

Shahadat Choudhury Expired: A tribute

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I knew Mr. Shahadat Choudhury as a heroic and brave freedom fighter operating inside Pakistani occupied Dacca city as a guerilla fighter in our colourful days of ‘Mukti-yudha’ operating under the directives of Shahid General Khaled Musharraf, the valiant freedom fighter and supreme commander of K forces. However in those days we had not met with each other. I first saw or rather met him at his newly found Weekly Bichitra office at his request some time early 1973. We had discussed so many things over cup of tea(s) and cigarettes (I was a heavy smoker at that time). We had difference of age – he is much younger, he could have been my student if he studied Physics in DU, had difference in political view. He used to address me as ‘sir’ a common practice among our younger generation. He was a **theoretical and radical Marxist** believing in revolution through armed struggle. He had outward sympathy if not active participation in Charu Majumder’s brand of Naxalite socialist revolution. I had never much faith in Charu Majumder’s doctrine ‘Chairman Mao is our Chairman’ or his doctrine of cutting throat of bourgeois intellectuals like university professors, vice chancellors, principals, headmasters and local jotdars (land owners in villages) and destroying sculptures of ‘Ram Mohan, Vidyasagar, Bankim I know many dedicated meritorious college and university going young men and women joined his party and suffered lot for the dream of revolution. But it had always appeared to me as *romanticism*. The main reason of failure of the movement was it had never appealed to the middle class in west Bengal nor it gained militant mass support among the peasants in rural belt of west Bengal, Andhra or Kerala. The reasons are many- why the movement failed, but this is not the time to go into it.

Since the day we first met, I many a times saw him in and out of Bichitra. In those days I too contributed to Bichitra. He was the real founder of Bichitra, although it carried the name Poet Shamsur Rahman as its editor by courtesy- as the magazine was an appendage of the then 'Dainik Bangla' of which Shamsur Rahman was its Editor. It was a trustee publication along with Dainik Bangla. But Shahadat was the real lifeblood of the very popular weekly. He drew some talented young men around him during those days, soon to be known as 'Bichitra' group in socio-cultural circles. It was anti establishment in outlook and very critical of government misdeeds whenever the group thought it so. The circle made an impression, if not impact, on the inquisitive minds belonging to middle class talented young men. He started his career in Bichitra as its assistant editor ending as editor until the government decided to close down its publication in 1997. He also edited another cine-magazine named 'Ananda Bichitra' that too got some popularity.

After the close down of Bichitra he started a Weekly Magazine '**Saptahik 2000**' in 1998 with himself as its editor and another entertainment type magazine 'Paksik Anandadhara'. Both these magazines are quite popular though could not be compared with erstwhile Bichitra. The impetus was lost.

Though a professional artist obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in fine arts, specializing in 'painting' from the Institute of Fine Arts, DU late Shahadat Choudhury chose his career as journalist after Bangladesh was liberated from the Pakistani occupation forces in late 1971. Shahadat immediately joined our war of liberation following the Pakistani crack down on the population of East Bengal on the night of 25th March, the blackest day in the history genocide. Ultimately the Pakistani 'operation search light' which followed a total war imposed on us killed 3 million people of Bangladesh. As mentioned above Shahadat Choudhury was an active and skillful guerilla fighter who operated in Dacca under the supervision of General Khaled Musharraf and Captain Haider, then Commander of sector-2. He was the coordinator of various guerilla groups operating in and around Dhaka city. He himself took part in different operations with success with the brave cooperation with his co-fighters including Shahid Rumi, eldest son of Shahid Janani Jahanara Begum.

A staunch anti rajakarism and anti fundamentalism late Shahadat took active part and cooperated whole heartedly with Shahid Janani Jahanara in floating a platform later to be known as '*Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Kamiti*' (A committee for eliminating Killers and Collaborators) under the dynamic leadership of Jahanara Begum.

On his death nation should remember the contribution he made in our liberation war in the world of journalism in our country. He showed how a mere weekly magazine could be effective in socio-political-cultural life of a society.

Personal life

Late Shahadat, son of a district judge Mr. Abdul Haque, was born in 1943 on 28th July. After matriculating from Dacca Graduate High School young Shahadat got admission into Institute of Fine Arts, DU in 1963. Subsequently he obtained bachelor degree in

1968. Shahdat in eighties lost his eyesight in one eye- a cornea replacement enabled him to see again. The cornea was donated by little known personality late Mr. Inamul Haque, an engineer by profession. Late Mr. Haque, a close friend of mine, was a social worker, truly secular and a liberal democrat politically, who had deep interest in literature and history too. He was a member of the Executive Council of Asiatic Society many a times and I had the opportunity to work with him for a long time in the society. He presented a paper on reformation of Bengali letters and alphabets based on Roman scripts while I was a general secretary of the Society. It infused lot of interest and lively discussion. He proposed the recommendation, though not accepted by literary community and most of the members of the Asiatic Society, for scientific reason and modernity.

