

# **Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: Architect Of Independence, Justice, And Secularism In Bangladesh – A Comprehensive Study**

<sup>1</sup>.Md.BokulMunshi  
<sup>2</sup>.Md.Yeakub

1. Lecturer, Department of Political Science, The People's University of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
2. Lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies, The People's University of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh

---

## **Summary:**

*Sheikh Mujib is much more than a name; he signifies a community, a nation, and freedom. Bangabandhu is a real artisan in constructing Bengal's history; history did not build him; rather, Bangabandhu generated history. He confirmed Bangladesh's prominent position as a sovereign nation on the world map. He was from Tungipara, a verdant village on the banks of the Baigar River. Yet in his addiction to affirm this geographical border, he put his life on line and underwent excruciating torment - he spent 4682 days of his existence in a subterranean dungeon. He founded the Bengali nation, which acknowledged him as their father and stands for equality, fairness, and non-communalism. My study will emphasize the sacrifice and accomplishments of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who stood up to defend the freedoms of the Bengali people, implemented the democratic system, and pioneered non-sectarian consciousness in opposition to the sectarianism of fundamentalist religion.*

**Keywords:** Independence, Bangabandhu, Party, Secularism, Justice.

---

Date of Submission: 09-09-2023

Date of Acceptance: 19-09-2023

---

## **I. Introduction:**

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is not only a name but also the name of the father of the nation that is Bangladesh. He is the best Bangladeshi ever and also the greatest leader of all time in Bangladesh who built the foundation for Independent Bangladesh. He is well recognized as one of the greatest leaders in the world and has been praised by many great leaders of different times around the globe. His visionary and charismatic leadership was the only source of inspiration to fight a war knowing fully well that the adversary is much stronger in military might and well-equipped with men, material and weapons. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March 1971 call for independence as he said, "This war for our freedom, and this war for independence" was the only motivation behind Bengalis who were almost unarmed but with very high morale. There was no need for a formal declaration of war where Bangabandhu on 7th March 1971 said in a public speech in front of the whole nation that this time it is our war of independence and the entire world including the adversary witnessed it.<sup>1</sup> However, eventually, Bangabandhu formally declared war on independence on 26th March 1971. With the great call of the greatest leader, the entire nation jumped into a war of independence with whatever they had and finally snatched victory on 16th December 1971. Hence, a new nation, a new country was born, named Bangladesh.

Globally Bangladesh is well known as a secular country. In this country, there is no difference between Muslims, Hindus, Buddhist or Christian. People from all religions enjoy the same rights and amenities as per the constitution of the country. But this right did not come just like that. There must be someone who worked behind this right to make Bangladesh a secular state. He is none other than Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangabandhu is considered a global idol of secularism. The constitution of Bangladesh was articulated as per the guideline given by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman where it clearly says that Bangladesh is a secular country. Despite tremendous pressure from many Muslim countries to name Bangladesh as the Islamic Republic, Bangabandhu boldly denied

it and named it as the Democratic Republic of Bangladesh where anybody and everybody will be known as Bangladeshi not as Muslim or Hindu or by any other religion.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's first and foremost concern was the people's right to establish justice. As he said in his 7th March 1971 speech, "I don't want Prime Minister ship, I want right for my peoples". This legendary speech which placed itself in the memory of the world says it all about the movement of Bangabandhu to establish justice for people. To establish justice for people, Bangabandhu had to be behind bars for 4682 days.<sup>2</sup> Sacrificing his comfort and peace, he ensured justice for his people, which is why the entire world recognizes Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Bangabandhu the great leader and the father of the Bangladesh nation.

This paper endeavors to do an in-depth analysis of the charismatic leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. As Fidel Castro said, "I haven't seen the Himalayas but have seen Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman". From this quote, it is clearly understood that discussing the leadership qualities of Bangabandhu is something like trying to find a ring in an ocean. Thus the discussion will be limited to the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the independence of Bangladesh and to establishing justice and secularism for his countrymen.

#### **Research Question:**

- I. How significant is Sheikh Mujib's speech for Bangladesh's independence?
- II. How did Bangladesh become a secular, egalitarian state?

### **II. Research Methodology:**

My study is fundamental and analytical, with secondary sources providing further information. The research was carried out by examining Bangabandhu's speeches and original publications.

Furthermore, material was gathered from numerous books, journals, periodicals, and news sources, although the survey approach was not used in this case.

