

Complex relations... the pen, the gun, freedom

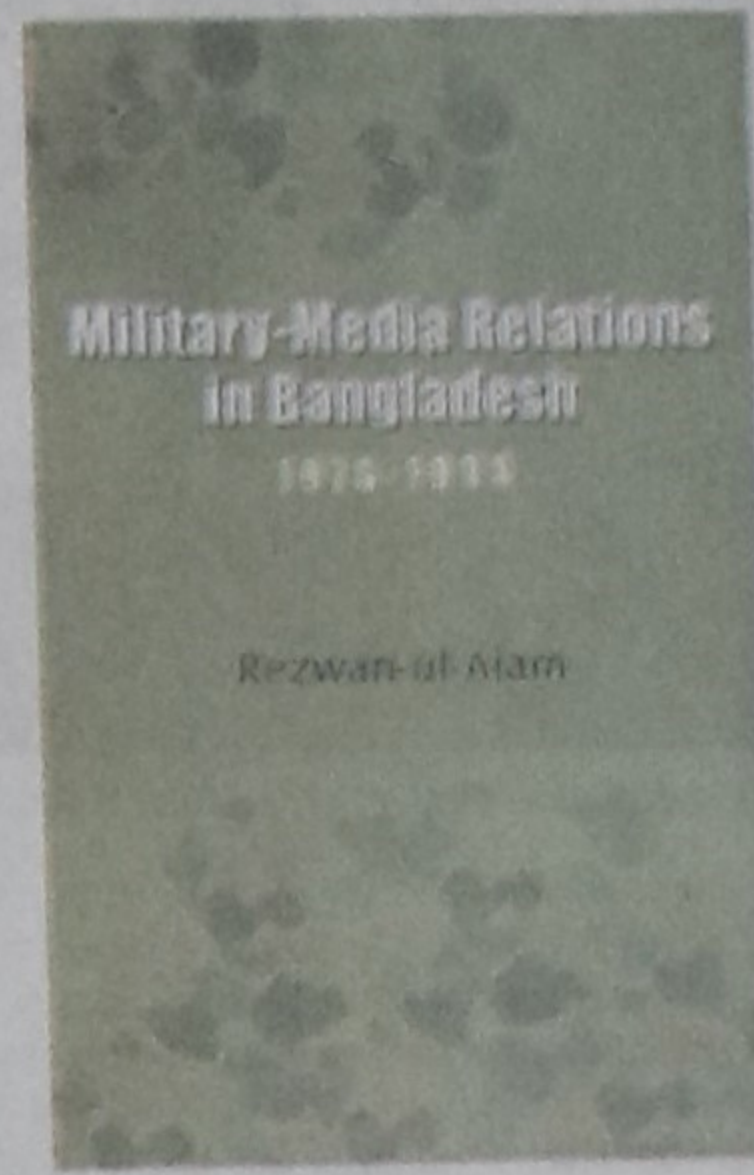
Shahid Alam finds a work on a sensitive issue exhaustive

THERE are certain fields of study that scholars, for a variety of reasons, hesitate to undertake, especially in a developing country like Bangladesh...

standards have steadily degenerated compared to even thirty years back, and markedly to that of the 1960s.

the introduction of the curious phenomenon called "embedded journalists" in the 2003 US invasion of Iraq?

Alam has come up with a theory to explain military-media relations in Bangladesh. His collaboration-opposition-collaboration hypothesis is, as he explains, applied to Bangladesh based on J. Herbert Altschull's advancing press model.



Military-Media Relations in Bangladesh 1975-1990 Rezwan-ul-Alam Palok Publishers

The variant has come about as a result of this authorial assessment: "While Bangladeshi journalists are perceived as being socially responsible, there is a great deal of debate whether they all serve truth or are instruments of peace or work for social change or are all instrument of social justice or a vehicle for two way exchanges."

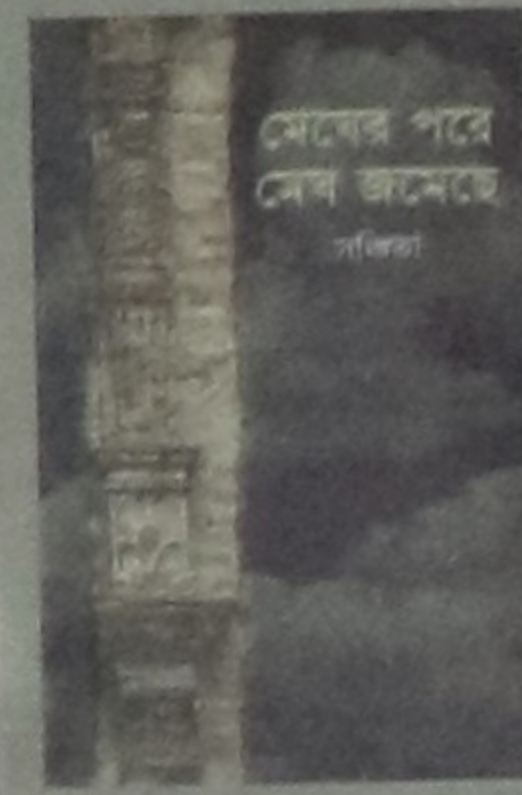
right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression, but they are subject to "reasonable restrictions" that include matters relating to state security and international relations, public order, decency and morality.

