Volume 20
Number 1
Year 2018
ISSN 1529-0905

Journal of BANGLADESH STUDIES

BDI
Bangladesh Development Initiative

Philosophy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Rounaq Jahan

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: *rounaq44@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper is essentially an examination of some salient aspects of the political thoughts and commitments that became associated with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's life and work. These become obvious through the positions and decisions that he had taken in the course of his life, and clearly suggested in the biographical narratives he has left behind. This paper draws on two of these accounts published recently, and using his own language and rhetorical constructions, it tries to derive the broad framework of the ideological or philosophical world-view that defined him. As a "man of the people" who had dedicated his life to the betterment of the masses, he eventually came to embrace the four principles of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism which later served as the guiding "pillars" of state policy, and were enshrined in the constitution of Bangladesh. These did not come about suddenly or casually but through a long process of maturation and experience. This paper situates that evolution within a historical and textual context.

1 Creating History

For our generation who witnessed the birth of Bangladesh, it is a daunting task to express in words the unique role played by the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Shiekh Mujibur Rahman in the creation of the new state. It is even more challenging to analyse the political ideas underpinning his life's work. Whenever I think of Bangabandhu I first remember those exciting and memorable days of March 1971. After finishing my Ph.D at Harvard and post-doctoral work at Columbia University I had just started teaching political science at Dhaka University in December 1970. I was, thus, able to witness the last days of the campaign of the historic December 1970 elections when the Awami League (AL) under Bangabandhu's leadership won unprecedented electoral victories. The AL won 167 out of 169 seats from East Pakistan in the National Assembly and 288 out of 300 seats in the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly. The AL's election manifesto was based on the party's historic six-points demands launched in 1966 and the eleven points demands of the students adopted in 1969. The AL's election campaign extensively used Bengali nationalist slogans and symbols and was successful in unifying the whole nation behind the struggle for our independence.

After the massive electoral victory in December 1970 we were all living with high expectation and excitement having no doubt in our minds that Bangladesh was going to emerge soon as an independent country. The only question that still remained unclear was whether we could create this independent state through peaceful negotiations with Pakistan or whether we would have to wage an armed struggle to gain that objective.

I remember when General Yahya Khan, Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan, postponed the scheduled meeting of the National Assembly on March 1, 1971 and in response Bangabandhu called for a non-co-operation movement starting from March 3, 1971; people from all walks of life immediately and spontaneously joined the movement. Members of the civil administration, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, business community, and almost all state functionaries, pledged allegiance to Bangabandhu. I do not recollect any other precedence in history where the entire civil administration shifted its allegiance from a colonial administration to a nationalist movement prior to the latter's gaining the status of an independent sovereign state. This de-facto shift of government authority took place in the first two weeks of March, 1971. Bangabandhu started promulgating orders to maintain law and order in the country and keep the economy running. His residence on road 32, Dhanmondi became the de-facto seat of government.

After March 2, 1971, every day I used to walk in different neighbourhoods of Dhaka to talk to people and understand their mood. I could see thousands of people on the streets chanting slogans demanding independence. Though a massive number of people were marching on the streets they were all peaceful. They all seemed to have only one thought in their minds which Bangabandhu articulated in his famous March 7, 1971 speech in the Race Course *maidan* (the present Suhrawardy Uddan). He said, "the struggle this time is

for our liberation, the struggle this time is for independence." (Bangabandhu: 1971, address, March 7). I was present in the meeting at Race Course *maidan* that day and witnessed the excitement of millions of people attending the meeting. We all shared the same hopes and aspirations about imminent political change.