### **III. Book Review:**

My fundamental study will help to shed new light on the political philosophy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the iron man and Dreamer of the Bengali people. The independence, justice, and secularism that were established by Bangabandhu throughout his lifetime would all be in harmony in this study. On this topic, some studies are available individually. For instance, Dr. Mostafa Kamal's research titled "Secularism of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: A theoretical evaluation" (2019) elaborates on his thorough and in-depth review and analysis of secularism, a significant political philosophy of Bangabandhu but lacking in freedom and justice. The political activities of Bangabandhu's life are highlighted in the work "Bangabandhu: Mahanayaka of History" by Durga Das Bhattacharya (2015). However, the steps of Bangabandhu's political activity and declaration of independence have been adequately described. However, Bangabandhu's beliefs in justice, equality, and secularism were not emphasized. Muntasir Mamun wrote a paper titled "Bangabandhu brought us Freedom" (2013) in which he emphasizes Bangabandhu's role in the emancipation of the Bengali nation. However, the idea of secularism in his extensive career has not been discussed. The goal of my study is to evaluate and balance these factors.

### **IV. Findings and Analysis:**

There are a total of 173 million people in Bangladesh including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and other religious groups. Where Muslims with 89.1% of the population, Hindus with 10%, and other religions make up the remaining 0.9% (including Buddhist, Christian) of the population.<sup>3</sup> When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was drafting the constitution of Bangladesh, he assured to every religion of people to get vacations for their celebrating on national holidays. There is evidence of celebrating various religious ceremonies and festivals. There is all public participation in religious programs and festivals like Eid Ul Fitr and Eid Ul Azha for Muslims, Durga Puja for Hindus, Buddha Purnima for Buddhists, and Christmas for Christians.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Contribution of Bangabandhu to the Independence of Bangladesh Eternal Mujib with Eternal Speech:**

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March speech made him eternal not only in Bangladesh but around the globe. That is why it has been placed in the world heritage record. I guess that was the largest public gathering in the history of Bangladesh. Bangabandhu started his speech at 3:02 pm and finished at 3:20 pm.<sup>5</sup> So it was a total of 18 minutes of speech but these 18 minutes decided the fate of Bangladesh to become an Independent nation. This historical speech needs and being analyzed and researched since then. Bangabandhu's confidence was transmitted to the entire nation to move for their independence. Despite several global external pressure, Sheikh Mujib did not lose confidence rather was more forceful in his demand and could completely satisfy his people to fight for the righteousness of his cause. Though there were hundreds and thousands of people present in Racecourse Maidan during

Bangabandhu's speech yet the speech was supposed to be broadcasted through radio. But ultimately the speech was not broadcasted due to some conspiracy. But several national and international media were present, recorded and later telecasted the speech which ultimately placed itself in the world's heritage and thus it became an eternal speech for the world.

### **Chronological Events towards Ultimate Goal-Independence:**

From the following table, we can see the chronology of events led by Bangabandhu which ultimately moved the nation towards its independence. His six-point formula which was articulated in 1966 was the basis of freedom and a certificate for the right to live. We don't need to go much back rather a brief analysis of events starting from 1966 through 1971 is enough to understand the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the independence of Bangladesh. During Ayub Khan's regime, Sheikh Mujib was sent behind the bar several times. A sedition case, known as Agartala Conspiracy Case was brought against Bangabandhu for which he was sent to jail first from 1958 to 1961 and then from 1966 to early 1969. During the second term in jail, Ayub Khan's administration was compelled to release him on February 22, 1969, unconditionally due to the mass uprising for the release of Bangabandhu. On his release, the Sarbadaliya Chatra Sangram Parishad organized a mass reception for Bangabandhu in Raman's race course. In this reception, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was awarded the title "Bangabandhu". In 1970 the general election was held where Bangabandhu's party got a landslide victory. But Yahya's military junta denied the result of the election and cancelled the national assembly meeting at Dhaka which was scheduled to be held on March 3, 1971. This announcement triggered further escalation of the situation and Bangabandhu called on an all-out noncooperation movement. During this movement, the entire civil authorities of East Pakistan came under the command and control of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Finally, the long-awaited moment came for the entire Bengal nation on March 7, 1971, when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came out with his eternal speech and said, "This time we will fight for freedom, this time we will fight for independence, none can stop us." When West Pakistan Military Junta launched a military attack on unarmed East Armed Bengali (East Pakistan) at night on 25 March 1971 then with the declaration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Liberation War started. After a long nine months of the war, with the ultimate sacrifice of 3 million martyrs, finally, on December 16, 1971, a new country was born in global history named Bangladesh.

