

BIRSHRESTHO

# Saga of the valiant

**T**HE Bishrestho, as they have rightly been dubbed, were the greatest heroes who sacrificed their lives for liberating this country. Theirs is a tale of great courage, determination and, above all, unparalleled patriotism. Their great deeds of valour will always inspire the nation.

We remember the valiant sons of the soil with a deep sense of gratitude and admira-

tion on this day of triumph. was commissioned in June 1968. In 1971 when the Pakistan army was engaged in destruction and brutal operations in Bangladesh, Captain Jahangir was constructing the Pakistan-China Link Highway in the rugged hilly region of the Karakoram. He managed to return to Bangladesh and

under orders of the independent Bangladesh Army, Captain Jahangir served as the

demolish the enemy positions. On 14 December he was hit by an enemy bullet in a face-to-face bunker encounter and became a martyr. His dead body was brought to the premises of the historical Sona Masjid and buried there on 15 December. Local people mourned the death of the hero.

**Sepoy Hamidur Rahman** Shahid Sepoy Hamidur Rahman (1953-1971) was born in village Khorda Khalishpur, PS Maheshpur, Dist Jessore. Father: Akkas Ali and mother Qaisunnesa. He earned much reputation as an honest and pious young man and a social worker. He joined the Pakistan army on 2 February 1971. After the crackdown of the Pak Army on 25 March, he went home only for a day, saw his mother for the last time and joined the war of liberation.

Sepoy Hamidur Rahman's last unit was the First East Bengal Regiment. He fought like a lion against the enemy soldiers on 28 October, 1971 near the Dhalai border post in Srimangal in Sylhet District. He crawled through a tea garden and caused heavy casualties to Pakistani soldiers by launching a fierce attack before embracing martyrdom. His mortal remains have been brought back to Bangladesh from across the border after long 36 years.

**Sepoy Md Mustafa Kamal**

Sepoy Md Mustafa Kamal was born on 16 December, 1947 in village West Hajipur, PS Daulatkhana, Dist. Bhola. Son of Habibur Rahman. As his father was a Havildar in the Army, he had the opportunity to spend his early boyhood with his parents in the Comilla Cantonment. While residing in the Comilla Cantonment, he was attracted by the disci-

plined life, parade and physical exercises of the soldiers. When soldiers of near-by units received training in accompaniment of the band, Mustafa Kamal used to parade in front of his house in the rhythm of the band. He was a boy of independent, dare-devil and dauntless nature. He joined the then Pakistan Army on 16 December, 1967.

On 18 April, 1971 when the Pakistani battalion attacked the Akhaura defence arrangement, he faced the enemy with great courage. He embraced martyrdom but his skillful handling of the situation saved hundreds of lives.

**Muhammad Ruhul Amin**

Engine Room Artificer Class-1 Shahid Muhammad Ruhul Amin was born in 1934 in village Baghpachra, PS Begumganj in Noakhali district. Parents: Azhar Mia and Musammat Zulekha Khatun. Shahid Ruhul Amin joined the then Pakistan Navy as a sailor in 1951 and received initial and technical training of the navy at PNS Bahadur and PNS Karasaz.

While serving in the navy he received training in frogman's engineering and commando courses. Shahid Ruhul Amin was a brave fighter and a great patriot. In his personal life he was very simple and modest. During the freedom movement in 1971, he was in-charge of the Engineer Officer as ER-A-1 in the gunboat PNS Comilla. After the barbaric crackdown of 25 March, he left his place of duty, returned to his village home and organised the students and youths of the village. He along with nearly 500 students and youths reached the Sector-3 Headquarters in Agartala in May. During this period he actively participated in the war of liberation under the leadership of General Shafiulla. Later on, under the orders of the

Supreme Commander of the War of Liberation, General Osmani, he joined BNS Palash, the Bangladesh Navy ship received from India and simultaneously performed the duties of squadron Engineer of two Bangladesh Navy ships, the other being BNS Padma.

