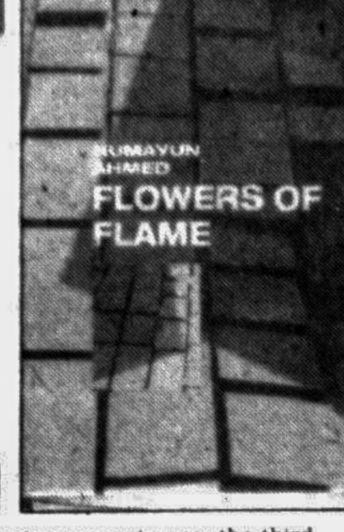
# Reflections from Literature\_

Excerpts from **Humayun Ahmed's** novel Aaguner Paroshmoni Translated by Mahjabeen Hussain



I was the sixth of July, nineteen seventy-one, the third day of the week. It was a dreadful year - a helpless city in the savage grips of the Pakistani army - its helpless. unprotected people drowned in darkness as if in a blackhole a city exhausted by seemingly endless days and endless nights.

Badiul Alam stood at the gate. He had entered the city accompanied by a group of seven boys. The guerilla operation was to be led by him. He was a slender boy wearing a light blue short-sleeved shirt. His large protruding eyes were hidden behind spectacles. Wiping his forehead with a handkerchief he called out again. "Mr Matin! Mr Matin!"

Matin came out. For a long time, he stood staring at the boy in silent wonder. He is merely a boy! Is he the person, he was expecting?

"I am Badiul Alam"

Come in, son."

Matin uttered these few words choked with emotion. His eyes tilled with tears. He was overjoyed. "How are you?" He enquired in a strained voice.

I in fine.

"Don't you have anything with you?"

"Nothing at all!"

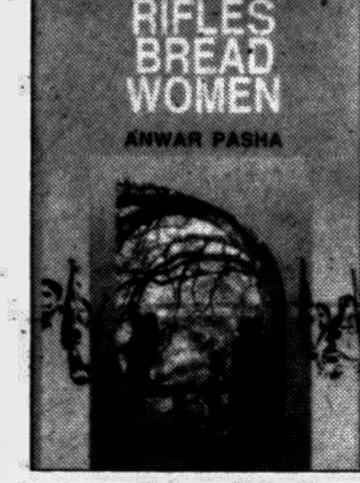
Drawing aside the curtain; Shurma stood near the door staring at the boy.

Come in. come inside. Why are you hesitating?" Matin said. The gate is locked, you've to open it!"

Oh! I see." Matin was embarrassed. The gate is usually locked up at five thirty in the evening. The keys are with Shurma. She brought them. These days we lock the gate. It's not that we are afraid of burglary. It's infrequent nowadays. I wonder how these burglars

are surviving these days. They must be very miserable!" he said. Badiul Alam stepped into the living-room. Matin observed that the boy had absolutely no curiosity. He merely sat on the sofa comfortably, not even caring to look around. Matin continned to talk about himself. "I and my wife have been staying here for a while by ourselves. We have two daughters - 'Ratri' and Apala. They are staying with their aunt and will return on

Excerpts from Anwar Pasha's novel Rifle Roti **Aurat Translated** Kabir Chowdhury



OW serene, soft and affectionate was that voice! Was he the same man, the iron-man Sheikh Mujib of two weeks later. Exactly two weeks after the 21st February. The thunder voice on 7th March, heard at the Ramna Race Course. Standing at the foot of the devastated Shaheed Minar Sudipta again remembered that voice. He had been remembering it time and again since yesterday. Had any Bengali ever heard that voice before? Perhaps he had, some time from the lips of Shashanka, of Hussein Shah, or of Shirajodwola's general Mohon Lal. And the other day from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Netaji's words had gone in vain. But, Bangobandhu, you efforts won't. We shall not allow them to go in vain. Didn't all those who had gone to the Ramna Race Course on the 7th of March become completely different persons for all their lives to come? At least Sudipta had become so. He never dabbled in politics. But after he had seen the magnificent spectacle and heard the speech of Bangobandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Ramna Race Course on the 7th of March all his heart andsoul and all the particles of his blood had consolidated into a firm resolve and blossomed forth into a sunflower. An evershining sunflower longing for liberty.

Our struggle this time is the struggle for freedom..... The

fight this time is the fight for independence.... Sudipta stood still while others moved on. But while every

Monday. My sister has no children. Sometimes she takes home Apala and Ratri. They are also very fond of their aunt." Badiul Alam gazed fixedly without uttering a word. Matin lelt

"How's everything?" he asked clearing his throat.