**Table Showing Chronology of Events<sup>6</sup>**

Serial	Date and Year	Events
1.	March 23, 1966	"Six-Point Formula—Our Right to Live" by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as president of the Awami League.
2.	August 20, 1970	Shifting of Polls date
3.	October 10, 1970	Sheikh Mujib asks people to assert their rights, and speeches in hoar areas of Sylhet, Mymensing and Cumilla districts.
4.	October 17, 1970	Ballot battle: My last fight to secure rights of East Bengal: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech at Dolaikhal
5.	October 20, 1970	Bengal shall not be allowed to turn slaves: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech at Dumni (Tejgoan).
6.	December 20, 1970	"People's Party will not sit in the opposition—no constitution without our cooperation": Mr. Z.A. Bhutto's statement in Lahore.
7.	December 20, 1970	Awami League competent to frame constitution: Mr. Tajuddin Ahmad's rejoinder to Mr. Bhutto's statement.
8.	January 4, 1971	Mujib warns against opposition to six points people's verdict cannot be changed: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's statement in Dacca.
9.	January 11, 1971	Awami League alone competent to form Central Government—constitution on six points to ensure people's rights: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's statement at Patuakhali
10.	January 14, 1971	Yahya affirms the desire for early transfer of power—nation congratulated on peaceful polls: President Yahya Khan's remarks at Dacca.
11.	January 14, 1971	Mujib future Prime Minister: President Yahya Khan's statement at Dacca.

12.	February 9, 1971	Awami League is determined to frame the constitution as six, eleven-point plan - Mujib regrets the delay in convening National Assembly Session, a statement in Dacca.
13.	February 13, 1971	National Assembly meets on March 3, 1971 - Dacca is the venue - President's order of official announcement, summoning the National Assembly to meet in Dacca
14.	February 14, 1971	Constitution to be based on six and eleven points reiteration by Awami League working committee Summoning of National Assembly as step forward: A Report on the East Pakistan Awami League Working Committee meeting
15.	February 15, 1971	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman cautions against conspiracy Transfer of power early: Inaugural speech, at a joint meeting of the National Assembly and East Pakistan Assembly members, elected on Awami League tickets
16.	February 17, 1971	No power can any longer enslave Bengalese: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Statement in Dacca
17.	March 3, 1971	Withdraw forces and transfer power: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech in a public meeting at Dacca
18.	March 4, 1971	Transfer of power to Awami League Now only solution of crisis: Report of the Press Conference at Karachi Press Club Air Marshal (Retired) Asghar Khan
19.	March 5, 1971	Army withdraw to barracks - East Wing protest continues - Firing in Tongi, Rajshahi: Announcement by Martial Law Authorities
20.	March 6, 1971	Tikka Khan, Governor of East Pakistan: Announcement Chief Martial Law Administrator
21.	March 7, 1971	Historical Speech at Ramna Race Course of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and final call to fight for independence.
22.	March 11, 1971	Dacca situation returning to normalcy: Press report on March 10, 1971, keeps economy in full gear in the name of Bangladesh: Tajuddin Statement issued.
23.	March 13, 1971	National Assembly minority group back Awami League's four-point demand for Interim Government at Centre and Provinces: Report of the meeting held, at Lahore by minority groups the National Assembly Delegation to Chief President Yahya and Sheikh Mujib.
24.	March 14, 1971	Transfer of power to Awami League and PPP in the two Wings, Bhutto's demand and case of pre-constitution changes: Speech by Mr. Z. A. Bhutto.
25.	March 15, 1971	Rule of the majority does not apply to Pakistan - PPP cannot be ignored in country's governance: Report of a Press Conference by Mr. Z. A. Bhutto.
26.	March 18, 1971	Mujib declines to accept probe body: Nouseful purpose would be served: Text of the statement by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
27.	March 20, 1971	Clash near Dacca - Curfew clamped in Joydebpur: Press report.
28.	March 19, 1971	Mujib condemns firing: Statement.
29.	March 19, 1971	Dacca talks at crucial stage - advisers, meeting follows Yahya Mujib talks: Awami League Chief ready to meet any West Wing Leader: Sheikh Mujib's Press Conference
30.	March 21, 1971	No more subjugation of Bangladesh: Report of Public Address of Sheikh Mujibur.
31.	March 22, 1971	Victory is ours, says Mujib: Message

**Table 1: Chronology of Events Towards Independence Contribution to Secularism and Establishing Justice for the People: Secularism Under the Leadership of Bangabandhu:**

