

She caused a flutter in young hearts

Sadya Afreen Mallick recalls an artiste's tempestuous life and death

As the train whizzed past Dolly, director Mashiuddin Shaker noticed the terrified look of the train driver, his forehead glistening with perspiration. Within a few moments, though, Dolly was persuaded by the cast to come down from the railway tracks and a terrible accident was averted. Shaker let out a sigh of relief as he had managed to overcome yet another hurdle in the shooting for the film *Shurjo Dighol Bari*. He already had to cope with changing two previous actresses for the unconventional role and he couldn't bear another mishap.

Dolly won a National Film Award for her role in the film *Shurjo Dighol Bari*. But the story could have ended that very day if the determined Dolly had decided to end her life on the railway tracks while the shooting was in its infancy.

Sadly, by then Dolly Ibrahim, the unmatched TV actress of the 1970s, had lost her will to live, a decision that ultimately led her to her demise at the age of 43. Though still young, she had accomplished a lifetime of achievements.

And after many a year, we are once more face to face with her astonishing life through the gripping memoir called *Adittiya Dolly*. The book, published by Shomoy Prokashoni to mark her birth anniversary on July 1, is a reminiscence of her story untold.

"Dolly was vivacious and always

made us laugh. She was a student of literature, so she could easily grasp the language of the films. She had a natural subtle sensuality about her, although she could be very moody and unpredictable," writes Mashiuddin Shaker.

Born to renowned educationist Dr. Nilima Ibrahim and physician Dr. Md. Ibrahim, Dolly, the second of five sisters, was deeply inclined towards the theatre and arts. The book weaves a vivid story of her childhood, as her obvious talents started to surface from quite early on.

The Dhaka University campus where she resided with her parents was the epicentre of politics and culture in the early 1970s. The mass upsurge of March 1971 that culminated as a result of 1969 left a mark on young Dolly's mind. A student of literature at Jagannath College, she witnessed student unrest against the Ayub regime, the Agartala conspiracy case and took active part in protest rallies against the regime. It was here that she met and grew fond of the student leader Raju. When they got married she was hardly 18.

Coming from a family deeply entrenched in cultural activities, she was eyed by movie directors from very early on as the potential lead actress for the ground breaking productions that were being developed at that time. She did not disappoint.

She was cast as the protagonist in the first play on BTV called *Ektala Dotala*, the first drama

serial *Roj Roj*, that gained massive popularity, the first art film *Surjo Dighol Bari*, and played lead roles in Zahir Raihan's *Borof Gola Nodi* and *Arek Phalgun* on BTV. On stage she was no less an actress and gave a lively performance at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) in



Adittiya Dolly
Ed Rashid Haider
Shomoy Prokashon

the play *Chithi* by Munier Chowdhury.

In post-liberation Bangladesh, Dolly's dedication to her art and her natural ability to get "into the skin" of her roles ensured her a meteoric rise to stardom. 'Ajmeri Zaman, Ferdousi Majumdar and

Dolly Ibrahim were the most sought after actresses of the golden era of BTV drama', says noted actor-director Abdullah Al Mamun in the compilation.

Very few people knew at that time the deep-set issues that were affecting her personal life. While donning the role of Joigun in *Shurjo Dighol Bari*, her eyes seemed to have lost that ever-present sparkle as she started to struggle with her demons. A determined Dolly tried her best not to let that dampen her spirits. But as some people noted, she hardly called for the make-up man anymore when she needed to shed tears on the set playing the role of a distressed mother, an oppressed wife.

She continued to perform side by side with powerful actors of that time, such as Mustafa, Abdullah al Mamun and many more.

TV play director Begum Mumtaz Hossain narrates how reputed Indian film editor Dulal Dutta noted Satyajit Ray showering praise on the actress for her role in the TV play *Bokul phool kotoduur*.

Dolly's presence caused a flutter in young hearts, writes poet Nirmolendu Goon. It was his dream come true when he played the lead role opposite Dolly in a TV play telecast live during the 1970s. Nirmolendu smiles when he remembers the time when he held on to Dolly's hands even when the scene had ended. Dolly had to forcibly free her hand, an incident

that still triggers laughter amongst those who witnessed the scene!

Dolly was a rebel at heart and far ahead of her time, reads her memoirs. Determined to be in control of her life, she finally cut ties with her husband while working on the unconventional role of Joigun in her debut film. After sometime, she thought she had found her soul mate in eminent photographer Anwar Hossain.

