

# TEENS and TWENTIES

## Road To Freedom

WITH the dissolving of the National Assembly, Bangladesh burst out into protests. At press conference that evening, Bangabandhu declared hartal on the 2nd and 3rd of March. It was decided that a public meeting would be held on the 7th of March to declare further programmes. Hartal was observed throughout Dhaka on 2nd March. The historic student rally was held at the Dhaka University. In this rally A.S.M. Abdur Rob hoisted the red and green flag with the golden Bangladesh emblem. It was the first time that the flag was hoisted in public.

That night curfew was imposed throughout Dhaka city. However, people were fond on the streets defying the curfew. There were protests in many places that night, and with it came bloodshed. In Rampura a student leader, Farooq Iqbal, was shot by the army.

Next day, during the country-wide hartal the casualty list in Chittagong reached 400. Casualties were also reported from other parts of the country. That very day Yahya Khan invited ten party leaders to attend a meeting in Dhaka on 10th March. Bangabandhu refused to attend.

In a public meeting on 3rd March, Bangabandhu announced the non-cooperation move-

ment. In this very meeting the creation of an 'Independent Bangladesh' was proclaimed.

In this proclamation, Rabindranath Tagore's 'Amar Sonar Bangla' was selected to be the national anthem of Bangladesh. The proclamation was formulated by the 'Shahin Bangla Chhatra Sangran Parishad'. In 'Amar Mukti-judho', author Dr Rafiqul Islam wrote — 'the proclamation was the first formed implementation of establishing an independent Bangladesh. It was the first time that a specified geographic area was named Bangladesh, for seven crore of its people to live in — and that for the first time a national flag and anthem was selected; so it can be said that the students were the first to materialize the dream of establishing an independent and sovereign Bangladesh.'

In a radio message on 6th March, Yahya called the Bangladeshi rebels 'miscreants' and called for the national assembly to meet on 25th March. Bhutto also announced his willingness to attend the assembly session. That very day the infamous Gen. Tikka Khan of Baluchistan was appointed as the Governor of East Pakistan.

Finally came the long awaited 7th March.

— To be continued

## Caterwhaling For A Teardrop

by Shammi Mohabbat

A dream sequence by Salman Rushdie landed the bechara in *goram pant* so does the young Mohabbat dare unbar his nightmare?

One fine morning I woke up, quite disoriented, during my natural periodic suspension of consciousness, during which the powers of the body are restored, the present political quagmire was juxtaposed onto Herman Melville's classic *Moby Dick*. Hunting the fabulous white Leviathan (allegorical of power in Bangladesh) aboard the ship B.N. PAL (B'desh Navy Peace And Love or BL... Nauseating Political Aggravation Licensees — depending upon your style of analogy), are Captain Ahab/Gregory Peck played by the grim and determined Khaleda-Hasina, and assisted by slow and boorish (partly in white cotton and partly in faded army green khaki) first mate and his (motley) crew.

The munchkin-like crew's sartorial range include black sleeveless jackets, safari suits, military khakis, business suits and student denims and they have a most unhygienic habit of exchanging clothes whenever they feel like. Furthermore they breed amongst themselves, almost incessantly. This may actually be Mother Nature's way of compensating for their generally short life span. Crew members drop like flies probably from a mixture of shock and exhaustion at doing an honest day's work...

Why do I impose my nightmares on my readers? All people dream during their sleep, and it's just a question of whether you remember them or not once awake. Due to excessive day dreaming or perhaps the general dream-like charmed life I lead (conceived in the spring, born on a Friday on a cusp about six-thirtyish in the evening, the clock hands bowed in unison to herald my coming) or maybe a jinx or hex, I have not had a dream for over seven years. Then again I could be just tuned to the wrong frequency. However, for the ones battling for power could this be a bad omen? Strange portents are in the air when the dreamless have visions.

