

From Sounagara to Bangladesh: The Historic Accomplishment by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Through His Speech of 7th March, 1971

AKM Mizanur Rahman*¹ Kisor Ray**²

Shafi Ahmed***³ Zobaidul Kabir****⁴

* *Ph D Fellow, Techno India University, India*

** *Professor, Management, Techno India University, India*

*** *Adjunct Faculty, Dhaka School of Economics and Former Professor of Jahangir Nagar University, Bangladesh*

**** *Adjunct Research Fellow, University of Newcastle, NSW-2295, Australia*

¹ mizan.edu@gmail.com

² ray.kisor@gmail.com, kisor.ray@technoindiaeducation.com

³ aceaahmd@gmail.com

⁴ zobaidul.kabir@newcastle.edu.au

Abstract — Bangladesh did not emerge on the globe all on a sudden. She is known to have an age-old legacy of honored history and heritage. The archeological traces and historical roots of ancient Vanga or Bangla or Bengal suggest a long history of independence and glory as a riverine and inlet-based civilization flourishing in this alluvial Ganges delta. Finally, a new nation state out of those legacies and heritages came into being with the name ‘Bangladesh’ in the year 1971. The turning point from a post-colonial military regime towards a new nation state is known to be the historic 7th March speech delivered at the Race Course Maidan by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This paper is an attempt to explore the historical facts and trends that might have contributed to the homecoming of the age-old civilization with distinct language, culture and identity of the great alluvial delta enthused and led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through his speech of 7th March, 1971. Based mainly on secondary data the findings exposed that people of this area were historically freedom loving and self-reliant. These leanings might have created a mindset of living with freedom and independence which was achieved through the dynamic and adaptive leadership of Bangabandhu as was manifested in his speech of 7th March, 1971. The speech appeared to be a chronological outcome of the past history of the land intermingled with the equanimity and expectations of the people articulated by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to define Bangladesh as a Nation State at the whirling point of history.

Key words: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 7th March, Sounagara, Bangladesh, Freedom, Independence, History.

I. PROLOGUE

The Ganges and her openings into the Bay of Bengal and also the fertile land of this alluvial great and green delta might have contributed to human settlements and their growth in the land now named Bangladesh [1]. Both agriculture and trade are assumed to have been booming here as depicted by the findings of Wari-Bateshwar in Belabo area of Narsingdi district in Bangladesh. Wari-Bateshwar appears to be the famous trade center ‘Sounagara’ of the Gangaridai as mentioned by Greek-Egyptian Astronomer and Geographer Claudius Ptolemy [2]. The fort city which is assumed to be two thousand and five hundred years old stood by the river Brahmaputra. From the writings of Duodorus, Megasthenes, and Claudius Ptolemy, Alexander the Great is learned to have his historical retreat from India after he had confirmed to know the mighty defensive warpower of the Gangaridai people equipped with thousands of frightening war elephants of huge strength and size [3, pp. 43-44]. Since those periods Bengal existed most of the times either independent or obstinately fighting for independence along with sporadic experience of being plundered, occupied and stifled. Newsweek in April 5 issue writes:

“To anyone acquainted with the character of Bengalis (Bangalis), it seemed almost inevitable that someday they would try to form their own independent nation. Despite their incorporation into India and Pakistan when the British Raj left the subcontinent in 1947, some 120 million Bengalis (70 million of whom live in East Pakistan and most of the rest in India’s West Bengal) still consider themselves a race apart from and above their neighbors.

Emotional and talkative the dark-skinned Bengalis have more in common with each other than with their co-religionists, Hindu or Moslem or with their compatriots, Indian or Pakistani. Says one Western expert, "They consider themselves to be Bengalis first, Moslems or Hindus second, and Pakistanis or Indians a poor third.

Culturally, ethnically, linguistically and spiritually the Bengalis are different from their countrymen in Pakistan and India" [4].

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman articulated Bangladesh out of East Pakistan leading as 'The Poet of Politics'. In the time zone of History and Political Science Bangabandhu and Bangladesh are inseparable. The great and green delta finally emerging as Bangladesh was named and renamed also shaped and reshaped many times. Finally, Bangladesh wrote the history of a hilarious sacrifice costing an ocean of blood to achieve Independence and Freedom. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dared to risk his life and everything in his mission of writing the name of a Bangladesh as a Nation State on the geography of the globe.

II. OBJECTIVES

This paper aims at looking closer into the past history of Bangladesh with a view to explore the emergence of a nation state through her own legacies and trends of socio-political activities evolving during different phases of history culminated in 1971 molded by the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Specifically, this paper contains the following objectives:

- Y To trace the evolution of commonalities in shaping the nationhood of the people of Bangladesh basing on language and religious harmony;
- Y To explore the political trends in history that enabled a unique nation to grow and establish an independent sovereign state kindled by the historic 7th March speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; and
- Y To get in-depth understanding of the situation, the obligations and the art of winning by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through the 7th March speech of 1971 following the course of history.

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a historical analysis mainly based on secondary data following a qualitative approach. But it also contains a humble attempt to collect primary data by means of in-depth interview of the rarely available eye-witnesses of the political whirling through the speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered on March 7, 1971.

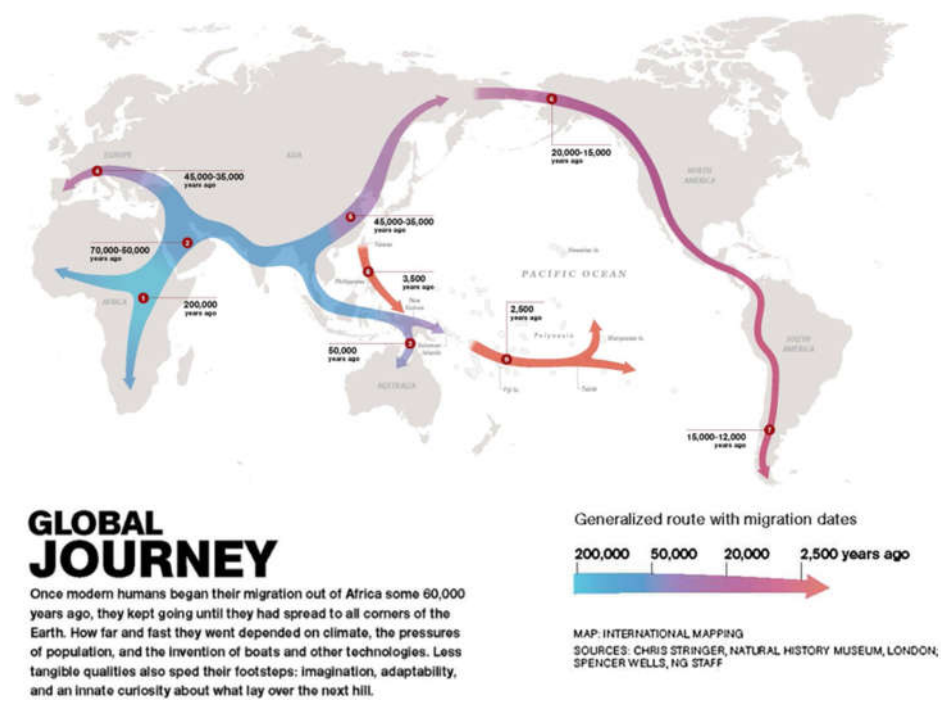
IV. LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF BENGAL