I remember at that time I often used to think of one concept of political philosophy that always intrigued me which was propounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau in his book, *Social Contract*. Rousseau wrote about the "general will" of people. First as a student and later as a teacher I used to wonder what would a "general will" look like in practice? How would one recognize the presence or absence of a "general will?" After March 2, 1971 when I witnessed the spontaneous participation of thousands of people in the non-cooperation movement and heard them speak about independence, I realized the meaning of "general will." I could see very clearly that a "general will" had been created in favour of our independence. The whole nation was now united behind the call for independence. This "general will", this unified people's voice, was being expressed in a spontaneous demonstration of public zeal, but it is also true that it had been created as a result of many years of Bangabandhu's commitment, sacrifice and hard work.

I consider myself to be very lucky that I was able to witness the events of March 1971 and Bangabandhu's role in creating history. Very few people are fortunate enough to see the making of history. I witnessed the transformation of our movement for autonomy into our struggle for independence. I witnessed how the main actor of this historic transformation, Bangabandhu Shiekh Mujibur Rahman, realized an impossible dream. As I noted before it is difficult to express in words the passion and the sense of purpose we felt in those days. Only those who shared that passion and sense of purpose can comprehend the depth of those emotions. There have been leaders in other countries who led their nations. But few could create history. Bangabandhu was one such rare grand actor of history.

It is unfortunate that even after 48 years of our independence and 43 years after his assassination there is no well-researched comprehensive biography of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I consider this void to be a matter of national shame. Fortunately, two recent books, based on his personal diaries, have been published which can serve as original sources that may help us to understand his ideals and political philosophy. The first book, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, published in 2012, throws light on his childhood, and early political life. Though the *Unfinished Memoirs* does not include events after the late 1950s it still illuminates his political thoughts very clearly.

The second book, *Karagarer Rojnamcha* (Prison Diaries) which was published in 2017 (translated in 2018), is based on his diaries when he was in prison after he launched the six points movement in 1966. From 1948 to 1971 Bangabandhu was imprisoned many times and this book reflects his detailed knowledge of the conditions of life of prisoners both political as well as others. Here again his political thoughts are made very clear. He discusses at length the different methods of suppression of people's movements pursued by an autocratic state. He highlights the importance of fundamental civil and political rights, particularly the need for ensuring freedom of expression~~s~~ for sustaining democracy.

In this article I have used these two books to explore Bangabandhu's political philosophy. I have quoted extensively from his writings so that we can hear his own voice. To understand his political philosophy, we should always keep in mind that Bangabandhu spent most of his life as a political player outside state power. He struggled against colonial and undemocratic state power, first against the British and later against the Pakistan state to establish the economic, political and cultural rights of the Bengalees. He exercised state power only for a limited period of time - barely three and a half years-after independence. His political discourse**,** as illustrated in these two books**,** is that of a leader fighting authoritarian state power, not that of a leader who was using state power to govern a country.

One of the remarkable features of his political life was his transformation from an ordinary rank and file worker of a political party to an unparalleled leader of millions of people. Bangabandhu possessed outstanding organizational capacity; at the same time he was a great orator. Generally we do not find such a combination of qualities in one leader.

In his *Unfinished Memoirs* Bangabandhu notes that he was more interested in party organizational work than in discussing theoretical and ideological issues. When Abul Hashem, the general secretary of the Muslim League invited a political philosopher Maulana Azad Sobhani to take political classes for students, Bangabandhu was not all that interested in spending long hours in listening to philosophical discussions. He writes:

> "My colleagues would attend his classes till late in the evening. But it was impossible for me to sit still for a long time. I would join in Maulana Sobhani's classes for a while and then leave. I would tell my friends, 'Go ahead and become pundits. I have too much work to do. Let me first work to attain Pakistan and then I will be able to sit down to discuss other issues' …. And it was true that I had a lot of work to do for the sake of the party, especially amongst students." (Rahman: 2012, p. 44)

Though he was not a political theoretician, Bangabandhu had a few specific political ideals and goals, and he worked consistently to achieve them. His

values are best captured in three sentences which Bangabandhu penned on May 3, 1973. He writes:

> "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." (Rahman: 2012, p. i)

The above quote makes it clear that Bangabandhu identified himself both as a human being and as a Bengalee. This self-identification helps us explore the main features of his political philosophy, such as nationalism, secularism, socialism and people-orientation. It may be possible to identify many other features of his political philosophy, but in this article I shall focus only on these four.