During the final stage of the war of liberation these two war ships were engaged in clashes with the Pakistani Army inside Bangladesh. He embraced martyrdom on December 10, 1971.

**Flight Lieutenant M Matur Rahman**

Shahid Flight Lieutenant M Matur Rahman was born on 21 February, 1945. He joined the Pakistan Air Force on 15 August, 1961 and was commissioned on 23 June, 1963. He received training in various kinds of aircrafts on different occasions of which mention may be made of T6G, T-33, F86F, UMIG-15, MIG, T-37. During the Pakistan time he was awarded "Sitara-e-Harab" on 14 October, 1967.

In 1971, when Bangladesh was under a barbaric attack by the marauding Pak Army, he occupied a T-33 aircraft by defying the strong security measures of the Mauripur Air Force Base in Karachi and was able to fly towards India taking with him the only Pakistani crew present there, pilot officer Rashid Minhaj. His aim was to land at the Jamnagar Airfield in India. Unfortunately, the aircraft met with an accident due to mechanical trouble. As a result, the aircraft crashed before crossing the Pakistan border. His burnt-out and decomposed dead body was buried at Masur and brought back to Bangladesh many years later in 2005.

**Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf**

Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf was born in May 1943 in village Salamattpur, PS Boalkhali, Dist

Faridpur. Parents: Munshi Mehdi Hussain and Musammat Magidunnesa. As a student he was very meritorious and was very good in games and sports also. He joined the then EPR on the 8 May 1963. He received military training at Peelkhana, Dhaka. Rouf was the No 1 machinegun operator of the medium machinegun detachment. At the initial stage of the war of liberation he was attached to the 8th Battalion of the East Bengal Regiment and was in operation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Sector.

The company with which he was operating with machinegun formed a defence array on both the banks of the Chingri Canal in Burighat area in order to stop the advance of the enemy on 20 April 1971 towards Mahalchhari, the main base of the Mukti Bahini. At 11.30am a strong detachment of the enemy, consisting of more than a company of the Pakistani Second Command Battalion, proceeded towards Mahalchhari. The enemy advanced violently attacking the company to demolish it under the cover of heavy mortar shelling. Rouf ignored the mortar shelling and continued hitting the enemy positions with the machinegun with great precision. As a result, seven speed boats of the enemy sank and about two platoons of the enemy soldiers were either dead or injured. With heavy casualty the enemy was compelled to retreat in the remaining two launches, throwing out the dead bodies into the water. Rouf continued his fierce attack on the retreating enemy with his machinegun. Suddenly, a mortar shell hit him and he died the death of a valiant soldier.

In the battle on that day, Munshi Abdur Rouf (Shahid) set an inspiring example of indomitable courage, great determination and devotion to duty.

**Lance Naik Nur Muhammad**

Lance Naik Nur Muhammad was born on the 26 February, 1936 in village Maheshkhali, PS Narail, Dist Jessore. Parents: Muhammad Amanat Shaikh and Musammat Jellata Khanum.

Nur Muhammad joined the then EPR (now BDR) on 14 March 1959. On completion of the initial military training he was transferred to Dinajpur Sector on 3 December 1959.

In September 1971 Nur Muhammad was in operation with a company of the Freedom Fighters in Sector-8. The company mainly consisted of the Bengalee soldiers of the erstwhile EPR. On 5 September, 1971 Nur Muhammad was on patrol in front of Goalhati village. He along with his four compatriots were observing the movement of the Pakistani army in Ghutipur base. Learning of the presence of the Freedom Fighters, the enemy came out of their defence line, made a circuitous advance from three sides and tried to trap the patrolling soldiers. The light machinegun which was the main weapon of the patrolling party was in the hands of Sepoy Nannu Miah. As he was seriously injured in the fight, it was impossible on his part to operate the LMG. Lance Naik Nur Muhammad instantly took up the machinegun and kept the enemy at a distance with machinegun fire. He repeatedly changed positions along with his co-fighters in order to create a wrong impression in the enemy camp about the position and strength of the Freedom Fighters there. He fought gallantly before embracing martyrdom for his beloved motherland.

