

Please, call a spade a spade

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I have been watching for the last few days that character assassination against politicians had become a good sports. But it is important to note that this has been done indiscriminately. I would have welcomed it if it was done rather selectively such as targeting a particular person, a party, how the party came into being, how much asset one had before getting the power, how many folds it increased after coming to power, who came to power from which profession, how they managed the country while they were in power, were the masses benefited by their leadership, etc.; these should have been all analyzed under magnifying glass. I would have not said a word had this been done properly. But this was not to be the case.

However, this is hardly a new phenomenon. Those who say things against politicians poisoning the environment, they themselves later enter politics and become politicians.

My questions to them are as follows: whose interest are you serving by putting down the politicians? I have another question: What is the definition of politician? Who you won't call politicians? This is a very strange nation! Sometime I ponder – I was born in a political family. I have witnessed self sacrifice for the good of the nation, enduring torture meted out in jail. When I was supposed to attend school with my father next to me, then I went to jail gate to visit my father who was a prisoner. Many a time I could not continue my education, could not attend school, because my father was in jail. Many of my generation had experienced this in their childhood, and passed their halcyon days of youth in this way. It is because of their self-sacrifice we were able to achieve freedom for our sovereign Bangladesh. However, it is the same Bangladesh where the soldiers of our independence movement were butchered mercilessly. Before killing, a systematic campaign was waged to discredit them; lies were spread allover to create confusion in the minds of our people. All these vile things were done to justify the killing. To whitewash the act of wanton killing it became necessary to do character assassination of politicians. Later, nineteen coups were staged in the military. Thousands of people were killed, consequently. Many a mother never did saw their child. Many a sister never saw her husband. And kids never saw their father.

The people who came to power by killing the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members on August 15 and killing four leaders inside the jail on November 3, had justified the killing by saying that corruptions were rampant thus these things have happened. Thirty one years have passed by, but no one could prove that one such instance of corruption or misrule had taken place. They could not prove one iota of allegation but they resorted to endless propaganda to vilify the politicians. Those who were connected with this pack of lies were never apprehended. But those who grabbed power illegally by denouncing politicians - what was their role?

General Zia made him the president by dint of fire power and who took off his army address and wore a safari suit and then morphed him into a politician. His mantra was – “I would make politic difficult for the politicians” and he did just that. When I observe today's situation, then I remember over and over again that true politicians who are self-sacrificing and who have love for their country are having a difficult time doing politics. At this moment, I hear criticism from those whose pasts are blurred and how they became rich – there is no transparency about it. And when they say something against the politicians, they do it very broadly. They don't call a spade a spade. It seems as if they say these things with an intention. They wanted to create a miasma.

I speak my mind. Now that questions have been raised about which party came into being when and how, what did they do, how much money they made while in power, then we have to do our arithmetic right. Not only this, we have to know who was benefited from certain government, who did what business by dint of which they become established in the society. If they have moral courage, let them say these things clearly.

Today, questions have been raised about politics, honest and fit politicians, corruption, terrorism, black money's influence in politics; I am delighted personally now that we are doing introspection. There is a reason for my pleasure. The thing that stirred everyone's mind today after thirty one long years, the same thing had vexed the father of the nation thirty five years ago. For the same reason he made a change temporarily. However, no one then understood for the lack of farsightedness. Or this could be it that a vile conspiracy was hatched to undermine our sovereignty and that is why his vision was not implemented.

So that black money and terrorists cannot influence the outcome of our national election, a change was proposed. This was the following – the government would take the responsibility of printing the posters. The government would bear all the costs of election for any candidate. Only thing the candidate will be allowed to do is canvassing going from door to door. All candidates could speak before masses in one meeting. They could stand on the same dais. The government will make all the arrangements. However, the government would bear the financial burden maintaining the neutrality. Following this new rule two sub-election was held. In Kishoreganj, a school teacher came out victorious. The brother of Vice-president Syed Nazrul Islam who ran for the seat was a sore loser. To help his brother win the election he did not hatch a conspiracy nor did he exert any undue political influence.

A bill was passed in the National Assembly to create solidarity and form one party by the name Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League and to create a national government. In that government only the party who would win the parliamentary seats could take part in the administration, military, and other various departments. Everyone would take part in the governance of the nation. This was done with a view to accelerate the economic emancipation of all the people of Bangladesh. Our masses were about to reap the benefit of this new style of governance.