In the medieval ages, scholars, mystics, and scientists tried through the use of their learning and wisdom to achieve alchemy: turning base metal into gold. Due to distortions induced by time, climate, syllabus (?) and diet, the aim of our dethi alchemists seems to be, convert *Shunar Bangla* to *Luhar Bangla*.

A few parties back, I was told the intriguing story of a Bangladeshi entry winning highly prestigious Cat shows throughout the US and Europe. Western society's finest had of course invested much by way of time, energy and effort into producing the most exquisite pure-breeds: Burmese, Siamese, Pekingese, Persian, whatnot. The owner being questioned over how his cat from Bangladesh could beat the best the world had to offer replied: 'Actually it's a tiger.'

Once my initial giggling fit had passed and I had read further between the lines, a far humbler side of the anecdote became apparent. It highlights how our country is under a mediocrity curse in all aspects: social, cultural, and economic, all related to the doublehelix downward spiral of population, education, malnutrition etc.

All of these symptoms of 25 years of stagnation and possible future damnation, mirror inherent wrongness in the political system — unfortunately, also intimately linked to all the above mentioned problems. Worst of all politics strategies, garrottes, pours poison through the ear, and absolutely massacres humour.

The present situation is frankly ridiculous: a nation of 120 million held at hostage while a relative handful have intercourse. It would need no Marquez or Grass to metamorphose this into potential Nobel prize winning material. However given the grotesque

and rule policies some may argue, 50 years, a half-century has been spent to show that politics is all about the party faithful fulfilling their love of lucre by any means necessary and contaminating all that they influence. The balances of power and compromises required to govern is in effect a subjugation of the will of the people and designed for corruption and injustice.

I think Sheikh Mujib tried to overcome his Frankenstein through the formation of BAK-SAL, Indira Gandhi, smelling the same flowers gave India Emergency and Urdu-totting generals martialled law in the land of the pure. While staunchly believing in Action's Law that absolute power corrupts absolutely, I also however loathe... democracy. Radical statement or what. Taken into context my deep-rooted liberalism, its indeed a giant leap for Shammi and a small step for mankind. The bottom line is that the people just want to

more to the screens to find out what is going on. I normally being a pacifist, however have an instinctive reaction to gratuitously clank over the head and cause permanent grievous bodily harm to anyone who expresses opinions which by their ignorance and crassness point to the influence of CNN. The pretty pictures are fine but the reportage and depth deficient commentary plus intelligence insulting selfhype and total lack of pretence of being impartial America should have kept CNN to itself. BBC while more subtly manipulative is easier to get on with and much less patronising. Digression endeth.

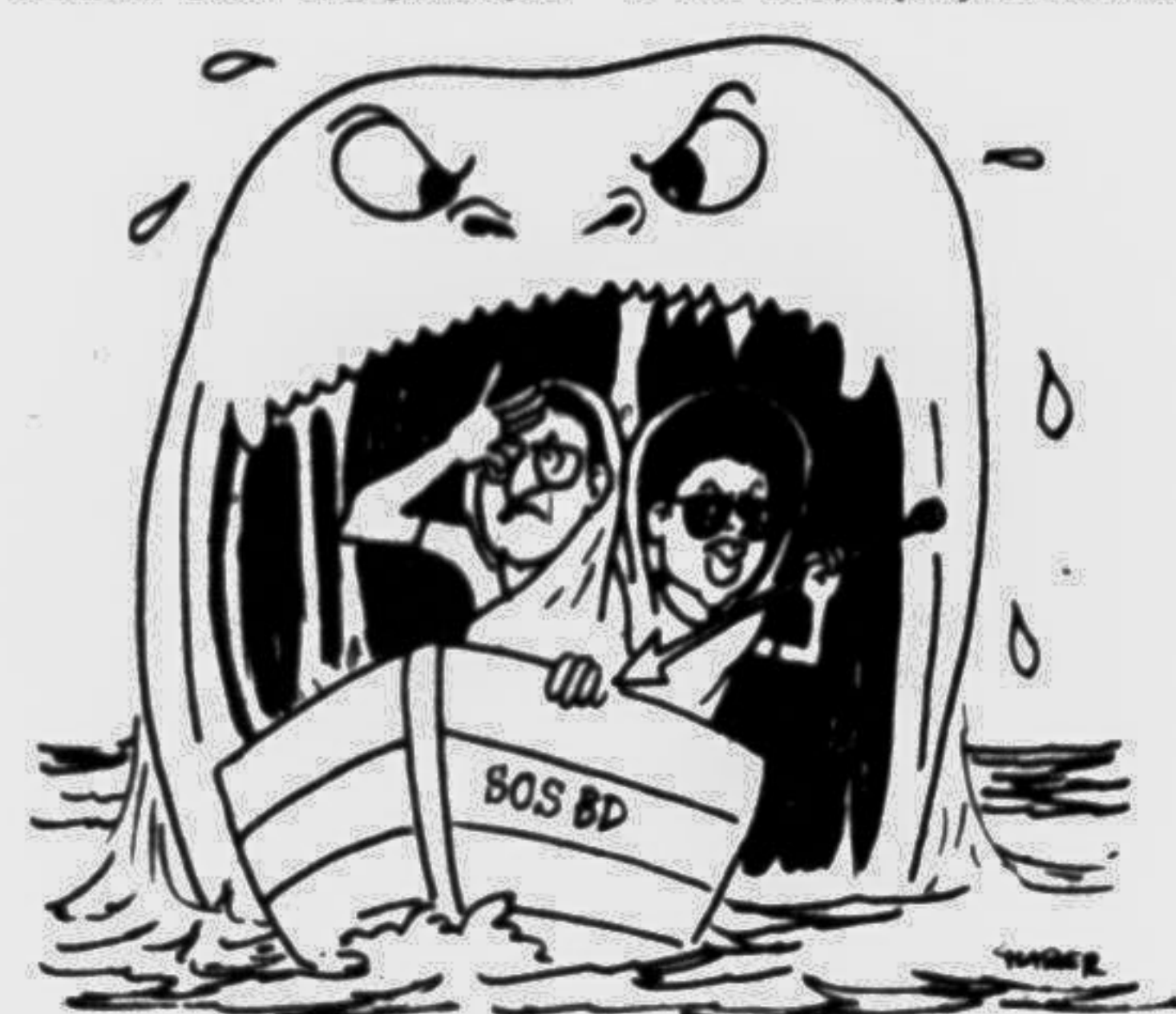
Why do feelings of hate flow so easily from pen of one whose name is literally love? Basically the strange quirks of fate have made me a creature whose temperament is directly affected by the climate. A huge irony for one destined to live his life in a land of six seasons. A recipe for a schizophrenia of truly whale-like proportions. In the torrid summer months crushed by a vicious combination of humidity and stifling heat dark dank thought of this land being truly God-forsaken enter the deep recesses of my mind. However, all would be more than redeemed by the period of grace endowed by the cooler four months when pure blue sky, benevolent sun and balmy breezes make *Shunar Bangla* a living, breathing reality out of the realms of the fantastic BUT for politics.

In the best part of the year it crawls out of its slimy dormancy and goes on to disrupt life with its full-fledged ugliness and curses all that it grubs with an anti-Midas touch and goes on to grow like a virulent oozing postulant on the fair face of humanity.

'NEWFLASH!'... This is the BBC London and we are receiving reports of a major catastrophe threatening disaster-prone Bangladesh. Serious outbreaks of humourslessness are being reported throughout the country and may lead to the total destruction of the nation. The UN Security Council has just passed a resolution for the largest evacuation operation ever in history and...

