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Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Huq

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"A true leader of men," says Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, "like a true poet, is born not made." In his words "A true leader guides not so much by percept as by example; not by calling upon others to make sacrifices and himself doing very little, but by bearing his full share of whatever sacrifices may be necessary for the attainment of the common good." In all respects Sher-e-Bangla was a true leader — a giant among the Titans. His towering frame overshadowed everyone and everything around. But more, much more, than the physical charisma was the vision and the deep humanity that came through and left an indelible impression.

It always made one feel small and humble to be in his towering presence. Dr. T. G. Spear of Cambridge University divided leadership into five types: (1) the natural, (2) the charismatic, (3) the rational, (4) of consensus, and (5) by force. According to him the natural leader is selfless, he is, in fact, not interested in leadership. He exerts himself to the best of his ability and with all the sincerity and devotion under the sun without any expectation of reward. Because of his sincerity he is able to establish a personal bond between himself and his followers. Generally, the cause throws up such a leader, he takes to it as a duck to water.

Dr. Spear cites Napoleon Bonaparte as an outstanding example of a natural leader, the imprint on the sands of time of this 'Child of Destiny' can never be erased. Our beloved comrade, the indomitable champion of truth and justice, was an out and out natural leader. It is true that he was not fated like Napoleon to eat out his heart in exile, or to bury himself during the closing years of his life in bitter memories of a stirring past. In a sense, he had been fortunate in his death, he had been spared the

torment of brooding over the ruin of his ambitions. He warmed both hands, as said the poet, before the fire of life; it sank and he was ready to depart. But Sher-e-Bangla had much in common with the Child of Destiny and even a personality like Qaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah indirectly testified to this observation when he claimed in 1946 that Sher-e-Bangla had met his Waterloo. Free from all narrowness, truthful in thought, fearless in action, meek as a lamb, but a Lion in spirit as he was, Sher-e-Bangla embodied the highest qualities that a man might desire. Like Napoleon, he was also a patriot, an idealist man of action, a dreamer of dreams. A review of his career reads like a romance; it seems unbelievable that a man so daring, so adventurous, so bold, so reckless of consequences, and yet so intensely practical, should have arisen in this benighted land of ours. Yet a study of his life will show that "the elements" were —

So mixed in him that
Nature might stand up
And say to all the world,
'This was a man'.

Like a genuine natural leader, he had always been wedded to his ideals and in his passionate and ardent desire to realise them, he unhesitatingly lighted upon truths that "perish never". He never bothered about creating any effect. He took up a cause if it came naturally to him and worked for it always with genuine sincerity and devotion, indomitable courage and conviction befitting a natural leader of the first water.

In a letter written to the then Governor of Bengal Sir John Herbert on the 2nd August, 1942 he had the courage and conviction and foresightedness to demand a separate Bengali Army and wrote. "I want you to consent to the formation of a Bengali Army consisting of hundred thousand young Bengalis consisting of Hindu and Muslim youths on a fifty-fifty basis. There is

an insisted demand for such a step being taken at once, and the people of Bengal will not be satisfied with any excuses. It is a national demand which must be immediately conceded.

He also pointed out in the same letter, "Administrative measures must be suited to the genius and traditions of the people and not fashioned according to the whims and caprices of hardened bureaucrats to many of whom autocratic ideas are bound up with the very breath of their lives."

A natural leader of dauntless spirit he was, he never cared a button for his personal security and safety to bring a person to book whatever might be the rank and status of the person concerned. Even the Governor of Bengal was reprimanded in writing by this fearless representative of the people.

In February, 1943 he made a statement in the capacity of Chief Minister of Bengal. On the floor of the Bengal Legislative Assembly regarding the then Government's policy on Midnapore Affairs. Sir John A. Herbert, the Governor of Bengal, could not relish the statement and in a letter written to the Sher-e-Bangla on the 15th February, 1943, he demanded, "I shall expect an explanation from you at your interview tomorrow morning of your conduct in failing to consult me before announcing what purports to be the decision of the Government."

This indecent letter very naturally found Sher-e-Bangla in fume and in a befitting reply sent on the 16th February, the Tiger of Bengal roared:

"Dear Sir John,

In reply to your letter of the 15th February, 1943, I write to say that I owe you no explanation whatever in respect of my conduct in failing to consult you before announcing what according to you is the decision of the Government, but I only owe you a duty — a mild *অমেরিকার সুচির মেরুদণ্ডের বাল্লোরোস* — as

been used in your letter under reply should, in future, be avoided in any correspondence between the Governor and his Chief Minister."

What is more, he did not even hesitate to rebuke and bring to book the then journalists for their passive roles and cowardice attitude. Reminding them of the daring roles of great dare-devil journalists like Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Motilal Ghosh Surendra Nath Banerjee, he declared on the floor of the Bengal Legislative Assembly on the 27th February, 1944: "They were lions in their own days and we have got the descendants of the lions of Indian journalism in our midst today. But the difference between the two classes of lions is very significant. Those were lions whose roars used to reverberate from Bengal across the seven seas to the homes of the British nation, but in the case of present lions they are as docile as lions in a circus show. The roar of the lions of old used to make throne and wag their tails in approbation of Government policy." No other politician in the history of this sub-continent ever had the guff to rebuke the journalists in such a forceful language.

But it was not only this defiant spirit and indomitable courage which marked him out from the average run of stalwarts in the unusually bright and colourful Indian political firmament, but his brilliant wit and remarkable sense of humour, occasionally ably supported by his thorough grasp of mathematics, together with unparalleled ability to gather up complexity and transmute it to simplicity also endeared him to the masses.

When Dr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, himself a renowned parliamentarian, urged upon the Chief Minister to change the angle of vision regarding a particular ticklish issue, Sher-e-Bangla promptly replied that it was not his but the angle of