladeshis needed a country where secularism, socialism, democracy and the kind of nationalism based on upholding the Bengali language and celebrating Bengali culture must take roots. As for the fourth pillar of our 1972 constitution, clearly he felt strongly that inequality in all spheres should be minimized in all fronts".¹

Culture and Politics : In order to comprehend Bangabandhu's thought on culture, the political-economic-cultural movements of his time along with his perception of culture and his activities should be appreciated properly. According to Professor Kabir Chowdhury :

"Since Bangabandhu came into existence from the country-side of Bangladesh, the perpetual inherited Bangalee sentiment of humanism

influenced his mental upbringing.... Despite the clear distinction in Lalon-Gandhi-Rabindranath-Mujib notion, the very humanistic tune was articulated in their ideas and activities.”²

But the element which had the largest share in his mental upbringing is the millennium-age-old rich tradition, culture, language and the desire of the liberation of the Bangalees. At the time of the partition of Bengal, Bangabandhu was in Kolkata, it was speculated then that Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan. His speech on this controversial topic was published in the Kolkata based The Daily Ittehad on July 7, 1947, which is as follows :

“It was not stated in the assertion of establishing Pakistan that the Bangalee, The Punjabi, the Sindhi, the Pathan, the Balochistani had to erase their national identity, language and culture. We cannot ignore our Bangalee identity although we are a part of the state Pakistan and this new identity of being a part of a new state cannot surpass our age old established Bangalee civilization, culture and language.”³

The above statement shows his deep attachment to the Bangalee culture.

Language, Culture and Tradition : The great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman played a vital and leading role in the historic Language Movement from the very beginning. He realized that Bangalee culture of thousand years cannot be protected without Bangla language signifying mainly our mystic philosophy, folksongs, arts, literature and culture.

Bangabandhu himself informed us from his tour to Brahmanbaria in 1949 : “I would consider a part of my life incomplete if I hadn’t had the occasion that day to hear Mr Abbasuddin sing bhatiali songs as we crossed the river. When he was singing these songs as we crossed the river that day, it seemed to me that the gently lapping waves were entranced by his singing. I had become Mr Abbasuddin's devotee by this time. He told me at one point, 'Mujib, there is a conspiracy afoot against the Bengali language. If Bengali isn't made a state language, Bengal's culture and civilization will be under threat. The songs that you have appreciated so much today will lose all their charm and melody. Whatever happens, Bengali must be made the

state language.' I pledged to him that I would try to make it our state language and have done my best to achieve this goal."⁴

It is known to all that 11 March of 1948 was a memorable day in the history of the Language Movement. On that day a spontaneous strike was observed throughout the country for demanding Bangla as the state language. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested and tortured by police for leading the strike. Pakistani intelligence report says : "This subject (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) was arrested on 11.3.48 for violating the orders.... He took very active part in the agitation for adopting Bengali as the State language of Pakistan, and made the propaganda at Dacca for general strike on 11.3.48 on this issue."⁵ This was for the first time that he was arrested in independent Pakistan. He said in strong voice : "We will continue our movement till Bengali is made the state language. Certainty, we are ready to work for this cause."⁶

Bangabandhu's self-concern regarding indigenous culture was visualized by a speech in the inaugural ceremony of the first 'Bangla Sahittya Sammelan-1974', after the independence of Bangladesh, held on 14 February, 1974 where he was the chief guest. He said :

"Now, if we want to triumph in the world as an independent nation, we have to uphold the glory of our language, literature, culture and tradition both in our country and abroad. Those who are practicing art and literature, those who are serving tradition and culture should proceed on by maintaining an intact relationship with the common people."⁷

Deliver Bangla Speech in abroad : To establish the status of Bangla language Bangabandhu worked not only in his homeland but also abroad. He delivered his speech in Bangla during his long tour to China in the fifties. He explained the reason : "... I should speak Bangla because people of all countries of the world know something about the Language Movement of East Bangla...."⁸. Similarly, we see that he spoke in Bangla at the United Nations Assembly on September 25, 1974. This is for the first time that Bangla language is pronounced in the United Nations Assembly by Bangabandhu himself. Regarding this historical event, distinguished actor and cultural practitioner Syed Hasan Imam wrote :

“Rabindranath Tagore managed to create a place for Bangla language in the cultural domain of the world by winning the Nobel Prize in Literature. On the other hand Bangabandhu has managed to secure a permanent place for Bangladesh in the political map of the world.”⁹

Film Industry : A new cabinet was formed in the East Pakistan on September 6, 1956 under the guidance of Ataur Rahman Khan. Sheikh Mujib was in the charge of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Labour, and Anti-corruption. During the period of his obligation as Minister, on April 3, 1957, he put forward the ‘East Pakistan Film Development Bill, 1957’ in the East Pakistan Provincial Council. ‘East Pakistan Film Development Corporation’ was established based on this bill and the film industry was promoted in this locality.

National Anthem : A cultural programme was arranged on the second day of two-day-long conference of the Awami League leaders on 3 January 1971 at the Engineers’ Institute. Rabindranath Tagore’s song- ‘Amar sonar Bangla, ami tomay bhalobashi’ was sung there. Bangabandhu was fascinated with the song. He played the key role in the selection of Tagore’s ‘Amar sonar Bangla...’ as the national anthem of the independent country. Dr. M. A. Wazed Miah, son-in-law of Bangabandhu, quoted regarding this matter :

“A two-day long meeting of the Awami League leaders from all levels was held at the Engineers’ Institute Auditorium. A cultural program was arranged on the final day. On that day at dinner Bangabandhu expressed his desire to us solemnly as, ‘If this country gets independence one day, take Tagore’s ‘Amar sonar Bangla...’ as our national anthem.”¹⁰

Reflection of Cultural Thoughts in the Constitution : The East Pakistan Singers Society arranged a felicitation ceremony for Bangabandhu on January 24, 1971. In the ceremony Bangabandhu’s notion about mass culture got expressed. He said :

“In order to flourish the mass culture poets-litterateurs-artists all have to reflect the dreams and desires, pleasures and pain of the people intensively in their works. Without cultural independence, political and economic independence will be of no use.”¹¹

The cultural thoughts of Bangabandhu has been reflected in our constitution constructed in 1972. Article 23 of the constitution illuminates, "The State shall adopt measures to conserve the cultural traditions and heritage of the people, and so to foster and improve the national language, literature and the arts that all sections of the people are afforded the opportunity to contribute towards and to participate in the enrichment of the national culture."¹²

Theatre and Drama : Bangabandhu also played a major role in the movement and development of theatre industry. Many theatres emerged in Dhaka and different areas of Bangladesh in 1972-73. No sooner had he learned about the cessation of some theatres due to the increase of tax on entertainment and strict rules of censorship than he enforced an ordinance to take necessary measures. The present progressive scenario of theatre industry owes a lot to that ordinance and certainly to Bangabandhu.

Bangabandhu had a great concern regarding the national culture and its welfare. He took formal initiatives so that every branch of culture may emerge and flourish smoothly irrespective of city and village boundaries. Due to his initiative, 'Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy' was established on 19 February 1974 according to 'Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Act 1974'.

Attachment with Literary Figures : Bangabandhu was also closely attached to the country's mainstream arts and literature. He was very much inspired by two major literary figures of Bangla language—Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. He often quoted lines from them.

Bangabandhu took the terms 'Jai Bangla' from Nazrul's poems for his political slogan—a slogan that has revived millions of souls for freedom while he chose the national anthem for the independent country from the songs of Rabindranath Tagore, which has become the basis of our non-communal Bangalee culture. It is important to note that he was the man who brought Kazi Nazrul Islam to Dhaka of independent Bangladesh and gave him the status of National Poet.

Apart from Rabindranath and Nazrul, Bangabandhu liked the writings of many others. Saratchandra's essay 'Andharer Rup (Appearance of

Darkness)' is mentioned in The Prison Diaries. Bangabandhu wrote on Shahidulla Kaiser's novel Sangsaptak while in prison in 1967 : "I started reading my friend Shahidullah Kaiser's novel Sangsaptak. I am enjoying reading it."¹³

Truly, Bangabandhu was the founder of greater Bangalee society; he emerged from them; he joined politics for them and his politico-cultural commitment was to settle the aggrieved Bangalees in an independent country of their own. He was successful in accomplishing his commitment. The sense of humanism, liberalism and democracy were salient motifs in his cultural thoughts and construction. These elements are very crucial to basic Bangalee culture pattern for which he dedicated his entire life.

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K M Khalid : Member of Parliament and Minister of State for Cultural Affairs



Bangabandhu's New Book 'My Insight into New China'

Shamsuzzaman Khan

The People's Republic of China was formed on 1st October 1949 under the leadership of the revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. Before that it was governed by the American imperialism backed so-called nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek. As soon as the new communist government was formed under Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek and his followers eloped to the island called Formosa in southeast China and formed their own government. That government named their so-called state 'Republic of China'. The ornamental name of the state became 'Taiwan'. As a result of the vetoes of America, it was Taiwan (i.e. Republic of China) which enjoyed permanent member status of the UN Security Council till 1971, and not the People's Republic of China which governed the entire Chinese mainland. At that time therefore, there were in effect two Chinas : Mao Zedong led socialist new China and Chiang Kai-shek led so-called democratic China.