2 Nationalism

Independence, Liberation and Democracy

From the beginning of his political life Bangabandhu was proud of his Bengali national identity. He was involved in the Pakistan movement but he believed that Pakistan should be established on the basis of the Lahore Resolution which envisaged two Muslim majority independent sovereign states. He points out that in his public speeches introducing Pakistan to his audiences he invariably invoked the Lahore Resolution. He writes:

> "There would be two Pakistans as envisaged in the Lahore Resolution. One would comprise Bengal and Assam and would be called East Pakistan. It would be an independent and sovereign nation. The other Pakistan would consist of the Punjab, Baluchistan, the Frontier Provinces and Sind. This would be called West Pakistan and it too would be an independent and sovereign nation." (Rahman: 2012, p. 23)

He perceived the nationalist movement not simply as a struggle to gain independence from the rule of an external colonial power but also as a struggle for the economic and political emancipation of the down-trodden masses from various forms of oppression. He joined the Pakistan movement in the hope that poor Muslim peasants will be liberated from the exploitation of the landlord classes. His idea of a nationalist movement was integrally associated with the struggle for the establishment of a democratic state and **a** just and equitable social order. He had always viewed the Bengali nationalist movement as a movement for the achievement of democracy as well as the liberation of the oppressed people. Thus, on 7th March 1971 he called upon people to launch simultaneously the struggle for independence and liberation.

Prior to the establishment of Pakistan, when as a student in Kolkata, Bangabandhu joined the Muslim League, he belonged to the Shaheed Suhrawardy and Abul Hashem faction of the party which was known as the progressive group. In his *Unfinished Memoirs* he writes:

> "Under Mr. Suhrawardy's leadership we wanted to make the Muslim League the party of the people and make it represent middle-class Bengali aspirations. Up until that time Muslim League had not become an organization that was rooted in the people. It used to serve the interests of landlords, moneyed men, and Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs." (Rahman: 2012, p. 17)

He further writes:

> "The Muslim League was previously a party belonging to landlords and people who had been given titles by the British because of their loyalty to the Raj. Their accomplices were money lenders and profiteers. Such peoples would have never created Pakistan. If Mr. Suhrawardy and Mr. Hashem hadn't made the Muslim League popular among Muslim youths and students and if they hadn't attracted Bengali Muslim intellectuals to the party, the movement for Pakistan would never have become popular among the people of Bengal who came mostly from the peasant class." (Rahman: 2012, p. 37)

In 1946, a special convention of the Muslim League amended the Lahore Resolution and replaced the word independent "states" with independent "state" thus giving birth to the idea of one Pakistan. Bangabandhu was present in that convention and notes in his *Memoirs* that at that time many people felt that a convention of the party had no *locus standi* to change a resolution that was adopted in a council meeting of the Muslim League in 1940. This dissatisfaction with the change of the idea of Pakistan from two to one state indicates that from his student days Bangabandhu believed in a separate Bengali national identity. Later in 1947, when Suhrawardy joined Sharat Bose in a last-minute initiative to keep Bengal united with the prospects of forming a separate independent state, Bangabandhu supported them in that enterprise.

After the creation of Pakistan, Bangabandhu returned to Dhaka and became involved in various progressive movements and organizations which championed linguistic, cultural and economic rights of the Bengalees. In 1948 he was imprisoned for participating in the movement demanding recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. He was also involved in other social and political protest movements, such as the movement of poor peasants against prohibiting inter-district trade in rice known as the 'cordon' system. He supported the movement of the fourth-class employees of Dhaka University and was again imprisoned in 1949.