After this change in governance I asked my father why he changed the system. I will narrate the answer that I received from him. He said, "We waged a long struggle, we took part in revolution, fought guerrilla war, and we came out victorious. After a revolution comes a change in the society. Suddenly, many a people became rich. Weapons are scattered all over because of the guerrilla warfare. So that election is not influenced by money and weapons, we need to implement change so that genuine folks who have sacrificed a lot and patriots could win the election. We will not face any problem provided honest people would come victorious in the election. We could again revert back to parliamentary system by changing constitution." Now that I see, if we had a national election as he envisioned thirty one years ago, then Bangladesh would not be in this nadir now. The incident of August 15, 1975 had changed all that.

By abrogating the constitution, democracy was killed, Martial Law was declared and fundamental rights taken away. A great misfortune for the people of Bangladesh. Yes, election was held later, but would someone call this an election? It was held to allow for the change of one person's army uniform and to legitimize the power; therefore, a conspiracy was hatched to capture two-thirds of the seats in national assembly. The masses had no role in it. There was no scope for voting. Because the outcome was predetermined. I am talking about the election of 1978 in which a yes-no vote on referendum and vote for president were held. I mentioned about the 1979 election for national assembly beforehand. Our people are still suffering right now because they lost their voting rights then. Whenever they get a chance to breathe easily, a situation is created for suffocation. After gaining the independence in 1972 a constitution was written; based on that an election was held in 1973. A change in power took place in 1975 through conspiratorial killings. A change of power never did take place excepting in 2001.

In 1996 Awami League was able to form the government and thereby ran the administration for five years quite successfully. This was the golden age for our people. Notwithstanding obstruction and conspiracy, we were able to establish good governance. People of our land got back their self-confidence. They were dreaming of a bright future. The government of Awami League did transfer the power peacefully. The reason for this is – Awami League never wanted to hold onto power by any means. We believe in the empowerment of people. We do politics for the good of masses; therefore the plebeians receive something when Awami League is in power. In the last thirty six years of existence as a free polity, Awami League was in power for only nine and half years and whatever the nation got including the status of independent nation and constitution are our contribution. Starting from being able to receive two bowlful of rice and ending in having mobile phones or cheap computers, these were done by Awami League for the good of

our masses. Awami League, in a selfless way worked as a volunteer while raising voice against misrule. That is the reason why Ayub, Yahya, Zia, Ershad, and Khaleda tried their best to destroy this political organization with their might. They killed tens and thousands of our workers but they could not decimate this party. They could not implant the seed of discontent among our masses against our party after enacting hundreds of disinformation campaign. Still now, masses place their confidence in this party. The disinformation campaign against Awami League has created miasmas. But they pass. There is no end to this endless litany of lies, which is continuing until this day.

Those folks who equate these two parties, BNP and Awami League while weighing them on the same scale, I have a question to them: could you please tell us what are the program of these two parties since their inception? Awami League came into existence in 1949 to fight for our language and fulfill the demands of our masses. This party was established against the people in power who busily divide the loot. On the contrary, Awami League came into existence to protest against the power in government, their evil deeds and repression against common people.

The BNP was fathered by a military administrator who was a power monger and who came to power extra constitutionally. This self-proclaimed president spent money from government coffer to build this party. Those who came forward to join this party were devoid of self sacrifice; they came to enjoy the power. That is the reason the culture of corruption and loan defaulting is interweaved with the birth of this political party.

Those who come to power for enjoyment, they only know how to take, they hardly give anything. That is the reason people do not get anything from them, only thing they receive is suffering. Some people become very rich overnight; their fate change. The outcome of their governance is: meritorious students received firearms, drugs, and black money; their character was blemished. The aftereffects are: Our youths are goaded to perform anti-social acts, the society being polluted by the action of these youths who are led to lead a life devoid of direction and idealism.

For these reasons Bangladesh could not move forward. The nation stumbled over and over again. Time and again power was grabbed unconstitutionally and they played games with the fate of our people. The democracy was reinstated by our struggle, protestation, by shedding blood, but then they made attempts to take it away.