Within three years of the formation of the state of PRC, the communist government organised a peace conference for the countries of Southeast Asia and the pacific region in October 1952. The eleven-day conference was attended by 418 representatives of 37 countries. Pakistan was invited to send a thirty-member peace delegation, with only five representatives being the quota for East Pakistan. The five East Pakistani delegates were :

Ataur Rahman Khan, editor of Daily Ittefaq Manik Mia, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Khondokar Mohammad Ilias and the East Pakistani Urdu poet Yusuf Hasan. The East Pakistani delegates were not only quantitatively discriminated but also faced difficulties regarding their passports and other related logistical issues. At last, they started their journey to China on the 25th of September. The religious and political leader from West Pakistan Pir of Manki Sharif, East Pakistan's Ataur Rahman Khan and West Pakistan's Mahmudul Hoque Usmani were nominated head and deputy heads of delegation respectively.

The team from Pakistan travelled by train to Canton in mainland China from Hong Kong. Young political leader Sheikh Mujib travelled from one section of the train to another in order to mingle with the new faces. He wrote : 'It seemed like a new country, with new people. They have hopes in their faces and not despair'... It was like an opium-fuelled nation had woken up... I wondered how they could enact such major change within just three years.'¹

The context of the peace conference in China's capital Peking (now known as Beijing) offers a great opportunity to delve into the world view of the talented and youthful Sheikh Mujibur. His socio-economic views, political philosophy and perspectives can be analysed from his words. He wrote : 'In jail I often thought of visiting China. Maulana Bhashani also asked me to visit China at least once if I got the opportunity... Learn about their rapid development in the span of just three years... News from China was not forthcoming in our country... In fact, they were deliberately blocked... Even then, from whatever news we did get, I thought of visiting China at least once to see how they are building their country'.² Thus, he made it quite clear that he was not visiting China merely for a travel or pleasure trip. The primary reason for the intuitive Sheikh Mujib for attending the peace conference was to investigate firsthand how the Chinese are building their post-revolution state and speedily developing their culture and society with commitment, dedication, patriotism and hard work. Secondly, Sheikh Mujib felt that in order to truly use social development, economic prosperity, and independence for people's welfare, one needs peace, and not tension, conflict or war, at the domestic, regional and global levels.

Sheikh Mujib was the leader who stood for the poor and oppressed people of East Pakistan. Keeping the interests of these disadvantaged and famine-stricken people in mind, he wrote : 'We want peace. Because we know and realise the damage that is caused by wars; in particular, my country would need to rely on another country for the raw materials of war. One only needs to remember the famine of 1943 to imagine what wars do to the people of a country where people die of hunger and/or struggle to provide for even the most basic of necessities. For Britain's war effort, 4 million people of my country had to die of hunger. Even then you would hear that at least now we are independent. That is somewhat true. We now have the name of 'Pakistan'; as for the extent of being independent, one only needs to look at oneself for the truth.'³

Sheikh Mujib's political beliefs and mindset is reflected in the above statement. It is in this context that his words in this book must be interpreted. It needs to be mentioned that the Indian delegation included the renowned litterateur from West Bengal Manoj Basu. He wrote a book in the '50s about his experience in the same peace conference titled 'Chin dekheelam' ('I visited China'). The title was misleading because at that time, there were in effect two Chinas with different constitutional and common names. Sheikh Mujib wrote his book in 1954 while being incarcerated as a political prisoner. There was uncertainty as to when he would be released, whether he would be allowed to take his notes with him, and whether the book could be released within his lifetime. As a result, he wrote the words 'New China' in his notes. This distinguishes Sheikh Mujibur's sense of history and politics from that of Manoj Basu.

2.

It was at the end of 1949 that the Red Army of the Communist Party surrounded the important city of Canton from three sides. Immediately following these events, the nationalist faction led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) and its followers fled to the island of Formosa and formed their own government with the military and financial support of the USA. Upon reaching Canton, Sheikh Mujib sat for dinner with a student of Canton

University who could speak English. Sheikh Mujib's main aim in attending the peace conference was to investigate and study the changes that had taken place in people's lives as a result of new China's revolutionary system of governance. By conversing with the said student, Sheikh Mujib learnt that at first the people were afraid that the triumphant revolutionaries would carry out torture and retributions. But that did not happen. In fact, they started cleaning the roads and announced loudly, 'Work without fear. Come out of your homes and open your shops and businesses. There is nothing to be afraid of. We are your brothers. Our work is to serve you'.⁴ The activists of the communist party went from door to door and enquired whether the people needed anything or faced any difficulties. They sought to help the people. They declared that since they are the peoples' army, they part of the people. They also started to investigate the number of the unemployed and poor. The long march of the Red Army led by Mao Zedong in 1934-35 resulted in the Chinese people having faith and trust on Chairman Mao and the Communist Party of China. As a result, the leader and his party were able to build a strong grassroots foundation and create the necessary situation for the revolution. That revolution came in 1949. And the new, socialist Chinese state was born. Not only was this a landmark event in the political history of Southeast Asia, but also changed global politics forever.

3.

Now, let us discuss the historic peace conference of the Southeast Asian and Pacific region countries. The conference was attended by 418 representatives from 37 countries. The delegates included observers from other parts of the world too. Around half of the delegates were communists or socialists, the rest professed other ideologies. But all were against wars and for peace. The significance of such a big conference being hosted by the new Chinese state led by Chairman Mao within three years of the revolution cannot be overstated. The main significance of the conference was that it highlighted the rejuvenation of the Southeast, West and South Asian regions as a result of the formation of the new Chinese state. In the

west, around three hundred years ago, political awakenings and revolutions resulted in the creation of capitalist, democratic societies. These countries in turn cursed the nations of Latin America, Africa and Asia to the shackles and oppression of colonialism. The emergence of the new Chinese state served as an inspiration for the independence movements in countries bonded to the shackles of colonialism.

The western imperialist powers used wars, conflicts, violence, murders of anti-imperialist nationalist revolutionaries and installation of puppet governments to continue their dominance. On the other hand, the new Chinese government showed restraint by organising themselves and then calling for a global peace conference. They chose not to pursue wars, destruction and tension but rather chose to serve their people by creating employment and organising an international peace conference. Because only peace can guarantee health, prosperity and progress. An uninterrupted peaceful environment is a prerequisite for flourishing humanitarianism and humanity and for building a healthy world.

The peace conference was an unprecedented major undertaking. New China did not yet fully have the infrastructural capability for organising such an event. But anything is possible when there is support of the people. Human resources can make the impossible, possible. The people of new China aptly demonstrated that. 418 guests joined the conference. It was difficult to accommodate all of these guests together. Hence, the popular government of new China asked the people to build a four-storied building for their foreign guests. The people happily obliged and built the building within seventy days. Delegate Sheikh Mujibur wrote,

‘We were amazed at the sight. The conference started with the speech of Madam Sun Yat Sen. Madam Sen was good in English and spoke well. But she chose to give her speech in Chinese. The President of the Chinese Peace Committee Comrade Kuo Mo-jo read out his written statement in Chinese too. Despite being a newly independent country, the Chinese were quite adept at technology already. As a result, the Chinese speeches could be heard translated in real time in other languages like English, French, Russian and Spanish. The gist

of the speeches by the two Chinese leaders is as follows : “We don’t want war. We want peace. The imperialists are getting restless for war. They are using their armies to suppress the national movements in Korea, Indo-China, Malay and Japan”. They added that although they don’t seek war, if war is indeed pushed towards them, and then they are prepared to give a befitting reply. They discussed how the general people are dying around the world in the course of their everyday lives like animals.’⁵

Another characteristic of the conference was that despite being the host and founder of the conference, new China did not impose any decision or proposal unilaterally on the other countries. As a result, well thought out and unanimous decisions were reached following constructive debates and discussions on all topics. The democratic minded Sheikh Mujibur Rahman liked this aspect of the conference greatly.

During the layover at Hong Kong, the Pakistani delegates discussed and decided among themselves that they would not say anything that might harm the reputation of Pakistan. Because he wrote, ‘The world would laugh at us if we discuss the governance system of Muslim League in Pakistan. Because their idea of a democracy would be difficult to explain to any civilised society. That would tarnish Pakistan’s image.’⁶

The various representatives discussed the situation in their respective countries. The famous poet Nazim Hikmat was a delegate from Turkey. He recited one of his poems and spoke on the situation of poverty, education and healthcare in his country. One of the Iranian delegate stated that all the wealth in his country was owned by just a hundred families. But it was particularly distressing to hear about the horrific ordeals from representatives of countries which fell victims to the anti-human and anti-civilisation aggressions of American imperialism. For instance, the words of the Japanese delegate can be considered. Americans apparently interfered in every aspect of their public and private lives. The Japanese people have to bear the costs of the huge American military presence in their country. Hundreds of thousands of bastards have been born from their activities. The Japanese women have been dishonoured by them. A

North Korean delegate talked about the use of dirty chemical weapons by the Americans on them. A Vietnamese female guerrilla talked about their anti-imperialist independence struggle against the French. She is a captain in the guerrilla army. She alone killed seventy French invading soldiers.