Within a relatively short period after the establishment of Pakistan he became convinced about the need for establishing an opposition political party not only for championing the rights of the Bengalees but also to challenge the authoritarian rule of the Muslim League. He explained the rationale for the establishment of the Awami League in the following way:

> "There is no point in pursuing the Muslim League any longer. This party has now become the establishment. They can no longer be called a party of the people. … if we did not form an organization that could take on the role of the opposition the country would turn into a dictatorship." (Rahman: 2012, p. 129)

In 1949, the Awami Muslim League (AML) was founded and Bangabandhu was elected the joint secretary of the party though he was still in prison. During 1949-1954, he was engaged in the challenging task of organizing the party in various districts. He was repeatedly imprisoned for being involved in different protest movements. In 1953 he became the general secretary of the party. In 1954, in the Provincial Assembly election the Muslim League was resoundingly defeated by the electoral alliance named Jukto Front (JF) where the AML was a major component party. Provincial autonomy and recognition of Bengali as a state language were two of the key points of JF's 21 points election manifesto. Bangabandhu was elected to the Provincial Assembly as a member of the JF alliance and became a member of the cabinet at a young age of 34, but the JF ministry was dismissed by the central government of Pakistan within 90 days.

The demand for self-rule gained increasing popular support in East Bengal from the mid-1950s. In 1955 Bangabandhu became a member of the Pakistan National Assembly (NA). In one of his speeches in the NA we already find a strong articulation of various demands of the Bengali nationalists and his strong sense of Bengali identity. He said: "They want to place the word "East Pakistan" instead of "East Bengal." We have demanded so many times that you should use Bengal instead of Pakistan. The word Bengal has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after people have been consulted. If you want to change it then we have to go back to Bengal and ask them whether they accept it … what about the state language Bengali? What about joint electorate? What about autonomy? … I appeal to my friends on that side to allow the people to give their verdict in any way, in the form of referendum or in the form of plebiscite." (Rahman: 2012, p. XIX).

In addition to championing Bengali linguistic and cultural rights, Bangabandhu also began to talk about economic exploitation of the Bengalees. Control over their own economic resources started to become a key agenda of the Bengali nationalists. In his *Unfinished Memoirs* he writes: "A group of West Pakistani leaders who saw themselves as representing the country at the centre and some senior bureaucrats were conniving to snatch away resources of East Bengal and transfer them to the other wing of the country. … when the Awami League began to demonstrate with facts and figures how East Pakistan was being exploited they became desperate and began to torture Awami League leaders and tried to suppress it by using force." (Rahman: 2012, p. 243-244).

In the council session of the party in 1955 the Awami League (AL) dropped the word 'Muslim' from its name and Bangabandhu again became the general secretary of the party. In 1958 there was a military coup in Pakistan and in the next ten years Bangabandhu was repeatedly imprisoned for leading various movements against the rule of the military dictator Ayub Khan.

In February 1966 Bangabandhu presented his historic six points demands which put forward a very radical notion of provincial autonomy leaving only limited powers in the hands of the central government. In March of that year he became the president of the AL and began a country wide campaign to popularize six points which soon became the sole agenda of the party. Six points captured the aspirations of the nation and it was billed as the charter for the liberation of the Bengalees. Following the launch of the six points program Bangabandhu was again imprisoned and he was charged with treason by the Pakistan government in the Agartala conspiracy case.

The six points manifesto and the Agartala conspiracy case enhanced Bangabandhu's nationalist stature. In 1969, Ayub fell from power in the face of massive students' movement. Bangabandhu was released from prison and the students conferred on him the title of Bangabandhu (friend of Bengal). During the 1970 election campaign Bangabandhu started using nationalist slogans such as 'Bangladesh' and 'Joy Bangla'. Thus, within a relatively short span of four years, between 1966 to 1970, Bangabandhu was able to unite the whole Bengalee nation behind his demand for liberation and independence. I do not think any other nationalist leader had been so successful in mobilizing such a huge number of people within such a short period of time.

It is noteworthy that throughout his life Bangabandhu was involved in movement politics and talked about people's emancipation from exploitation and oppression. But it was clear that he believed in peaceful non-violent political movements. From 1947 till 1970 the Bengali nationalist movement became stronger day by day under his leadership but he stayed within the bounds of democratic politics. Whenever Pakistani rulers gave opportunities for election he participated in them though

the elections were often not free and fair and attempts were made to foil the election results. In *Prison Diaries* he points out repeatedly that by limiting the democratic space an autocratic regime ultimately leads the country towards terrorist politics. He writes:

> "The newspaper arrived, but I became upset after reading it. They were bent on closing the door to politics forever in this country… [According to new rules] anyone could be taken to court for saying anything. In addition there were the Defence of Pakistan Rule and the Security Act of Pakistan. And there was section 124 as well. I was being indicted for giving a speech under Act 124 section 7(3) … In all they had framed five cases against me, [in addition to others already pending]… My fear is that these people are taking Pakistan down the road of the politics of terror. We don't believe in taking that path … [But] those of us who intend to do good for the country by resorting to the path of democracy are finding our way blocked. It is frightening to contemplate the consequences of such policies for the nation". (Rahman: 2018, pp. 49-50).

In his 7th March 1971 speech Bangabandhu weaved together the themes of nationalism, democracy and liberation in the following way: "To day … the cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival, a cry for our rights … you are the ones who brought about an Awami League victory so you could see a constitutional government restored. The hope was that the elected representatives of the people, sitting in the National Assembly, would formulate a constitution that would assure the people of their economic, political and cultural emancipation …. Each time we the numerically larger segment of Pakistan's population tried to assert our rights and control our destiny they [Pakistan government] conspired against us and pounced upon us …. Let me tell you that the prime ministership is not what I seek. What I want is justice, the rights of the people of this land." (Bangabandhu: 1971, address, March 7).

3 Secularism

Non-communalism and Equal Rights for All Citizens

Though he was a Bengali nationalist Bangabandhu never tried to create division and hatred between different identity groups. Many nationalist politicians use provocative languages and symbols that encourage violence between different groups. These days we are witnessing the rise of such nationalist leaders even in Western democratic countries who are trying to instigate intolerance and violence towards minority groups. But Bangabandhu's nationalist politics was different. He believed in co-existence and mutual tolerance of different identity groups and talked about equal rights of all citizens. He always stood against communal violence. As noted earlier he identified himself both as a Bengalee and as a human being and worked hard to ensure that no crimes against humanity are committed in the name of nationalist politics.

From the beginning of his political life Bangabandhu took a strong position against communal violence. Though he was involved in the Pakistan movement he believed that in India Muslims, and in Pakistan Hindus, should enjoy equal rights as citizens and live together in peace and harmony. He talked about equal rights of all groups to practice their respective religions.

He witnessed the communal riots in Kolkata on August 16, 1946. He points out that Suhrawardy asked his supporters to observe the day in a peaceful way so that no blame could fall on the Suhrawardy government. But unfortunately, communal riots did break out in Kolkata and later spread to Noakhali. Bangabandhu saved both Muslims and Hindus from acts of communal violence in Kolkata. Later when Suhrawardy joined Mahatma Gandhi in efforts to bring back communal harmony Bangabandhu joined them.

After the establishment of Pakistan when he was leaving Kolkata Suhrawardy advised him to work for Hindu-Muslim communal harmony so that Hindus would not leave East Bengal and migrate to West Bengal. Suhrawardy told him:

> "When you go back to your country try to ensure communal harmony. If there is trouble in East Bengal it will be catastrophic. Try to ensure that Hindus don't flee Pakistan. If they are forced to come here they will stir up trouble and that will result in an exodus of Muslims to East Bengal. If all the Muslims of Bengal, Bihar and Assam leave for East Bengal … you will not be able to accommodate so many people" (Rahman: 2012, p. 87-88)

After returning to Dhaka he joined *Gonotantrik Jubo League* and took up the cause of building communal harmony as his main mission. He was against all forms of communal violence, not simply between Hindus and Muslims but also between different Muslim sects and between Bengalees and non-Bengalees. In his *Unfinished Memoirs* he strongly condemns the anti-Kadiyani riots that took place in Lahore in 1953. He describes his belief in tolerance and non-violence in the following way:

> "I know at least this much no one should be murdered because he holds views different from mine. That certainly was not what Islam taught and such an action was tantamount to a crime in the religion … let alone Kadiyanis, Islam forbids punishing even non-believers … Pakistan was

supposed to be a democracy. Here people of all faiths irrespective of race and religion were supposed to have equal rights." (Rahman: 2012, p. 244).

In 1954, when riots broke out between Bengali and non-Bengali workers in Adamjee jute mills in Narayanganj he rushed to the area to calm the situation. In 1964 when Hindu-Muslim riots spread in India he started a civic campaign to prevent communal riots in East Bengal. Even in his March 7, 1971 speech he asked people to remain vigilant against threat of communal violence. He said:

"Be very careful, keep in mind that the enemy has infiltrated our ranks to engage in the work of provocateurs. Whether Bengalee or non-Bengalee, Hindu or Muslim, all are our brothers and it is our responsibility to ensure their safety." (Bangabandhu: 1971, address March 7).

In his personal life he followed the preaching of Islam. But Bangabandhu was against the political use of religion. He condemned the Muslim League's practice of using the slogan of Islam and not paying attention to the economic well-being of the people which he argued was the goal for which "the working class, the peasants and the labourers had made sacrifice during the movement for independence."[15] (Rahman: 2012, p. 244).

4 Socialism

Equality, Freedom from Exploitation and Oppression

In his *Unfinished Memoirs* Bangabandhu writes:

"I myself am no communist, but I believe in socialism and not in capitalism. I believe capital is a tool of the oppressor. As long as capitalism is the mainspring of the economic order, people all over the world will continue to be oppressed." (Rahman: 2012, p. 237)

In both his books and in different speeches Bangabandhu talked about establishing an equal and just economic and social order. By socialism he meant a system that would free people from exploitation and oppression and remove inequality. He visited China in 1952 which left a deep imprint in his mind. He found great differences in the living conditions of people in Pakistan and China which he attributed to the differences in the two political systems. He writes:

"the big difference between us and them was that people in China knew and were made to feel, that the country and its resources were their own. On the other hand, our people had begun to comprehend that the resources of the nation were being enjoyed by a coterie while they themselves were getting no share of it. As a consequence, the people of Pakistan were becoming increasingly disillusioned. The only difference they were now beginning to see was that white skinned rulers had been replaced by dark skinned ones" (Rahman: 2012, p. 236-237)

Bangabandhu believed that the government has a role to play in removing inequality and freeing people from exploitation. He admired the priorities set by the Chinese government in improving the socio-economic conditions of the people. He writes:

"Everywhere we could see new schools and colleges coming up. The government has taken charge of education" (Rahman: 2012, p. 235). He further writes:

"The communist government had confiscated the land owned by landlords and had distributed it among all farmers. Thus, landless peasants had become landowners. China now belonged to peasants and workers and the class that used to dominate and exploit had had their day." (Rahman: 2012, p. 232).

In his *Prison Diaries* also Bangabandhu writes about the need for promoting economic and social equality. While he was in prison, he used to share his food with other prisoners and often cooked for them. He points out that in his own house the same food was shared by his family members, as well as his household staff. He lamented that in the households of many industrialists and business-people, two types of food are being served, one for the master class and another for the serving class. He notes that even in feudal households the same food was shared by all, but the practice of separating food was introduced by the capitalist class. He commented that … "a new civilization based on industry and commerce is emerging out of the ruins of the feudal system, but the new dispensation was much worse in its attitudes than the feudal one" (Rahman: 2018, p. 197).