"Pardon?" "The last place you were in. How is the situation there?"

"We can't understand anything, for we are in a strange position. It is as if we are in the belly of a tiger. There's no way of knowing what the tiger is doing. We will remain ignorant until the tiger is dead. We can come out only after it's dead."

LTHOUGH he was ready, Matin did not go to work. He had dressed up and even left the house uttering Yah Mukaddemu ten times. On reaching the third gate of Pilkhana, a ghastly scene struck him stone-dead. In a lorry two minor boys with hands tied at the back were being taken away. Their faces were expressionless. One of them had a black eye. Part of his face had swollen up horribly. A gang of militia men dressed in black surrounded them. One of them, every now and then, was striking the heads of the two boys with a handkerchief while the others burst into laughter intermittently.

The lorry was running so the sight was visible for not more than one and a half minute. But to Matin these minutes seemed an eternity. There was something gruesome about the whole thing. Matin felt dizzy and his legs became wobbly. It was not he alone who felt this way for the people around him suddenly seemed somewhat shaken. Matin thought, had it been a sight of the boys being beaten, as they were taken away, he might not have felt this way. It shook him because of the way they made fun of the boys with the handkerchief. He headed back towards

"Aren't you going to the office?" said Idris, the paanwala. "Not feeling well. Give me a paan."

Though he didn't need to have one still he had. At such a time, people tend to do and say unnecessary things. This they do to overcome fear but it doesn't help. The fear deepens as each day passes.

HE man who gripped Ashfaq's right hand was round faced. How strange was it for a man to have round face ! It seemed as if it was drawn by a compass. His hands too were soft as a lady's. He placed a stick, the size of a pencil, in between, two of his fingers. Ashfaq thought this was happening in a dream but not in reality; the round faced manwas playing with his hand. He himself did not realize that he was howling like an animal. Had anyone split up his hand? What was happening? What were they doing? The pain was absolutely tormenting. He screamed for the second time and lost consciousness. Major Raqib looked at Ashfaq. How handsome he looked with a sharp nose, resembling Nadeem.

"Ashfaq, you seem to have regained consciousness. That's good. The car is here. Let's go or do you want to have a cup of coffee before leaving?"

Ashfaq stared at him. The man was not as tall as Nadeem, but a bit shorter. He would measure five feet eight inches approximately.

"Ashfaq, you know their address, don't you?"

one took out his handkerchief and wiped off his tears Sudipta let his flow down his cheeks, oblivious of his surroundings, as he gazed at the ruins of the Shaheed Minar with pained eyes. He remembered Barkat and Salam. They were is students at one time. Many memories of his life were woven with theirs. The memory of Barkat's sobbing old mother came to his mind. She was not merely the mother of Barkat alone. She was the symbol of helpless Mother Bengal of millions of Bengalees. You had no right to teach you children your own tongue; your children had no right to lead their lives in their own way in your cool mango groves; foreigners would rob you of your wealth and exploit you to death while your children would have no right to protect you. Tagore had truly observed - Our mother was the daughter of the gods but she did not have the power of the gods. She loved us but was unable to protect us .... But, oh mother, your children have now grown up. There could be no question of protecting them now. We shall protect you now.

> "Hello, Sudip!". Turning around he saw Firoz. He was waving to him from his

HE road was deserted; not a soul could be seen any where; from time to time you saw shell-shattered homes, L dead human bodies, charred and gutted homesteads victims of fire - once you saw a few such sights there was no variety any more. Was there any variety in destruction? There was endless variety only in creation. And yet there seemed to be an unearthly attraction in watching those monotonous scenes of insane destruction.

There was a row of little shops set up by people of lower middle class. Not a great deal of asset was needed to run these enterprises. However, they managed to eke out their living on the strength of this business. But now the army had burnt down all those shops.

In the big yard of a house fenced off by walls they saw at least twentyfive to thirty cars badly damaged by fire. There was a workshop on the premises for maintenance and servicing of

A rickshaw with the dead driver still on the driving seat lay askew on one side of the road. It was apparent that they had shot him as he was trying to run away in his rickshaw, whose handle he still held in his loose grip.

Oh. the pity of it! Look, the dead body of a young boy still hang from the branch of a tree. He had seen the tree with large

litterateur is an inhabitant of a

particular country and society

he leaves in. Though he is very

lone in his creative world or

arena at the time of his literary

pursuits and creations, the lit-

terateur is also a member of

the greater society. And for

this reason, in the creative and

other works of the litterateur,

not only, personal feelings joys

and sorrows are depicted, but

also the reflections of the

greater social-minds embodies.

Though the litterateur is the

resident of his personal world,

yet as a member of the society

he is also identified with it and

he has to keep close affinity

with the social environ, and

also to contribute something

directly or indirectly to the

social progress unless he lives

in the ivory tower and believes

in the philosophy of art for

or it is a truism that, a country

and a nation eventually grows

through the ages with the so-

cial evaluation that takes place

in particular geographical ar-

eas and demarcated lands.

There remains the background

and trends of age-old history

and tradition as active agents

or ingredients behind the for-

mation of the nation compris-

ing of one or more social

groups. Various factors work in

forming and developing a na-

tion or more than one nation,

particularly with its unique-

ness, race, religion, cultural

There is no denying the fact

art's sake.

"A few of them, not all."

"That'll do. The whole thing is like a spider's web. If you can trace out one thread then the whole web can be found out. Ashlag !

"Yes.

"Let's start." "I won't tell you anything."

"Nothing at all?"

'Only two of your fingers have been broken. You have eight more left

won t say a word

You are not in your senses now. Sometimes when the torture is excessive, a person is not in his right mind. Cool down. Take some coffee .. cigarette, then we'll have a talk ... or do you want to have something solid? Beef curry and paratha?"

Ashfaq did not speak. He gazed at his left hand, it had swollen up within a few seconds. Was it really his own hand? He ate the paratha and beef curry quite eagerly. He didn't realize, that he was so hungry.

· The curry was very hot. It was delicious. That the West Pakistanis like hot curry was unknown to him.

Ashfaq !" 'Yes'

Want some more?"

"How about coffee?"

I want a poun.

"Can't get any, the shops are all closed because of the curfew. Have you got cigarette? If not tell me

Yes. I have. Then let's go.

Where?"

"You'll tell me who your friends are and lead me to their houses." Ashfaq lit up a cigarette, single handed, with a lot of trouble. He took a puff and took some time to exhale. It tasted good.

"Major.

"I won't say a thing."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing. In any case, you'll kill me. So kill me. But don't torture me. It's not fair to torture.

"Aren't you afraid to die?"

'Yes. I am. But what else can I do? I have no alternative." "There's a way. Help us to catch them. I'll arrange to have you set free. I personally guarantee your freedom."

"Major, this is not possible" "Not possible?"

"Not, it's not."

tion ground.

"I am a human being, not the offspring of a cat or a dog." You a ... human offspring ... ?"

"Yes, don't torture me anymore, kill me. I can't bear torture."

Major Raqib looked at him intently for a long time. He wished to end all the pains of Ashfaq. But that was impossible. The information had to be forced out. This was a spider's web, only a thread had been traced out. The web can be found out too. It had to be discovered. Man is a feeble animal. Major Raqib, after ordering to crush two more fingers of Ashfaq, returned to his

Outside, the rain came down in torrents.

branches covered with thick leaves and taken shelter there. But the soldiers had fired volley after volley of bullets at all the trees with thick, heavy leaves. One of those bullets got him and his dead body, caught among the branches, did not fall down. With head downwards he hang from there still.

And what was here? Oh, yes, a school. And here was the office of a newspaper, a daily. Was, but not any more. The army had wiped it out. Unless one came here it would be hard to believe that destruction could be so total. Beginning from the doors and windows they had burnt into cinders everything every single machine and all papers and files. Only the naked walls somehow stood there like the skeleton in a Hindu crema-

And the whole city of Dhaka was a unique museum of such strange sights.

REE Bengal? Sudipta felt thrilled. They had not noticed Bula quietly come into the room with a transistor raido set. The message of Free Bengal rang out from there. There was no fear any more! Now the message of Free Bengal would scatter all over the sky of Bangladesh. You just placed your ear by the radio set and you could hear it. O the residents of Bengal, listen to that voice! It is still feeble; it has not yet acquired the power to go beyond the sky of this country and reach the skies of distant lands. But would it take it very long to acquire that power?/When the news was over the song "O my golden Bengal, I love you" began. Yes, this love would show the Bengalees their path. Today their armed might could be limited but the wealth of their love was endless. Now with their love and affection armed strength had joined hands. Now the Bengalees would be invincible.

Sudipta went to bed during the small hours of the night. There was a sprawling multi-bed kind of a thing made on the floor. A number of people lay there side by side, one after another, almost as many as the room could hold. Sudipta did not know any one of them. The one he knew most intimately, relatively speaking, was Jamal, and he had made his acquaintance only a few hours ago. Which was quite all right. A new acquaintanceship had just begun. The old life came to an end on the night of the 25th. Ah-let that be true. New men, new friends and a new dawn. How far away were they? Couldn't be very far. There was nothing to fear. It was a matter of this one night, it will be over.

## National Consciousness in Literature

#### The Glittering Stars ITERATURE is the creation of individual or personal mind and efforts and it is the contribution of individual /talent. The

Dedicated to the Martyrs of Liberation War of 1971

### by Najma Jalil

Departed though you are. to a place that is very far,

Oh, valiant sons of the country Everyday you seem to glitter in our memory

But today is the very day, For we recall you on a special way,

Not only with pomp and gaiety, But with pride, honour and dignity

Oh, sons of the soil, how radiant you seem, Shining in the sky like the brilliant stars.

You are present not only in our dreams But always ... everytime ... and in every hour

We fell your touch as light, as the magic wand

In the wind that blows through this land. And your tears of joy in the shower ...

Oh! divine emblems of strength and power,

Light up the whole galaxy.

At this moment of ecstasy

So that we shall have the pleasure Of presenting you with gifts and valuable treasures

Oh true patriots, evergreen as you are, You are the chief source of inspiration Both to our present and future generation.

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#### by Mohammad Mahfuzullah

and linguistic affinities and unity as well as historical growth and development help the growth a nation. Yet, according to some experts, the main element and principal acting force is a sentiment. and an inspiration. And this sentiment is of social oneness and the inspiration is of having a group of human beings sharing common belief in their national life. In fact, behind the concept of nationalism of a group of people or the inhabitants of a country, the feelings, desires and urges for living together work deeply and it could be termed as the familyfeeling in a greater perspective and context. As the nation incorporates a

geographical area and one or more societies, so the literature of the country embraces and reflects the social and national mind also. When a writer delineates the real hopes and aspirations, the sorrows and pathos of his people he eventually gives expression to the national consciousness and the mind of the country too.

Directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, the writer actually gives expressions to the feelings and desires and the sense of unity of the people of the country and their inherent urges for living together, in various shades. forms and technique and as such, national consciousness is aroused and sustained. It should be borne in mind that in the primitive or medieval

ages, the group-consciousness of the people was be taken into consideration as the national consciousness or nationalism (though in that age the term nationalism were not known).

And that group-consciousness or feeling had not been developed within à particular geographical area or under the frame-work of any state-system. But in the modern age the scope and definition of nationalism has not been contained in the limitation of a group, party or race, it has also been spreaded also in the areas of religion, ideology, geographical boundaries. And as such, the areas of the reflection of national consciousness have also been expanded and have gained various dimensions and the delineation of it have naturally become widespread.

To speak briefly, the literature which reflects the national psyche and aspirations and contains the elements of national inspirations could be termed as national literature or the literature of national consciousness. Yet, there is a sharp but discernible difference between national literature and the literature of national consciousness. Because, national literature may not always contain national consciousness. All national literature are not obviously the literature of national consciousness. The literature which

contains or reflects the na-

tional mind, its thoughts.

hopes and aspirations and the spirits of national awareness. could be termed as literature of national consciousness.

In literature, the national consciousness or national aspirations are depicted in the context of different times and perspectives and it is to identify the form and spirit of such literature in the historicals context and perspective too. Like the love for the country. the national consciousness does not grow and thrive always and everywhere in a natural way, rather it has to be aroused and imbibed with various elements consciously and with much effort. And in this particular mission, the litterateurs have something very positive to be performed and particularly the poets can arouse the spirit of national feelings and consciousness by their literary creations contain vigour, exuberance in different forms. Litterateurs and poets can delineate the spirit of national consciousness in such a creative way and masterly manner that their writings may inspire others and create a sense of national unity.

National consciousness means the spirit of searching the identity and history of a nation and the preservation of one's own traditional values and heritage. In this particular task and endeavour, the contribution of creative writers could be very valuable and significant.

The writer is the Executive Director of Nazrul Institute.

#### Two poems by Shamsur Rahman

### Samson

() my power drunk military masters do you imagine your big-shot courtiers and simpering a sycophants will forever remain unscathed? Have you forgotten. O Philistines, how I smashed the skulls of a thousand barbarians with the jawbone of an ass? Surely you know what power lies dormant in my arms. No matter how much blood you shed today, or how widely your courtiers and allies spread terror in the end there will be no respite.

You have gouged out my eyes, put me in chains.

I must go without casting eyes

on full-bodied clouds, ruddy sunsets.

self-important gleaners of leftovers.

Yet I'm well-loved still

the frantic crawl of a child on all fours.

the red lotus-like vouthfulness of maidens.

flowers quivering in the breeze. Infutile frenzy I seek sight in sightlessness. can't tell morning from twilight: if a celestial tree springs to life in the inky dark of this subterranean dungeon its divine loveliness will stay hidden in the stillness. I'm so lonely I've made friends with the mice. For my own fault I'm blind, drained of strength, troubled by nightmares. I must serve time in heavy chains, tripping over them day and night. while you are secure in your seats. I am encircled by enemies, an object of ridicule to your sycophants, jesters,

### Ghost Town

I arrived. I think, in unfamiliar moonlight. Skeletons of horses hang all about, cobwebs cover doorways; melancholy clay figurines scattered haphazardly, rows of empty bottles everywhere, and a such extra ordinary ant-hills in abandoned trucks and buses. But where are you. O women and men, in what distant sphere?

Ten times four and a few more years advances my age, leaving such lonely footprints on the open streets and secret alleys of this city. Whose griefs and sorrows are traced in the lines of my face. I try to leave sorrow behind and find I have entered a deeper sorrow like a primitive disappearing quietly into his cave as daylight ends.

All day this mute city lies stricken by emptiness. Like the emptiness of a match box afterall the powder-tipped matchsticks have burnt out. Who can dream of ever hearing a trombone here? You won't even hear a traffic policeman's warning whistle.

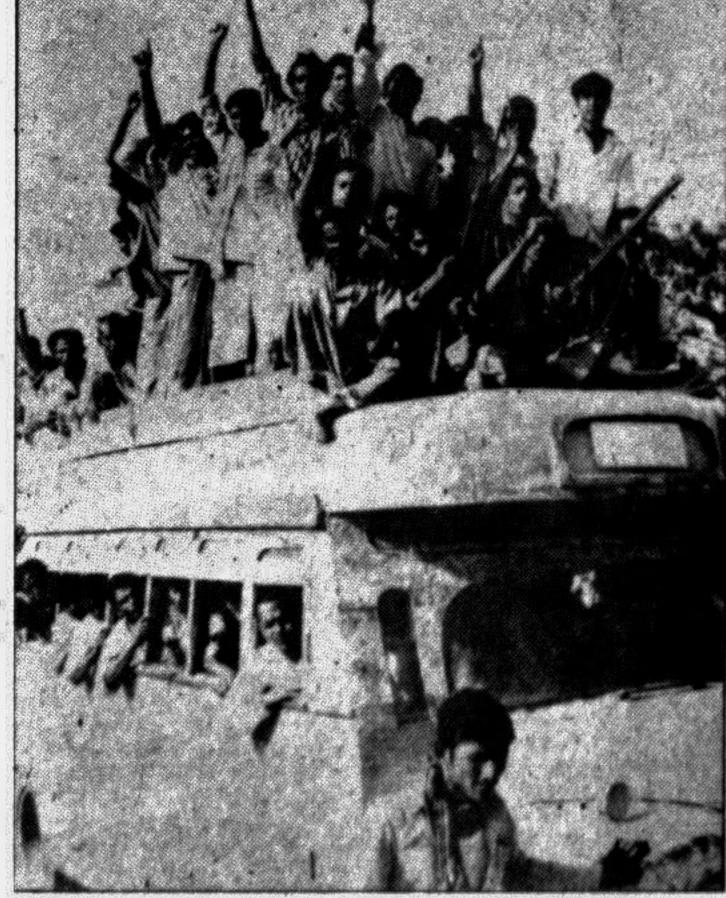
To look upon a ruined city is like a bad attack of high blood pressure. In this harsh solitude the streets heave thick sighs. the trees are like ravaged stone sculpture. Long-tongued silence licks at houses, rows of columns. Like an enraptured lecher licking a woman's thigh. The shadows of the life I didn't live begin in dance in a ghastly ballet. Why do things disappear? Solitude sharpens awareness of transience.

— Translated by Kaiser Haq



Mass upsurge 1969-70

Photo, courtesy-Noazesh Ahmed, Naib Uddin Ahmed



Freedom Jighters entering Dhaka 1971 Photo, Courtesy -Dhaka City Museum, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy