

Carving out the spirit of Liberation War

Syed Abdullah Khalid on "Aparajeyo Bangla"



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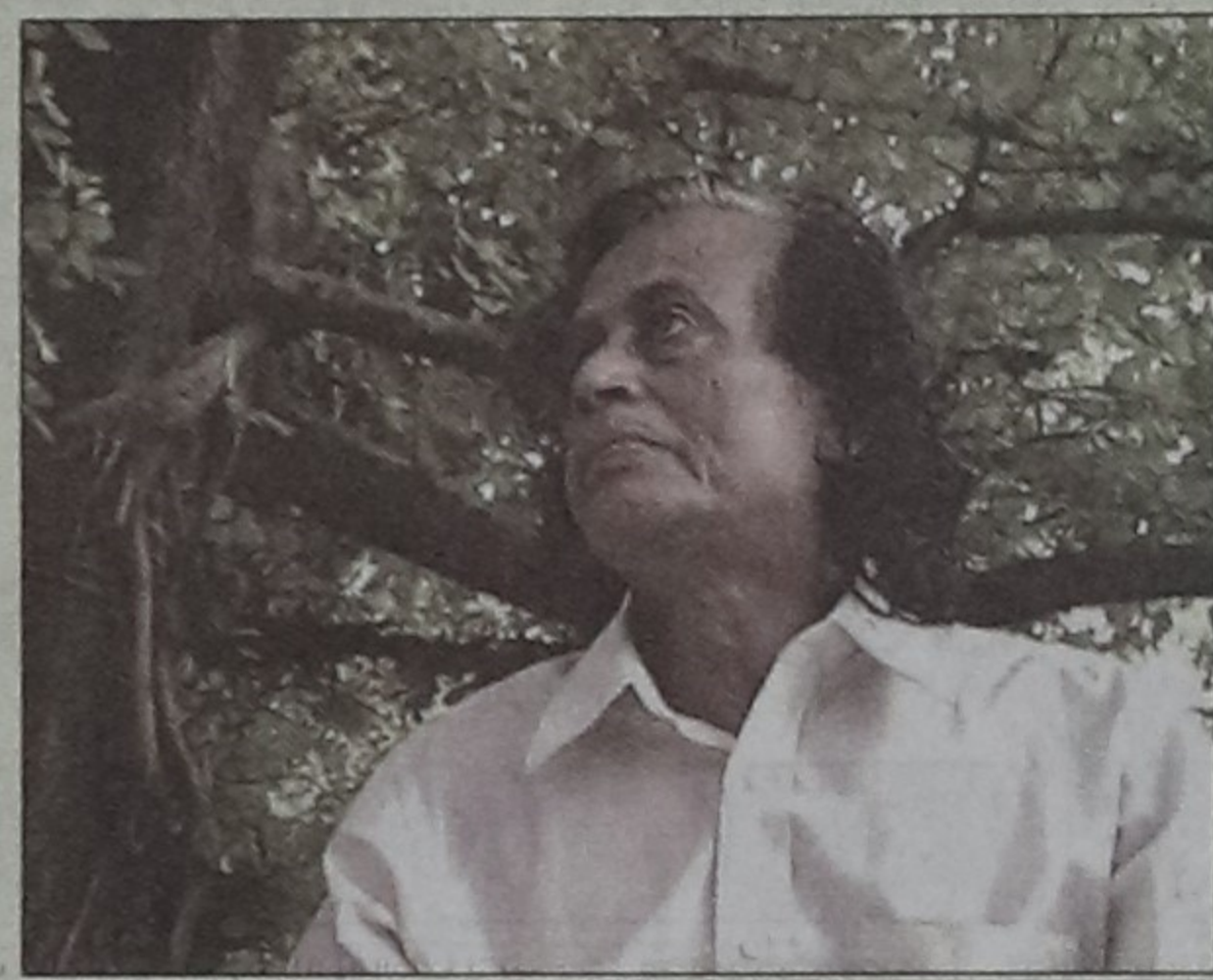
Syed Abdullah Khalid is regarded as one of the most brilliant sculptors of our country. A multitalented artist, Khalid has not excelled in sculpture but also made an impression with his paintings.

Khalid's "Aparajeyo Bangla" on Dhaka University campus has become an evocative icon on the Liberation War. The sculpture is a reflection of the Bengali consciousness and indomitable yearning for freedom. The project was launched in 1973 when this artist was a young teacher at the Department of Fine Arts, Chittagong University. Throughout the making of the sculpture, Khalid had to face religious anarchism and negative reaction from the bigots.

Nevertheless Khalid -- high on patriotism -- was determined to finish the work of art.

"I think struggle is one of the most remarkable traits of human nature. The rewards we get without struggles are paled when compared to achievements accomplished through physical and psychological labours," said Khalid.

Hasina Ahmed, Syed Hamid Moksood and Badrul



Syed Abdullah Khalid. PHOTO: SAIFUL WADUD HELAL

Alam Benu, who are very close to Khalid, modelled for "Aparajeyo Bangla." The artist closely observed the models' personalities and his close association with them enabled him to do justice with his portrayal. On August 15, 1975, the work suddenly came to a halt because of the heinous murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Political instability and the arrest of the then Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, also disrupted the work.

The project remained incomplete till the end of 1978. Some fundamentalist groups tried to demolish the models' personalities and his close association with them. However, the brave students of Dhaka University fiercely guarded the work. After a long hiatus, the work began once more in the beginning of 1979 -- with a new vision and dream. At last the project was finished on December 16, 1979. The sculpture was inaugurated by wounded freedom fighters.

"There are monuments recognised and commissioned by the government, and then there are those made by the people. 'Aparajeyo Bangla' falls in the latter category. I undertook the project for my own gratification. I wanted to do something for my country and fellow citizens. After the Liberation War, I contemplated a plan to create a symbol which would inspire generations of Bangladeshis," asserted Khalid.

Losing himself in nature, Khalid takes themes from this infinite source and plays with colours on the canvas. He likes to experiment with different forms and abstract breaking and constructing them in many ways. In many of Khalid's works, one finds a great interchange between abstract and realistic forms. Works of Mustafa Monwar, Rashid Choudhury, Quamrul Hasan and Zaimul Abedin inspire Khalid.

Today Khalid has become the model of an ideal artist. Unfortunately he has received no assistance from the government or any organisation. However, the artist has no complaint. Imagination, love for nature and motherland continue to drive his artistic endeavours.

Words of hope from Lubna Mariam

SYEDA SHAMIN MORTADA

Bangladesh is proud of its rich pool of patriotic cultural personalities. Take the case of danseuse Lubna Mariam who went to refugee camps and war zones during the Liberation War as a member of the 'Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Shangstha' -- a troupe of artistes. As a part of the group, Mariam managed to stir the patriotic sentiments of the freedom fighters. At the training camps, music provided a much-needed boost to the morale of the freedom fighters and Bengali refugees. Through her art, Mariam conveyed that the dream of a sovereign Bangladesh was within reach.

However the modest artiste shrugs off the credit for her role in the Liberation War. As she says, "I don't think my individual contribution was significant; we were part of a movement. This was the people's war. I firmly believe that our boys didn't receive their due in terms of recognition. We fail to recognise that people from all the villages and every nook and corner came forward to free the country in those troubled times. Their selfless sacrifice to a greater cause is certainly worth paying heed to. My father

was a sector commander at the time and young boys with no arms or ammunition would approach him saying that their mothers had sent them to fight for the country."

However Mariam has her reservations about the current scene in Bangladesh. "We didn't want a country where people would be denied of their rights. Obnoxious power play and corruption have taken over. The leading political parties lack honest interest in serving the people; politicians use religion as a tool."

However, not all is lost. Like many others of her ilk, Mariam has set up a cultural organisation called 'Shadhona.' Through 'Shadhona,' Mariam has made it her mission to give a boost to Bangladeshi culture.

"There is no vision in the cultural arena today; hardly anyone takes up the cause of preserving and promoting our cultural traditions," she says, adding that there is a positive side as well. "Our beautiful country has great diversity. The people here are what we may term as 'Shonar Manush.' We have great potential which we should capitalise on."

The writer is a freelance contributor.



Bangla Academy observes Martyred Intellectuals' Day



Shahnaz Nasrin sings at the programme. PHOTO: STAR

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Bangla Academy observed the Martyred Intellectuals' Day at its premises on December 14. With this event, which included a memorial speech and musical programme, began the three-day celebration of Victory Day by Bangla Academy.

The event started with Altaf Hossain, secretary, Bangla Academy, placing wreaths at the martyrs' graves adjacent to the Dhaka University Mosque, monuments for the martyred intellectuals at Mirpur and Rayer Bazar killing fields.

In the afternoon, Dr. Syed Mohammad Shahed, director general of Bangla academy, welcomed the audience. "The conspiracy against the Bengali nation and the country is still brewing. Recent attacks on sculpturers and cultural activities are proves on this. We have to be united to fight this evil," Dr. Shahed said in his speech.

Professor Mustafa Nurul Islam presented the memorial speech. Regretting the fact that observing Martyred Intellectuals' Day often

becomes limited to just formalities, he said, "If we ask ourselves what we are witnessing these days, we find that fundamentalism has branched out in a more cohesive form. We need to take lessons from history. By remembering and honouring the martyred intellectuals, we can find inspiration to move forward."

The musical programme began with Shahnaz Nasrin rendering a Rabindra Sangeet, "Tomaro ashimee pran-o mon loye." This was followed by another Rabindra Sangeet, "Jodi tor daak shuney" by the artiste. Next on stage was Rezaul Karim who rendered two songs -- "Mishey achhey ora amader jatir praney" and "Nahi bhoi nahi bhoi." Artiste Julie Sharmilee rendered two popular patriotic songs -- "Ek nodi rokte periyee" and "Amaye genthayee dao na maa go." Highlights of the evening were performances by renowned Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artistes Bipul Bhattacharya and Abdul Jabbar.

Gautam Majumdar, Sirazul Islam, FM Alamgir Kabir, Almas Ali and Sayeed Hossain Sentu accompanied the artistes on 'tabla,' flute, violin and keyboard respectively.

LWM's Victory Day celebration continues

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

As part of the four-day celebration on the occasion of Victory Day, a discussion was held on December 14 at the Liberation War Museum (LWM) premises. Reminiscence is always painful when war or atrocities are concerned. The family members of the martyred freedom fighters went over their experiences during the war. The ambience turned heavy and sombre, as some were wiping their eyes and tried to maintain their composure while talking about losing the ones they loved.

Ziauddin Tarik Ali, a trustee of LWM, delivered the introductory speech. Kazi Saifuddin Mamun, son of martyr Kazi Shamsul Haque; Parveen Akhter Chowdhury, daughter of martyr Dr. Golam Kibria; Elora Mukhtar, daughter of martyr Md. Abdul Mukhtar; Mizanur Rahman Talukdar, son of martyr Shahid Abdul Wahab Talukdar; and Sheikh



Group performance by singers at Liberation War Museum. PHOTO: MUMIT M

Salma Nargis, daughter of martyr Sheikh Abdus Salam spoke at the discussion.

The speakers reminisced on their fathers' dedication, lives and loyalty to the country and its people. The programme was directed by Rashid Haider.

The second part of the

event featured a cultural programme. Students of USEF Bangladesh, Chhayanat and Muktiyoddha Characha Kendra (an organisation from Rajshahi) performed at the musical soiree. A multimedia presentation on the life and works of martyred poet Meherunnessa was also

screened. Meherunnessa was brutally murdered by the Kader Molla Bahini.

Poet Kazi Rozi spoke on Meherunnessa's poetry and scholarly writings. Mahmuda Siddika Sumi, Shamima Sultana Tandira and Mahmuda Akhter recited poetry on the occasion.

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