

## **A CALL TO SHEIKH HASINA**

*Manirul Islam*

Sheikh Hasina, at this capricious time of our nation, may I request you to remain silent in public, refrain from participation in any political activity or issuing any political statement on Bangladesh or even on your party while you are on a personal trip abroad. This is doing more damage than any good to your party and to your country.

You have come to USA on personal reasons, to see the ailing daughter-in-law and for your own treatment. Please focus on those issues, finish your business and come back to Bangladesh hail and hearty and of course with a fresh mind to experience and exercise politics of new time and new order. If you think you can not cope with the demand of the day, please stand aside from day to day activity of the party leaving the mantle to the veteran politicians and intellectuals of AL. Definitely you will remain as guardian angel to advise the leadership.

Present government, so far very diligently, is laying all together a very new political turf. To play on this turf will demand new dynamics and standards of skill and morality. The party will be defined as a structured democratic organization with formal functional layers and transparent process. The policy and strategy will be validated by cumulative decision. Leadership will mean a homogeneously blended platform of disciplines like politics, economics, business, technology, sociology, culture etc.

Politically seasoned true patriotic leaders with experience, knowledge and ingenuity can only salvage the old ship like AL. If AL fails to sail along the direction of this changed wind, I am afraid; the impact will be more catastrophic on national scale than on your personal level. Direction of wind has changed because the existence of nation was in peril due to the failure of existing political leadership and political system. Existing political system in party level is totalitarian in nature and therefore no single leader can escape the stigma of this failure. Of course this has opened opportunity to few vested interests to demonize total political process and to rip the benefit in the vacuum. Whatever is the side effect, change was inevitable for the sake of national existence.

Now, how a political leader may look like through the prism of this changed time. The leader will be social, cultural and economic mirror of the population. Superior knowledge and experience on local, regional and global politics is essential. Enviably honesty, integrity and moral standard will be the main attributes of the character. The leader must have talent to identify and blend technical expertise with patriotic political expertise for a collective, democratic and transparent leadership. The leader must not be perpetuated or anointed; rather periodic democratic change must be instilled in the party system. Does it mean a leader must have all of the above! Hell no. Leadership, not a leader, must be a permutation and combination of all above.

Sheikh Hasina, you should be proud, even today, the living leaders of your party are the main architects of the independence of Bangladesh. It is so true that these leaders will not survive politically outside the parapet of AL and so is the very existence of AL of

Bangabandhu which will not exist without these leaders. Do not translate disagreement or difference of opinion within the party into suspicion or frustration. Rather take it in the spirit of hundred flowers blooming in the new breeze of democracy. Engage in democratic discussion and decision making in party forum. I know it is easier said than done. But this is the modern realism in Bangladesh context and so learn to adapt. You might do more harm than good to AL by belittling the political icons of our history in front of handful supporters in USA? Bangabandhu and Tajuddin equation in post liberation complex political climate till today baffles and torments many patriotic minds. Many of us still believe that chilling events of 1975 could be averted if Tajuddin was still in confidence of Bangabandhu. Bangabandhu gave his life. Tajuddin could not survive either. It was improbable for anyone but you to experience those tragedies so dearly. But tragedy indeed befell on every Bangalee with conscience when our nation became orphan. It may sound very crude but surely very time appropriate statement that Hasanat Abdullah, Sheikh Helal, Sheikh Selim and Kazi Jafrullah are not politicians. They are literally the 'cuckoos of spring' and just ripping the benefits of being related to you.

The political process of the country is going through a very critical and uncertain situation. This is the time for silent observation and self reflection, analyzing past and planning future. Divisive, provocative and irresponsible utterances will only help mutilating the party. In conclusion, I make a sincere appeal to you to give in to the demand of the day and bring about all the changes and corrections to every layer of the party to make Awami League a modern political party on a strong democratic structure. A secular and democratic Bangladesh and millions of Bangalees around the globe place their confidence in you – change for the better.