Alam devotes a fair amount of attention to the role of the British press, BBC, VOA and the two major journalists unions in Bangladesh during the period of the military regimes.

Military-Media Relations in Bangladesh 1975-1990 is an important work that should be both instructive to all concerned about the future of the liberal democratic system in Bangladesh, and to scholars wishing to study the subject matter in its other dimensions.

Dr. Shahid Alam is Head, Media and Communication, Independent University, Bangladesh.

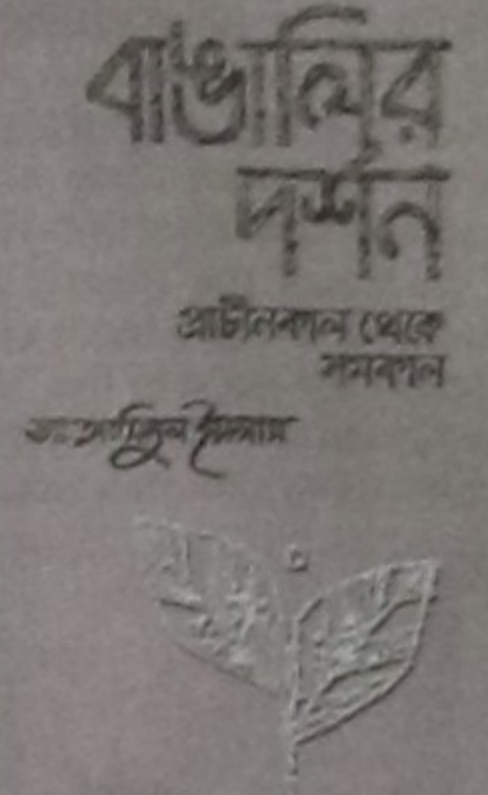
AT A GLANCE



Megher Pore Megh Jomechhe Sanchita Jyotsna Publishers

As always, another exquisite work of fiction from Sanchita. The tale is simple. Call it a story, or a collage of stories that bring out the reality or the myth. Or both.

Bangali Darshan Dr. Aminul Islam Mowla Brothers



Contrary to what others might say about an absence of philosophy in Bengali life, Aminul Islam thinks there are ample instances to show that Bengalis have always been driven by a sense of philosophy.

DANI JOHNSON Spirit Driven Success



Spirit Driven Success Dani Johnson

It is one of those books that brim over with matters of a sermonising nature. But, no matter. There are people willing to be shown the positive; and Dani Johnson does it with that little touch of the religious.

Reshaping the Holy Democracy, Development and Muslim Women in Bangladesh Elora Shehabuddin Columbia University Press



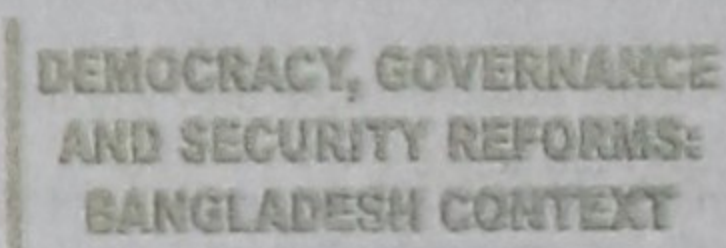
Shehabuddin goes into an exploration of the lives of women in Bangladesh. The focus, of course, is on how these lives have been transformed by secular NGOs even as faith has remained an integral part of experience for them.

Democracy, governance and security

Mustaqim Kazi is appreciative of the ideas a book throws up

THE book under review Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context is in fact a compilation of papers presented at a workshop organized recently by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii.

cooperative. Hence we have had weak parliaments of boycott and walkout, hartals and work stoppages. We never had a fruitful debating parliament participated in by the treasury and the opposition for a meaningful democracy.



Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context Ed Mufleh R. Osmany, Shaheen Afroze Academic Press and Publishers Library, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka

But such a negative political development has indeed created the scope for direct military rule of the kind this nation has witnessed in the past.

The nation's political leaders may not agree, but it is true that their inability to guide the nation as well as their corrupt nature are mostly responsible for the sorry

state of affairs in the political, social and economic domain. If these politicians have failed to learn lessons even after such a period of humiliation, when they were thrown behind bars by Dr Fakhruddin's caretaker government on corruption charges, the nation may yet face harder times ahead.

However, it has to be mentioned here that on the conceptual or ideological side, the nation probably does not have a short supply. What it lacks most is the power of transforming those concepts and ideas into reality. The people here know that for a vibrant functional democracy, leaders should be people-oriented. The political leaders also profess to serve the people selflessly.

men and some of the major institutional reforms including the separation of the judiciary from the executive as well as preparation of the voter list and national ID cards with photos are some of the achievements which will go a long way for establishing a corruption-free democratic society in Bangladesh.

Coming back to the book, the five papers viz. "Democracy and Rule of Law" by Begum Asma Siddiqua, "Civil and Military relationship: Bangladesh Perspective" by A T M Amin, "Emergence of NGOs, Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh" by Abul Haseeb Khan, "Role of Governance in Combating Corruption" by Mizanur Rahman Shelley and "Role of Security Forces in a Democracy" by Mohd Aminul Karim point out problems and suggest ways for establishing lasting democracy in Bangladesh.

Mustaqim Kazi is a freelance book reviewer.

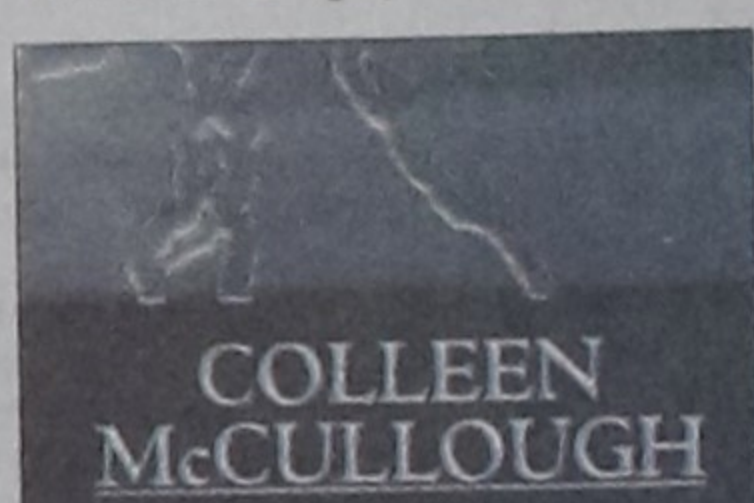
Soldiers in trauma and nurse in love

Tulip Chowdhury enjoys stories in a story

SOLDIERS sacrifice their lives for their countries when called to duty. And there are soldiers who cannot take the trauma of witnessing the death and destruction of war even long after the war is over.

makes him stand out from the rest of her patients. To Neal, Nugget, Benedict and Luce she is "Sis" and they treat her as nothing less. But when Michael too starts to call her Sis, she feels as if he does so without his heart in it, as if he is not meant to call her that.

deeply affected by the violence of war. Sister Langtry is firm about not letting down her professional guard



An Indecent Obsession Colleen McCullough Avon Books

With the arrival of Sergeant Wilson in Ward-X the other occupants are also taken by surprise at his calmness. When the war is ravaging people how could it have made Wilson all the more indifferent? And indeed why is he in Ward-X? In the meantime Luce commits suicide.

When Sergeant Wilson comes she finds herself in a new awakening of her soul. His manly appearance, his rugged looks catch her unawares. She has thought that years of loneliness, a life without closeness with any man will wash away all romantic feelings and lust. And yet there she is entertaining the very thoughts that she had thought were non-existent in her.

Nothing to read in the warm sunshine of the coming winter days? Grab this book; let it fill your days with sunshine of a different kind, the kind that illuminates your heart.

An Indecent Obsession is a book with a deep outlook on life as it is found in army field hospitals. There is the drama between the doctors and the nurses, the superiors and the subordinates. And the lives of the patients hold unique everyday stories that are sometimes hilarious. With unique mastery of words the writer weaves the life stories of six troubled soldiers and their nurse. The unforgettable cast of characters seems to be very much alive. The tale is passionate, witty and so believable and strong that the presence of the characters lingers even long after the novel ends.

Tulip Chowdhury is a teacher and writer.

Comedy and erotica

Farida Shaikh dwells on ideas

BURIAL At Sea is a long, short story by Khushwant Singh, a widely read contemporary writer. The book is a quick mix of fictional formulae with a blend of history, the partition period, political doctrine, capitalism-communism, amoral life reflected in death and disaster on personal account against the looming shape of sexuality.

This work has also been described as a literary version of Osha Rajneesh by The Times of India. He was a mystic and spiritual teacher who settled in Bombay. Speaking out against socialism, Mahatma Gandhi and institutionalised religion, he advocated a liberal attitude towards sexuality.

reader feels kind of 'fast forwarded.'

Victor Jai Bhagwan loses his temper with the leader of the unions and slaps him hard, who shouts back crude epithets and abusive terms one after the other. The tantric god-woman Durgeshwari comments: 'Lose your temper and lose the argument'. She needs to hide her pregnancy to save the reputation of the tycoon, 'hamare tumhare beech sambhand hoga bandhan nahin.'

In this story Mr. Mattoo earns more as the chairman of his son's company than he has done as a lawyer; the fact that Jai Bhagwan's business empire started out with a textile mill is similar to the writer's personal history.



Burial at Sea Khushwant Singh Penguin Books India

A noted reviewer of the book comments 'Burial At Sea seems hurried from the beginning and very scattered, lacking direction. The conclusion doesn't fare any better as the tale ends abruptly and unsatisfactorily. It seems like this novel was written in a rush, meant to either quickly satisfy a publisher's contract or to add a boost to the author's bank account.'

Even so, the book is a brief enjoyable read through a smooth text of comic irony and erotic examples. It is vintage Khushwant Singh, after the classic two-volume A History of the Sikhs.

Farida Shaikh is a member of The Reading Circle.