The American delegation contained both whites and black delegates. They talked about racial discrimination, hate and torture in their country. The white delegates accepted the charges of racism but said that things were however, slowly changing. One of the black delegates stated that they do not want war. The common people of USA do not like wars. The ruling classes wage wars for their own interests. If we tell them that the general people do not want wars, then they use law enforcement and prosecution to suppress us.

4.

The nationalist leader from East Pakistan Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his speech in Bangla. It was his role in the Language Movement and his political principles which influenced the proud Bangali leader Sheikh Mujib to use Bangla at the conference. The leader, who would go on to lead Bangladesh's independence struggle as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, also gave his first speech in the United Nations in Bangla as his country's head of government. But it was his speech in the 1952 peace conference which was his first international speech in Bangla. Manoj Basu from West Bengal also gave his speech in Bangla. He congratulated Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for giving his speech in Bangla.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman lamented in his book, 'I am not a writer. I don't have the power of language. Hence, while I can perceive the beauty, I cannot express it in writing. Forgive me dear readers'. This is not actually true. Maybe he was referring to topic specific writing. He could write beautiful prose on factual issues devoid of emotion. Examples : a) When we were approaching Hong Kong, I thought to myself what a beautiful country to look at from a distance. It is as if the country stretched from the highs of the mountains to the lows of the sea, intersected by rivers. b) I looked

outside and observed the country carefully. I wondered how similar everything appeared with East Bengal. Green rice fields surrounded by big trees. The train crossed the occasional villages of mud houses and small rivers. Men tending to their lands with shovels, what a beautiful country to look at.

5.

Colonial rule results in the decay of peoples' ethical, social and cultural character in all sectors. This is due to economic hardship, psychological distortions and the propensity for greed. These result in greater crimes, prostitution, wrongs and discrimination in society. Inhumanity, unhealthy competition and deviations become the norm. People lose their honesty, character and even their humanity.

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Unfinished Memoirs, Page 125

My Insight into New China, Page 19

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Prof. Shamsuzzaman Khan : Writer, Folklorist and Chairman of Bangla Academy.

The Significance of the Birth Centenary Celebration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

Kamal Chowdhury

Celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bangali of all time, the founder of the Bangali nation-state is an auspicious time, in the history of Bangla and Bangalis. This is the time for the Bangali Nation to pay homage and show their deepest love to the greatest of its sons. With a view to celebrate the birth centenary throughout the year at home and abroad with excitement and joyful events, the Government has declared March 17, 2020 to March 17, 2021 as 'Mujib Year'. The grateful Bangali Nation has got the opportunity to pay profound respect and love to the Father of the Nation. This year will always be a wonderful experience of our life time. The Bangalis had never had an independent sovereign state over the long thousands of years of their history. Born on 17th March 1920 in a quaint little village, called Tungipara at Gopalganj subdivision under the then Faridpur district, he became the undisputed leader of the movement of independence and emancipation of Bangalis, with his uncompromising attitude, perseverance and endless sacrifices. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's lifelong movement and struggle have given a clear shape to the long and cherished desire of freedom and liberation. Starting from the language movement of 1948-52, the 6-point movement of 1966, the mass uprising of 1969, the elections of 1970 and finally, to the liberation war of 1971, in every step of movement in Bangladesh, Bangabandhu prepared the

people of this country for extreme self-sacrifice to achieve independence. He has conveyed to every Bangali the song of breaking the shackles and the motto of emancipation. Under his valiant leadership Bangladesh got an independent sovereign state. Bangalis stand tall on the map of the world with unique glory. Bangabandhu fought for the rights and peace of all the oppressed people not only of Bangalis or Bangladesh but of the whole world and declared solidarity in the struggle for their rights. Celebrating the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is therefore a glorious and significant occasion for us.

On 7th March 1971, Bangabandhu gave his decisive call for independence. He called upon all to take all-out preparation for the liberation struggle by turning every house into a fort. Bangabandhu has risen to an extraordinary height from the common man, was transformed from an individual to the totality. The UNESCO has included his historic speech on March 7 in the Memory of the World International Register as World's documentary heritage. This speech is a turning point in the history of Bangalis. Because no one has been ever able to unite the Bangalis like this before, no one has called for independence in this way and at his call, the Bangalis plunged into the war with patriotism to free their motherland from shackles of subjugation. This speech is the best war speech in the world. On the one hand, the bloodshot eyes of the Pakistani aggressors and their tank-cannons were ready; on the other hand, a fearless great hero was kindling the fire of freedom in the hearts of unarmed Bengalis. In his fiery speech on March 7, he emerged as the only symbol of the nation. On that day, he was not just a person, not just a leader, but transformed himself into the voice of the millions by embracing the thousand-year history of the Bengali nation. He said, "The struggle this time is for our liberation, the struggle this time is for our freedom". Ignoring the bloody eyes of the Pakistani military aggressors, he raised the index finger of courage and added, "Once we have given blood, we will give more". He said, "Nobody can keep us down anymore". At that time the best epic in the history of Bangalis was written. He also set an example of being the first sovereign Bangali to run the state by the power of the people. During the long nine-month bloody war of liberation,

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the source of strength, courage and inspiration of this nation.

10th January 1972 is a historical day in our national life. On that day the Father of the Nation made a heroic return to his beloved free country. The Pakistani occupation forces let loose the brutal genocide on the black night of 25th March 1971. Bangabandhu had declared the independence of Bangladesh in the early hours of 26th March before he was arrested by the occupation forces. Pakistani regime wanted to assassinate the imprisoned Mujib. But they could not kill him owing to the mounting pressure on them from the global community. The Pakistani Government was forced to free Bangabandhu on 8th January 1972. The Nation witnessed an unprecedented scene on the day of Bangabandhu's triumphant homecoming. There was tremendous excitement everywhere; there was a sea of cheering crowds. The Bangali Nation welcomed their liberator with the resounded slogan 'Joy Bangla' 'Joy Bangabandhu'. The Bangali nation was soaked in deep love for the author of the epic called 'Independence'. Having set foot on the soil of his beloved homeland, Bangabandhu said, "I saw the people of Bangla today, saw the soil of Bangla, saw the sky of Bangla, felt the weather of Bangla. I salute Bangla, my golden Bangla; I love you so much, this is perhaps the reason why I have been called back". He also said "My Bangladesh is independent today, the desire of my life is fulfilled today and the people of my Bangla is liberated today". "I was a prisoner, ready to go to the gallows, but I knew nobody could keep my Bangalis in check." "I did not know that I would return to you. I told just one thing, I have no objection if you kill me. Please return my dead body to my Bangalis, this is my only request to you".

Bangabandhu was the epitome of a brave and fearless Bangali. Disregarding the fear of death, he said, "If my death comes, I will go away smiling, I will not insult my Bangali race, I will not apologise to you. And when I go, I will say Joy Bangla, Independent Bangla, Bangali is my nation, Bangla is my language, Bangla's soil is my place". "Bangla is independent, Bangladesh is independent today". In the context of Bangladesh, this birth centenary is associated with the achievement and glory of a special period. With the profound significance of Bangabandhu's birth centenary, several

milestones of development and progress will be added simultaneously. Bangabandhu started his dream journey of a prosperous golden Bangla. That dream has gained momentum under the leadership of his daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Today, Bangladesh occupies a prominent place in the various global indicators of socio-economic development. Among the milestones that will be crossed in the country at this time are the Golden Jubilee of Independence, Digital Bangladesh and middle income status of Bangladesh. All this is an example of the continuity of the electoral commitment and credence of the present government. The history of this combination of birth centenary celebrations and the implementation of government's commitments are probably not to be found in any other country.

The Election Manifesto-2018 of the Bangladesh Awami League says, "Our beloved motherland Bangladesh is on the verge of completing fifty years of great independence and the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman." Our commitment to the nation is to accomplish the vision-2021 successfully by building a happy and prosperous future while celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Independence and the birth centenary of Bangabandhu. The celebration of the birth centenary and the Golden Jubilee of Independence, these two important events have been linked with the commitment of building a prosperous Bangladesh, which will mark the organization of this festival in far-reaching significance.

People are the key driving force of history. But the role of the individual is always crucial. Some people emerge as the voice of the millions by their own merit, ability, courage and talent through long and arduous journey of struggle and thus change the course of history. They contain the aspiration and dream of the people and seek a new horizon for the nation's right for self-determination and liberation. We know of many such great leaders in the history of the world. Bangabandhu emerged as the greatest of the leaders of the Bangalis with his unprecedented combination of courage, uncompromising attitude, unwavering determination and extraordinary eloquence. Prison, oppression, torture, nothing could stop him from dreaming of the emancipation of Bangalis. He spent many years in solitary

confinement – chose to live a troubled life. According to a recent publication of the Prisons, Bangabandhu had to spend 3,053 days of his life and youth in prison. He was arrested during the language movement on March 11, 1948, since then, the jail has been his frequent residence. In his two remarkable books - The Unfinished Memoirs and The Prison Diaries - and in the recently published book about him - Secret Documents of the Intelligence Branch on the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman - we learn a lot in detail about those days.

After the Independence, a new country emerged from the debris in Bangladesh under his leadership like a mythical phoenix bird. He started the dream journey of the second revolution with the aim of building a prosperous golden Bangla. He was killed by the bullet of the assassin. But in our way of life, in every sphere of life, he has always been as bright as the eternal lighthouse. To the new generation, he is emerging every moment as a beacon of inspiration. Today, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina in the journey of prosperous Bangladesh, he is the courage and enlightener. The birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib is therefore not just a birthday for Bangalis, but a rare opportunity for Bangalis to pay homage to their Liberator. Side by side, it is time for the nation to express its collective gratitude to him for the nation he has created, shaped and embodied as a proud part of the world. In his lifetime, he became known all over the world as the leader for the exploited. He was also the Himalayas in the eyes of world heroes like Fidel Castro. In the world media, he was hailed as 'Poet of Politics'.

Bangabandhu is simultaneously the leader of the nation and the world. Through the celebration of his birth centenary, the people of Bangladesh all over and the freedom-loving people of the world will pay homage and love to Bangabandhu. We are witnessing that this event is becoming a legacy of history in terms of glory on the one hand and memorable and festive on the other. As expected our younger generation is getting deeply involved in this event and taking lessons from the life history of Bangabandhu, they will emerge as the future Maestro of Bangladesh. We want the whole world, including Bangladesh, to read the biography of this "Poet of Politics" of infinite courage and self-sacrifice. Bangabandhu started the second

revolution in this country. Today the world has reached the threshold of the 4th revolution with the wonderful progress of science and technology. With this wonderful journey of innovation and progress, the lessons of our history and heritage will help us to make Bangladesh a prosperous and developed country. Bangabandhu is our history and tradition; he is our past, present and bright future - Bangladesh will forever be illuminated by the brightness of that light. We will always carry the glorious and joyous memory of the opportunity that we got to greet and pay our respects to him with all the warmth of our hearts on the occasion of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu, and to witness this historic time.

Dr. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury (Kamal Chowdhury) : Poet and Chief Coordinator, The National Implementation Committee for the Celebration of the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

International Mother Language Day and Ekushey Book Fair

Habibullah Sirajee

Man has an instinctive attachment to the language he is born with. When the normal flow of a language is threatened, people's attraction for their mother language turns into passion. So was the case with our mother language Bangla. It had been disintegrated from the mainstream of society again and again by the ruling elites during different foreign regimes in Bengal. Bangla has been neglected and become a common language for common people of the land. This gradually develops a strong but sincere urge in them for their mother tongue. Such a strong feeling for our language has pervaded our consciousness since the long past and it is but something we are proud of. We, the people of Bangladesh, fought for the language, and our people laid their lives to the cause of Bangla, our mother tongue. It is a lone example in the whole world and finally we were able to establish the right of our language in 1952. Its importance was gradually felt by the world communities and the Twenty-first February was declared International Mother Language Day. The day is now observed throughout the world.

When, after the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947, Urdu was imposed as the only state language of the land, people's love for their language burst into a loud protest giving rise to a movement called the Language Movement which continued until it eventually assumed a cataclysmic proportion on 21st February in 1952. Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, Abdul Jabbar,

Abul Barkat, Abdus Salam, Shafiul and Ohiullah were martyred and many were injured. This gave us all, the people of Bangladesh, a sense of unity and undaunted courage to break the shackles of bondage perpetuated so far by foreign forces.

There are always some moments of history that decide not only the present but all the time to come. Our Language Movement was such an event. The freedom struggle of Bangladesh in 1971, in fact, originated from the Language Movement from 1948 to 1952. The Bangla speaking people of the land mainly came of a linguistic nationalism. But the then West Pakistan's leaders liked to believe that the subcontinent was divided on the basis of the theory that the Hindus and the Muslims were two separate nations and that religion was the basis of its nationhood. The Language Movement was the first successful challenge to this theory; and, as a consequence, Bangladesh stood as a modern secular-democratic nation. The people of this land have always had a strong sense of their linguistics and cultural heritage. It is noteworthy that the claim of Bangla as the national language of the whole Pakistan was articulated by the eminent linguist Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah as early as 3 August 1947. A spontaneous and all-out strike was observed on 11 March of 1948 across the country demanding Bangla as the state language. This was the first successful strike in the history of the Language Movement. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested for leading this strike. Pakistani Intelligence Report says : 'This subject (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) was arrested on 11.3.48 for violating the orders.... He took very active part in the agitation for adopting Bengali as the State language of Pakistan, and made the propaganda at Dacca for general strike on 11.3.48 on this issue.'¹ This was for the first time that he was arrested in independent Pakistan. He said in strong voice : 'We will continue our movement till Bengali is made the state language. Certainty, we are ready to work for this cause.'²

But long before that, medieval Bengali poet Abdul Hakim (1620-1690) wrote a poem namely 'Bangabani (Words from Bangla)' where he stated firmly : 'The Lord understands and loves all languages/...those who hate Bangla after being born in Bengal I cannot tell who gave birth to them/...if one is not happy with his own language why doesn't he leave Bengal and

go somewhere else!’³ After him, a popular 19th-century Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873) wrote ‘Bangabhasha (Language of Bangla)’, a poem, with the same love and affection to Bangla language.

The self-realization of the Bengali nation after the Twenty-first February of 1952 was coupled with a sense of pride and gratefulness that our past traditions came into existence with full capabilities of creativity. The Language Movement was creative by nature. It not only produced new works of arts and literature, but also, and more importantly, gave these creations a new content. As a result, we have a distinct body of literary and artistic creations which derive their origin from 21st February of 1952. Essentially the literature or art of Twenty-first February refers to the literary works dealing with the love and sacrifice of the Language Movement. In the arena of world literature, it is a unique kind of theme. We have the songs of the Language Movement that commemorate the movements and its martyrs. One such song, written by Abdul Gaffar Choudhury and set to music by Altaf Mahmud, has become the theme song. The lyric (‘How can I forget the 21st February/ Sprayed with the blood of my brothers?’) is full of pathos and anguish. Later on, our writers and artists have produced poems, plays, fictions, paintings and cinemas based on the movement that continued to inspire us not only in the liberation war, but also all the struggles against all the odds and obstacles we come across in our national life. The play *Kabar (The Grave)* by Munier Chowdhury, the film *Jiban Theke Nawa (Taken from Life)* by Zahir Raihan and the eloquent design of the *Shahid Minar (the Martyrs’ Monument)* by Hamidur Rahman are evidently the products of three different types, which are considered as Bangladeshi masterpieces in arts and literature. People of all strata of our society are greatly influenced by it. The 21st February has shaped the creative life of commoners in a different way. The Rickshaw painters, the artists of Nakshikantha and other native artists drew inspirations from the movement as well.

The very theme of the 21st February is protest; therefore the creative works based on it is the literature of protest by nature. The protest may take place in the fields of politics, culture and aesthetics. In Bangla literature, there is no genre of arts and literature which is not influenced

by its experiences. There is no rightful movement after 1952 to date that is not boasted by its sacrifices.

The Twenty-first February implies a new look at our own selves and our culture, and a reassessment of our forgotten and neglected traditions of creativity. The result of the Language Movement thus empowers us with not only a Bangla speaking nationhood but also a nation with a rare pride in the world and the people of Bangladesh have sacrificed their lives for the sake of their mother tongue. UNESCO has very rightfully addressed the day and recognized it by declaring the day International Mother Language Day on 17 November 1999.

It is the Language Movement that led to the establishment of Bangla Academy, a lighthouse of Bengali Nation and intellectual excellence, on 3 December 1955. Over the last three decades of its inception Amar Ekushey Granthamela (Immortal Ekushey Book Fair) has been recognized as the longest book fair in the world. It is for us a matter of utmost pleasure and national glory. It is arranged every year by Bangla Academy for the whole month of February at Bangla Academy premises and Suhrawardy Udyan. This event is dedicated to the martyrs who died during the Language Movement on 21 February 1952.

Now it is signified not only as a centre for selling and purchasing books, but is deeply associated with the national spirit of Bengalis also. On the occasion of the fair the Benaglis living at different corners of the globe not only turn back home but the foreign people also come here to see how deeply do the Bengalis cherish their love for books. Like our local writers, those who live in the Far East and in many European countries also come back home in February to bring out books and are involved in the festivity of the book fair.