When the constitution of Bangladesh was being articulated in November 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib said, "We will not stop practice of religion, Muslims will Practice their religion, Hindus will practice their religion, Buddhists will practice their religion, Christians will practice their religion, we will only object to political use of religion". The various guideline of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman says it is all about secularism. Since then till date, Bangladesh is practicing secularism in the country. Till we can see and feel the peaceful coexistence of people of all religions in the country though there are small skirmishes at times on religious issues. But those can be considered minor and negligible. The constitution prepared under the guideline of Bangabandhu remains the same and minority people are still enjoying their rights. The four fundamental policies of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman include nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. On 7 June 1972, he said that before the country's liberation, the slogans were the six points, now the slogans were the four pillars. When the Constitution of Bangladesh was

adopted in 1972, the four pillars became the four fundamental state policies of Bangladesh. So secularism remains as the fourth pillar and freedom of religion remains guaranteed among the other democratic rights. Bangabandhu was consistently secular throughout his political career and never allowed religion in politics.

“Religion cannot be used for political reasons. Religion will not be allowed to be used in Bangladesh for political purposes. I believe that if anyone does it, the people of Bengal will retaliate against them,” Bangabandhu said in another speech<sup>7</sup>. He further added in his speech, “If anyone says that religious rights have been violated, I would say that religious rights have not been violated. We have made arrangements to protect the religious rights of seven and a half crore people”. Though seldom we see little ups and downs regarding religious issues in Bangladesh yet due to the clear guidance by the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, things are under control. The visionary leadership quality of Bangabandhu could foresee the eventualities a long way back.

Secularism is existing in many parts of the globe but that of Bangladesh is a unique one due to its nature and the guidance given by Bangabandhu. Here we can see people practicing their religion with full freedom and enjoying religious festivals full of joy. In Bangabandhu’s clear direction, secularism did not mean that people should not have religious freedom, which is an important kind of freedom that people with religious convictions would surely tend to value. For these reasons, Sheikh Mujib did not see any great merit in the anti-religious way of thinking about secularism. Nor did he find any particular point in avoiding religious practice and sacrificing religious freedom to become secular. Religious freedom is held high in his views and what is negated is the political use of it. He rather encouraged people to enjoy the freedom to practice their religion of their choice.

### **Establishing Justice for People:**

With his visionary command and charismatic leadership, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could bring the entire nation under one standpoint that Bangladesh should be an independent country. He always felt the pulse of general people, knowing their joys and sorrows and being part of their triumphs. He always stood beside the deprived and raised their voice for their rights. His voice was powerful and forceful which made him unique and gave him confidence to unite people. He did not climb up leadership overnight but his pure love for the people made him lovable by everybody whether rural or urban.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected councilor of the All India Muslim League from Bengal in 1943 and served in this position until the Indian subcontinent divides in 1947. Subsequently, he was elected General Secretary of Islamia College Students Union in Calcutta. In the year 1948, he started protesting against the then Chief Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin’s declaration in the constituent assembly that the people of East Pakistan must accept Urdu as their state language. But Bangabandhu strongly solicited the mother tongue Bangla as a state language. He was one of the founding joint secretaries of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League established in 1949, general secretary of the Awami League from 1953 to 1966 and President of the Awami League from 1966 to 1975. He joined parliamentary politics first in 1954 by the election process as a member of the East Bengal Legislative Assembly.

His uncompromising attitude toward establishing justice for the people of his country made him a greathero in the hearts and minds of the people. He strongly stood for Bangla to be the only language for Bengalese. Though he was put behind bars during the language movement in 1952 his essential guidance ultimately worked for the movement. He became General Secretary of the Awami Muslim League in the year 1953. In the year 1955, the Awami Muslim League was renamed Awami League under his able leadership. He became minister of the provincial Awami League government headed by Khan Ataur Rahman in the year 1956. On February 5, 1966, he expressed his significant six-point program recognized as the Charter of Freedom of the Bangladeshi nation. In the year 1968, the West Pakistan government filed the Agartala Conspiracy Case against Sheikh Mujib to curbe his initiative of movement for his people. This false case created danger and hatred against the West Pakistanis. The Awami League secured 167 seats out of 169 National Assembly seats in East Pakistan and won 288 out of 300 seats in the Provincial Assembly on December 7, 1970. Finally, the immortal speech of Bangabandhu on March 7, 1971, drew the tangled demarcation of independence for the Bangladeshi nation. Bangabandhu established his political philosophy in the address by motivating people, to take risks to conclude Pakistanis’ exploitation. Sheikh Mujib was fully aware of the colonial rule and its difficulties in the Indian subcontinent that led to partition in 1947. This same was being practiced by the West Pakistanis to create another colony in the eastern region. He wanted to establish a non-exploitation and repression-free society. When Pakistanis started genocide in the East Pakistan, Bangabandhu announced independence, which he ensured on March 26, 1971. He acted judiciously and always thought for the country’s fellowmen despite being uncertain about his future. In the West Pakistan prison, he had to face numerous torture and they tried to break his nerve but he was so self-determined that he did not bow down and his firm mental strength remained ever fresh. Under his able leadership, Bangladesh became independent on December 16, 1971. On January 10, 1972, Sheikh Mujib re

turned to Bangladesh as world pressure mounted on Pakistan to release him.