The real history of ancient Bengal can at best be windowed; but may hardly be properly known, understood and put in black and white. The etymology of Bengal is yet to be learned and brought to light. During the early days, civilization was being carried by the flows of the water. Egyptian civilization by the Nile, Mesopotamian civilization by the Euphrates and the Tigris, Chinese civilization by the Yellow, Harappa-Mohenjo-Daro civilization by the Indus stand to be great examples of river valley civilizations [1]. Likewise existed the Gangaridae civilization by the five openings of the Ganges River. Rivers and the inlets might have been playing vital roles for human settlements. Ganges renamed as Padma in her Bangladesh part had the both of those. Ganges was flowing a long way beginning right from the great Himalayas through many parts of India, met the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Meghna on the way into Bangladesh to finally empty into the Bay of Bengal. Archeological and historical evidences indicate that

the Arians took little more time to reach this part of India and rather than reshaping the way of lives here, there had been a ‘come together’ of the Arian culture with that of Bangla [1].

A. The First Ever Human Settlement

The first ever human settlement in the areas which is now covered within Bangladesh is very



difficult to trace back. But from the archeological findings regarding the historical out-migration of the sapiens towards the Indian sub-continent it may be assumed that the first human settlement in these areas may date back to no less than 50000 years. The following figure from the National Geography also supports this concept.

Figure – 1: THE FIRST EVER HUMAN SETTLEMENT
Source:<https://images.nationalgeographic.org/image/upload/v1638889806/EducationHub/photos/global-human-journey.jpg>

A timeline of Bengal supported by archeological findings along with the evolution of language, religion and major events or trends from ancient time till date may be presented as follows:

CHART-1: BANGLADESH	
Vanga/ Bangala/ Bangla [Bengal]	‘ Bengal is the name given to Bangla, the eastern province of British India which stretches from the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south, and from the Brahmaputra, the Kangsa, the Surma and the Sajjuk rivers in the east to the Nagar, the Barakar and the lower reaches of the Suvarnarekha in the west. The area described above lies roughly between 27° 9’ and 20° 50’ north latitude and 86° 35’ and 92° 30’ east longitude’ [3]. As she was described by Willem Van Schendel, “Imagine yourself high in the air over the Himalayas. Look down and you see a forbidding landscape of snow-capped mountains and harsh vegetation. But now look to the southeast and discover an immense floodplain stretching between the mountains and the sea. That shimmering green expanse is Bangladesh” [5].

Bangladesh	<p>Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign country on 26th of March, 1971 winning final victory on 16th of December 1971, following a nine-month War of Liberation. Dhaka (previously spelt Dacca) is its capital. Area of Bangladesh: 147,570 sq. km. Boundaries: West Bengal (India) on the west; Indian states of West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya on the north; Indian states of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram together with Myanmar on the east; and Bay of Bengal on the south. Geographical location in South Asia, between 20°34' to 26° 38' north latitude and 88° 01' to 92° 41' east longitude [6]. Geographic area of present Bangladesh is an outcome from the ancient [mainly self-ruled] regions of Vanga termed as Gangaridai [7] by the Greek and Latin writers [part of Khulna and Barishal Division], Samatata [part of Dhaka, Barishal and Kumilla Division], Harikela [part of Sylhet, Kumilla, Dhaka, Barishal and Chittagong Division], Pundrovardhana [Rajshahi and Rangpur Division] and Pragjyotisa [part of Sylhet and Dhaka Division] [8].</p>
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CHART-2: THE BANGLADESH CHART

Timeline & Dynasty	Archeological Signs and Unique Historic Features	Religion and Language	Historical Landmarks/ Trends
c. 50,000 BCE Sapiens	Tim Steel observes, an anthropological solution to the existing argument about the 'out of Africa' migration as to whether the early human species arrived in Australia 100,000 or more years ago, or only about 50,000 years ago may shift the timeline of the earliest inhabitation of humans in Bangladesh. But the principle that there were human inhabitants in Bangladesh, at least 50,000 years ago still stands valid [9].	Unknown Out-moving Sapiens from Africa.	First ever existence of Sapiens in the land now known as Bangladesh. Some of the early sapiens moved into the northern part of the Middle East and then dispersed across the world. In this dispersal some people went to Southeast Asia and Australia, more than 50,000 years ago [10]. They are construed to have passed through the country that is known as Bangladesh now [11].
c. 40,000 BCE	Archeological sign of initial Human settlements along the Ganges. Earliest stone tools found in western hills [12].	Unknown Out-moving Sapiens from Africa.	Ancient initial human settlements. Least information is available.
c. 10,000 BCE	Discovery of Paleolithic and Microlithic weapon on the near west of Bangladesh [1].	Austic Dravidian & Tibeto-Burman Satam: BCE 3500; Aryan: BCE 2500 [13]	Early Settlements moving from North to South due to cold weather. Before the arrival of the Aryans the original settlers were Nisadas or Austic or Austro-Asiatics [8]
Pre-1,500 BCE	Fossil wood industries; Cultivation of irrigated rice and domestication of animals [5].	Austic; Dravidian; Aryan; Indic [13]	The Aryans came down approximately by 2000 BCE. <u>The first struggle for upkeeping own culture and heritage began.</u> Aryans didn't even know the elephants; pride of the South [14]. They attempted to put down the people here [1].
c.1700-340 BCE Janapads of Vanga [c. 1100-340 BCE], Varendri, Harikela, Pundra.	Chalcolithic Period; Pandu Rajar Dhibi archeological site; Urban centers, long-distance maritime trade, first sizeable states can be traced. Indo-European languages and Sanskrit culture begin to spread from the west [12]. Mahavira, the 24 th and last Tirthankar: c. 599-527 BCE. Goutam Buddha: c. 583-563 BCE [Encyclopedia Britanica].	Vedic Religion Rise of Jainism [6 th Century BCE], Rise of Buddhism [6 th Century BCE]. Ancient Prakrit, Pali, Old Indo-Aryan, Sanskrit [Panini's Grammer: 650-600 BCE]. Old Prachya	The <u>Nalanda Mahavihara</u> was in place [6]. During 5 th Century BCE peoples of Bengal identified in different self-governed localities (Janapad) called Vanga, Pundra, Varendri, Gaur, Harikela, Samatat, Rarh, Chandradip and so on [15] ; Urban civilization emerged at Wari-Bateswar [6].
c. 544-345 BCE Magadh Rule	Bimbisara, a man of political determination and foresight is known to be the first important king of Magadh [16].	Hinduism Buddhism Jainism. Sanskrit, Magadhi Old Prakrit, Adi Brahmnilipi [17].	The earliest Indian king to realize and uphold the need of skilled administration is supposed to be Bimbisar. The beginning of an administrative system might have taken a root henceforth [16].