Indeed a dark spectre lies over our land: humour will be *khalassed* and once this happens it is downhill thereafter. Mankind is not elevated above other animals by virtue of his ability to reason but by his ability to laugh. A smile requires 15 facial muscles and involves electrical stimulation of the upper lip zygomaticus major muscle as confirmed by a friend currently imbibing the hippocratic arts. Another one of life's little jokes that this *shundari-dumtari-to-be* should be a heart healer/stealer/breaker all in one.

Boringly enough I awoke before the nightmare ended but consolingly if you remember the book/film — the whale had the last laugh! Joi Bangladesh.



nature of politics where truth is stranger than fiction, the ludicrous is so real that comedy can only give way to tragedy and pathos.

Aristotle held that laughter was intimately related to ugliness and deformity. Cicero and Francis Bacon viewed laughter as being caused by deformity and a certain baseness. Given this basis and through the use of mental acrobatics, the mind should quite easily conclude that the B'deshi nation should be in a state of constant mirth and merriment.

My senses reveal otherwise. Democracy has turned out to be a sick joke — a noble concept open to bad puns. Democracy is what I say. Democracy perhaps gives the ubiquitous of hartal. By definition democracy is of the people but if the people are illiterate and ignorant, then only politics of the lowest common denominator type will work: emotive, irrational, rabble-raising stuff. In the sub-continent (perhaps a legacy of the British divide

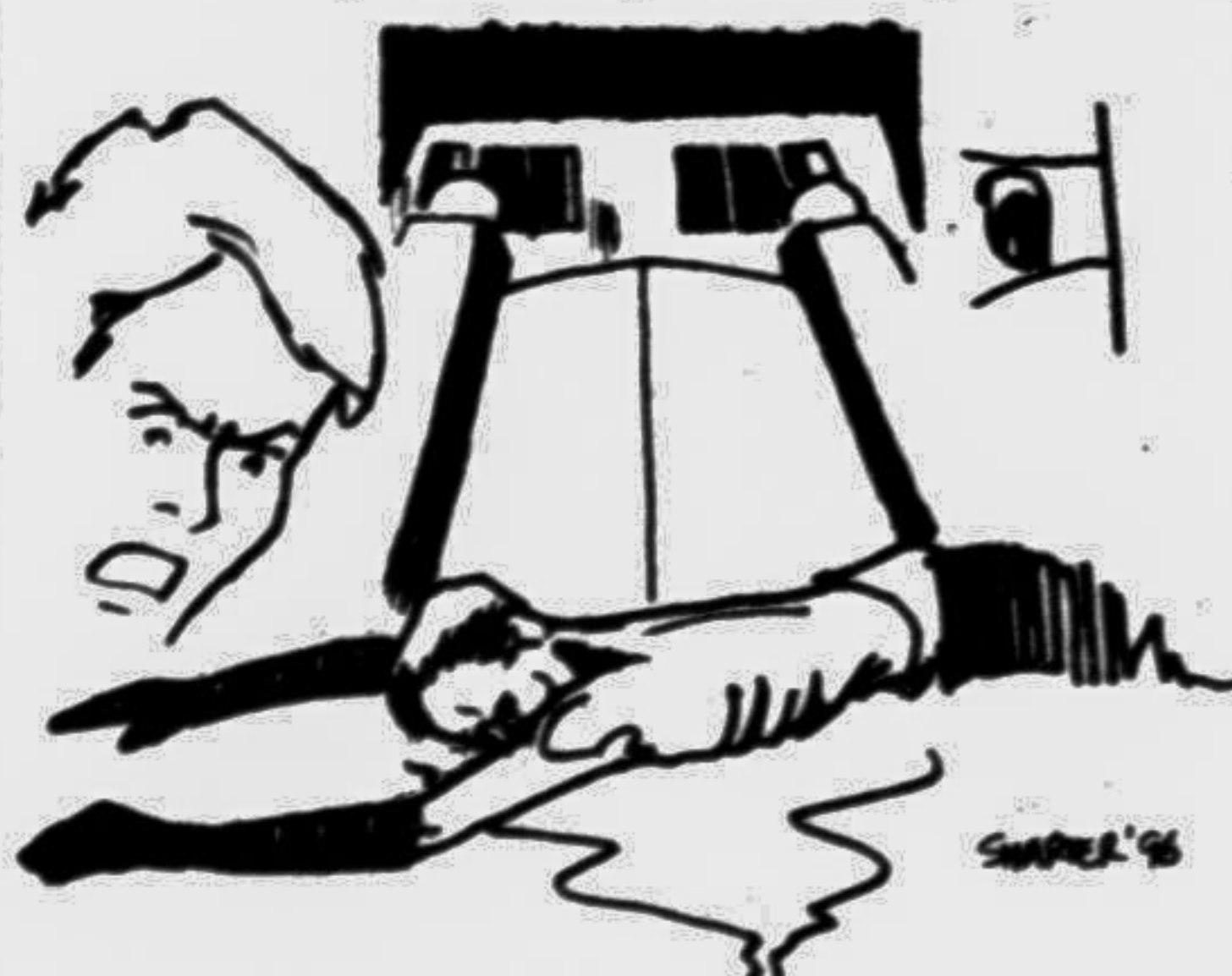
GET ON WITH IT! life is a struggle anyway without having selfish idiots complicate things further.

Looking abroad, what counts as democracy in America would not be cricket in Britain and may leave the French nonplussed and vice versa. In all of these democracies the free press is seen as an institution defending fortress democracy. Was it Noam Chomsky who said that 'the media is to democracy as violence is to a dictatorship'?... endless arguments will prevail down this road so I take a nifty sideline and go on to digress about one of my pet hates CNN. From a young age I have had a habit of changing abbreviations into more amusing and sometimes truer forms but for CNN I fail to come up with anything remotely printable especially with the first letter lending itself readily to particularly juicy invective.

Anyhow with tensions running high in Dhaka people have been craning their heads

## Do It While You Can !!

by Sumit Roy Choudhury



Vision one:

7 O'clock. I just came back from my morning jog and was going to have my breakfast. 'Toast and tea again! You could have made some sandwiches.' 'Sorry Son, but I have to rush to the radio station,' said my mother. 'O.K. Send the car, or else I shall be late for school again.'

Vision two:

11:30 am. I am going to be late again. School is at twelve and I haven't eaten yet. I rushed as I ate my so-called lunch.

Vision three:

11:50 am. What the heck! I have a test in the first period. The car is not here yet. Oh, no. It must be on the main road caught up in a traffic jam. I grabbed my bag and started on the quest for the car. Just as I was getting out of the building, I saw a man — only skin and bones — lying on the ground groaning and begging for food and water. Foamy saliva crept off his mouth rhythmically like the waves of an ocean at sunset. Later it dawned on me that his sun was also setting. There was no one around. I went as if I saw nothing, ignoring an urge inside me which beckoned me to stay and help him.

Vision four:

5:45 pm. Had a great time at school. When I came to the front of our house the man was still lying outside the gate in the same way I had last seen him. By his side was a crow. Above, in the sky, a cluster of vultures. The stray dog near the garbage dump was keeping a close watch. All the saliva had dried out leaving a sickening trace of white froth. Life has abandoned the unfortunate being. An unpleasant but true smell of carrion came out of his decomposing body. A bag of seeds was with him.

I couldn't bear it. My mind, my soul, every part of my body and my environment was accusing me. Or was it just my conscience? Had I given him the rice I waste, and the excess water that ran as I brush my teeth, he could have survived. But I didn't care. It was a murder. I was feeling choked. I was really unbearable. The mental pressure was really crushing me.

I shouted. My mother came into my room. I was in my bed. 'What's happened, son?' My mother inquired worriedly. I couldn't talk for about two minutes since I was sobbing heavily.

'I just had a horrible dream.' After some time she tucked me in and in a few minutes I entered the world of dreams.

Vision five:

I can see the world as if from the outer space. It looks very misty. It is a transparent ball filled with smoke and fume.

Vision six:

I am in a rain forest. It is all barren on one side with stumps all over, bearing testimony of the presence of hundreds, or even thousands of glorious trees in the past. I hear a creaking noise. I turn around and see a gigantic tree falling right on me. I am going to be mashed.

Vision seven:

I can't breathe due to the smog. Everyone is getting sick around me. People are fighting like a bunch of hayenas for morsels. They have the disposition of sewer rats.

Vision eight:

I am on a river bank. The land is splitting up. I am going to be engulfed.

Vision nine:

A ship is leaving for outer space as hell has descended on earth. Some children are boarded in, hoping to find another habitable planet. As it lifts off, millions of people cry and shout as they try to make a last bolt to live. Shortly after the lift-off, the people start dying, and in a matter of hours, everyone passes away.

Vision ten:

The world is destroyed, along with its atmosphere. A ship of aliens passes and the aliens pitifully look at the planet.

Now I know these were no dreams. The dying of the man was an omen. He was a symbol of the earth, his distress was the distress of the earth. I was the symbol for the human beings who are not caring for the world enough. But it's high time for us. We can not stay inert any more. We have one home only. Why break it down? Why don't we start acting before the time runs out?

When I woke up I found a bag of seeds on my table. Mum told, 'A very lean and thin man came and asked for some food. I gave him some bread. And he gave this bag asked me to give to you.'

I went out jogging and after coming back I was planting the seeds. I heard a voice: 'Do it while you can.' When I went out, I saw a lean and thin man walking away. He turned and smiled at me. He was the dying man in my dream. And then I could not see him any more.



## Revolution is Dead : Long Live Revolution !

by Asrarul Islam Chowdhury

WHERE do we stand after a quarter of a century? There million souls asked me this question last night

I couldn't give an answer, I didn't have one And even if I did, I may not have been right.

Did you ask yourself once?

If you did, you may have wondered and pondered And I, for one, wouldn't have been surprised in the least If it gave you the nightmare of your life.

Divide and rule, they said, and so we did

For forgetting everything of the first zone of time "Oh my good gracious!" those sacred souls said to me "Is this Bangladesh, the land we gave thee?"

Look around you; tell me, what do you see?

A once herculean child, fighting against all odds And a man, a sheer saint is he, Laughing for not being sent to the guillotine!

From the green fields of St Nowhere

To the powerful town behind the hills The sun rises and sinks, and tells us perpetually The wise men of yesteryears cry from over the skies.

Those three million told me in my dreams

That they sing a verse every night Maybe I should sing it for you, before it's too late I really do hope you hear it on this Silver Jubilee of Bangladesh.

From the relics of yesterday, will awaken from the ashes Those herculean children, who'll fight the mother of all clothes

A mere spark it will take, to put things into motion

For revolution is dead: long live revolution! But then, time will run through your fingers And you'll hold it, only when it's gone That day you'll realize, what we've done to our pride By that time, my friend, the present will come to an end....

Dedicated to all freedom fighters of all of our freedom movements — of the past, the present and the future....



## Freedom

by Aneek Intesar Ahmed

My chains had grown rusty and my bones so sore My eyes grew dim as the years went by But freedom, never came

Life without sunshine, is life without freedom The everlasting dark cloud reminding me of pain I close my eyes and open them again.

Half expecting to see daylight But it is the same dark gloom

Which suspends itself on my free spirit Enslaving it for all eternity as time passes me by

Without a second glance the world runs by

While I, left in darkness and gloom

Am left to die of sheer loneliness

How long was it before I had spoken

To any other but my captors?

How long was it since I saw a sunset?

How many times, have I struggled against my shackles

To rip them to shreds along with my captors.

Oh but what is this?

Is it the light of dawn, or my angel's wisdom light

But surely, it is sunshine.

The ray of hope and lasting life

My eyes see the light of the dawn

I feel a flush of euphoria at this

A ray of life light and happiness

Penetrating into my gloom,

Feeling the warmth, my strength of will doubles,

I feel the need, the compulsion, the zeal to live

I won't let go, I won't let go....

## A Gallant Soldier

'Sepoy Mohammad Mustafa Kamal

(Bir Shestra)

by Shahed Latif

soldiers not to shoot unnecessarily because each and every single bullet, in such a crucial time, is worth thousands.

After the war took its full shape, the 4th East Bengal Regiment, built up a defence surrounding Aushuganj, the Anderson river of Brahmanbaria and the Uzanshir. Two companies of soldiers were posted in Aushuganj and one each in the other two. On the 14th of April the Pakistani soldiers attacked simultaneously with gun-ships, naval gun boats and other bomber fighter planes. Their target was Aushuganj and the Anderson river, this battle continued for nine long hours. On one side the Pakistani's were attacking simultaneously from the air, firing bombs from the naval gun boats and dropping soldiers from helicopters, on the other end a handful of MuktiBahini's were fighting and defending their positions with very limited arms. Their only aim was to keep on fighting till the end.

When the Pakistani soldiers were being dropped by parachutes in Aushuganj all the three battalions of soldiers retreated back in Akhura for strategic reason.

Centering Akhura they again built up resistance near the Titas river in Dorian.

The No 2 platoon was sent to Dorian and Mustafa Kamal was assigned there. Seeing sepoy Mustafa Kamal's bravery, intelligence and his dedication towards his job, Shafat Jamil made him Lance Naik. This meant that ten soldiers were under his command.

On the 16th of April in an effort to demolish the 4th Bengal Regiment, the Pakistani's were advancing through the Comilla Akhura railroad. On the 17th of April the Pakistani soldiers were firing motor

from artillery at the no 2 platoon of Dorian. Shafat Jamil quickly send another platoon of troops to strengthen their position. The shelling dwindled at early morning, but still the MuktiBahini's were wide awake. They were happy when they saw cloud in the sky, because they thought that would stop the Pakistani troops from advancing. The rain did fall, and to their dismay it did not seem to hinder the enemies. Within half an hour, the Pakistani soldiers took position of Ganga Sagar and Mogra Bazar. This was strategically very important an area for the MuktiBahini's, and now the high buildings of Mogra Bazar was used by the enemy soldiers to shoot at the MuktiBahini's. The Pakistani attack intensified from noon even though the MuktiBahini's thought the heavy rain would stop them. Mustafa Kamal sitting in his trench single handedly kept on firing from his L. M. G. at the enemies. The enemies after a while began to proceed from north-west and south at Dorian, and there was no other way other than retreating. To make the passage safe for the escape, somebody had to keep on firing at the enemies so that they could not understand the mobilisation of the troops. Considering that Mustafa Kamal was the section commander of the soldiers, he took his L. M. G. and asked his soldiers to run away from the east side. Even though some insisted that he should run for safety, he did not pay heed to their sayings because had he done so one or two of the soldiers would have died. While others were escaping, suddenly the sound of his L. M. G. stopped and he fell on the ground. Even though he died, the soldiers under him were saved and to him their staying alive was even more important than his own life.

## For Fear of What They'd Think

by Kamini Ray

I can never do any work, In me shyness lurks; Resolutions fall over the brink — For fear of what they'd think.

I hide in my own corner With the bearing of a mourner, From each forward step I shrink — For fear of what they'd think.

Of my lonely heart Loving thoughts form a large part, But in the Sea of caution they sink — For fear of what they'd think.

Tears stain my eyes; I carefully wipe them dry, Evaporate them in a blink — For fear of what they'd think.

If a word of love you say The pain will go away, But I estrange the final link — For fear of what they'd think.

(A translation of 'pache loke kichu bole' Translated by Kazi Khaled Arafat

Be like a post-stamp, stick to one thing until you get there.

Courtesy — Mozammel Haque Ranju