The extraordinary courage, sense of duty and love for his superordinates shown by him even at the point of certain death were indeed exemplary.



From top left: Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir, Flight Lieutenant M Matur Rahman, Sepoy Md Mustafa Kamal, Lance Naik Nur Muhammad, Muhammad Ruhul Amin, Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf, Sepoy Hamidur Rahman.

tion on this day of triumph.

**Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir**

Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir (1949-1971) was born in village Rahimganj in Barisal district.

Captain Jahangir joined the Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul on 5 October, 1967. He

commander of the freedom fighters in Sector-7 of the Chapai-Nawabganj border area in Rajshahi district. Under his able and heroic leadership the freedom fighters created panic in the enemy camp.

Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir crossed the Mahananda river on 13 December, 1971 and proceeded towards Nawabganj to

## The War of Liberation and our literature

JUNAIDUL HAQUE

**I**N 1971 we fought a great nine-month war of liberation. It was the greatest event in the thousand-year-old history of Bengal. Our long fight for freedom had reached its culmination under a great, charismatic leader named Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We fought and finally defeated the barbarians to get a free land, a happy population and a new flag.

A great war deeply affects a nation. A war of liberation affects even more. It influences and changes the lives of the people. What is literature all about? The life of people, their hopes and dreams, their love and hatred, their struggle for existence. We can't forget that the world's greatest novel by Leo Tolstoy is about the impact of a great war on a nation. It is about the influence of war on the human mind. The greatest of classics, The Iliad and The Odyssey, circle around wars. So do the greatest Indian epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. It is only natural that 1971 will deeply affect our psyche and leave a great impact on our literature. In fact our post-independence literature differs greatly from our pre-independence, colonial literature; 1971 simply breathed a new life into our literature. The hard-earned freedom made us creative.

We have always fought a cultural battle or a full-fledged war to brighten our national identity. The people of our sub-continent fought against British colonial rule since the middle of the nineteenth century. The fight for

Bengali rights began at that time, feels many a historian. Modern Bangla literature began with utterances like 'Swadhinata Heenatay Key Bachitey Chay, Hey, Key Bachitey Chay?' meaning 'who wants to live without freedom, O, who?' The Bengali fight for freedom was thus manifested in the great works of Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chatterjee, Kazi Nazrul Islam and the likes. The British left us, leaving behind the independent states of India and Pakistan. The Bengalees suffered a lot to get Pakistan but the latter made them suffer even more. They were subjected to great economic suffering and social humiliation by the new colonial rulers, the Pakistanis, who were neither just nor sincere. They even wanted to rob us of our mother tongue. Our forefathers took part in our great language movement of 1952 and fought Pakistani autocracy in 1954. They also fought for a democratic education system in 1962. The Bengalees fought their final extensive battle for democracy in 1969, ousting Ayub Khan and paving the way for a free and fair election. But since they were denied their rights even after their landslide election victory in 1970, they had to fight their last battle for freedom. Victory was achieved on December 16, 1971 and Pakistan sank into oblivion, buried under the corpses of millions of patriots. Rose the bright, red sun of free Bangladesh.

All the genres of Bangla literature were directly influenced by our great war of inde-

pendence. Our poetry, our fiction, our drama, our memories and our essays were all dipped in our noble 1971 experience. They carried our sorrow, glorified our victory and told the whole world about our dreams. At times we were very emotional and all our writings were not great works of art. But gradually, with the passage of time, we achieved the necessary emotional detachment and wrote better and better. Our Shamsur Rahman, our Syed Shamsul Huq, our Serajul Islam Choudhury and our Jahanara Imam made us proud.