<p>4th century BCE c. 350–322 BCE The Gangaridai and a few robust and sustainable states protected by rivers & swamps.</p> <p>Nanda Dynasty-BCE 362-321 [18].</p>	<p>Archeological findings of Wari-Bateshwar, Belabo, Narshingdi, Bangladesh [19]. The historically famous trade center and port city ‘Sounagara’ by the river Brahmaputra as mentioned by Greek-Egyptian Historian Ptolemy is now assumed to be in here. Greek and Latin writers refer to the people as the Gangaridai (variant Gandaridai/ Gangarhiddhi). ... Cartius, Plutarch and Solinus agree in placing them on the further, that is the eastern bank of the Ganges. Dudorus, too, speaks of “the nations of the Prasioi and the Gandaridai whose king was Xandrames” [20]; Brahmini records of Mahasthan; Fragments of a colossal image found at Silua, Noakhali; Accounts of Megasthenes, Periplus and Ptolemy [21]; Rise of the Kingdom of Samatata [3].</p>	<p>Gangaridai: Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Greek Polytheism, Zoroastrianism. Old Prakrit, Indo-Aryan, Sanskrit, Brahmmilipi, Kushan Lipi [17].</p>	<p>Well defended independent land with huge defensive war-power and fortification. Alexander the Great is known to have his retreat from India once being confirmed the information of huge defensive power of the Prasioi and the Gangaridai, specially, the defensive War Elephants which was reported to have a combined number of about 6000 [3]. The soldiers of Alexander the Great with awful experience fighting war elephant in the war with Porus [22]. Robust self-sustained states sheltered by the delicate barriers of rivers and marshlands might have been the most visible characteristic of the land [20]. In history, Gangariddhi (Gangaridai) is yet to be talked about [2].</p>
<p>3rd century BCE c. 321-184 BCE The Maurya</p>	<p>Mahasthan Brahmi inscription [3]. BCE 315: Visit of Megasthenes to India [18].</p>	<p>Hinduism Buddhism Jainism Ajvikism Greek Polytheism Zoroastrianism Goudi Prakrit, Indo-Aryan, Sanskrit, Ashokalipi [17].</p>	<p>Ashoka the Great [268-231 BCE]. Production of Muslin and Colored Silk [14] Gold Coins referred to Gold Mines [20]. Kautilya’s ‘Arthashastra’ came in. Koutilya mentions of Gour [2] Good Governance.</p>
<p>2nd century BCE Sunga Dynasty c. 184-73 BCE [18]</p>	<p>Discovery of Terracotta figurines at Mahasthangarh. [Pushyamitra Shunga, Agnimitra, Debabhuti]</p>	<p>Hinduism Buddhism Jainism Ajvikism. Sanskrit, Goudi Prakrit.</p>	<p>Resurgence of Brahminism. Pataliputra was the capital [23].</p>
<p>1st century BCE Kanva Dynasty c.73-28 BCE [16]</p>	<p>From Panchala realm coins marked ‘Bhumimitra’ and from Vidisha, Kaushambi and Vatsa Copper Coins marked ‘Kanvasya’ have been found [24].</p>	<p>Hinduism Buddhism Jainism Ajvikism Greek-Polytheism Zoroastrianism Sanskrit</p>	<p>Brahminism continued [Encyclopedia Britanica: www.britanica.com]. Pataliputra was the capital [23]</p>
<p>c. 1st century to 3rd Century CE: Wan area of the History of the land.</p>	<p>Virgil, the famous Roman poet, described Gangaradai in his Georgics (30 BC). Ptolemy, the ancient geographer, recorded the Gangaridai occupying the Ganga's five mouths and the Ganga city (second century AD). Pliny, the ancient Roman historian (first century AD), also cites the Gangaridai [25].</p>	<p>Hinduism Buddhism Jainism Ajvikism Greek-Polytheism Zoroastrianism Sanskrit</p>	<p>The five centuries between the decline of the Indian empire of the Mauryas and the emergence of the Guptas have been described as a dark period in Indian history, during which foreign dynasties fought one another [26].</p>
<p>Gupta Empire c. 300-550CE [27]</p>	<p>The Mehrauli Iron Pillar Near Delhi identified with King Chandragupta II (c. 375- 413/14 CE); Samudragupta known as the ‘Indian Napoleon’ [28]; [https://www.worldhistory.org/Samudragupta/] During 507-508 Banyagupta in Shamatata appeared as a King [17].</p>	<p>Hinduism Buddhism Jainism. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Goudi Apabhamsa, Banga Kamrupi; Gupta Lipi [17]</p>	<p>The beginning of formal Monarchy; Varahamihira and Aryabhata considered zero as a number; Famous Chinese traveler Fa Hien visited the land; Vatsyayana’s Kama Sutra [The book on the Art of Love] was written; Buddhism spreads to China; Nalanda University was set up [16].</p>

Shashanka (Narengragupta) [23] Gauda Kingdom c. 590-626 CE	Kautilya's Arthashastra refers to Gouda alongside Banga, Pundra and Kamarupa (Banglapedia, updated June, 2021); Coins & inscriptions; ' <i>Harshacharita</i> ' written by Banabhatta or Bana mentions of Shashanka [c. 7 th century CE]; The Chinese traveler and Monk Xuanzang or Hiuen Tsang (602-664 CE) mentioned of Si-yu-Ki (Shashanka) or She-sang-kia as the king of Karnasuvarna, the capital of Gouda [28].	Hinduism (Shaivism); Buddhism. Banga Kamrupi [13]; Bangla Purba (Goudiya) Lipi/Kutil Lipi.	The first ever existence of independent and united Bangla with Janapads of both the West and the East [29]. 'Bangla' is often called the Goudiya Language; The beginning of Bangla Calendar coincides with Bangadhipati Shashanka's ascending to throne in 593/594 A.D. [25]
Matsyanyayam or Jungle Rule [30]: A Century of Anarchy 650-750 AD [27]	Bhadra Dynasty Khadga Dynasty Deva Dynasty Chandra Dynasty Varman Dynasty [Obscure period in History [20]]	Hinduism (Shaivism); Buddhism. Bangla; Bangla Purba (Goudiya) Lipi/Kutil Lipi.	After the death of Shashanka there had been a political disaster, anarchy and lawlessness giving space for independent minor dynasties to rule over Banga, Samatata and Harikela.
6th Century CE Banga & Samatat Rulers of Faridpur: Dharmaditya Samachardeva Gopachandra [31] [May also be 525-575 CE]	Five copperplates discovered at or near Kotalipara, Faridpur and one at Mallasarul, Burdwan, and one in Jayrampur, Balleshvara [3]; Gold Coins found at Savar, Dhaka [25].	Hinduism Buddhism Jainism. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bangla; Bangla Purba Lipi/Kutil Lipi [17]	On the ruins of the Guptas rose the INDEPENDENT KINGDOM in Bengal with capital at Kotalipara, Faridpur. They assumed title 'Maharajadhiraja' proves they had been independent as well [3].
Minor Dynasty Bhadra Dynasty 6th-7th Century	From Hiuen Tsang: A line of Brahmana Kings ruled in Shamatata in the first half of the seventh century AD. Silabhadra and Jyesthabhadra Mentioned in Nidhanpur coper-plate [3]	Hinduism Buddhism. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bangla; Bangla Purba Lipi/Kutil Lipi.	Brahmanical Royal Dynasty; Independent rulers of Banga and Shamatata. Brahmanical Dynasty overthrown by Buddhist Kings known as Khadga.
Minor Dynasty Khadga Dynasty c. 625-705 CE [32]	Two copperplates found at Ashrafpur, 30 miles north-east of Dhaka; A short record inscribed on an image of Sharvani (Durga) near Kumilla [20].	Buddhism Hinduism. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bangla, Purba Lipi/ Kutil Lipi.	Independent Kings of Vanga and Shamatata. Dandadev Shilabhadra became Chancellor of Nalanda [33] [History is of this period may be treated tentative].
Minor Dynasty Nath & Rata Dynasty 640-670 Shamatata	The Kailan copperplate inscription of Shridharana Rata. It was discovered sometime before 1945 at Kailan (or Kailain), a large village about 29 km southwest of Comilla.	Hinduism; Buddhism. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bangla; Purba/Kutil Lipi, Nagari Lipi.	Brahmanical Independent Kings [17].
Minor Dynasty Deva Dynasty 720 – 800 CE	Copperplates of Maynamati & Lalmai [17]. Five copperplates and one stone plaque inscription of the Deva period have been recovered from Mainamati [34].	Buddhism Hinduism Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bangla; Purba/Kutil Lipi, Nagari Lipi.	Buddhism ruled about 80 years. The 'Golden Age' of Vanga-Samatata with greatest achievement in the field of art and architecture [34].
Minor Dynasty Chandra Dynasty 865-1055 CE [Banga, Samatata, Chadradwip and Harikela]	Archeological Sites of Bikrampur and Maynamati: More than 500 gold coins; Silver coins with Harikela legend [35]. The name Govindachandra of <i>Vangala-Desa</i> is known from the Chola's invasion [3, p. 196]	Buddhism Hinduism. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Bangla; Ancient Bangla <u>Lipi</u> [17].	Buddhist Independent rule for 190 years; Chandrapur University of Shrihatta. <u>Beginning of the writing of Charyapada, the sourcing reference of Bangla Language</u> [17, p. 43]
Minor Dynasty	Three copperplates and the Bhuvanesvara	Brahmanism;	Brahmanical Varman Kings overthrew

Varman Dynasty 1055 – 1145 CE [17]	inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva [30].	Pluralism in Religion. Sanskrit, Bangla, Prakrit, Ancient Bangla Lipi.	the Buddhist kings and independently ruled with Bikrampur as their capital [20].
The Pala Dynasty c. 750-1161 [17]	Gopal established the Pala Dynasty [16, p. 223]; Khalimpur Copperplate says, Gopal was made king by the ‘Prakritis’ meaning the ‘Subjects’ [3, p. 96]	Buddhism and Pluralism in Religion. Sanskrit, Bangla; Pali. Proto-Bangla Lipi.	<u>Writing of Charyapada, the sourcing reference of Bangla Language.</u> Shaping of administration. Advent of a unique and unified Nationhood [27]
Sena Dynasty c. 1097-1225	Senas were from Karnata in South India; Deopara Inscriptions and Madhainagar Grant [3, p. 205]	Pluralism in Religion. Sanskrit, Bangla; Prakrit. Bangla Lipi.	Senas were Brahma-Ksatriyas; They brought the whole of Bangla under their rule. [36].
Early Sultanate: Khalji Dynasty 1204-1231	In the year 1204–5 (601 A.H.), Bakhtiyar himself struck a gold coin in the name of his overlord in Delhi, Sultan Muhammad Ghuri [37]. Independent Sultan Gias Uddin Iywj Shah - 1213-1227 [1]	Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam. Bangla; Sanskrit, Turkish, Arabic. Ancient Bangla Lipi.	Ikhtiar Uddin Muhammad Bakhtiar Khalji: First Muslim Ruler of Bangla. <u>Mostly independent</u> and sometimes subordinate to Delhi Sultanate [17, p. 47].
Delhi Sultanate: Mamluk Dynasty 1227-1287 AD	Rule of Nasir Uddin Mahmud appointed by his father Iltutmish (1227-29); From 1227 till 1287 Bangla was under Delhi Sultanate. A total of 15 Turk Rulers, of them 10 had been Mamluks, ruled at this period [15, p. 23]. [Ziauddin Barani, Ibn Battuta, and Shams Siraj Afif provide source materials.]	Pluralism in Religion. Bangla; Sanskrit, Persian, Turkish, Arabic. Ancient Bangla Lipi.	Governors of Bangla, throughout the thirteenth century, strove to assert their independence from the parent dynasty in Delhi whenever possible [37]. Traditional Medieval Rule [17, p. 47].
Balaban Dynasty 1287-1324 AD	Balaban dynasty ended with Rukn Uddin Kaykaus who introduced coin for paying tax. But Shamsuddin Feroj Shah, one of the two advisors of Bugra Khan appointed by Balaban, took over Lakhnauti and ruled till 1322 [29, p. 24].	Pluralism in Religion. Bangla; Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Ancient Bangla Lipi.	<u>Declared Independence from Delhi Sultanate.</u> In the eyes of Delhi Bangla was the ‘Balagakapur’; the land of rebellion [2, p. 21]. Hazrat Shah Jalal (R) came to Sylhet.
Tughlaq Dynasty 1324-1338 AD	Gyasuddin Tughlaq and his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq made all out efforts to bring Bangla under Delhi rule appointing Governors after dividing Bangla in three parts namely Satgaon, Sonargaon and Lakhnauti but in vain for rebellion [38].	Pluralism in Religion. Bangla; Sanskrit, Persian, Turkish, Arabic. Ancient Bangla Lipi.	<u>Ghiyashuddin Bahadur Shah declared independence;</u> <u>Independent Bangla Sultanate emerged with Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah at Sonargaon.</u>
Independent Bangla Sultanate 1338-1538 AD	Independent Bangla Sultanate began during Tughlaq Dynasty of Delhi. Ilyas Shahi Dynasty of Bangla; Raja Ganesh; Ilyas Shahi Dynasty of Bangla; Habshi Rule; Hussain Shahi Dynasty; Sher Shah (1537-1540). [Gold and Silver coins of Double Tanka, Tanka and Half-Tanka.]	Pluralism in Religion. Bangla; Sanskrit, Persian, Turkish, Arabic. Complete Bangla Lipi (Alphabet) [17]	<u>Independent.</u> Bangla was declared court language. Adina Mosque was built. Unified and independent Bangla emerged in history [17, p. 48]. <u>Bhakti Movement:</u> Sant Kabir, Guru Nanak and Chaitanyadeva [16, p. 339].
Delhi Rule (Afghan) 1540-1576 AD	Sher Shah Suri appointed few governors who ruled for a short period; Independent Shamsuddin Mohammad Shah Ghazi Sultanate (1553-1563) Karrani Dynasty (1563-76)	Pluralism in Religion; Bangla along with other languages used in Bangla.	Delhi Sultanate (Afghan). Administrative reforms; <u>Independent Mohammad Shah Sultanate;</u> Mughal rule was established after the battle of Rajmahal in 1576.
The Mughal Empire 1576-1757 AD	Subah Bangla brought under complete control during the reign of Emperor Jahangir. During the reign of Emperor Akbar the Great	Pluralism in Religion. Bangla widely used in	The heroic resistance of the ‘Bara Bhuiyas’ till 1599 (Death of Isa Khan) and beyond;

	Bangla was named as Subah Bangla [1, p. 80]. During the reign of Aurangzeb Subadar Mir Jumla made Dhaka the capital of Subah Bangla [29, p. 31].	most of the parts of Bangla; Persian.	Economy and money market of Bangla flourished mostly during Subadar Shaista Khan; Almost independent Nababs during the end of Mughal Empire ending up with Nabab Siraj-ud-Daula (Battle of Palasey 1757).
British India 1757-1947 AD	Colonial Rule: Company Rule & British Rule. Y Independence Struggle: 'Fakir-Sannyasi Rebellion'; Y Resistance of Titu Mir (1931); Y Sepoy Mutiny - 1857; Y The Indigo Revolt of 1859-60; Y Swami Vivekananda spoke in Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893; Y August 12, 1908 Bangali Rebel Khudiram was hanged; Y 1913: Rabindranath Tagore awarded with Nobel Prize; Y In 1922 Bangla poem 'The Rebel' [Bodrohi] published. Y September 23, 1932: Preetilata Waddadar sacrificed her life; Y August 14, 1933: Masterda Surya Sen and Tarekeshwar Dostidar sentenced to death; Y The Lahore Resolution-1940.	Pluralism in Religion; Bangla widely used in most of the parts of Bengal; Composable & Printable Bangla Alphabet by 1800 [17] English came in as second language.	In 1760 India's first ever Independence Struggle the 'Fakir-Sannyasi Rebellion' began from Bangla led by Fakir Majnu Shah, Pandit Bhavanicharan Pathak & Devi Choudhurani; Sepoy Mutiny initiated by Bangla Army [Mangal Panday] from Barrakpore [1857]; October 21, 1943: Netaji Subashchandra Bose announced Azad Hind Provisional Government [39]; Partition of India: 1947; Deshbandhu CR Das; Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huque, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani played role.
Pakistan Period 1947-1971 AD	Inequality and disparity in all aspects of national life. The Language Movement-1952; Leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; The United Front Election-1954; The Six-point Movement - 1966; Agartala Conspiracy Case-1968; The Mass Upsurge of 1969; The Election of 1970 and Non-cooperation Movement -1971. [40] The War of Liberation - 1971.	Islam; Hinduism; Buddhism; Christianity. Language: Urdu was intended to be imposed but Bangla remained in practice.	Yahya Khan delivered a radio speech to the nation on March 6 1971; Bangabandhu delivered his historical speech on March 7 1971; Crack-down on March 25-26, 1971; Declaration of Independence on 26th March, 1971 and the War of Liberation led to victory on 16 December, 1971.

V. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Bangladesh Chart is suggestive of the following features of her land and the people:

- Y The biggest Green Delta now named as Bangladesh might have a history of human settlement of no less than 40000 to 50000 years;
- Y Bangladesh has the legacy of the alluvial Ganges Civilization; peace-loving and self-sustained in nature;
- Y The ever-winning War Hero of ancient world Alexander the Great had his historic retreat from Asia knowing the defensive panache and strength of the Gangaridai fortified with huge War Elephants;
- Y Bangladesh emerged in history with religious pluralism consisting mostly of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Ajvikism, Christianity and Islam;

- Υ The evolution of her language Bangla flourished with own indigenous nature based on Prakrit enriched with words from many other languages like Dravidian, Magadhi, Indo-European, Sanskrit, Persian, Pashtun, Arabic, English and others;
- Υ The urge for self-determination and denial to all external domination are deep-rooted in the history of the land and of the people from ancient time;
- Υ The economy of the land was based both on agriculture and indigenous industrial heritage;
- Υ The struggle in Bangla against the Aryans, the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals, the British colonial rule and the urge for emancipation from the subjugation of Military Rulers of Pakistan founded the historic basement of Bangali Nationhood;
- Υ The life and works of the Mahavira, Goutam Buddha, Islamic Sufis, Fakirs, Sanyasis, Srichaitannya, Nanak, Sant Kabir, Hassan Raja, Lalan Shah, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Deshbandhu C R Das, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq, Hossain Shahid Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and many other great souls molded the liberal socio-political unique psyche of Bangali nation;
- Υ The religious togetherness, the economy, the sweet language and culture, and the unique emotion along with the freedom loving nature of the people bejeweled with the soul-searching spirit precast the Bangali Nationhood.

The study makes attempt to examine how far 7th March speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could touch upon the innate characteristics of Bangali Nationhood.

A. The Leader Comes in: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born on March 17, 1920 in a respectable Muslim family of rural Bangladesh named Tungipara of Gopalganj district; the southern alluvial greenland of Bangladesh touching the rivers Garai, Modhumati, Kaliganga, old Kumar and many more water bodies. His nick name was 'Khoka'. Since his childhood Bangabandhu used to like sports, humanitarian works, and social works. He got married during his childhood at the age of 10 [41].

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had his early schooling in Tungipara, Madaripur and Gopalganj. He passed Matriculation from Gopalganj High School where he had his political induction and had his first experience of going to the Jail. He also got inspired during his school life by the Anti-British movement organized by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose [42].

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had his higher secondary education in Kolkata Islamia College where he was more exposed to politics and became the Secretary General of the Islamia College Students Union. He witnessed the famine of the fifties. After his graduation in 1946 he witnessed the great partition of both India and Bangla and played active role to contain riots at that time [41]. With bleeding heart and uncertain hope and aspirations he came to East Pakistan and arrived in Dhaka. He got admitted in the University of Dhaka but had to discontinue his study due to political commitment and active role in politics. Afterwards Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman passed through an eventful part of his life to reach the dais of Sunday, the 7th of March 1971.

B. The Sunday Profile: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

The Sunday profile of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman may be summarized as below:

1) Personal Appearance and Attires

- Υ Age: Ten days short of 52 years [Born on 17th of March, 1920 in the reputable Sheikh family [42]]. Nick name.
- Υ Height: 5'11" [43].

- Υ Eyes: Alert black eyes [43].
- Υ Hairstyle and Mustache: Back brushed graying hairs and bushy mustache [43].
- Υ Attires: White Pajama and Kurta along with his famous short black coat (later on branded as Mujib Coat). He was also putting on the power spectacles as usual [44]. He had the smoking pipe in his left hand (Videos).
- Υ Car: White colored private car bearing Registration Number Dhaka Ga-1 [45].
- Υ Look: Elegant (Videos).
- Υ Audience: More than one million [46].

2) *Education*

Bangabandhu had his early education in Gopalganj and Madaripur and obtained Graduation from Islamia College, Kolkata in 1947. He also studied (incomplete) in the Department of Law, University of Dhaka [47].

3) *Political Background*

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman started his political career in undivided Bangla (Bengal) of British India and actively participated in the Independence Movement of Greater India from the British Colonial Rule. Bangabandhu was greatly influenced by the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and some other leaders of his time and learned the art of politics with the missions of achieving Emancipation, Freedom, Human Rights and Independence. He was also a keen witness to the inordinate famine of the fifties [42, pp. 17-18].

4) *Political Mentoring and Grooming*

Bangabandhu's political mentor was Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. He also worked closely with Sher e Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq and Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and got influenced by them as well [40]. Bangabandhu visited China in 1952 [48] and in 1957, USSR in 1957 and USA in 1958, UK in 1963 on different occasions during his emerging political career [49].

5) *Political Credentials*

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was at the forefront of the Language Movement [50]. He won a landslide victory from Gopalganj in the election of 1954 to get elected as a Member of the National Assembly and was given responsibility as Minister in charge of the Ministry of Cooperatives and Agricultural Development of the Provincial Government [42, p. 273]. But the cabinet was dissolved soon by the GOP. Bangabandhu was again elected as a member of the Second Constituent Assembly in 1955. He again got appointed as the Minister of Industries, Commerce, Labour, Anti-Corruption and Village Aid in the Provincial Coalition Government led by Khan Ataur Rahman (1956-58). He resigned from the post in 1957 to dedicate full time to his Party [50]. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman put forward the historic Six Points as the founding document for independence in 1966 and faced the Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1968. He stood up on the dais with the beleaguered experience of 31 years of active politics [51] sacrificing no less than 4,394 days of his life in prison before the Sunday evening of March 7, 1971 [52].

6) *Position in Party*

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was chosen as the Secretary General of his party in 1953 and in 1964. He was elected as President of Awami League in 1966. He got re-elected as the President of Awami League in 1970 [42, pp. XV-XXVIII]; [Excerpted from the album, Father of the Nation, 3rd Edition,

2010, published by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust, Dhaka].

7) *People's Mandate*

In the election of 1970-71 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party had won an 'amazing total of 160 National Assembly seats and 288 Provincial Assembly seats out of 162 and 300 respectively' [53]; turning him as the mandated leader of the house with absolute majority. The voice of Bangabandhu on 7th March 1971 was the voice of Democracy.

8) *The Dais:*

An open-field temporary platform of more than normal height. A simple dais covered with a long piece of white cloth [45]. The sound system was from the 'Call Ready' company (Videos).

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the leader born with complete homeliness and contiguous attachment with the people. He raised himself from a general member up to the President of the Party and won the election of 1970 with absolute majority by dint of his leadership qualities, his extraordinary courage, his incessant patriotism facing atrocities along with his pragmatic and charismatic personality full with commitment and dedication.

C. *The Consequences of the Speech*

It was clear that Bangladesh had come into existence. Mujib had become the de facto ruler and his home had turned into the Presidency [54]. The reverberating speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered on March 07, 1971 was followed by the deadly War of Liberation leading to the Independence of Bangladesh, a new democracy in South Asia, at the cost of three million lives. The speech is known to have been a source of inspiration and guideline for the people of the new nation state to step forward for socio-economic emancipation, freedom and prosperity. The speech is claimed to have an echoing or reverberation effect both during and after the War of Liberation. The speech is known to be played in many occasions and events. The young people, generation after generation, may texture the pride of the inestimable heirloom we own [55].

D. *Seven Steps of the 7th March Speech*

The historical public meeting of 7th March, 1971 at the Dhaka Race Course Maydan (Suhrawardy Udyan) had no formal structure. The meeting had no anchor, no chairperson, no second speaker; a unique event that made history. The iconic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered on March 7 1971 was also fully off-the-cuff as observed by many authors and researchers. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman uttered more or less 91 sentences including few compounds. The speech was fluent, lucid and precise. From the audio video records revealed that the speech got delivered in the seven following parts:

Firstly, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman spontaneously entered the prologue of his speech on March 7 1971 to present the context and explain the situation in existence.

Secondly, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reminded the huge audience in millions of the past historical facts of anguishes, disenchantments and impediments. Bangabandhu identified and presented the fault lines before the people to make it clear about the mindset and intentions of GOP.

Thirdly, Bangabandhu mentioned the non-judicial killing (using weapon purchased spending revenue of the people) by the forces in the name of defending the country.

Fourthly, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his speech on the 7th day of March 1971 made a historic reply to the speech of General Yahya Khan delivered on March 6, 1971. He had set up open dialogue with the Martial Law Government of Pakistan on the issues in front of millions of people. He

clearly and precisely laid four tough and irrevocable conditions to be fulfilled to create a conducive atmosphere for joining the National Assembly. Those four conditions were:

- Υ Withdrawal of Martial Law;
- Υ Withdrawal of all armed forces' deployment;
- Υ Enquiry of non-judicial killings; and
- Υ Transfer of power in the hands of elected representatives of the people.

These four irrevocable conditions were to be fulfilled, according to the speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in order to create a conducive atmosphere to join the National Assembly. Bangabandhu also invited the President of Pakistan to come and see in person the situation prevailing here and the injustice going on.

Fifthly, Bangabandhu continued to speak if these conditions are not adhered to and if firing at people continues any further, he called upon the people to stop everything and go for complete shutdown of tax payment, which was historically a traditional art of denial to the central rulers ruling Bengal from ancient times. He also declared the closure of courts and all offices except essential services to avoid sufferings of the mass people. The effective and open takeover of the government authority with complete legal mandate of the people was the most beautiful 'Art of Politics' voiced by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his speech of 7th March. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman then laid down all the human security instructions including religious harmony and ethnic inclusion. He asked for financial support from the people to take care of the victims of repressions. He also declared waiver of the limited-income group people and waved the rickshaw pullers, cart drivers and other day-to-day earners from general strike. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman laid down all the human security instructions including religious harmony and ethnic inclusion. He asked for financial support from the people to take care of the victims of repressions. He also declared waiver of the limited-income group people, the rickshaw pullers, cart drivers and other day-to-day earners from general strike.

Sixthly, Bangabandhu gave all the strategic operational instructions of fortification, safeguard and march forward towards non-conventional War of Liberation. He had publicly laid down and explained the command structure and strategy of the War. He also in his own language, declared the weaponry to be used. He also mentioned discipline to be strictly maintained.

Ascending those six steps Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his thunderous, flamboyant and clear voice delivered the epilogue i.e. the effective declaration of Emancipation and Independence of the Bangali Nation; sounding the eternal voice of Freedom and Independence for all the peoples of the globe. Bangabandhu uttered the historical effective declaration of independence of Bangladesh, both political and economic.

Fig – 2: The Seven Steps of Seventh March, 1971



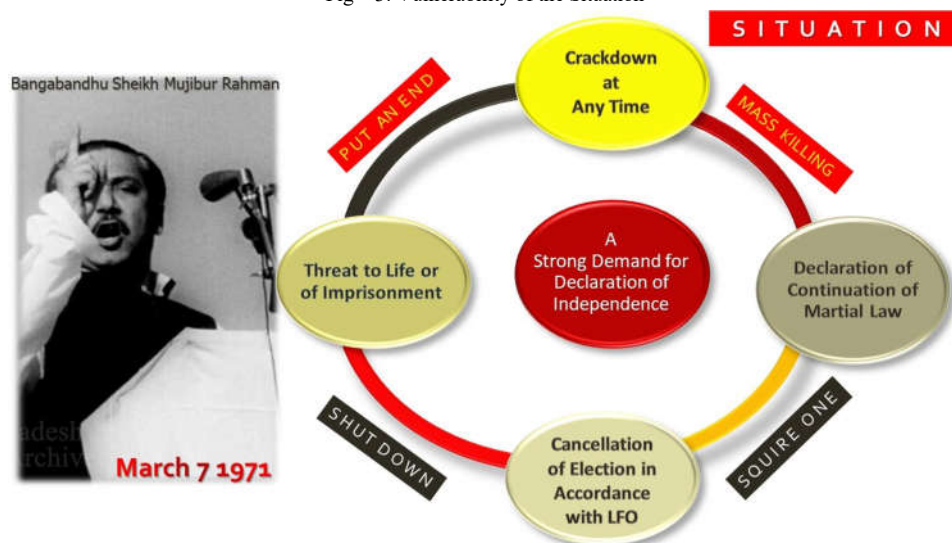
D. Vulnerability of the Situation

The situation on day of 7th March 1971 was acutely vulnerable. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had to definitely put caring attention to the situation of the day while delivering his historic speech. He might have to keep in consideration the following dangerous course the GOP would undertake to maintain their power structure unhindered:

- Υ GOP would declare to continue with the Martial Law what they eventually did;
- Υ GOP would have canceled the election or dissolve National Assembly as they had done after the 1954 election;
- Υ They would have arrested Bangabandhu and try him as they had done before in 1968 framing the infamous Agartala Conspiracy Case; and
- Υ GOP would proceed with a complete crackdown going for mass killing to shut down the doors of democracy and emancipation of the people.

The situation can be clearly put forward with help of the following diagram:

Fig – 3: Vulnerability of the Situation



Within this kind of a situation people, especially the militant student leaders and the left-wing leaders were very much eager to get the straightforward and plain declaration of Independence which could have been translated as UDI by the GOP. Bangabandhu had to consciously and carefully bypass this trap of UDI which could have brought about an abortive and fatal consequence or an instant crackdown by the Martial Law Government of Pakistan.

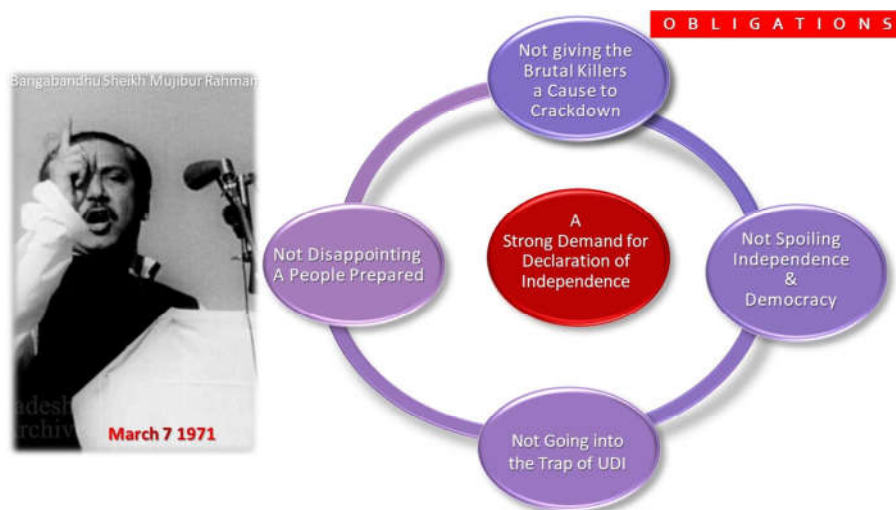
E. Obligations of the Situation

Amidst the situation of the day of 7th March, 1971 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was bonded with the following obligations:

- Υ Not to leave any space for the GOP for an instant crackdown;
- Υ Not spoiling the aspirations of the people towards emancipation and independence;
- Υ Not hastily stepping into the trap of UDI might have spacing the allegation of secession allowing GOP undertake any kind of atrocities they had been prepared for; and
- Υ Not disappointing the electorate extending highest possible support in electing Awami League with absolute majority. The situation was obligatory to break through both LFO and the Six Points became outmoded to meet the aspirations for Independence.