He did not want to see inequality grow in Bangladesh. In the council session of the AL held during April 7-8, 1972, he reiterated his commitment to promote an exploitation free socio-economic system and socialism was formally adopted as one of the ideals of the party. In the next council session of the party held in 1974 he, again, pledged to work for freeing the nation of exploitation and oppression.[21] (Rashid: 2016, p. 145-162).

5 People Orientation

People's issues, people's politics

Often we find leaders who lead people towards great goals but they do not become emotionally involved with the people. Bangabandhu was an exception. When I compare the speeches of various leaders of the world

with those of Bangabandhu, one of his off-repeated expressions − "love for people" −stands out as unique. He often talked about his love for people and people's love for him in return. This emotional bond connected him with the concerns of ordinary people. He talked about different ideological issues such as nationalism, socialism and secularism but he always prioritised the issues that are upper most in ordinary people's lives. His politics was people's politics. During the campaign for Pakistan when famine struck, he worked in feeding centres for the famine victims. He worked to rescue the victims of communal riots in Kolkata. He participated in street rallies demanding food security for the poor in East Bengal. His political philosophy was not centered only around the goal of getting state power: he developed his political ideas by being involved with the concerns of the ordinary masses.

This people's orientation made him a pragmatist. In his diaries he constantly refers to issues that would affect ordinary people's everyday life such as rise in essential commodity prices or tax increases or flood or famine. For example, in his *Prison Diaries* he refers to the floods in Sylhet, which made "more than a 150,000 people homeless. Ten are dead. We do not know the number of cattle swept away in the flood. How will the people in the country survive?" He decried the taxes on the people that were being increased supposedly because the economy had improved. He pointed out that the Finance Minister, who is a spokesman for the affluent classes and works on their behalf, has spared them from "the burden of taxes. Industrialists and big businesses … are constantly showering thanks upon him. Meanwhile, ordinary people have been protesting loudly". (Rahman: 2018, p. 79).

His empathy for people was legendary. In prison he developed friendship not only with other prisoners but also with the prison guards and other prisons officials. He always kept himself informed about the condition of political workers inside and outside the prison. Through his writings we get to know about the contributions of many of these known and unknown political workers.

He had particular empathy for those who were marginalized in society. In his *Prison Diaries* he describes in detail the life stories of various prisoners. He was especially kind to the mentally challenged prisoners and used to buy cigarettes for them which made them very happy.

At one level Bangabandhu was a man of the masses. He learnt about people's aspirations from them. At another level he was the leader of the people. He carried forward ordinary people's aspirations. He had faith in people. That is why he could call upon people on March 7, 1971 to join the liberation struggle with "whatever little they have." (Bangabandhu: 1971, address March 7).

6 Bangabandhu's Political Philosophy and Four Guiding Principles of State

We see the reflections of Bangabandhu's political philosophy in the four guiding principles of state adopted by our constitution: nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. He defended these four principles in various speeches delivered in the parliament or in the party forums or in addresses to the nation.

Bangabandhu used to articulate the goals of his life's work in two simple words. He would either say he wants to build "*Sonar Bangla"* (Golden Bengal) again, or he would say he wants to bring a "smile on the faces of the poor and unhappy people." Bangabandhu never talked about GDP growth or other theoretical issues. He knew very well how precious a smile is and his goal was to achieve that priceless objective.

References

Bangabandhu (1971), address March 7 http://bangla pedia.org retrieved June 9, 2019

Rahman, Sheikh Mujibur (2012). *The Unfinished Memoirs* (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd). This is the only English translation of his *Oshampto Atmajiboni* (2012, Dhaka: The University Press Ltd)

Rahman, Sheikh Mujibur (2018). *Prison Diaries* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy). This is the only English translation of his *Karagarer Rojnamcha* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2017)

Rashid, Harun-ur. (2016). *Muldharar Rajniti: Bangladesh Awami League Council 1949-2016* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy)