

Evaluation of Charismatic Leader of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

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Abstract- *The aim of the present study is to evaluate the charismatic leadership quality of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This study was carried out by descriptive qualitative research techniques. The result revealed that Sheikh Mujib was stimulated people by his charismatic leadership capability and huge political knowledge. From his early life he was demonstrated two key leadership qualities which make him unquestionable leader of the Bangladesh. One key quality was proactive social consciousness and paramount dedication for politics. Sheikh Mujib has so many leadership skills that recognized him as a leader of general people. His aspiration and sacrifice for nation made him an icon of the country. Therefore, it can be concluded that his leadership trait made himself as a father of the nation*

Index Terms- *Charismatic quality, Leadership, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Social Consciousness, Dedication*

I. INTRODUCTION

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman provided a rabble rousing charismatic leadership (Ali, 1973). He was a Bengali nationalist politician and the founder of Bangladesh (William, 2009). He headed the Awami League, served as the first President of Bangladesh and later became its Prime Minister of Bangladesh. He is popularly referred to as Sheikh Mujib and with the honorary title of Bangabandhu. It has been observed that “No man in the entire history of modern world except Mao for different reasons has hypnotized his people as Mujib did” (Bhatnagar, 1971). His eldest daughter Sheikh Hasina is the present leader of the Awami League and the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

He was usually dressed in long flowing Punjabi (Kurta), Pyjama (trouser) and a black jacket – used to be called “Mujib Coat”. He was a dedicated leader, “a loving father” (Kamal, 1973) and an understanding comrade. A student political leader, Mujib rose in East Bengali (from 1956, East Pakistan) politics and within the ranks of the Awami League as a charismatic and forceful orator. An advocate of socialism, Mujib became popular for his leadership against the ethnic and institutional discrimination of Bengalis (CSB, 2006). He demanded increased provincial autonomy, and became a fierce opponent of the military rule of Ayub Khan. At the heightening of sectional tensions, Mujib outlined a 6-point autonomy plan, which was seen as separatism in West Pakistan. He was tried in 1968 for allegedly conspiring with the Indian government but was not found guilty. Despite leading his party to a major victory in the 1970 elections, Mujib was not invited to form the government. This was the party that eventually led us to the independence movement in 1971 again, under the leadership of none other than Sheikh Mujib, who was not just a “political colossus, but who, standing tall and with a commanding physical presence, was literally larger than life” (Quayum, 2013).

During his nine month detention, guerilla war erupted between government forces and Bengali nationalists aided by India. An all out war between the Pakistan Army and Bangladesh-India Joint Forces led to the establishment of Bangladesh, and after his release Mujib assumed office as a provisional president, and later prime minister. Even as a constitution was adopted, proclaiming socialism and a secular democracy, Mujib struggled to address the challenges of intense poverty and unemployment, coupled with rampant corruption. In the aftermath of the 1974 famine (Mascarenhas, 1986) and amidst rising political agitation, he banned other political parties and most of the newspapers but four Governments owned. He established a one party state (Khan, 1996). Politicians, policy makers, civil society, different organizations, national and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations), teachers, researchers, civil servants and all members of the society can easily take the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman issue into consideration with due importance. Moreover, the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has become a potential field of academic research for many scholars all over the world in the present time. There are separate curricula for ‘Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’ in many universities at home and abroad. The main objective of the study is to explore charismatic leadership characteristics of Shiekh Mujibar Rahman.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was based secondary source of information. Secondary information was gathered from available literature review. Secondary data was also assembled from different journal, website, articles and books, essays, national and international newspapers.

Descriptive and preferential qualitative techniques were employed in this study. The study was performed by using trait approach. Leadership quality and inherent potentialities of Sheikh Mujib were evaluated on the light of the trait theory.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Early life of Sheikh Mujib

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in a respectable Muslim Family on 17 March, 1920, in Tungipara village under the then Gopalganj district in the province of Bengal in British India (**Frank, 2002**). He was the third child among four daughters and two sons of Sheikh Lutfar Rahman and Sheikh Shahara Khatun. At the age of seven (1927), Bangabandhu began his schooling at Gimadanga Primary School. At nine, he was admitted to class three at Gopalganj Public School, two year later, class four at Madaripur Islamia High School (**Ahmed, 1983**). Subsequently, he was transferred to a local Missionary School. Bangabandhu was forced to go for a break of study when, at the age of fourteen (1934), one of his eyes had to be operated on. Two key qualities were observed in his early life, one quality was active social consciousness and other quality was paramount passion for politics.

3.2 Married life of Mujib

At eighteen (1938), Mujib married Begum Fazilatunnesa. They later became the happy parents of two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, and three sons, Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel (**Ahmed, 1983**).

3.3 Mujib's Political career

Bangabandhu's political career was effectively inaugurated while he was a student at Gopalganj Missionary School. He led a group of students to demand that the cracked roof of the school be repaired when Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Chief Minister of Undivided Bengal, came to visit the school along with Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy (1939). Table 1 show his dominant personality leadership factor as a charismatic leader of Bangladesh.

Table 1: Five dominant personality factors studies in the political career of Sheikh Mujib

Neuroticism	The tendency to be depressed, anxious, insecure, vulnerable, and hostile
Extraversion	The tendency to be sociable and assertive and to have positive energy
Openness	The tendency to be informed, creative, insightful, and curious
Agreeableness	The tendency to be accepting, conforming, trusting, and nurturing
Conscientiousness	The tendency to be thorough, organized, controlled, dependable, and decisive

Source: (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987)

Sheikh Mujib became politically active when he joined the Nikhil Bharat Muslim Chhatra Federation (All India Muslim Students Federation, 1940) (**Craig, 1997**). He was elected Councilor for a one-year term. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman passed the Entrance (currently Secondary School Certificate, 1942) Examination. He then took admission as an Intermediate student in the humanities faculty of Calcutta Islamia College, where he had lodgings at Baker Hostel. The same year Bangabandhu got actively involved with the movement for the creation of Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib's busy active political career took off in the literal sense with his election as a Councilor of the Muslim League (1943). Bangabandhu took part in the conference of the all Bengal Muslim Students League held in Kushtia, where he played an important role. He was elected Secretary of Faridpur District Association (1944), a Calcutta-based organization of the residents of Faridpur. Sheikh Mujib was elected General Secretary of Islamia College Students Union (1946). Bangabandhu obtained Bachelor of Arts degree from Islamia College under Calcutta University (1947). When communal riots broke out in the wake of the partition of India and the birth of Pakistan, Bangabandhu played a pioneering role in protecting Muslims and trying to contain the violence (**Craig, 1998**).

3.4 Early Movement

The new realization and political thinking took roots in his mind as early as 1948. He was then a student in the Law faculty of Dhaka University. A moment was launched that very year on the demand to make Bengali one of the state languages of Pakistan. In fact this movement can be termed as the first stirrings of the movement of an independent Bangladesh. During that language movement the Bangabandhu was arrested on March 11, 1948 (**Karim, 2002**). Mujib was imprisoned for lending his support to the strike movement of the lower grade employees of Dhaka University. He was expelled from the University even before he came out of the prison (**Frank, 2002**). Mujib remained an expelled student and later explained: "I did not come to the University to bow my head to injustice" (**Mascarenhas, 1986**). During the blood-drenched language movement of 1952 also he was pushed behind the bars and took up leadership of the movement from inside the jail. The Bangabandhu was elected Joint-Secretary of the newly formed political

organization the Awami League. Previously he had been the leader of the progressive student's organization, the Chhatra League. In 1953 he was elected General Secretary of the Awami League. Elections to the then Provincial Assembly of Bangladesh were held in 1954. A democratic electoral alliance—the United Front—against the ruling Muslim League was forged during that election. Bangabandhu was elected member of the Provincial Assembly. He joined the Huq Cabinet of the United Front as its youngest Minister. He was elected to the second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and served from 1955 to 1958 (Frank, 2002). General Ayub Khan staged a military coup in Pakistan in 1958 and the Bangabandhu was arrested on various charges and innumerable cases were framed against him. He got back his freedom after 14 months of solitary confinement but was re-arrested in February 1962 (Karim, 2002).

3.5 East Pakistan Leader of Bangabandhu

The Bangabandhu revived the Awami League after the death of Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy in 1963. By that time the military Junta had lifted the ban on political parties. Thus the Awami League began its constitutional struggle under the leadership of the Bangabandhu to realize the demand for self-determination of the Bengalese.

The Bangabandhu placed his historic Six-point programme at a political conference in Lahore in 1966. This programme called for a federal state structure for Pakistan and full autonomy for Bangladesh with a parliamentary democratic system (Kadira, 2004). The Army Junta of Pakistan threatened to use the language of weapons against the Six-Point movement and the Bangabandhu was arrested under the Defense Rules on May 8, 1966. There was rising discontent in East Pakistan over the atrocities by the Pakistan Armed Forces against Bengalis and the neglect of the issues and needs of East Pakistan by the ruling regime (Ahmad, 1985).

On June 17, 1968 he was removed from Dhaka Central Jail to Kurmitola Cantonment and was charged with conspiring to make Bangladesh independent with the help of India. This case is known as the Agartala Conspiracy case (Frank, 2002). He was the No.1 accused in the case. While the trial was in progress in the court of a military tribunal the administration of the military junta collapsed as a consequence of a great mass upsurge in Bangladesh at the beginning of 1969.

As a result, he was released together with all the other co-accused. The case was withdrawn and the Bangabandhu was invited to a Round Table Conference at the capital of Pakistan. At this conference President Ayub Khan requested Bangabandhu to accept the Prime Ministership of Pakistan. Bangabandhu rejected the offer and remained firm in his demand for the acceptance of his Six-Point programme. Many scholars and observers believed the Bengali agitation emphasized the rejection of the *Two-Nation Theory* — the case upon which Pakistan had been created — by asserting the ethno-cultural identity of Bengalis as a nation (Khan, 1996).

3.6 Elections in December, 1970

In the elections held in December 1970, the Awami League under Mujib's leadership won a massive majority in the provincial legislature, and all but two of East Pakistan's quota of seats in the new National Assembly, thus forming a clear majority (Frank, 2002). The election result revealed a polarization between the two wings of Pakistan, with the largest and most successful party in the West being the Pakistan People's Party of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was completely opposed to Mujib's demand for greater autonomy. Bhutto threatened to boycott the assembly and oppose the government if Mujib was invited by Yahya Khan (then president of Pakistan) to form the next government, demanding his party's inclusion. There was also widespread opposition in the Pakistani military and the Islamic political parties to Mujib becoming Pakistan's prime minister. And even though neither Mujib nor the League had explicitly advocated political independence for East Pakistan (openly at least), smaller nationalist groups were demanding independence for *Bangladesh*. Capitalization on West Pakistan and fearing East-Pakistani separatism, Bhutto feared civil war, therefore, Bhutto sent a secret message conveyed by his most trusted companion and lifelong friend Dr. Mubashir Hassan, to Mujib and his inner circle (Biswas, 2005). Hassan succeeded to meet with Mujib and convinced to form a coalition government with Bhutto (Biswas, 2005). It was decided that Bhutto would serve as President with Mujib as Prime minister. All of these developments took place hidden from General Yahya Khan's watch, therefore none of Pakistan Armed Forces personnel were kept informed (Biswas, 2005). Meanwhile, Bhutto increased the pressure on Yahya Khan to take a stance on whether who shall govern.

3.7 Supreme Test

Mujib called for independence and asked the people to launch a major campaign of civil disobedience and organized armed resistance at a mass gathering of people held at the Race Course Ground in Dhaka on March 7, 1971. "The struggle now is the struggle for our emancipation; the struggle now is the struggle for our independence. Joy Bangla! Since we have given blood, we will give more blood. God-willing, the people of this country will be liberated... Turn every house into a fort. Face (the enemy) with whatever you have." Following a last-ditch attempt to foster agreement, Yahya Khan declared martial law, banned the Awami League and ordered the army to arrest Mujib and other Bengali leaders and activists. The army launched Operation Searchlight to curb the political and

civil unrest, fighting the nationalist militias that were believed to have received training in India. Speaking on radio even as the army began its crackdown, Mujib asked his fellows to create resistance against Pakistani Army of occupation by a telegraph at midnight on March 26, 1971 (**Karim, 2002**).

Declaration of Independence War of 1971

....."Pak Army suddenly attacked E.P.R Base at Pilkhana, Rajarbag Police Line and killing citizens. Street battles are going on in every street of Dhaka-Chittagong. I appeal to the Nations of the World for help. Our freedom fighters are gallantly fighting with the enemies to free the motherland. I appeal and order you all in the name of Almighty Allah to fight to the last drop of blood to liberate the country. Ask police, E.P.R, Bengal regiment and Ansar to stand by you and to fight. No compromise. Victory is ours. Drive out the last enemy from the holy soil of motherland. Convey this message to all Awami League leaders, workers and other patriots and lovers of freedom. May Allah bless you (**BA L, 2006**).

Joy Bangla
SK. MUJIBUR RAHMAN

3.8 Liberation War, 1971

Leaflets and pamphlets used to drive public opinion for independent Bangladesh depicted Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the iconic figure. Sheikh Mujib was arrested and taken to Pakistan after midnight via Tejgaon international airport on a PAF C-130 flight right under the noses of ATC Officer Squadron Leader Khaja, Senior Operations Officer Wing Commander Khademul Bashar and Director of Airport and Flight Security Squadron Leader M. Hamidullah Khan. All were on duty that night due to the state of emergency. Mujib was moved to West Pakistan and kept under heavy guard in a jail near Faisalabad (then Lyallpur). Many other League politicians avoided arrest by fleeing to India and other countries. Pakistani general Rahimuddin Khan was appointed to preside over Mujib's military court case in Faisalabad, the proceedings of which have never been made public (**PCA, 1955**). The Pakistani army's campaign to restore order soon degenerated into a rampage of terror and bloodshed (**Rashiduzzaman, 2006**). With militias known as Razakars, the army targeted Bengali intellectuals, politicians and union leaders, as well as ordinary civilians. It targeted Bengali and non-Bengali Hindus across the region, and throughout the year large numbers of Hindus fled across the border to the neighboring Indian states of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura (**Chowdhury, 2006**). The East Bengali army and police regiments soon revolted and League leaders formed a government in exile in Kolkata under Tajuddin Ahmad, a politician close to Mujib. A major insurgency led by the Mukti Bahini (*Freedom Fighters*) arose across East Pakistan. Despite international pressure, the Pakistani government refused to release Mujib and negotiate with him. Most of the Mujib family was kept under house arrest during this period. General Osmani was the key military commanding officer in the Mukti Bahini, which was a part of the struggle between the state forces and the nationalist militia during the war that came to be known as the Bangladesh Liberation War. Following Indian intervention in December 1971, the Pakistani army surrendered to the joint force of Bengali Mukti Bahini and Indian Army, and the League leadership created a government in Dhaka.

3.9 The Great Leader Return

Upon assuming the presidency after Yahya Khan's resignation, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto responded to international pressure and released Mujib on January 8, 1972. He was then flown to London where he met with British Prime Minister Edward Heath and addressed the international media. Mujib then flew to New Delhi on a Royal Air Force plane given by the British government to take him back to Dhaka. In New Delhi, he was received by Indian President Varahagiri Venkata Giri and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as well as the entire Indian cabinet and chiefs of armed forces. Delhi was given a festive look as Mujib and Indira addressed a huge crowd where he publicly expressed his gratitude to Indira Gandhi and "the best friends of my people, the people of India. From New Delhi, Sheikh Mujib flew back to Dhaka on the RAF jet where he was received by a massive and emotional sea of people at Tejgaon Airport on January 10, 1972.

3.10 Governing Bangladesh

Bangabandhu took the position of the Prime minister of Bangladesh in 12th January 1972, his party won an overwhelming majority in the elections held on 7 March 1973. Mujib helped Bangladesh enter into the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement. He travelled to the United States, the United Kingdom and other European nations to obtain humanitarian and developmental assistance for the nation (**Karim, 2002**). He signed a treaty of friendship with India, which pledged extensive economic and humanitarian assistance and began training Bangladesh's security forces and government personnel (**Crag, 2006**). Mujib forged a close friendship with Indira Gandhi, strongly praising India's decision to intercede, and professed admiration and friendship for India. But the Indian government did not remain in close cooperation with Bangladesh during Mujib's lifetime (**Hasan, 2000**). He charged the provisional parliament to write a new constitution (1972), and proclaimed the four fundamental principles of "nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism," which would come to be known as "Mujibism" (**Hasan, 2000**). Mujib nationalized hundreds of

industries and companies as well as abandoned land and capital and initiated land reform aimed at helping millions of poor farmers (**Time Magazine, 1971**). Major efforts were launched to rehabilitate an estimated 10 million refugees. The economy began recovering and a famine was prevented (**Khalid, 2006**). A constitution was proclaimed in 1973 and elections were held, which resulted in Mujib and his party gaining power with an absolute majority (**Frank, 2002**). He further outlined state programmes to expand primary education, sanitation, food, healthcare, water and electric supply across the country. A five-year plan released in 1973 focused state investments into agriculture, rural infrastructure and cottage industries (**Bloob, 2002**).

Although the state was committed to secularism, Mujib soon began moving closer to political Islam through state policies as well as personal conduct (**USSD, 1971**). He revived the Islamic Academy (which had been banned in 1972 for suspected collusion with Pakistani forces) and banned the production and sale of alcohol and banned the practice of gambling, which had been one of the major demands of Islamic groups (**USUD, 1971**). Mujib sought Bangladesh's membership in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Islamic Development Bank and made a significant trip to Lahore in 1974 to attend the OIC summit, which helped repair relations with Pakistan to an extent (**USSD, 1971**). In his public appearances and speeches, Mujib made increased usage of Islamic greetings, slogans and references to Islamic ideologies. In his final years, Mujib largely abandoned his trademark "Joy Bangla" salutation for "Khuda Hafez" preferred by religious Muslims. He also declared a common amnesty to the suspected war criminals in some conditions to get the support of far right groups as the communists were not happy with Mujib's regime. He declared, "I believe that the brokers, who assisted the Pakistanis during the liberation war has realized their faults. I hope they will involve themselves in the development of the country forgetting all their misdeeds. Those who were arrested and jailed in the Collaborator act should be freed before the 16 December 1974" (**USUD, 1971**). In his leadership the fourth amendment of the constitution was passed in 25th January 1975. This amendment changed the system of government from parliamentary to presidential. By dissolving all political parties of the country he established one party "BAKSAL" government (**Frank, 2002**).

3.11 Assassination

On August 15, 1975, a group of junior army officers invaded the presidential residence with tanks and killed Mujib, his family and personal staff (**Hasan, 2000**). Only his daughters Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Sheikh Rehana, who were visiting West Germany, escaped. They were banned from returning to Bangladesh (**Raman, 2006**). The coup was planned by disgruntled Awami League colleagues and military officers, which included Mujib's colleague and former confidante Khondaker Mostaq Ahmad, who became his immediate successor. There was intense speculation in the media accusing the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency of having instigated the plot (**Mohammad, 2006**). Lawrence Lifschultz has alleged that the CIA was involved in the coup and assassination, basing his assumption on the then US ambassador in Dhaka Eugene Booster. Mujib's death plunged the nation into many years of political turmoil. The coup leaders were soon overthrown and a series of counter-coups and political assassinations paralysed the country (**Jahan, 2006**). Order was largely restored after a coup in 1977 gave control to the army chief Ziaur Rahman. Declaring himself President in 1978, Ziaur Rahman signed the Indemnity Ordinance, giving immunity from prosecution to the men who plotted Mujib's assassination and overthrow.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mujib is as a rabble-rousing, charismatic leader who galvanized the nationalist struggle but proved inept in governing the country. Following his death, succeeding governments offered low-key commemorations of Mujib, and his public image was restored only with the election of an Awami League government led by his daughter Sheikh Hasina in 1996. August 15 is commemorated as "National Mourning Day," mainly by Awami League supporters. He remains the paramount icon of the Awami League, which continues to profess Mujib's ideals of socialism. Mujib is widely admired by scholars and in Bengali communities in India and across the world for denouncing the military rule and that what he maintained was 'ethnic discrimination in Pakistan', and for leading the Bengali struggle for rights and liberty. In a 2004 poll conducted on the worldwide listeners of BBC's Bengali radio service, Mujib was voted the "Greatest Bengali of All Time" beating out Rabindranath Tagore and others. Bangabandhu lives in the heart of his people. Bangladesh and Bangabandhu are one and inseparable. Bangladesh and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's vision and he fought and died for it. Intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, sociability and determination were remained in the character of Mujib. The names 'Bangali' and 'Bangladesh' will continue to live on. And that is why Ananda Shankar Ray had written:

"As long as the Padma, Meghna, Gouri, Jamuna flows on,
Your accomplishment will also live on, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

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