Selflessly Sheikh Mujib began to work for the country's people to get rid of the colonial rule during the Pakistani period and come out from the war-trodden situation during the independence war. He tried to remove red-tape from the bureaucracy. If we consider his psychology and behavioral aspects we will find that he was a founder member of the East Pakistan Muslim Students League, established in 1948. He placed six-point demands on February 5, 1966, at Lahore which was beneficial for this region. Bangabandhu, by providing six points, the request was tried to deem in "non-violence" movement and sought a bloodless, calm-composite and autonomous clarification to attain absolute sovereignty. It was the starting point to overthrow the second colonial era during the Pakistani period gradually. It also created more comprehensive public thoughts to decide what to do inside their community and dedicated existence through innovative ideas and creativity. He fought selflessly for the Bengalese for their overall welfare. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had involved himself in structuring a comprehensive education scheme in assessing the country's socioeconomic and political scenario during the post-independence period.

## V. Conclusion:

It is none other than Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman whose contribution is globally recognized for the independence of Bangladesh and for establishing secularism and justice for the country as an example in front of the whole world. His character traits, leadership qualities and command control are still being globally researched and analyzed in different renowned institutes and universities. His 7th March 1971's speech has taken place in world heritage as a historic event for the world. He is recognized as Bangabandhu and the father of the nation not only at home but also throughout the world. His feelings for his countrymen and sacrifice for the nation made him a unique leader of all time and ever best Bangladeshi. He lives in the hearts and minds of the people of Bangladesh of all time. His feelings for his fellow countrymen, his charismatic leadership, command and control, the eternal speech of March 7, 1971, uncompromising attitude towards justice for people are some of the numerous character traits that made him lovable to his countrymen and throughout the world since then till now. His confidence in different local, regional and global forums before and after becoming the head of the state helped Bangladesh to the greatest extent to stand with an ever-high head in front of the world. He was such a visionary that his directions are still being followed and will be followed hundred years ahead for the betterment of the country. In a nutshell, it can be said that the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the independence of Bangladesh and for establishing justice and secularism is unique and unparalleled which cannot be compared with any other Bangladeshi.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. The Unfinished Memory By Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, The University Press Limited June 2012.
- [2]. Liberation War And Aftermath, Golam Murshid, Prothoma Prokashani, January 2010.
- [3]. I Saw Victory, M R Akhter Mukul, Ononya Prokashani 16 Dec 1985.
- [4]. Bangladesh Government 1971, H T Imam, Agamee Prokashani, March 2004.
- [5]. Liberation War, Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque, Agamee Prokashani, April 2005.
- [6]. The Separation Of East Pakistan, Hasan Zaheer, The University Press Limited 2001.
- [7]. Bangladesh Documents Volume One And Two, The University Press Limited 1999.
- [8]. Hossain, S.S., (2014). Biplobi Neta Sheikh Mujib, Dhaka: Oritjo Publications;
- [9]. Evaluation Of Charismatic Leader Of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Md. Sayedur Rahman, June 2014.
- [10]. Bangabandhu, The Greatest Gift To Humanity, Sharif Shahab Uddin, March 17, 2021.
- [11]. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: The Father Of The Nation, March 16, 2020.
- [12]. Bangabandhu And Visions Of Bangladesh, Professor Amartya Sen, March 7th, 2021.
- [13]. International Journal Of Social, Political And Economic Research, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2019
- [14]. <https://blgs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2021/03/07/Bangabandhu-And-VisionsOfBangladesh/>.
- [15]. <http://www.bdembassyusa.org/?Page=Father-Of-The-Nation>.
- [16]. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mujibism>.
- [17]. Bangabandhu's Vision Of Secular Bangladesh Was Abandoned After His Demise | Dhaka Tribune.
- [18]. Secularism, Bangabandhu, Bangladesh | The Daily Star.
- [19]. Bangabandhu And Visions Of Bangladesh | South Asia @ LSE.
- [20]. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2021/03/07/Bangabandhu-And-Visionsof-Bangladesh/>.
- [21]. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bangladesh-population>