

A Birthday And Dream of million Children

- Selina Hossain

To-day is the ninetieth birthday of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This day has been declared as National Children's Day. This date of birth of the Father of the Nation is the symbolic day of development of millions of children. They shall mature with the knowledge of sacrifice made by the architect of our country's liberation, his courage and love for humanity, they shall prepare themselves with the knowledge of authentic history of their country and shall remain pledge-bound to zealously maintain the true perception of history. In our concern for the country and the nation, the birthday of the Father of the Nation is a historically significant day as it encompasses the gradual development of our children.

Bangabandhu was born in a charming rural village, Tungipara. Madhumati river flowed by the side of this village in Gopalganj district. Since his early days, he was acquainting himself with its nature, and its abjectly poor people. In the magnificence of nature's unending horizon, he had gained the dedication to transform his home country into a place of honour and glory. He realised home country is much more than a territory, she needs to be projected with dignity, her people should be given a wider space to live, and their struggle to uphold their right must not be compromised. Poverty is not the last word in a man's life. Man may be poor, but he must not be lacking in human dignity. Human rights must be granted to him, he should have a rightful place in the society, for which a society based on social justice is obligatory. A knowledge-based social structure tempered with democratic values is the essential per-requisite to run a country. Bangabandhu had all along been conscious of his obligations toward his own country.

Since his childhood, two elements remained uppermost in his psyche, one—love for his people, and two—alertness to obtain people's rights. Once, while he was returning home from school he gave his warm clothes to a friend who was shivering in cold, on another occasion he gave his new umbrella to his poor school-mate who was going to school completely drenched in rain water. These incidents, however, trivial might seem, they helped him in his early days to understand in his own way the miseries prevailing in the society. He learnt to attend to the basic needs of a person. It indeed is urgent that the children of the present Bangladesh grow with human sensibilities. Following the life of this noble personality, the family, society and state have a responsibility to develop the character of our children imbued with moral values.

Bangabandhu in his speech which he delivered at the Ramna Green on January 4, 1971 said, 'The Bengalees, particularly the students and the youth, need to know our history and legacy in clear terms. A boy of Bengal who does not know the legacy of his forefathers, he remains a stranger to becoming a true Bengali. Till now, the glorious history of Bangladesh is yet to be written. I call upon our educationists to write anew the history of the Bengalees so that our future

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generations may feel proud in the knowledge of their glorious past and stand erect with their heads high.

Bangabandhu kept his childhood spirit alive for his battle to secure political rights of his people. Here, to recall, when Bangabandhu was a student of the Gopalganj Mission School, the Chief Minister of Bengal, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq and Cabinet Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy together came to visit the school. As they, accompanied by the Head Master of the school, were leaving the school on completion of their visit, Bangabandhu with some of the school students appeared in front of them blocking their passage. Bangabandhu told the honoured guests that the students were unable to pursue their studies as rain-water leaked through the cracked roof. Both the leaders were impressed by the boldness of Bangabandhu in ventilating their grievances. He realised at the very early age that firmness in character was essential to secure rights in every sphere of life. Sher-e-Bangla assured to give financial grant from his discretionary fund to repair the damaged roof of the students' hostel. The visitors were taken aback at the personality of the student. They surely realised that this fearless boy was destined to go much ahead in life.

On September 23, 1974, Bangabandhu delivered speech at the United Nations as the Prime Minister of sovereign Bangladesh. He said, "To-day as I stand in this august body, I share along with you, the satisfaction in the fact that seven and half-crore people of Bangladesh are also represented in this Assembly. On completion of the battle to secure the complete right of self-determination, it now is a historic moment for the entire Bengali nation.

The Bengali people waged relentless war centuries after centuries in their quest to secure their right to live independently with dignity as citizens of a free nation, they were always keen to live in peace and in a spirit of good neighborliness with all countries in the world. Millions of our people paid supreme price for the ideals that were enshrined in the UN Charter.

I know Bengali nation is pledge-bound to establish a world suitable to usher peace and social justice. The souls of our liberation war martyrs too shall join us in our pledge. It is a matter of particular satisfaction that during the presidency of an active freedom-fighter, Bangladesh has been inducted into this Assembly. Coming from a tiny village, Tungipara of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu with his courage, education, knowledge and mettle reached the highest place in the world as the architect of a free nation and with glory as the Father of the Nation. His birthday is the National Children's Day. This is not like any other day. The children need to know this great personality, how he had learnt to know the country and the people from his childhood.

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In October, 1953 the first World Children's Day was observed under the auspices of the UNICEF and International Child Welfare Union. Presently World Children's Day is observed on first Monday of October. Countless children were orphaned during the first world war that flared up in the second decade of the last century. They had lost their shelter, security of life. In 1924, League of Nations held its convention in Geneva. It declared that the children deserve to get whatever precious things humanity possessed. Again, in Second World War millions of children were rendered orphan and vulnerable. Not only that, innumerable children were crippled with atom bomb radiation. On November 20 in 1989 UN Charter for Children's Rights was adopted at the General Assembly of the United Nations. Bangladesh is a signatory to the Charter along with other nations. Bangladesh is the dream land of Bangabandhu.

It is true that Universal Children's Day helps the children to develop in them the spirit of internationalism. National Children's Day, in its turn, helps the children bloom in their national identity, inspires them to cherish their own culture. Any child wherever he might live, he needs to sustain his existence with his national identity. Viewed from this perspective, the observance of the birthday of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is an occasion of great significance in our national life.

Uptil now children's condition in Bangladesh is pitilessly on the fringe. It is our responsibility to unitedly resolve their problems no matter how we are placed in life. In the past our collective achievement had been enviable Language movement is our national glory. Liberation war significantly adds to our national honour and dignity. We all were united in that great battle. Bangabandhu called upon us to join the liberation war in his 7th March speech. In the annals of world history that was an unique speech. On his birthday, each and every citizen of the country must take a pledge to say, 'Whatever precious things humanity possesses, children have every right to get them.'

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Translation : Syed Badrul Haque