The present Amar Ekushey Book Fair was formally inaugurated in 1984. From then on every year the book fair gets bigger and bigger. It can be said that the publishing industry of Bangladesh has stood on a strong foundation on the occasion of this fair. Now many new publishers have come into this industry. The number of readers and writers is also increasing every year.

The Language Movement is, in fact, one of the greatest events of the country – an event leaving an overwhelming and ever-lasting impact on our national life in many ways. It has changed the course of our whole life, more importantly – our own mindset, taught us not to bow down our head to any evils, injustice and malpractices and given full vent to our creative faculty.

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Habibullah Sirajee : Poet and Director General, Bangla Academy



Books in the Time of Pandemic

Mofidul Hoque

In 1949 when Book Fair started its journey in a city devastated by war not everyone recognized the role books can play in a world devastated by war. But books brought hope for the future in a dark time and the initiative proved to be a success. Such was the beginning of Frankfurt Book Fair. Very soon Frankfurt became the destination of book-people all around the world. In 2020 the world has been engulfed in another crisis with the covid-19 outbreak. The pandemic has destroyed the business as we have known and we have to search for new ways to move forward. Like many other events the physical book-fair has been cancelled for a virtual presentation. This came as a big frustration for many but the virtual platform will also create new contacts, bringing in new results. The global publishing sector has to look beyond the present. Frankfurt will again look for signals of hope. Seventy-one years ago the devastated city hosted the book fair to give hope to many by chartering a new course. Now in the face of global crisis Frankfurt will again host a book fair, not physically but virtually, which will certainly inspire us all to find hope in the future.

With this understanding we would like to highlight the importance of cooperation among the nations to promote book. Book publishing is no longer a centralized business but every culture, language and nation has something to add to the global publishing. We are confident that the virtual book fair with digital contacts can open new horizon for all. Here

lies the significance of regional publishing and presenting local product to the global market. Frankfurt is a city which is symbolic in many ways. It is the financial capital of Germany that also harbours largest book fair on earth, both in terms of quantity or number of participants and also quality of the products presented. The fair not only brings the trade representatives together but also attract new ideas and concepts that enrich our collective wisdom which is the ultimate aim of books as a vehicle of new thought, genre and content. This is what makes Frankfurt Book Fair special and also the best place to understand the future of book and book publishing.

Civilization is going through a grave crisis. While the impact of climate change is looming large over us, not every country has been equally affected by the impending danger. Moreover, the crisis has a slow pace to develop and, as a result, nations and the people are slower to react, in many cases they are ignoring the signals of all encompassing danger. But sudden eruption of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent death of millions has made everybody understand that no one is immune to consider him or herself safe. No society, developed or developing, can claim to be safe from the attack. The crisis has bonded all humans together. Now one realizes that no man is an island, while isolation is the prescription to survive but isolation should be practiced collectively and it should not mean separation. While one cannot survive alone, the fight against contamination links the individual with others including his family, locality, community, region, nation and the whole world. A civilizational crisis calls for civilizational response. Here lies the significance of books, which transmit all borders and aspires to build bridges among individuals, nations and countries of the world. As such in the new reality role of books has been heightened and made it an essential component of human struggle in isolation. In this background the significance of every opportunity to build bondage with books are getting more and more important. It is also equally important to look into new ways to promote books from every region and part of the world. It is necessary to ensure that nations not only remain at the receiving end. The regional publications have gained new strength over the years and they have resources to offer.

Emergence of South Asia as another hub of global economy is a recent phenomenon which has shown that despite the problems in the life of millions the regions prospects are also great. In such a scenario usually economy gets most of the attention of players and partners in the developmental process. A corollary of such approach is connectivity, a word which is getting more and more importance in these days. The link among the nations of South Asia, the rails, roads and sea-routes, are opening new vistas of trade and economy. Exchange of goods and services is bringing the countries together but it is culture which can bring people closer. Thus cultural connectivity is the issue which needs to be addressed vigorously and here lies the significance of all the efforts to bring books, authors and publishers together. The publishers of the region highlight the importance of building bridges and develop connectivity. They recognize the importance of creating a platform for the publishers belonging to South Asian nations and work together to promote each other's writings in their own market. The time has come to develop connectivity of culture where books are the bricks to build bridges. The steps toward cooperation have to be a win-win scenario where the publishers together can make a difference which is much needed in today's conflict-ridden world.

We note with satisfaction that Frankfurt Book Fair is working to create a platform where the publishers from various countries can join together, discuss and identify areas of mutual co-operation. So far the attempts to create such space have not spread regionally. In spite of that publishers are trying to create opportunities of their own, the book fairs provided scope to bring the publishers together. But these events confined mostly to fairs held in India, Beijing or Singapore, which have played an important role but cannot fulfill the regional need and aspiration. The publishing community of Bangladesh has committed themselves to create appropriate platform of cooperation for the publishers of SAARC nations and beyond. The time has come to realize the dream in an effective way. The corona virus pandemic resulted in online connectivity where FBM is going to be the major hub. We are hopeful that digital version of the Book Fair will contribute to strengthen the digital connectivity. It is also important to initiate discussion on mutual cooperation and play with ideas which can contribute in the process.

Mofidul Hoque : Writer, Publisher and Trustee, Liberation War Museum.



Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib and Books

Minar Monsur

As we celebrate the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with befitting affection and adoration, he is being remembered not only for being a courageous, successful and visionary political leader who gifted his people with freedom and independence. We are also celebrating his other identity of being an extraordinary human being imbued with the most humane of qualities rooted for eternity in the soul of his country, the hearts of his countrymen and the map of his motherland. His three books are living proof of these qualities. They not only offer new insights into his thought processes but also reveal a writing prowess to be proud of. Poets, writers, researchers and artists in Bangladesh are trying to capture the breadth of Bangabandhu's character in their own literary and art forms. Hundreds of books and articles are being published. While this endeavour started during the great man's lifetime, it has gained new momentum after his untimely demise and in particular since the release of his handwritten biographical works. It is rare for such a burst of creativity surrounding one individual.

It can naturally be asked as to why such creative interest and enthusiasm is being shown for the life of one political leader. History is rife with examples of leaders who have secured independence for their peoples'. It can be argued that creative people around the world did not devote so

much time and energy for them, and that would be a valid point. It should be noted that when Newsweek¹ termed Bangabandhu as the 'Poet of Politics' in their April 1971 edition, Bangladesh was not yet liberated. In 1971, the renowned Indian poet and intellectual Annada Shankar Ray wrote these eternal words for Bangabandhu :

*'As long as the Padma, Jamuna, Gouri and Meghna rivers flow
your deeds will remain Sheikh Mujibur Rahman...*

Even as rivers of tears and blood flow, there is no fear.

For victory will be yours Sheikh Mujibur Rahman...'

Like Bangabandhu, these two tribute of words have become etched in history. He was thus, established in his own unique way even before the independent country of Bangladesh was founded by him. He had captured alike the imagination of foreign writers, journalists and poets. Of course, tributes from national and international writers and journalists flowed when Bangabandhu was taken well before his time in the tragic events of August 1975. Yet, the question arises why such adulation was shown during his lifetime. In simple terms, it was his charismatic leadership. The captivating nature of his personality was even mentioned by Fidel Castro. However, charisma alone does not explain his uniqueness. There was more to his personality and character.

For that, we need to explore the source of his charisma and captivating influence. Bangabandhu was a Bangali through and through. His character contained within it the beauty, fragrance, culture and heritage of his beloved Bangladesh. Just as he loved the 'oppressed' Bangalis as his own brothers and sisters, he carried within him the culture and heritage of his land. It should be noted that Bangabandhu's three books² reveal such numerous instances of his love for books and music that they can be the subject of a separate book in its own right.

2.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-1975) spent almost a third of his life in the dark cells of prisons. He even spent days on end in cells allocated for condemned prisoners awaiting his death. He endured

unimaginable psychological torture. He made good use of his time in prison for two activities primarily : i) reading a wide variety of books; and ii) writing. He was also an avid reader of foreign newspapers and magazines. He would never complain about his accommodation, food or even healthcare in prison. However, he would become agitated if for any reason his supply of newspapers got restricted. This was a well known fact for the prison authorities, his family and party colleagues. He wrote : 'My father used to keep various newspapers : Ananda Bazar, Basumati, Azad, Monthly Mohammadi and Sawgat. I used to read all the newspapers from my childhood'.³ During his long stints in prison, he would add Newsweek and some other important international publications to his list of essential regular reading. He himself was involved with the publication and distribution of newspapers. Bangladesh's reputed daily, Ittefaq, stands as living testimony of that fact.