Mr. Shahadat fell seriously ill because of heart attack and taken to BARDEM hospital where he succumbed to death in the early morning of (1-30 a.m.) November 29, 2005. He was only 62 years in age.

At his death starting from Rastrapati Dr. Iazuddin Ahmed to political leaders of all shades including AL chief Shaikh Hasina expressed deep shock and condolences, which reflects that he was respected, loved by all. This is a rare quality to achieve, which late Shahadat gained in glorious manner.

It may be recalled that article entitled “*Einstein-Rabindranath Saksat : Sangeet niye katha*” by Ajoy Roy and Avijit Roy published in *Shaptahik 2000* on 25th November, 2005 just a few days before he breathed his last.

Let me pay my deep respect to the brave freedom fighter on his untimely death. His friends and colleagues will remember him long time to come. Let me end my article by quoting from Jahanara Imam’s ‘Ekattarer dinguli’ wherein in many places Shadat’s name was referred. (I will write it in Bangla some portion of it asking the moderator to convert it in proper Bengali font MM uses):

২৪৭ পৃষ্ঠায় জাহানারা ইমাম লিখেছেন (৩১শে অক্টোবর রবিবার ১৯৭১):

“খালেদ মোশারফের পরামর্শ এবং প্রেরণাতেই বাদল বারেবারে জীবনের ঝুঁকি নিয়ে ঢাকা এসেছে। বন্ধু অ্যাসফি সসাদেও সহায়তায় সংগঠিত করেছে ঢাকার তরুণদের— যারা যুদ্ধে যাবার জন্য উদগ্রীব হয়ে আছে, অথচ পথ পাচ্ছে না। তাদের কাছ থেকে পথের নির্দেশ নিয়ে একে একে ছোট ছোট দলে ওপাও গেছে কাজী, মায়ী, ফতে, পুলু, গাজী আরো অনেকে। গেছে **শাহাদাত চৌধুরী**, আহরার আহমদ, ক্যাপ্টেন আকবর, ক্যাপ্টেন সালেক, ক্যাপ্টেন জাফর ইমাম, পাকিস্তান এয়ার ফোর্সের কাদের, এ. আর. খোন্দকার, সুলতান মাহমুদ। ... ”

১৬ই ডিসেম্বরে, বিজয় লাভের পরদিন ২৮শ পৃষ্ঠায় জাহানারা ইমাম লিখেছেন (১৭ই ডিসেম্বর শুক্রবার ১৯৭১):

“... সন্ধ্যার পর একটা মোমবাতি জ্বলে ভুতুরে আলোয় জামীকে জড়িয়ে ধরে বসেছিলাম। হঠাৎ দরজায় করাঘাত। উঠে দরজা খুললাম। কাঁধে স্টেনগান ঝোলানো কয়েকটি তরুণ দাঁড়িয়ে। আমি দরজা ছেড়ে দু’পা পিছিয়ে বললাম. ‘এসো বাবারা এসো।’

ওরা ঘরে প্রথমে নিজের পরিচয় দিল, ‘আমি মেজর হায়দার। এ **শাহাদাৎ**, এ আলম। ও আনু, এ জিয়া ও ফতে আর এই যে চুল্লু ”

হায়দার আর আনু ছাড়া আর সবাইকেই তো অগেই দেখেছি। .. আমি ওদের হাত ধরে এনে ডিভানে বসলাম। আমি **শাহাদাতের** হাত থেকে চাইনিজ স্টেনগানটা আমার হাতে তুলে নিলাম। ঘুরিয়ে ফিরিয়ে দেখলাম। তারপর জামীর হাতে দিলাম। .. আমি হায়দারের দিকে তাকিয়ে বললাম, ‘জামী পারিবারিক অসুবিধার কারণে মুক্তিযুদ্ধে যেতে পারে নি। ও একেবারে পাগল হয়ে আছে। ওকে কাজে লাগাও।

মেজর হায়দার বলল, ‘ঠিক আছে জামী, আমি এই মুহূর্ত থেকে তুমি আমার বডিগার্ড হলে। তুমি গাড়ী চালাতে পার?’

জামী সটান এ্যাটেনশনে দাঁড়িয়ে ঘটং করে স্যালুট দিয়ে বলল, ‘পারি’।

.. .. মেজর হায়দার গম্ভীর মুখে বলল, ‘.. .. এটা খুব টাফ জব। চব্বিশ ঘন্টার ডিউটি।’

পাঁচদিন পর জামী এই প্রথমবারের মত দাঁত বের করে হাসল,
‘আটচল্লিশ ঘন্টার হলেও পরোয়া নেই।’ ”

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