



MOTHER LANGUAGE

Bangabandhu Issue



International Mother Language Institute (IMLI)

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The Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Mother Language

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Mother Language

Bangabandhu Issue

A special issue on Bangabandhu on the occasion of his birth centenary

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Editorial

This is of immense pleasure that International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) has humbly dedicated the research journal *Mother Language* under the title of **Mother Language: Bangabandhu Issue** to the loving memory of the Father of the Nation of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of his Birth Centenary. Birth or birth anniversary of a great leader like Bangabandhu is a rare and unique happening in the collective memory of any nation, which takes place only once and never recurs again. Hence the Birth Centenary of Bangabandhu, the greatest Bengali of all times, appears to be a great event in the life of the Bengalis and as such we the Bengalis are, with all reverence and gratitude, commemorating this eventful occasion.

Mother Language: Bangabandhu Issue contains seven articles contributed by the renowned writers of home and abroad.

The title of the first article is *Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: His Uniqueness as a Leader and his Role in World History* written by Professor Dr. Pabitra Sarkar. The essayist in his piece says how Sheikh Mujib's unique leadership has played a pivotal role to carve out the physical shape and existence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh as a sovereign country in the world atlas.

In the second article entitled *Sheikh Mujib: A Hero of Our Times* the writer, Professor Abdul Mannan, delineates Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a hero of the present time. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from his boyhood till the tragic day of his life showed his unprecedented valour and patriotism for the creation and protection of his beloved country.

In the third essay entitled *Bangabandhu as a Statesman* the writer, Muhammad Zamir, depicts Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a charismatic leader who devoted himself fully for the cause of

Bangladesh both for attaining the independence of this country as well as upholding the dignity of the country as a sovereign state around the world.

The title of the fourth article is *Commemorating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through His Works*. Here the writer, Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam, remembers the struggle and hardship Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went through for his people and his beloved Bangladesh. He also tells about the dreams and vision of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, i.e, the dream of Golden Bengal and the economic emancipation.

Waliur Rahman, in his article entitled *Bangabandhu*, alludes to the events where he had the opportunity to see Bangabandhu closely at home and abroad. Based upon the experience of his close meetings with him, Mr. Waliur tried to draw an impression and understanding of a great leader like Bangabandhu.

In the sixth article Syed Badrul Ahsan presents Bangabandhu as an unconventionally courageous and self-respected leader who has attained such a huge stature that he can easily and comfortably stand before and sit with any world leader with his full personality and dignity.

The title of the last article is *Bangabandhu Who Prefers to Protest*. In this essay the essayist Professor Md. Safiul Muz Nabeen focuses on the inherent temperament of protest Bangabandhu loves to raise throughout his life for the cause of his people as well as for the independence and economic emancipation of Bangladesh.

Heart-felt gratitude is conveyed to the contributors of this journal. And special thanks and good gestures are given to all the members of editorial panel and related persons for their unwavering support and cooperation to make this modest effort meaningful and successful – the publication of *Mother Language: Bangabandhu Issue*.

Jinnat Imtiaz Ali

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Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: His Uniqueness as a Leader and his Role in World History

Pabitra Sarkar*

Allow me, at the outset, to confess that I am neither a historian, nor an analyst of geopolitics. I am a linguist of sort and dabble in literature, and as, what is called a ‘public intellectual’, register my reactions at various social issues. My only qualification for speaking about Mujib is that I am a die-hard Bengali, who was born in the area which was later turned into the Democratic Republic of Bangladesh by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. So I request you not to take my presentation as an academic exercise, but rather as a literary tribute.

I think I am older than most of the people present here, still I haven’t had the privilege of seeing any charismatic leader in action. The memory of our time was full of these names found in school texts—Mazzini, Garibaldi, Jean d’Arc, Abraham Lincoln, Simon de Vallera, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, etc. They are all stars that are far off. I haven’t seen Gandhi either, nor Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, although I had a glimpse of Nehru once. And my deepest disappointment is that, although we shared the same historical time, I missed seeing Sheikh Mujib in person. He was probably the last charismatic leader in the history of the world so far.

Who do I call a leader with charisma? It’s not just one who can master thousands of people in a meeting, and spellbind and move them to actions with his/her speech, but, instead, one for whom people offer to give up their lives. This I have learned from the television interview of one Mr Habib Hasan (I may be wrong about the name, as I heard it only once), who was an associate of Subhas

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Sheikh Mujib: A Hero of Our Times

Abdul Mannan*

This year Bangladesh is marking the centenary of the birth of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Earlier, the government had declared that the year would be celebrated as ‘Mujib Borsho’ or ‘Mujib Year’, with a number of elaborate programmes lasting till the end of the year 2021, the year Bangladesh marks up fifty years of existence as an independent nation. A gala inaugural programme attended by foreign dignitaries, including Heads of States and Heads of Governments and the Secretary General of the UN, had been planned. Yet, just a week before it was due to take place, the scheduled inaugural programme was postponed and other events restructured due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh, along with more than two hundred countries around the world. Bangabandhu’s daughter, the current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, rightly put public interest above the celebration of her father’s birth centenary, scheduled for 17 March 2020. Under the prevailing circumstances, the concluding date has been re-fixed accordingly allowing an extension of some months. However almost all the programmes are still being observed, just in adapted forms: the foreign guests remained virtually present on the inaugural day through video conferencing, for instance. Nothing much was or will be lost.

Sheikh Mujib was born on 17th March 1920, in a small village of Tungipara in the Gopalganj sub-division of Faridpur. He was the eldest son of his parents, whose ancestry can be traced back to the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. From the family history, it is estimated that,

*Former Chairman, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh and Vice-Chancellor, University of Chittagong

Bangabandhu as a Statesman

Muhammad Zamir*

On this, the 45th anniversary of the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation and many members of his immediate family, I will recall the historic role that he played as the master helmsman during 1972 and how he safely guided our ship through troubled waters amidst a devastated post-war scenario. I will do so because many have forgotten his significant role and his commitment towards democracy and institution building.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from his internment in Pakistan in the first week of January 1972 and eventually returned to Dhaka, the capital of independent Bangladesh amidst a rapturous welcome on 10th January 1972. On the way he stopped over in London and New Delhi.

A charismatic leader, dedicated and committed to the cause of Bangladesh, he encapsulated his vision for his new country at Palam Airport, New Delhi on 10 January 1972. He described his journey to a free Bangladesh as a journey from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from desolation to hope. He also reiterated that he was going back to his independent country not with hatred in his heart for anyone, but with the satisfaction that truth has at last triumphed over falsehood, sanity over insanity, courage over cowardice, justice over injustice and good over evil. Bangabandhu's magnanimity and belief in the people of Bangladesh got reflected in his optimism. It was also this spirit that would inspire him to face up to the many difficulties that he would have to overcome in the coming months.

*Former Ambassador

Commemorating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through His Works

Dr. Fakrul Alam*

[This was delivered as a lecture 5 years back at Bangla Academy]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin my lecture by first paying my deep respect to the departed souls of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of our nation, and the members of his family, and all else who were murdered in cold blood on the night of 15th of August 1975. The murderers thought they would blot out his vision, eliminate his presence from Bangladesh's history, and redirect our country to the dictatorial path that would lead them back to Pakistan, but they have failed in almost every way. Bangabandhu's vision still guides our nation; his presence is everywhere in Bangladesh, nor merely in places named after him, or in official ceremonies, or even in party activities; his vision for Bangladesh is taking shape all the time in our country as it strives to become the Golden Bengal of his dreams, overcoming all obstacles and machinations, and going from strength to strength every day.

Let me also begin my lecture by thanking Mr. Shamsuzzaman Khan, Director-General of Bangla Academy, for inviting me to deliver this speech on the eve of his forty-first death anniversary and our National Mourning Day, and the officers and staff of Bangla Academy for working with him in arranging this and other events for the day. I consider it not only an honor and a privilege

*Director, Sheikh Mujib Research Institute for Peace and Liberty, University of Dhaka

Bangabandhu

Waliur Rahman*

“The bloody massacre in Bangladesh caused Allende to be forgotten, the din of war in the Sinai Desert drowned out the groans of Bangladesh, ... and so on, and on and on, until everyone has completely forgotten everything” (Kundera, 1996, p. 9).

The massacre in Bangladesh started on the early morning of March 26: yes, March 26 by the Pakistan Army with the lethal use of Air Force, tanks and Kalashnikov on the innocent men and women of Bangladesh. Before the Pakistanis could transform the lush green soil of Bangladesh into a Sudetelandor Rhineland, it was then that Bangabandhu declared independence of Bangladesh. The Declaration of Independence exactly at midnight rings the tone of regeneration of the soul of the Bengalis. I quote, “This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is Independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved” (Salik, 1978, p. 75; Loshak, 1971, p. 98-99). This declaration was picked up by NSC and the State Department. A young major in the Pakistan Army, Siddiq Salik, taped and had it transmitted to the Pakistan GHQ.

It reminds me of another famous declaration which brought India, *Bharat Barsha*, out of the clutches of the Colonial British Raj, when Jawaharlal Nehru went to the air at midnight on 14 August 1947 and said, “Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and

*Diplomat, author and researcher. Former Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (1997-1998).

BANGABANDHU:
Our Troubadour, our History on a Global Scale

Syed Badrul Ahsan*

He was our window to the world, the leader who guided us at home, the statesman who spoke for us in the councils of the globe. There was about him, literally and figuratively, those attributes that were the making of an epic tale in history. He was our epic tale. He was our history. In the twenty four years we were part of Pakistan, it was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who told us, over and over again, that there was a path out of the woods. In the nearly half century we have been a sovereign republic, it is Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who has been—and will be for all time—our starlight on the road to a larger, bigger destiny for ourselves.

This land is synonymous with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was the poet, the troubadour who sang of freedom, the minstrel who led us out of the thick undergrowth of darkness left behind by lesser and smaller men. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was taller than those little men, for he understood the lessons of history. He was one of us. He is part of us even as he, on an expansive canvas, is part of history. He is history, on a global scale.

That pipe was his trademark. No matter where he happened to be—in prison or at home or at conferences or meeting foreign heads of government—that pipe was his constant companion. Bangabandhu was fond of that pipe, which he filled with Erinmore tobacco. In his conversation with the celebrated British television host David Frost in early 1972, he made it a point to let the latter know just how important that pipe was to him. And he smoked it in style, in grandeur. To his already pronounced gravitas, the pipe only

*Journalist and Biographer

Bangabandhu Who Prefers to Protest

Safiul Muz Nabeen*

Bangabandhu is an epithet which means a friend of Bengal – in other words, a friend of Bangla. This is such a startling epithet that is rarely seen to have adorned anybody in the recent history we can remember. From his boyhood till the critical time when the coward killers in the dark of night came to kill, even then raising his forefinger and holding the favourite smoking pipe, indomitably he challenged and protested what foul the cowards were going to do. Never did he shrink back to face valiantly the abominable beasts who entered his private house with automatic weapons on. Though single, number does not matter, for a while the towering personality like him had been able to singly push them apart. He is such a fearless person who can protest even in the time of sheer threat engulfing his invincible existence.

To Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, a protest has got multi-faceted connotations. It was not the lone way he showed his protest. For the protest he raised his loud voice against what appeared to be unjust or what was not acceptable in any sense of the terms. He motivated people and called upon them to be organized in order to wage an incessant movement against the wrongdoings of those who tried to suppress the common people. He started shouting at the power mongers who bothered little to make fortune at the cost of lives of others. Bangabandhu did not hesitate to take a stand against his own stalwarts either. Even he went to the extent of bringing his so-called followers to book. Both disciplinary and legal actions were taken against those who tried to change their positions unlawfully under

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