Writing does not come easy. Most renowned writers of the world would attest to that. Politician Bangabandhu never had the time nor inclination for writing. Despite his inexperience, he genuinely shines as a writer in his limited literary works. His efforts are clearly visible for all in his three posthumously published books, 'Unfinished Memoirs', 'Prison Diaries' and 'New China as I Saw'. It is beyond the scope of this article to adequately evaluate all three books. But at the very least, it can be said that these books are capable of transcending national boundaries as a result of their inherent worth. That the books are for the world at large is already in demonstration from the fact that they have been translated into multiple languages. More such translation works are in the pipeline. Nationally, the sales of these three books have broken all previous records. Around eight years back, renowned researcher and former Director General of Bangla Academy Shamsuzzaman Khan wrote :

'The two books (Unfinished Memoirs and Prison Diaries) have broken all records in Bangladesh's literary and publishing history. Around hundred thousand copies of Unfinished Memoirs have been sold, and within less than a year of its publication, Prison Diaries has already sold more than seventy thousand copies. It is rare to see such popularity of written works in Bangladesh. It is a landmark phenomenon in our cultural history'⁴.

Bangabandhu's love for books was unlimited. He was an avid reader. He used to read all kinds of books from home and abroad. His love for books reached new heights during his prolonged periods of incarceration. It was however, not easy to get hold of a variety of books in prison. The prison authorities deliberately made this pursuit even tougher at times too. That is why Bangabandhu himself carried a collection of books with him at all times. He would also ask his political colleagues to send him specific publications. In this regard, his eldest daughter Sheikh Hasina wrote :

'Since 1949, whenever my father went to jail, he used to always carry a collection of specific books with him. These included works by Rabindranth, Sarat Chandra, Nazrul, Bernard Shaw, Russell, Shelley and Kit. Some of these books had seals of censor on them. Books sent to jails at that time were checked and then given a censor clearance seal. In fact, one could tell how many times Bangabandhu went to jail from the number of seals which were put on these books...My mother used to buy a lot of books for my father and send them to him in jail. We used to accompany our mother to New Market for buying these books for our father. Buying and reading of books was a norm in our household. We had plenty of books.'⁵

In 1951, Bangabandhu secretly wrote to Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mia from his cell: 'Please don't send me anything. I don't need anything here. If possible, send me some books or publications on China.'⁷

It was known throughout that Bangabandhu's residence at Dhanmondi Road No. 32 had a well-stocked library. Some of his photographs in his own library have now become part of our documentary history. His love of reading was not restricted to books alone. He was an avid reader of newspaper articles and reports by acclaimed writers and journalists such as Jashim Uddin, Shahidullah Kaiser, Sardar Fazlul Karim, Munir Chowdhury, Satyan Sen, Tofazzal Hossain Manik Mia, and Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury. He was on first name basis with most renowned artists and writers of his day. Despite being a full time politician, he had the heart of a poet's. That poetic heart is at use throughout his literary endeavours. For instance, he wrote:

'A part of me would always been incomplete had I not heard Abbasuddin's song in his own voice whilst on the river. It was as if the

waves of the rivers were listening to his words with me. I became a fan of Mr. Abbasuddin'.⁷

3.

There are several milestones in the long and memorable journey of Tungipara's Khoka becoming Bangabandhu and the Father of the Nation. These include : the Language Movement of 1952, the Six-Point Movement of 1966, the Mass Upsurge of 1969 and the War of Liberation in 1971. He played the key role in the Language Movement, then in the cultural movement (including the movement to restore Rabindranath literature) and finally in the fight for autonomy and independence culminating in the War of Liberation. It was our culture which was at the crux of all these struggles and the person in the driver's seat was none other than Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. As a result, the spirit and personal touch of Bangabandhu is enmeshed in all major literary and cultural initiatives like establishing the Bangla Academy and Shilpakala Academy, to name a few. It should be noted that Bangabandhu was responsible for organising an international book fair in the war-torn infant nation of Bangladesh in 1972. In the same year, Bangabandhu wholeheartedly supported the organising of a seven-day international book exhibition to commemorate the International Book Fair 1972.⁸ Within two years, and under Bangabandhu's direct patronage, two national level book fairs, the Dhaka National Book Fair and Chattogram National Book Fair, were organised in 1974 and 1975 respectively. Renowned writer, journalist and erstwhile official of the National Book Centre Bodiuddin Nazir has added that despite severe funds crisis nationally, Bangabandhu donated 2.5 million TK in 1972 to the National Book Centre to ensure its smooth operation. It was a big amount for that time and context⁹.

Bangabandhu dreamt of building a prosperous Bangladesh till his last breath. He also made it clear that to build a prosperous nation, we needed enlightened human beings. For that purpose, he believed that there is no alternative to the knowledge enshrined in books. It is in that spirit that the National Book Centre regularly funds and donates books to around eight hundred libraries throughout the country. In the 2019-20 fiscal year,

despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, books worth 40 million TK have been bought by the National Book Centre from around three hundred publishers. Additionally, 20 million Tk has been donated as cash support for the private grassroots libraries established by individual efforts. These efforts have helped the national publishers to flourish and also spread the knowledge contained in the books to peoples' doorsteps.

Bangabandhu's birth centenary is being celebrated nationally as 'Mujib Borsho'. The National Book Centre has adopted a resolution to establish at least one library in every village of Bangladesh. Due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to setting up libraries, the National Book Centre is also committed to ensure the delivery of books to peoples' doorsteps. Since people cannot frequent libraries as a result of physical distancing requirements, our policy now is to ensure that libraries should reach the readers. As a result, the National Book Centre has undertaken a mobile reading initiative with the help of ten renowned libraries of Dhaka and with financial support from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The initiative has already proved to be a popular one among the youth and adolescents stuck at homes. To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, there is a plan to extend the aforementioned mobile initiative to every part of the country. There is also a plan to start 'Saloon Library' soon.

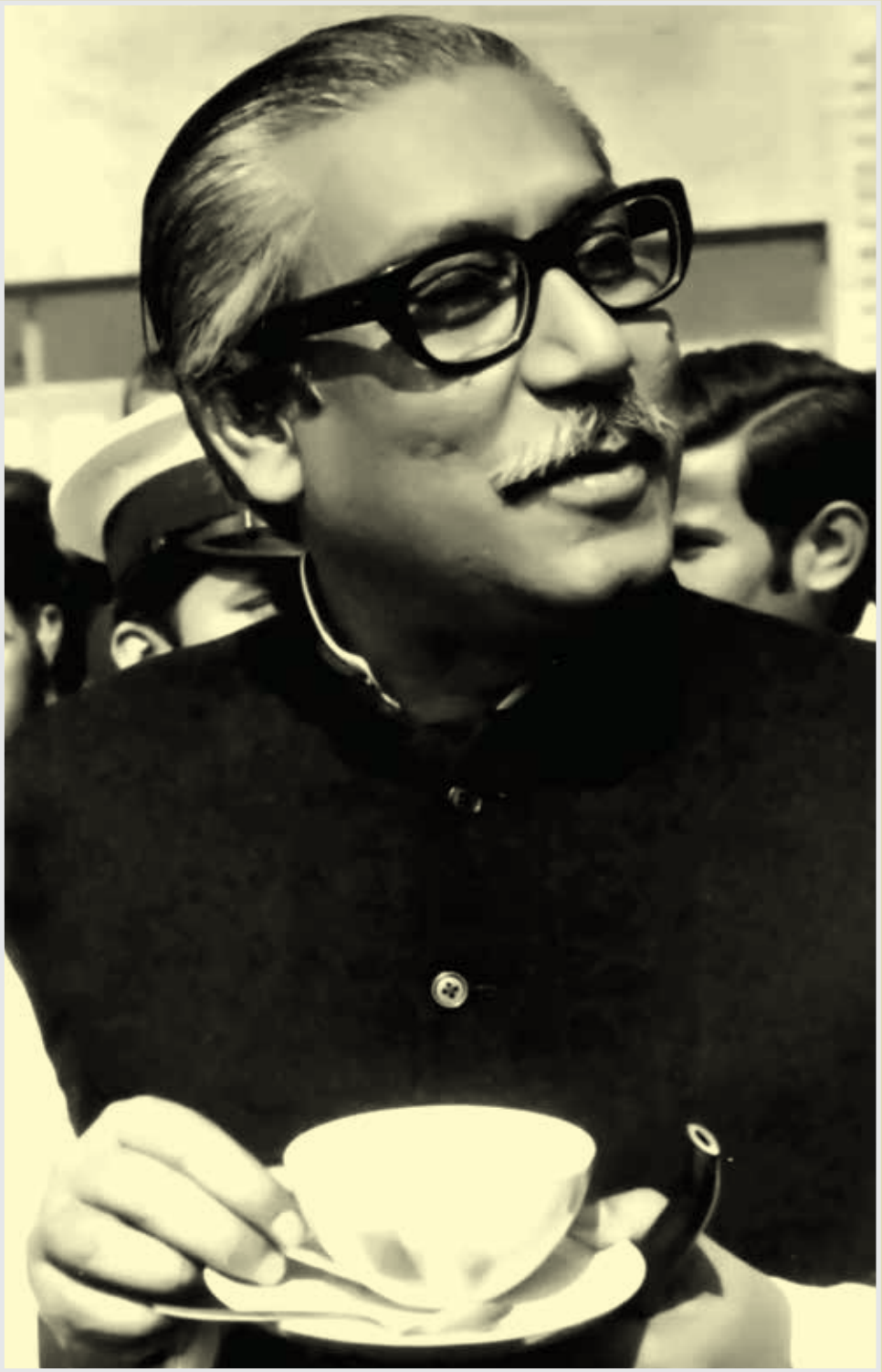
One of the key roles of the National Book Centre is to participate in, and organise, national and international book fairs and exhibitions. Apart from participating in the reputed International Book Fairs in Frankfurt, New York, Kolkata, and London, the National Book Centre also organises book fairs themselves in the divisional and national levels of Bangladesh. The aims are to: connect books with their readers, arrange transfer and acquisition of knowledge and experience, and help promote the national publishing industry. Trainings, workshops and seminars are arranged for the development of the sector and industry. It should be noted that increasingly nowadays traditional printed books are becoming obsolete as a result of the advent of easy and cheap information technology and social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. This poses a serious risk to our future generations. Addiction to social networking for example, is dissuading them from physical and intellectual exercises. The adverse

impact is being felt by our publishing industry as well. The situation is being compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. Under these circumstances, our greatest challenge is to attract children, adolescents and youths to traditional books. In this Mujib Year and the upcoming golden anniversary of our glorious independence, the National Book Centre has resolved to face this challenge with all means at their disposal.

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Minar Monsur : Poet and Director, National Book Centre, Bangladesh.



Memorable Quotes of Distinguished Personalities on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



“I’m broken by the news of Sheikh Mujib’s death. He was a great leader. His extraordinary heroism has been a source of inspiration for the people of Asia and Africa.”

Indira Gandhi, *Former Prime Minister of India*



“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.”

Fidel Castro, *Former President of Cuba*



“The speciality of Mujib’s character was his uncompromising fighting leadership with a generous heart.”

Yasser Arafat, *Former President of Palestine*



“Sheikh Mujib was a pioneer who fought for establishing people’s rights and dignity in one of the most profound struggles for liberation in the twentieth century. The title of Bangabandhu bestowed on him reflects the extraordinary love that this patriot had for the people of his country. He was a leader of the masses and made the ultimate sacrifice in their service.”

Pranab Mukherjee, *Former President of India*



“Saluting an icon of democracy, a towering personality and a great friend of India, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.”

Narendra Modi, *Prime Minister of India*



“Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a great statesmen who fought for the rights and dignity of his people and was steadfastly committed to independence and national duty.”

Christian Wulff, *Former President of Germany*



“What a tragedy to have such brilliant and courageous leadership stolen from the people of Bangladesh in such a moment of violence and cowardice. But today, Bangladesh is growing in the vision of Bangabandhu and under the strong leadership of his daughter. The United States is proud to be a friend and strong supporter of the fulfillment of his vision.”

John F. Kerry, *Former Secretary of State, USA*



“Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a brave leader. The Bangali nation and the people of the world will remember him forever for his role.”

Sonia Gandhi, *President of Indian National Congress*

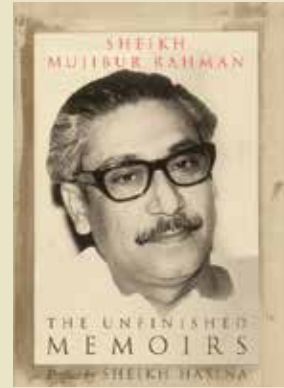


“Sheikh Mujibur Rahman does not belong to Bangladesh alone. He is the harbinger of freedom for all Bangalis.”

Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, *Egyptian journalist*



About the Books of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib



The Unfinished Memoirs Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Greatest Bengali of all times and the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman spent his whole life in political struggle till death. He dedicated his entire life to the emancipation and freedom of his people. The Unfinished Memoirs is an inextricable part of that journey towards freedom authored by the Father of the Nation himself. He himself set out the context in which it was written :

Friends tell me, "Write your biography." My colleagues tell me, "You should write down the events of your political life as they will come in handy in future." My wife once came to the jail-gate and told me, "You are sitting idle anyway. You should use the time to write about your life". I replied, "But I can't write well. And what I have done worth writing anyway? I can only say that I have sacrificed somewhat for my ideals and principles."

(Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, The Unfinished Memoirs, The University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2012, Page 2).

On one such day in prison, when the guard locked him and went away for the night, Bangabandhu started thinking in his small cell looking at the stars about his political mentor Suhrawardy. How he met him, how he became close to him, the lessons he learnt, and affection he received, from him. This made him decide to start writing. That is the genesis of the

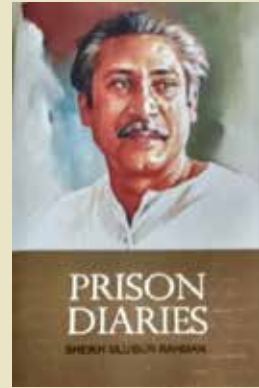
'Unfinished Memoirs'. Before this work could be published, on the one hand, Bengalis got their long cherished independence in 1971 under the leadership of Bangabandhu and through a bloody War of Liberation achieved final victory. On the other hand, the nation witnessed the tragic events of 15th August 1975 when Bangabandhu along with almost his entire family was brutally killed by the assassins. As a result, the manuscript was almost lost forever to history. The fact that the biography got narrowly saved makes the work that much more precious and unique. The editor of this work, Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina, wrote a detailed account of this context in the preface to the book. The biography, as the name suggests, is unfinished. However, it does provide a lot of details from Bangabandhu's life including : the context in which it was written, the family of the author, his birth and early life, school and college days. Bangabandhu's social and political activities and thoughts also received a lot of attention, such as the famine, communal riots in Bihar and Kolkata, politics of East Bengal from partition to 1954, misrule of Muslim League at central and provincial levels in Pakistan, language movement, formation of Awami League and Chatro League, formation of Jukto-Front, Jukto-Front's win in election and formation of government, discriminatory behaviour of the central government, palace politics conspiracies and so on.

The book also reveals details about the author's life in prison, his parents, children and his wife who we learn stood by him through thick and thin as an equal partner in every sense of the term. Additionally, the accounts of the author's travels to China, India and the then West Pakistan gives a different dimension to the book as well. Written in easy to understand language, the book serves as living evidence of the journey towards freedom for a nation. The resolve and determination of Bangabandhu is also palpably revealed in the literature. The book was published in 2012 by the University Press Limited (UPL) Cover was designed by Samar Majumder. The book has been translated in different languages.

About the Books of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

Prison Diaries

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



In the long running history of Bengalis, it was only under the leadership of Bangabandhu that they were able to establish for themselves an independent and sovereign country.

From his childhood, Banganbandhu was a person possessing deep humane qualities. It was difficult for him to stand by idly and accept the hardships of others. He was always on the lookout to help others and alleviate the sufferings of his fellow men. It was this empathy for others which resulted in his emergence as a political leader. Once he started in the path of politics, he never had to look back. The only way for him was forward. He was an active political worker during the days of the Pakistan Movement. But by the time the movement for Bangladesh started, he was at his zenith as a political leader. His path however, was never smooth. The Pakistani ruling elites did everything in their power to stifle his voice and clip his wings. As a result, he spent a large part of his life in prison. Prison Diaries narrates his life under incarceration.

It was his wife, his partner in every sense of the term, Begum Sheikh Faziltunnesa Mujib, who inspired him to write whilst in prison. In the preface, Sheikh Hasina writes :

My mother used to provide my father with pen and paper whenever he used to be arrested and taken to prison. She always encouraged him to write regularly. Whenever my father was released from prison, she used to go to the jail gate to receive him and to ensure that his writings were collected. She used to preserve them with care.

Like the Unfinished Memoirs, the manuscripts of Prison Diaries were also luckily saved from being lost forever to history. In the preface, Sheikh Hasina writes about how the scripts were first saved when Bangabandhu's residence was captured by the Pakistan Army after his arrest in March 1971 and subsequently how she got hold of them following the tragic events of August 1975 when Bangabandhu along with almost his entire family was assassinated.

In 1966, Bangabandhu presented the historic Six Point programme which was a blueprint or manifesto for the emancipation of the Bengalis. The Pakistani rulers understood the significance of these demands quite well. To cut him off from his people, Bangabandhu was arrested and put in prison. It was Bangabandhu's life and thoughts during the period between 1966 and 1969, that 'Prison Diaries' captures so vividly. Sheikh Hasina writes :

[...] Readers will get a clear idea about prisons when reading this book. Many unknown facts about life under incarceration are revealed such as the convicts and their foray into the world of crimes. Certain terminologies were used in prisons in that era, many of which are no longer in usage. These and many other facets of prison life are narrated. [...] The book also puts into perspective the political events of that time, the state of contemporary press and journalism, the repressive nature of erstwhile leadership and their efforts to divert public attention away from the Six-Point Demands and so on. Readers get an invaluable insight into Bangabandhu's ultimate aim of creating an independent country through his struggles and movements for people's freedom. Bangabandhu's writings consistently

reveal his indomitable confidence to be able to secure the emancipation of Bengalis. It is arguable that his self-confidence and ability to see the future have no historic or contemporary parallels'. (Pages 12-13).

In this book, Bangabandhu writes about the liberation of his poverty-stricken, repressed and downtrodden people with heartfelt love and empathy. Awami League leaders used to endure miserable lives in prisons. Bangabandhu had boundless love for them too. His concerns and worries for them are clear in this book. His cell was close to the ones for people with mental health issues. He describes various aspects of their lives : their happiness, their sorrows, their laugh and cries with deep affection and sensitivity. He often could not sleep due to their antics, yet he never felt disturbed and related to their pain instead.

Bangabandhu always remembered his parents during his life under incarceration. His love and affection for his parents, as revealed in *Prison Diaries*, stand as an example for every child.

His life in prison was permeated by loneliness. An unbearable feeling of being alone. But this remarkable person used to find refuge by seeking beauty in the most unlikely of sources. Sheikh Hasina writes in the Preface :

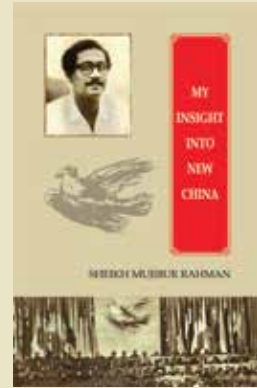
His only companions were the people who could roam freely in the prison, plants and animals. It is difficult to write about the skilled articulation with which he described a simple pair of yellow birds. He used to pet a chicken, which he described beautifully. The pain he felt at the death of chicken is also seamlessly narrated (Page 14).

Prison Diaries is a witness of the bloody and long journey of Bengalis towards freedom. A significant chapter of that journey, led by Bangabandhu, is captured in this book. During his long periods of incarceration, Bangabandhu's health suffered greatly. But he never revealed his own discomfort to his family as well as his political colleagues, lest they be concerned and disheartened. Sheikh Hasina writes :

“I learnt a lot of new details about him after reading his diary. It pained me to read about his sickness, with no one to care for him, in solitary confinement” (Page 13). This book reveals some, but not all, of the sacrifices made by Bangabandhu for his ideals and principles. The name Prison Diaries was chosen by his youngest daughter Sheikh Rehana. In 2017, the book was first published by Bangla Academy, and has been reprinted several times due to popular demand. Tarik Sujat is behind the beautiful cover and design of this book. The portrait in the cover has been designed by Rasel Kanti Das. The book was published by Bangla Academy.

About the Books of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

Amar Dekha Naya Chin
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



The Asia and Pacific Rim Peace Conference was held in erstwhile Peking from 2 to 12 October 1952. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman travelled to China for taking part in this conference as a member of the Pakistan delegation. Amar Dekha Nayachin (translated as 'New China as I saw it') is by Bangabandhu based on his maiden visit to China. It was penned while he was imprisoned as a political prisoner in 1954. In this book, he demonstrates his keen powers of observation and articulate writing skills as he narrates the governance and life in post-revolution China.

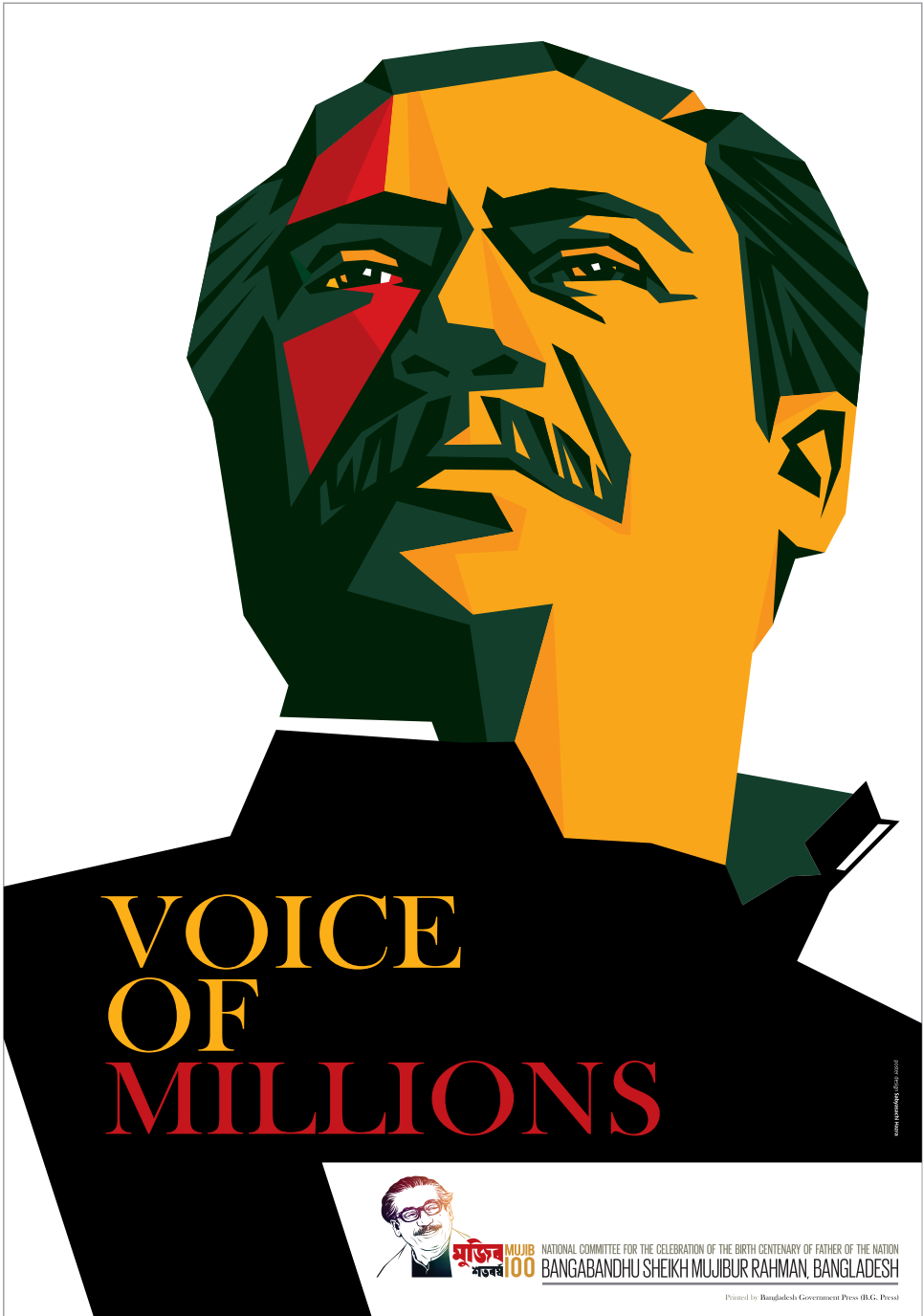
The book goes into detailed narration about the communist revolution's impact on the people of China from all walks of life. For instance, how the Chinese government dealt with people's standard of living, basic necessities, education and healthcare are given much attention. The Chinese people's attitudes to the new ways of life are also highlighted. Bangabandhu used the opportunity to take part in the peace conference to deeply observe the Chinese society. Even the minute details like the work environments and homes of the workers and farmers did not elude his watchful gaze. He observed the children and students and the initiatives undertaken to infuse them with a deep sense of patriotism and civic responsibilities from an early age. He traveled with an open mind and an eagerness to learn, and that is visible in his writing.

This book also reveals his strong anti-imperialist stance, secular ideology and deep affection for Bengali nationalism. Every aspect of his travelogue speaks on his identity as a young politician, deep-rooted patriotism and the desire to see his country's progress.

His love for beauty, interest in life, society and culture and thirst for knowledge and information are also starkly portrayed. This book is made even more interesting owing to the context in which it was written, the manner in which the manuscript was preserved under extremely hostile conditions and the vivid photographs which accompany it.

This book, published by Bangla Academy, was the first one to be published during the 2020 Amar Ekushey Book Fair (specifically dedicated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in observance of Mujib Year). The cover and design of the book were contributed by Tarik Sujat.

Source : Voice of Millions, 17th March 2020



Poster on Bangabandhu Skeikh Mujib released on 17 March 2020

MUJIB



100
YEARS OF
FATHER OF THE NATION
BANGABANDHU
SHEIKH MUJIB
1920-2020



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NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH CENTENARY OF FATHER OF THE NATION
BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, BANGLADESH

Printed by: Bangladesh Government Press (B&G Press)

Poster on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib released on 17 March 2020