The obligations can clearly be expressed with the help of the following diagram:

Fig: 4: Obligations of the Situation

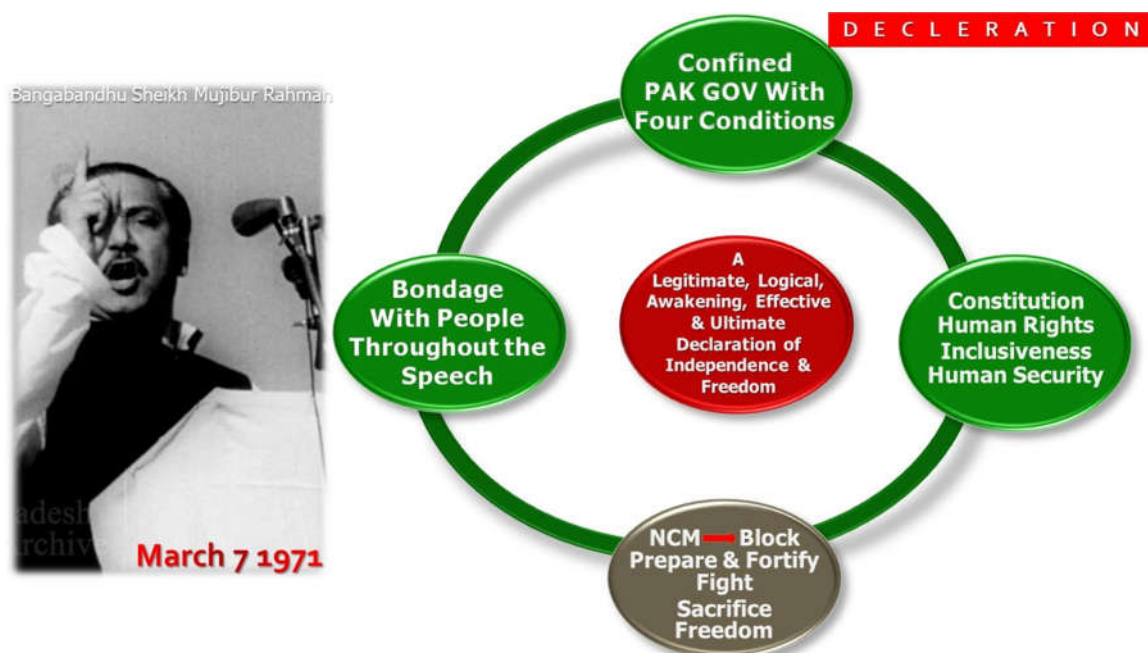


Within this kind of obligations again people, especially the militant student leaders and the left-wing leaders had been pressing to proceed with straightforward and plain declaration of Independence which could have resulted in a catastrophic end. Bangabandhu had again to consciously and carefully avoid any kind of abortive wordings in his speech that could have justified any drastic enforcement by the GOP. This was a unique ground challenge for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7th of March, 1971.

F. The Tactical Declaration of Independence (Avoiding the UDI Trap)

Given the context, the vulnerabilities and the obligations of the moment Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7th of March, 1971 had to follow a tactical course of wordings and language. He firstly confined the GOP with four conditions. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman then moved on with his democratic mandate to outline the sequential path of movement. He started with Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM). Then he mentioned of organization, preparation and fortifications. At the final stage, with a timer of ‘being attacked’ or fired upon, he declared to fight back. Finally, he called upon to sacrifice blood to uproot the enemies with whatever the people had at their disposal. The following diagram explains it in a nutshell:

Fig – 5: The Tactical and Sequential Declaration of Independence



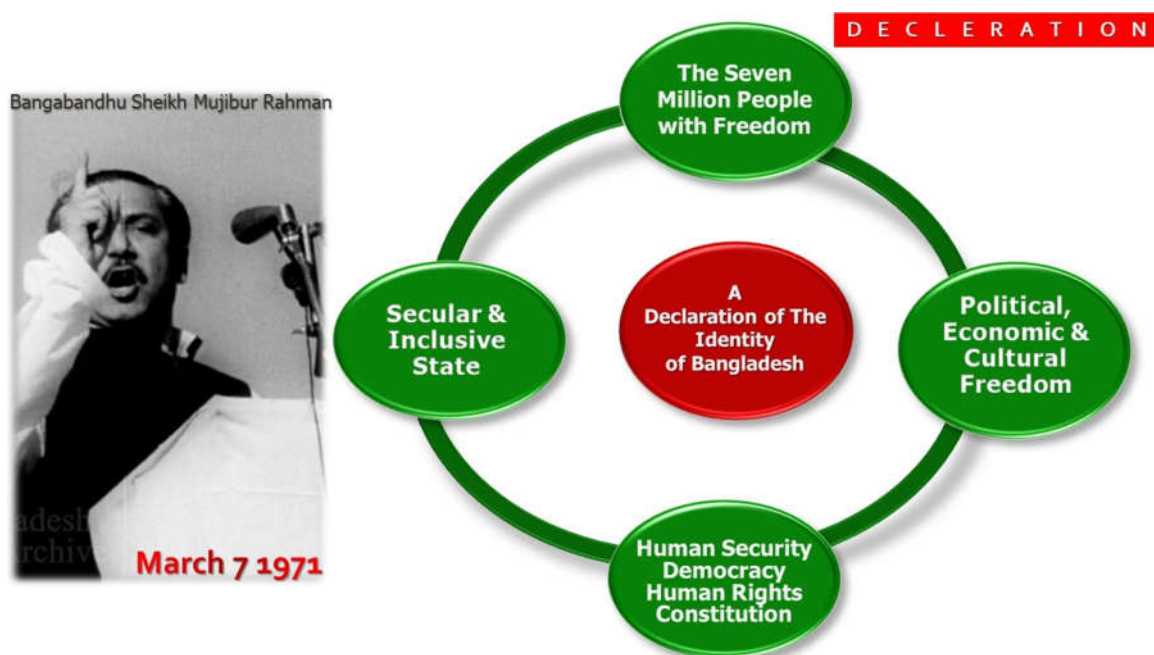
At every stage of his speech he kept the close bondage with the people with family-based words, language and expressions. With mentions of the constitution, human rights, human security, inclusiveness, and religious harmony his tactical declaration got free from the trap of Unilateral Declaration of Independence or cessation.

VI. EPILOGUE: THE IDENTITY OF BANGLADESH

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his speech of 7th March, 1971 outlined the identity of Bangladesh as a Nation State. The speech was the ‘Magna Carta’ of the nationhood for the people of Bangladesh. A veteran Freedom Fighter mentioned the speech as the Alphabet of Nationhood for the people of Bangladesh. Bangabandhu adorned seven million people with the goal of emancipation and freedom founded on the values of democracy, nationhood, secularism and human dignity.

The following diagram based on the findings of the study may explain how Bangladesh was given an identity by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman:

Fig – 6: Defining the Identity of Bangladesh



The independent political identity of Bangladesh gradually emerged from history through the ages. The people of this land had been historically freedom loving with a defensive strategy since the period of Sounagara (Gangaridai). Throughout recorded history, the alluvial delta known as Bangla strove for her independence. These leanings may have generated a defiance of living with freedom and independence, which was attained via the dynamic and adaptive leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as expressed in his speech on March 7, 1971. The speech appeared to be, ‘Nothing more could've been better and nothing less could've been enough’. With the basement generated through the tactical declaration of independence and the defining words of nationhood of the people of Bangladesh following the timeline of history, the speech of 7th March, 1971 delivered at the Race Course by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman appeared to have led to the natal of Bangladesh.

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