The movement we lodged in 2006 for a fair and just election and to reform Election Commission and the Caretaker Government was acceptable to most people excepting to BNP and Jamaat.

The demands we put forward based on which we ran our protest movement was proven by the success of our struggle. They say that our demands will be materialized but at the same time our leadership was criticized; why do they make us base and vile amongst our people. These problems were there long before. Today, those folks, who are criticizing us and trying to put all politicians in one boat, never mentioned these problems before and never offer any solution. Some of these people were given responsibilities many a time but they never showed any interest to solve these problems. If the election of 2001 was a neutral one, then these problems won't be there and people did not have to suffer this much. To stop Awami League to come to power they hatched a conspiracy wittingly or otherwise; they put a monster in the power that devoured the nation. Is it fare to compare us with the monster?

The present-day caretaker government is the direct result of myriad demonstrations, movement carried out by Awami League and its mega alliances. Our demands had the full support of common people. It was in 2001 that Awami League transferred the power peacefully. Apart from this, never before the power was transferred peacefully. In the current movement, 68 of our workers have received martyrdom. Alongside with police the terrorists belonging to BNP and Jamaat attacked our people. The goons of Jamaat came from national Mosque of Baitul Mukkaram brandishing automatic firearms and attacked our people. They said, "Fire like shower, if we die, we will become shahid, if we survive, we will be gazi." They gunned down the leader of Jubo-League. Even then people did not lose hope. Common folks joined our movement on the street. A political movement is only successful when common people join it turning the same into a mass movement.

The demands for which we fought the fight were justifiable; it was proven already. The results of our forbearance and supreme sacrifice are the present day caretaker government. One of the advisors commented, "We cannot catch businessmen lest the economy suffers."

Then, how are they going to take measures against corrupt people?

Are they going to say, politicians are responsible for this. What do you make out of this?

Naturally, a question arises. A political party is composed of people coming from every walk of life. How you are going to see them? If anyone of them resorts to corruption, how you may view them? As a professional from a distinct profession or as a politician?

Businessmen will receive impunity because by arresting them the economy may become stagnant – said one of the advisors of the caretaker government. Then question may arise ---

- Corrupt officers from the administrative cadre won't be arrested because it may affect administration.
- Corrupt judges and lawyers cannot be apprehended or else the court system will have to be shut down.

Corrupt people in other profession –

- NGOs cannot be arrested or else their activities will be hampered
- Doctors cannot be arrested or else hospitals and clinic will be affected
- Teachers cannot be arrested or else educational institute will be affected
- Newsmen cannot be arrested or else newspapers will be affected

If we raise the above reasoning, then the politicians are the only people who are guilty and we could take measures against them. Now let me raise another issue here. Many of the people from other profession have joined politics. Some of them become members of political party, become member of the parliament, become minister and also get involved in corruption. Now how are you going to view them? Are they going to be identified as lawyer, newspaper reporter, businessman, bureaucrat, doctor, engineer, NGO leader?

Which politicians are guilty? The one who took to the street to fight for demands of the people, take part in mass movement, face police torture and teargas shell, face bomb and grenade attack, suffer in jail, face hardship, not give enough time to their family, not provide financial aid to their family, who struggled lifelong to create an atmosphere for good governance. They will make it possible for some special people to assume power. Once they get the power, then they will take a falchion in their hand and foam at mouth telling moral tales. This is equivalent to outright deception!

On the other hand, there are those who first will build their career, won't allow settling any dust on their body. Forget about getting hit by a stick, they won't let sunlight touch their body. They will place themselves in the society after earning sufficient money and then would like to join politics to become a leader and enjoy the power. This class of politicians is very vocal. Because they first satiate the demands of their family. They look fresh; their body had never endured pain and suffering. How much good can be expected of them for our nation? In the last thirty six years this kind of politicians ruled the nation for twenty six and half years. What have they given to the nation? And what did they take? Why not let us take an account of this? Then it will be crystal clear.