Innumerable poems, novels, short stories, plays and memoirs were written after the war was over. Shamsur Rahman led the poets. He wrote his best Swadhinata poems in 1971, when the war was continuing, and sent them to Abu Saeed Ayub in Calcutta through freedom fighters like Shahadat Chowdhury and Habibul Alam Bir Protik. Ayub got them printed in The Weekly Desh under the pseudonym of Mazlum Adib, meaning a tortured writer. Rahman's great 1971 poems formed his famous collection, Bandee Shibir Thekey (From Confinement). Al Mahmud, Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Syed Shamsul Huq, Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal, Shaheed Quadri, Rafiq Azad, Nirmalendu Gun, Asad Chowdhury and their juniors like Abid Anwar and Rudra Muhammad Shahidullah came up with brilliant poetry. Some of these poets, like Rafiq Azad and Abid Anwar, were active freedom fighters. So was Kaiser Haq, Bangladesh's premier English language poet

and essayist. He remembers 1971 with deep love and respect whenever he gets a chance. The liberation war deepened our poets' feelings, sharpened their intellect and turned them into greater patriots. Our greatest national event didn't fail to inspire our writers and poets, not at all.

Martyred academician Anwar Pasha wrote the first novel on 1971, Rifle Roti Aurat. Seniors like Shaikat Osman wrote profusely on our liberation war. Syed Shamsul Huq, Hasan Azizul Huq, Rahat Khan, Mahmudul Huq and Akhteruzzaman Elias didn't lag behind. Especially, Syed Huq wrote on our liberation war with incomparable passion, boundless energy and exemplary commitment. His Nishiddho Loban, Antargato, Brishti O Bidrohegon and some other novels are world-class works of art. Shamsur Rahman the poet and Syed Huq the novelist have made us eternally grateful to them for their swadhinata poems and prose respectively. Hasan Azizul Huq and Rahat Khan wrote some unforgettable stories. Younger writers like Moinul Ahsan Saber were boys in their early teens during 1971 but later wrote memorable stories about our noble war. His Kobej Lethel is a brilliant example where a village goon goes through touching experiences and gets purified into a devoted patriot. Popular writers like Humayun Ahmed and juvenile writers like his brother Zafar Iqbal wrote soulfully on our liberation war. Ahmed's 1971 and Jalil Shaheer Petition are touchingly superb stories on 1971. He wrote a few novels and TV plays on 1971 too. Their father

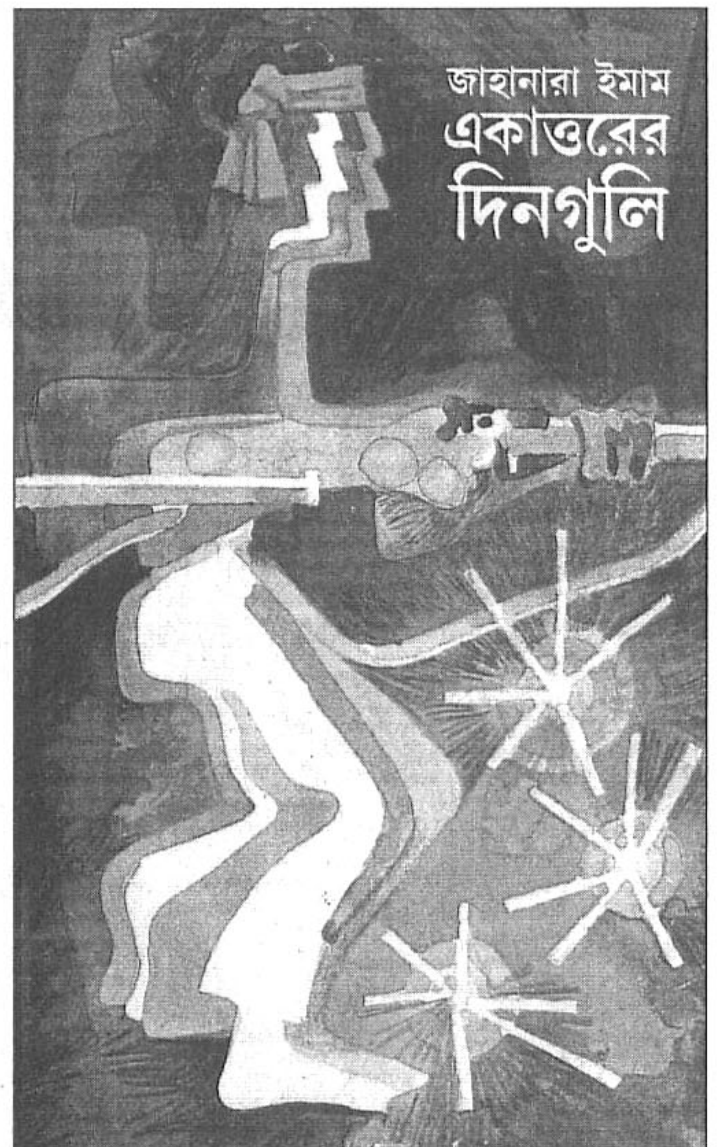
is a 1971 martyr.

Our plays got a new life after 1971. The stage plays went through a revolution under gifted actors and directors like Aly Zaker and Nasiruddin Yusuf, who were active freedom fighters in 1971. Asaduzzaman Noor and Raisul Islam Asad, the brilliant actors, were valiant freedom fighters. So, they were all men of commitment. Syed Shamsul Huq wrote great plays for them, plays celebrating our fight for freedom. Nurol Diner Shara Jibon and Payer Awaz Pawa Jay are all-time classics. Plays achieved great heights and people flocked to the Bailey Road to spend evenings. Brilliant memoirs were also written about 1971. Abdul Gaffar Choudhury's Nirruddishto Noy Mash is a classic among such biographies. I read the book breathlessly as a teenager and could read it in one day even at forty. War hero Rafiqul Islam's Lakhso Praner Binimonye, Jahanara Imam's Ekattorer Dinguli, Begum Mushtari Shafi's Swadhinata Ar Roktojhora Din and Belal Mohammad's Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra are a few outstanding memoirs. Our liberation war was waged within our land but we had to fight political and diplomatic battles not only in India but also in Europe and America. Abu Saeed Chowdhury, our great ambassador of freedom in 1971, wrote an unforgettable book titled Probashee Muktiyuddher Dinguli. He was a junior friend of Kazi Nazrul Islam and Buddhadev Bose during his youthful Calcutta days and no justice ever wrote better Bangla

prose. Jahanara Imam's diary has immortalised our 1971 agony. The nation gratefully remembers that her son Rumi and his friends were valiant freedom fighters. Abdul Matin's Swadhinata Sangramey Probashee Banglaee is another outstanding book.

Our essayists extensively explored the meaning, the significance and the impact (political, sociological, economic, philosophical and literary) of our liberation war. Serajul Islam Choudhury is perhaps our most influential post-independence essayist. His splendidly lucid prose made him very popular. Kabir Chowdhury, Sardar Fazlul Karim, Anisuzzaman, Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Muntasir Mamun and the likes interpreted our freedom movement for the benefit of our nation in general and our youngsters in particular.

Our war of independence influenced our poetry, novels and short stories, plays and biography beyond measure. It will be difficult to discuss this great impact in short. Literary critics, historians and sociologists should come forward to work extensively on this subject. That will enrich not only our literature but our history as well. Meanwhile, post-independence writers will go on writing on our great fight for freedom. From the serious Syed Manzoorul Islam and Shahidul Zaheer to the popular Humayun Ahmed, Zafar Iqbal and Anisul Huq, from the not-so-young Abid Anwar, Khandker Ashraf Hossain and Manju Sarkar to the young Mashiul Alam, Shaheen Akhter,



Shahnaz Munni and Aditi Falguni, our writers and poets will not stop exploring 1971.

Bangladesh is immortal and so is 1971.

Junaidul Haque writes fiction and essays. He loves to write on 1971.