

My Patches of Disquiet

Waheedul Haque

things all of them, super-efficiently designed for equally efficient performance. And by the way or as a matter of course, things having beauty very special to each one of them.

On the Bijoy Sarani-Lake Road junction on a rather stylishly reclined pedestal is reposed an elegant weapon of destruction, poised as if to soar. Why did they put it there and in a position that the Sabre jet was as if embarking on a straining mission on the Jatiya Sangsad or may be to buzz away or dog-fight bombers come to hit the Parliament? A supersonic jet is of necessity a thing of beauty. Why did they put it up there — to beautify the spot? But a mass produced thing coming out of the conveyor assembly line is not art, however elegant it may look. Specially if in the making of the thing a mind hasn't gone into it to express the person a constituting that mind. It is not art that our sight gets obstructed by on that Monipuri Para crossroads. What then it is and why is it there for and

what it is doing occupying space and rather vitiating a wonderful verdant milieu rich with such a rich array-trees of Kanchan, Segun, Mahogany, Ashvattha and what not?

It is specially repulsive because, more than being an instrument of death and violence, it is not a war trophy fallen to us as part of a victorious engagement. Do we make jet fighters or any kind of aeroplanes — what are we then exhibiting an American war machine in public for? Does it in any way reflect our culture or history or anything we take a lot of pride in? Yes, we have been ruled by unformed people come usurping state-power straight from the barracks off and on right from Ayub to Ershad. That does not mean we are a militaristic society and those spans of kidnapped people's power were anything we would want to hark back to. You want to educate people about flying war machines? Well, there are so many things to educate the public mind, why choose this one? You were in a quandary as

to what to do about your flying machines gone out of commission? By all means place these in a museum for military hardware.

One thing is true. That spot cries for a piece of sculpture — one of those big outdoor modern things, heights of man's manipulating three-dimensional space into a unique creation. We want to build a world free of machines of violent conflict and our public exhibition of things may not be a dangerous gloating over on a false and deadly warring streak that lies dormant in every man — veritably as a *wasusasa* of the *kharunas*.

It was once rumoured that the authorities planned to put all of such non-flying war-birds on similar pedestals in a similar manner of celebrating them. Evidently they have changed their mind. Many thanks for that. And if this foolish thing on, to come to think of it, Bijoy Sarani, the Victory Avenue — and having absolutely nothing to do with our victory in 1971, is removed under any plea, my thanks would transform into regular gratitude.

Until that good event, this Sabre would continue to be a perennial source of disquiet for me.

their herds of goats and cows by the river edge. The last of the paddy before the monsoon was being harvested and gathered in by ant-like teams of workers across the endless now browning plain.

Our driver was anxious to be away once we landed. "Our journey from Rajshahi in the north west had already been eight hours and Dhaka was still two hours ahead. Buses had priority and the 'urging' trucks blocked our disembarkation at the Aricha Ghat.

By the front ramp of the ferry the driver narrowly missed a woman squatting by the ferry's gates. Perhaps no more the 20, her face was radiantly beautiful in the afternoon sun. Not a line on her forehead, her long black hair tied back in a twist with a piece red cotton. Her large brown eyes had a gentle serene smile that showed no bitterness.

As the van lurched up the ramp in a rush to be away, I turned only to realise it was the woman in red who shuffled through the mechanical canyons on her twisted legs seeking small tips or 'backshis'. Her home was the ferry deck.

The intersection of hopelessness, unfulfilled dreams and tragedy crashed through my very being for the woman on the deck. I strained my view back through the dusty windows of the van to see no more than the black shadow of the ferry in the afternoon sun, an image of a beautiful woman and a sense of despair.

Death came close from the oncoming night coaches that gave not an inch as they raced along the northern road from Dhaka. The roar from their engines and piercing blasts from their air horns were but a blur through the emotional tangle of anger, despair and frustration in which I languished.

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plaque that sums up what may be the fundamental significance of Apollo:

"Here man completed his first exploration of the moon, December 1972 A.D. May the spirit of peace in which we came be reflected in the lives of all mankind."

Photos are from US National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

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Apollo had another effect on human thinking. "Never did I hear, 'Well, you Americans finally did it,'" Collins says. "Always it was 'we', we human beings drawn together for one fleeting moment watching two of us walk the alien surface."

Apollo 17's moon walkers, Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan, thus far the last humans on the moon, left a

Recalling Moulvi Mujibur Rahman, the Illustrious Editor of *The Mussalman*

by Anisuzzaman

"THE nationality we contemplate for India will be of a new and novel type. It will not be uniform but multiform. It will be a web of many different strands; and in order that we may make a stable and durable fabric of it we must see that each one of its component elements may attain its maximum strength, durability and vigilance." This could have been said by any thoughtful Indian today, but the quotation is taken from the editorial that appeared in *The Mussalman* on 20 January 1925.

Very few people now remember *The Mussalman* or its illustrious editor, Moulvi Mujibur Rahman. A man of high integrity and character, Mujibur Rahman spent his life for the cause of freedom of India, for Hindu-Muslim unity, for the upliftment of Muslim community in Bengal and for upholding the dignity of the press. *The Mussalman* was founded with a view to organise Muslim public opinion against the partition of Bengal and Mujibur Rahman worked ceaselessly to that end. He was in politics — in the Indian National Congress, the Khilafat Committee, and the Muslim League, but wherever he was, he did all that he could do for the unity of the Indian people. For over 30 years he was active in journalism and his contribution to the field was acknowledged when he was elected in 1927 the President of the All India Journalists' Association. He never compromised his position as a journalist even at the cost of refraining his weekly from publication. He suffered imprisonment but never lost his dignity — he was a man among men ever in prison.

Mujibur Rahman was born

in Nehalpur in the district of 24 Parganas in 1869. Having passed the Entrance examination, at which he obtained a stipend of Rs 10, he came to Calcutta and got himself admitted to the FA class in the Presidency College, but his financial circumstances put an end to his formal studies. After a brief spell of work at home he returned to Calcutta and opened a stationery shop in the Bowbazar area. It was at this time that a correspondence he made to *The Bengalee*, edited by Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925), drew attention of many including the well-known Congress leader, Abdul Rasul, Bar-at-Law (1872-1917). When Abdul Rasul decided to bring out an English weekly, with the cooperation of Abul Kasem (1872-1936) of Burdwan and Abdul Halim Ghaznavi (1879-1956) of Tangail, he invited Mujibur Rahman to become its manager. *The Mussalman* appeared on 7 December 1906 with Abul Kasem as its editor. After a month and a half Mujibur Rahman was asked to take over the editorship.

Mujibur Rahman supported the anti-partition movement, so he did not find many Muslim subscribers for his paper. On the other hand, those non-Muslims who shared his view would not subscribe because of the weekly's nomenclature. His views brought him in conflict with the government several times. On 23 November 1913 the office of the weekly was searched and seven different issues were forfeited. On 13 November 1914 *The Mussalman* published an editorial entitled "England, Turkey and Indian Mussalman". It was wartime

and the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal who found the editorial objectionable, warned the editor in writing. In 1918 the Chief Secretary was led to believe that the editor "has acted or is about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety" and directed him to "abstain from publishing any part of the said paper without first submitting the manuscript of the same to the Special Mohammedan Press Censor, Bengal". Mujibur Rahman refused to comply with and the periodical ceased to publish in the next five weeks when the government released it.

His participation in the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements led to his arrest on 9 December 1921. During his trial he refused to answer questions put to him by the prosecution lest that should be an act of cooperation with the government. He is said to have even refused to say whether his name was Mujibur Rahman. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and was released on 31 December 1922. In prison he recorded his experience (later published as "Jel Jivaner Dalir"), was extremely reluctant to exchange civilities with jail visitors, like Sir Abdul Rahim (1867-1952), for their British connection, and saw to it that other political prisoners, too, maintained discipline and self-respect. During his imprisonment the circulation of his paper fell from 1900 to 900. After his release, the circulation was regained and from 20 January 1925 the frequency of its publication was changed to three times a week (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays). He also brought out a Bengali

weekly, *The Khadem*, in 1926. Mujibur Rahman is said to have been the Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee and the Khilafat Committee, the Secretary of the Provincial Muslim League and the Chairman of the Reception Committee of All India Muslim League Conference in Calcutta in 1927. He was elected an Alderman in 1931, but refused to seek election to Provincial Council or Assembly, because members elected were obliged to take an oath of allegiance to the British government.

After the death of Abdul Rasul, the *Mussalman* Publishing Company was established in Calcutta in 1925-26 with Wazed Ali Khan Panni of Karatia (1869-1936), Mujibur Rahman, Syed Nasim Ali (later Justice), Nurul Huq Chowdhury (later a Cabinet Minister of Pakistan), Mohammad Azim (zamindar and merchant) and Ashrafuddin Chowdhury (Minister for Education in the United Front government in East Pakistan) as Directors. On 8 July 1932 *The Mussalman* was made a daily. Differences of opinion developed among the Directors, or between the editor and other Directors later on. Mujibur Rahman resigned in 1935 and joined the weekly *Comrade*, founded by Maulana Mohammad Ali (1878-1931). *The Mussalman* ceased to publish probably in 1936. Mujibur Rahman suffered, in 1937, a paralytic attack which incapacitated him and he died in Calcutta on 26 April 1940.

Mujibur Rahman was a bachelor. He was a champion of female education. He was against all kinds of orthodoxy. One of the things that gave him pleasure in prison was to see that the barriers of un-

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A Woman of the Decks

by Edward Booth



THEY came aboard like a grinding multi-coloured centipede. The long queues of over-laden cargo trucks with their exhausts belching black fumes roll into the steel tunnel of the ferry. They came with the grey dust from the 'char' waste lands along the river, tattered tyres and dripping sump oil.

The human cylinders of the long distance buses also came. Their underbellies no different from their cousin trucks. Their human cargo oozing from every window and crumpling the roof of each bus, flush to the level of the ferry's superstructure. From their occupants came all manner of human mucus, offal and litter.

The decks of the BIWFS ferry shuddered as the engines at full throttle pulled the craft into the grey turbid waters of the mighty Jamuna. Hourly, the richness of the northern lands from the Himalayas to the fertile plains of Bangladesh

are washed south in suspension to silt the river estuaries and the Bay of Bengal.

Under the fierce (43 degree) mid-afternoon sun the black ferry decks absorbed the incessant heat and cooked the accumulated cocktail of mechanical and human residue. A patchwork of black umbrellas shaded some of the bus-roof travellers. The cooler breeze from the ferry's downstream speed contrasted with the listless dusty heat-haze which enveloped the landing ghat.

From the first class lounge, ten metres above the deck, the refreshing breeze complemented the partially warm, but not quite chilled Coke. Only God, the captain and the bridge staff were above us. The green line of the flood plain stretched as a convex to the west and north. To the south was the Padma and Jamuna junction, the confluence of the two great rivers of the subcontinent.

in the canyons between the trucks and buses a woman in a tatty red dress dragged herself along the deck on her twisted legs. She looked up to the bus windows and those who squeezed between the vehicles seeking alms. She shuffled slowly, unable to avoid the beetle nut spit, banana peel and pools of the hot black oily cocktail that coated the deck.

What type of hell is this, I pondered as I sipped the Coke and clicked my Nikon. The billowing brown patchwork sails of the slender river boats gave them a poetic yet frail form against the steady throb of the diesel engines and angular force of the ferry. Compared to the road, the ferry leg of our journey was a pleasant and tranquil interlude through an apparently timeless and painless landscape.

Huge slabs of the rich-grey alluvial banks were seen to crumble and be swallowed into the river. Small boys tended

America's Lunar Walk at 25

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About 19 minutes after Armstrong demonstrated that a human could walk safely on the moon, Buzz Aldrin joined him on the surface. The two men set up a television camera, planted an American flag, collected soil and rock samples, and deployed scientific experiments. President Richard Nixon telephoned from the White House, noting, "this certainly has to be the most historic telephone call ever made."

Dignitaries watching ranged from the Dalai Lama, flight pioneer Charles Lindbergh and Queen Elizabeth II to Italian actress Gina Lollobrigida, who announced: "Nothing in show business will ever top what I saw on television today!" At Yankee Stadium in New York, 34,000 spectators applauded as umpires halted the baseball game to announce that the Eagle had landed. In Wollongong, Australia, a local judge brought in a television to watch the moon expedition during trials. Laplanders herded reindeer with transistor radios at their ears. A thousand Poles gathered in the lobby of the US embassy in Warsaw to cheer the touchdown. Milanese police reported that crime dropped to one-third normal, apparently because criminals, too, were watching the moon expedition. India's Parliament gave Apollo a standing ovation.

In the end, of course, Armstrong and Aldrin successfully blasted off from the moon and rejoined Michael Collins in the Command Module. And all

three explorers returned safely to Earth. "One of my proudest recollections of Apollo 11 was that the three of us did not jobs well," Michael Collins would say.

Six more Apollo crews landed on the moon in the next two-and-a-half years. Each expedition explored new territory, covered a bit more terrain, brought home more specimens. The final three expeditions even hotrodded across the moon in a motorized buggy, raising clouds of dust.

Busy astronauts, jouncing in their white spacesuits, turned the moon into an al fresco laboratory, studded with devices to measure everything from the solar wind to lunar magnetism and moonquakes.

Scientists hoped rocks brought back from the moon would settle the issue of the moon's origin — did it condense from gases in space at about the same time as the Earth? Alternatively, was it an interstellar wanderer captured by the Earth's gravity? Or was it a broken-off chunk of the Earth itself? It has turned out that rocks seem to favour none of the three theories. Where did the moon come from? As Michael Collins puts it, "frustrated scientists work on."

Technologically, the space programme changed the world. It boosted the development of computers, electronics and new materials. Satellites have altered communications, navigation, weather forecasting and our ability to study the earth,

whether ecologically, geologically or archaeologically. Yet Apollo's chief impact may be on human thinking.

People around the world now say: "If we can put a man on the moon..." As Kraft noted, Apollo showed that "we can do anything we set our mind to do."

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A FRAGMENT OF THE MOON — Displays of moon rocks, such as the one shown here, became immensely popular museum artifacts in the months after the Apollo 11 lunar landing.

Allied Air Forces : Eastern Air Command

Sl. No.	1944	Sorties Flown				Bombs dropped tons	Supplies delivered forward tons	Men carried	Aircraft Al	Types
		Fighter Offensive	Fighter Air Defence	Bombers	Transport					
1.	June	2,760	1,783	680	9,324	982	21,293	11,792	6,673	51

Summary of Air Operation, June 1944

curred in the Burma front on June 20, when the British Fourteenth Army broke through the encirclement of Imphal and opened the road to Kohima. Lieutenant General Count Mataguchi commanding Japanese Fifteenth Army ordered his forces to withdraw, having suffered 30,000 casualties. Allied forces suffered 2,669 casualties and 10,000 wounded in the Manipur campaign.

There were two VC (Victoria Cross) awarded in June in the Burma front:

1. Sjt. Hanson Victor Turner, VC 4624899, The West Yorkshire Regt. On the night of June 6/7 Sjt. Turner died in the battle. He was awarded VC. The citation read, "In Burma, at Nighthoukang, on the night of 6th-7th June, 1944, an attack was made by the Japanese with medium and light machine guns. The attack largely fell on the position held by a platoon of which Sergeant Turner was one of the section commanders. The enemy were able to use grenades with deadly effect. Three machine guns in the platoon were destroyed and the platoon was forced to give ground. Sergeant Turner with coolness and fine leadership reorganised his troops and with doggedness and spirit of endurance of highest order re-

Allmand, however, charged on by himself, hurling grenades into the enemy gun positions and killing three Japanese with his kukri. Inspired by this action the surviving men of his platoon attained their objective. On 23rd June, in the final attack on the railway bridge at Mogaung, despite trench-feet, Captain Allmand moved forward alone and charged a machine-gun post single handedly. He was mortally wounded and died shortly afterwards.

The superb gallantry, outstanding heroism of this very brave officer was a wonderful example to the whole battalion and highest tradition of his regiment."

RAF Station Cox's Bazar was commissioned in the first week of June, 1944. On the day of the opening a grand party was arranged. Hundreds of nurses from the hospitals in the offshore islands and members of the Women Auxiliary Air Force were present in great numbers. The party was roaring.

In the bamboo hut officers mess bar a young Indian major and an young RAF squadron leader were sitting side by side having a drink. Something in the ribbons of the squadron leader looked rather uncommon to the major. He looked carefully and exclaimed, "God

tie down part of a Japanese fleet. The task force returned to Colombo without suffering any loss. On 19th June Vice Adm. Power, commanding TF-66 based in Colombo conducted operation 'Pedal' a carrier raid on Port Blair with carrier *Illustrious*, the battle cruiser *Renown* and the French battleship *Richelieu* with a light escort force. Eight Corsairs and 15 Barracuda of fighter bombers attacked the airfield and the harbour. Two aircraft were lost to ground fire.

In the Strait of Mulaeca and in the Bay of Bengal, Royal Navy submarine *Stoick*, under Lt. Marriot sank two ships of 4141 tons and six small craft: *Tantalus* under Lt. Cdr. Mackenzie sank one ship of 536 tons; *Truculent* under Lt. Alexander sank one ship of 3040 tons; *Spiteful* under Lt. Sherwood sank one small ship; and the Dutch submarine *K-XIV* torpedoed a Japanese minelayer and damaged it, under Lt. Cdr. V. Hoof.

It should be mentioned that the year before on 26th April, German U Boat U 180 under Cdr. Musenberg at a point south of Mauritius transferred Indian Nationalist leader Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to Japanese submarine 129 under Cdr. Izu who brought him to Penang.