Those politicians who are committed to ideology politics is made difficult for them. And because of this, those who practice sycophancy, buttering the boss's feet, and who are opportunist, their number is on the rise. Their motto is not sacrifice; they come to politics with the mindset of an enjoyment and they end up

repressing the masses. The reason why the fate of common people did not change after thirty six years of becoming an independent nation is a handful of people became richer by the day at the deprivation of common masses. Had there been idealist politicians at the helm, then Bangladesh would have succeeded economically. Had there been no incident like the one happened on August 15, 1975 and if Bangabandhu could have had five more years in his hand, then Bangladesh could have set example for progress. If one does research on economy he or she could figure this one out.

The nation and masses have suffered enormously time and again to accommodate those people in political arena who are not meant to be in politics in the first place. It is not only the rampant corruption that they did, but they got involved in adulteration too and thereby they destroyed the future of our people. If a nation cannot be healthy, then its younger generation will be malnourished physically and emotionally. The agri-products that are labeled not suitable for consumption in abroad, these are imported and distributed inside the country thereby forcing our people to eat these harmful foods. Peoples' fates are in peril. In the past five years a small coterie of people have become immensely wealthy but at the peril of our people; seeing this development one cringe in fear.

I read a horror story in the newspaper. Recently, the relief goods such as corrugated tin and winter clothes such as blankets were seized. These were recovered from places controlled by BNP leaders. Why these people became so desperate and where did they get their courage to do these kinds of corruption? When some folks rebuke them, they identify them as politicians. And because of this those who do politics honestly with sacrificial tendency are also being maligned. This is hardly right. The factory that used the corrugated tin and the place where winter blankets were found belong to member of the late Ziaur Rahman's family. This is the same man (Zia) who seized power illegally and his family members still live inside cantonment. And because of this they became so reckless. Their desire to thievery stems from the fact that they had grabbed power extra-constitutionally. But alas, the rest of the politicians have to bear the brunt of this ignominy. Will you call them politicians?

Both Tareq and Koko have become multi-billionaire keeping their ill-gotten assets under assumed names only because they are sons of the Prime Minister. This is not all. The PM's brother, sister, nephews, nieces, etc., have all become super rich having house both inside the country and abroad. How is it possible to become filthy rich in just five years time? The nation was shown a torn suitcase and under shirt with much fanfare. Was there an Aladdin's lamp hidden in that torn suitcase too? I can hardly imagine how could one become the owner of 16 industries so suddenly? Smuggling huge amount of dollars to a foreign destination, taking hundreds of suitcases while taking a foreign trip, and having assets under assumed name – who knows the full account of malfeasance. A person who was dear to the Prime Minister and who became the errand boy of her family has become a media tycoon in the past 5 years. This only happens in one country in our planet.

Those people who grouped together to blame Awami League for the thievery of relief goods are now blaming all the politicians for the widespread looting of the MP's relief mater storehouse. Won't they now say that a coal won't fade its color even after hundred washing! Thieves' eyes are always fixed on goods! That is why their eyes were on measly relief materials even though they have become super rich.

It is our nation's misfortune but it is also true that during 1996-2001, I helped usher in development in our nation but in the next five year (2001-2006) not only all the development ceased but the nation went backward. Criticism was levied with a broad brush; consequently, whatever gain was made during my leadership was lost in the din. Why should we (Awami League) bear the brunt of criticism when it was not our doing? Could someone please show enough courage to tell the truth? Awami League was out of power during 2001-2006. If our administration had done wrong, do you think that we would have been spared by BNP? They have looked everywhere for our malfeasance, they jailed a few of our leaders, tortured us, looked everywhere for misappropriation of funds, but what did they find? Do you think they would let us go scot-free? They even tried to wipe us all from this earth by lobbing grenades. They have killed 26,000 people including some of our leaders. No trials were held much less the investigations. How much more do we have to endure?

Our greatest fault is that we (Awami League) do not do sycophancy; we speak for the poor. Please do not equate us with the thieves; it pains us. We do not want to lose faith on our people. Our only hope is based on truthfulness and our utmost reliance on our people. I believe in my heart that Allah takes our endurance test and He is with the honest folks. Therefore, I could assert to it that truth will set us free and we will come out victorious.

Recently, I keep hearing one phrase. We have two female leaders. All the problems are due to these two female leaders. They also talk about politics of inheritance. If lawyers' sons and daughters become a lawyer, should we call it inheritance of profession? If this is not the case, then why the issue comes up only for the politician?

There is much talk concerning two female leaders. One class of people always looks at our national politics from the perspective of two female leaders. All problems are linked to two leaders. If two men were the leaders of two parties, then would this question now be raised? Could it be the sign of a society which is male dominated and since they are not at the helm they felt ashamed about it? This is the way they could cover up their deficiency. Whoever the people would accept should be the leader. If someone would like to compare these two ladies, then I would ask them to do so taking into consideration their education, knowledge, their way of life, the way they dress, manage their parties, managing the nation, etc. to make a comparative judgment.

In five years time the agricultural production was raised from 0.19 million metric tons to 0.27 million metric tons, which was 0.08 million metric tons more than before. Similarly, electricity output was raised from 1600 mega watt to 4300 mega watt (these include the wattage generated by captive generators). The rate of literacy was raised from 46% to 66%. The economy grew at a 6.6% clip. Inflation was reduced from 6.4% down to 1.59%. The poverty was reduced at the rate of 1.52% annually. Right now the rate of poverty alleviation stands at 0.48% annually, which means more people are becoming poor. This is happening at the expense of a few people becoming rich. During my government there were no irregularities concerning the distribution of rice, lentil, cooking oil, salt and fertilizers. We kept the price of essential commodities in check for five years. If we would have resorted to corruption, do you think we could have done all of these? Not at all! We have privatized TV station, radio station, electricity generation, mobile cell phone, and airlines. In 1998 when the nation was engulfed by flood for three months we faced adversity while distributing relief goods. No body could bring an allegation for misappropriation of funds. I hope you would compare us with the other government using the same standard. For our Air Force, we bought eight MiG 29 planes at the cost of \$ 119 million when the tendered price was \$ 289 million. Thus, the nation saved \$ 170 million. Similarly, we purchased frigate at the cost of \$ 99 million when the market price was \$ 104 million. The nation saved more dollars. We did not do politics to pocket the commissions.

Please do not equate the two governments when you obscure the success of one government while whitewashing the failure of the other. While I ran the government as the prime minister for five years, I was able to produce more success in the field of economy, social, cultural, sports, infrastructure development, empowering our women, rights of children, poverty alleviation, electricity production, food and agriculture, health, highways, mobile phone, computer, etc. People have bought these things and used them as well. All of these were made available during 1996 through 2001. So, where is the failure? For a comparison, let us see what our people got during 2001 through 2006. If you do that, it will be clear. What our masses received excepting rise in corruption, inflation in the price of everyday commodities, rise in black money, illegal grabbing of land, adulteration of foodstuffs, counterfeiting, curry favor to party men and close relatives, lobbying of grenades, blasting bombs, raping women, public beating, killing people through crossfire, etc. Our people got nothing excepting fear of uncertainty and anxiety.

There are talks concerning close relatives. At the time of our liberation struggle our family along with our close relatives were all actively involved in politics. Starting from the student life, all were associated with politics. Our family hails from Tungipara under the union of Patgati, under subdivision Gopalganj and district Faridpur. My father's grandfather (the cousin of my father's grandfather) Sheikh Abdur Rashid and his son Khan Shaheb Musharraf Hussain was both the chairman of our union since the British time. He received the title Khan Shaheb for his service to the community doing developmental and public help work.

Khan Shaheb Musharraf Hussain was elected an MP in 1965. In 1970, he was elected again as an MP. During liberation war he went to India. The Pakistani army burnt his house in 1971. He never had any property in Dhaka nor was he an industrialist.

My eldest aunt (Fufu) was wedded to the scion of a family in Duttapara, Shibchar, Madaripur. Her husband's younger brother, Badshah Miah, was a student body member in 1946. His son, Iliyas Ahmed Chowdhury was a student at Dhaka University. He was a good sportsman too. He was elected MP in 1970, 1973, and 1991. After his demise his son Litton Chowdhury was elected MP in 1991, 1996, and 2001. This family had produced MPs who won 6 times in the election but they live in Dhaka in a rental place. Up until today, they were not able to buy their home in Dhaka. These legislators also took part in our liberation movement. One of the MPs was the treasurer of Mujib Bahini. He had business in Khulna. The Pakistani military burnt his barge along with cargo during our liberation struggle. He never owned a house in Dhaka. In 1971 the Pak soldier burnt his village house.

My middle aunt (Fufu) was wedded at Tungipara. She was the mother of Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni. My uncle (Fufa) was a government officer. During British time he was the first college graduate among Muslims from our area. In 1971, his house was burnt to the ground by Pak army. Sheikh Moni was directly involved in our freedom struggle. Since 1961 he gave leadership to many student movements while he was a student at Dhaka University. He was the founding member of Jubo League. He returned at the end of our freedom struggle. On August 15, 1975 he and his pregnant wife were shot dead. He left behind two orphaned sons. They are now grown up, married and settled down. Their father had no house of his own in Dhaka. They still live in rented house.

My third aunt (Fufu) lived in Barisal. My uncle, Abdur Rab Serniabat, was a lawyer. He was elected MP in 1970 and 1973. He was directly involved in our freedom fight. His son, Abul Hasanat Abdullah, was a Mukti Bahini member. He was the chairman of Barisal municipality. He was elected MP in 1991 and 1996. In 1971 their house in Barisal was burnt by Pak army. They never bought any abandoned house in Dhaka in the aftermath of our victory. This family that produced MPs four times never became wealthy overnight. He was the chairman of the National Committee for signing the Peace Treaty in Chittagong Hill Tracts because he was the Chief Whip of the national Assembly. He lives in a house in Dhaka's Kola Bagan. He could not afford to own a home in posh Gulshan or Baridhara. In 1975, the killers killed Abdur Rab Serniabat, his daughters, Baby and Arzoo, his son, Arif, and nephews, Shahid and Rintu. Hasanat's four-year old son, Shukanto, was gunned down by the killers. My aunt (Fufu) and her son and daughters, Khokon, Beauty, Rani, and Hasanat's wife, Shahana, also took in bullets in their house located at Mintoo Road.

My youngest aunt (Fufu) was wedded at Maksudpur, Gopalganj. Her husband, my uncle, Syed Hussain Shaheb, earned a master's degree from Kolkata University and joined in the government service. Since my father was involved in the movement against Ayub Khan, he did not receive his due promotion. To harass him, the government would transfer him to backwaters of Bangladesh such as Magura, Habiganj, Thakurgaon, Ramgar, Rangpur, Sylhet, Mymensingh, and Rangamati. My cousins could hardly study in one school in a year. Very often they would attend one school and then appear before exam in other school. They became the victim of harassment studying six months here, ten months there, etc. Their youngest daughter Rozy was gunned down in August 1975. My aunt was under house arrest for three months. My aunt was in jail for long years.

Sheikh Naser was the only brother of my father. He had a business in Khulna and he never did politics directly. He also participated in our freedom war. He was disabled because one of his feet was maimed. Under this circumstance, he joined the gunboat of Major Jalil while fighting in Sunderban area. Sheikh Jamal also fought in the same sector. As a freedom fighter my uncle never did buy any abandoned house in Dhaka nor did he become an industrialist.

My brothers, Captain Sheikh Kamal, and Lieutenant Sheikh Jamal, both were freedom fighters. Kamal worked as Col. Osmany's ADC when the latter formed armed forces on November 21, 1971. After returning home at the end of the war both could have bought abandoned house and become industrialist. But they did not do anything like that. Kamal rejoined Dhaka University as a student.

Jamal was a student at Dhaka College. Jamal went to Yugoslavia after President Marshal Tito visited Bangladesh and promised him to finish his military education in his country. But due to language problem Jamal had difficulties with his studies there. President Tito advised him to continue his studies at Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, England. Before getting admitted there, Jamal to bear the expense of his studies worked in London's departmental store, Selfridges. When his father was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, he opted to work in a department store to earn money for his studies. The conscientious ones in Bangladesh, could you please compare this with the present day situation in our homeland? He returned home after his studies and joined Bangladesh army. He was supposed to go abroad for a six months training. On August 15, 1975 Kamal and his wife Sultana, Jamal and his wife Parvin were butchered in their house located at Road No. 32 inside Bangabandhu House.

As a son of the Prime Minister neither of them bought any house or become industrialist. Sheikh Kamal established a sports organization by the name Abahoni. Among the wealth he left was a sitar and a cricket bat.

My husband used to work at Atomic Energy Commission. We had to make ends meet with a limited budget. As a daughter of the Prime Minister I could have own few houses, industries, etc., if I had wished. It never crossed my mind. However, the country was now independent. Our nation was recognized as a sovereign country; we were happy about all this. My mind was absorbed in thoughts how to help those who were not as fortunate as I was. How could I become rich? This thought never entered my mind. I was reared with a strong ideology. My father and mother gave us this education. My father often said, "When walking always look down. You will see there are others who are far worse than you. Only then you will realize how you are faring."

I was prime Minister for five years. My son and daughter and Sheikh Rehana's son and daughter all received education and ideology from us. Still now, the ex-PM's sister rides public bus to attend office. She makes end meet by working. She could not afford to buy even a car. Joy, Putul, Bobby, and Tulip - our kids have all attended college and learned to be a human being. They are all working. They never become greedy. This is a blessing that we never have to hear bad things about our kids. They all have become good citizens. I pray to Allah for their achievements. And I ask my countrymen for their supplication (*Doa*).

Now let us compare what the children of BNP Prime Minister, MPs, and ministers have done as their parents are at the catbird seat of power. What was their wealth before and now? In a short time they became owners of 20-25 industries, acquired thousands of acres of land in their name and under fictitious names. They became owners of newspapers, private TV channels, etc. Were they able to do this earning money through legitimate means? The Private TV, radio stations, etc., were privatized during Awami League rule but no ministers or MPs could become the owner and not one. No body from my family could become an owner for the lack of money. Only Zia family's members have become the owner of 2-3 channels. If one figures out how much money Zia family members have made, his head would spin a few times.

My father first became a minister in 1954. We used to live in Number 3 Mintoo Road residence. In 1956 my father again became a minister. This time we lived in a house located at no. 15 Abdul Matin Road. After that my father became the president and Prime Minister of Bangladesh. We never thought to amass wealth using the power. Still then, misinformation campaigns were lodged against our family. That process is still continuing. In 1975, when my family members were killed it was announced repeatedly in the radio and TV that whatever wealth my family had will be unearthed. And they did try to find our wealth. They could find hardly any! Our paternal home located on No. 32 Dhanmandi (New No. 11) was donated by my sister and me to the people of Bangladesh. Please visit the house to see how simple was the lifestyle of my parents, the onetime president and PM of Bangladesh who is the founding father of the nation and brought independence for this nation after spending times in jail and enduring horrendous amounts of torture. He was harassed under false litigation still he gave leadership to our movement leading us to achieve our freedom. Please think for a moment how simple was his lifestyle and compare this to one who came to power at later time. You will see the stark difference. On August 15, 1975 they killed all the

family members. At that time, all the documents, papers, and jewelries were in the hands of military. They have sifted through all these with great care. They even investigated both inside and outside the country. What did they found? Zilch! But it did not stop them from waging disinformation campaign. This vile campaign got started in 1973 against Sheikh Mujib government. This is the man who worked tirelessly to build the foundation of this nation.

In 1996 I formed the government and became the Prime Minister. I would like to mention just one example regarding what I did to make laws to privatize electricity generation and we set electricity supply center. During my administration we set the price of electricity very low. Could anyone buy electricity at that low low price? We could have raised the price by mere one cent and pocket the commission. However, we did not do that to save the money of our people. We are still trying to safeguard the interest of our people. Lest you forget the money of our people being siphoned off by BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

My conscience is very clear. I never did participate in irregular activities. No one could come forward and say that I have embezzled people's money, any money. No one could call me a thief or thief's mother. This is my greatest achievement.

Therefore, earnestly I would request anyone not to equate us with others conspiratorially. Please show your moral courage to call a thief thief, a sadhu sadhu, a white white, a black black. This is the way with conscientious people. Uplift your conscience. Only then truth will come out victorious. If you resort to lies, liars would be encouraged and consequently, irregularity will be the norm.

If you blame the culprits and the fair-minded people at the same time, the culprits will become enthused. It will be an exercise in futility to equate these two dissimilar groups.

The translation was done by Dr. A.H. Jaffor Ullah. No one had asked him to do it. This is the least he could do for a party that brought freedom to his motherland from the clutch of Pakistani Army Generals in 1971.