From then on Dolly distanced herself from her old life and sought a new identity. She immersed herself in new fields such as photography. She took on the responsibilities of director of an advertisement agency and became editor of a weekly, *Sathidin*. She had bid farewell to the stage that had so galvanised her, and with it, it seemed her energy to live on slowly ebbed away.

The memoirs provide an insight into how she felt misunderstood by society, her friends and family. She started to falter in her beliefs until one fateful night when Dolly's younger sister answered a call from the Dhaka Medical College. The gifted actress had performed one last act from where there was no return. She had truly waved the world goodbye. But through these recollections of her life she seems to have left behind her script. So her story does not remain untold.

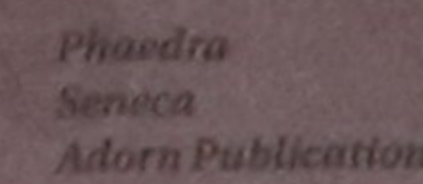
Sadya Afreen Mallick is Editor, Star Arts and Entertainment, and a leading Nazrul Sangeet artist.

AT A GLANCE



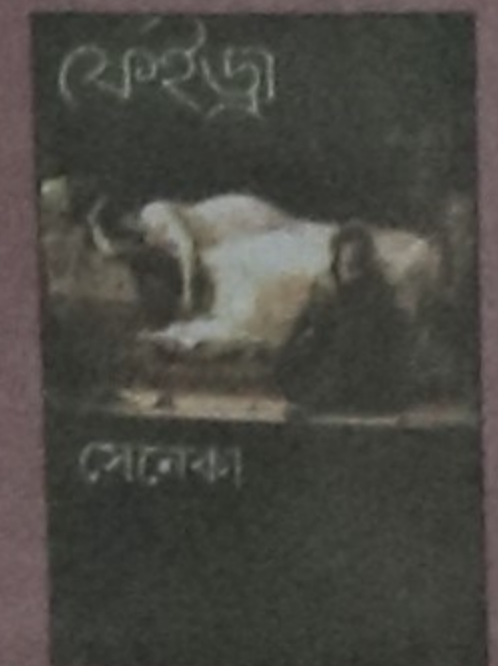
Barisal and Beyond
Essays on Bangla Literature
Clinton B. Seely
Chronicle Books, New Delhi

It is one of those fine works which rekindles your interest in literature. And where Bengali literature is the focus, it cannot but ignite in the individual all the emotions which once characterized people in this part of the world. Seely does a good job of it. He grasps his subject and presents it in substantive form to his readers.



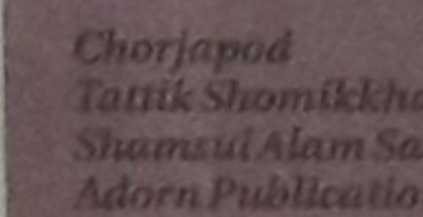
Phaedra
Seneca
Adorn Publication

Anyone curious about Greek tragedy, or the long tradition which has given global literature much to be proud of, will be thrilled by this translation of Seneca's seminal work. It recreates a lost world of ideas, and it brings into focus all those thoughts which once exercised minds in the Old World.



Premier Kobita
Sohrab Hussain
Bibhash

These are poems which come from a working journalist and a vocal one at that. The poetry focuses on all the yearnings of the man who has loved and lost, and losing, appears to be pining back all the old songs. There are the pure moments of bliss in the recollections of love that used to be.



Chorjapod
Tattik Shomikha
Shamsul Alam Saeed
Adorn Publication

The history of Bengali literature, with all its nuances and manifestations, is what you essentially come by in this serious work. Obviously it is not for the layman, but then, who will stop him from reading it! The more important thing is that it is extremely scholarly and promises to enrich your knowledge on the subject.



The rise and fall and rise of politics

Dilara Choudhury notes the hurdles to Bangladesh's democracy

Bangladesh began its journey as an independent country with a parliamentary system of government. It had been a foregone conclusion in the context of the Awami League, which was at the helm of the country's affairs following the liberation war. Tragically, however, the first blow to the AL's cherished form of government came from the party itself in January 1975 when Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared Bangladesh as a one-party state with a presidential form of government. Since then Bangladesh has gone through military and civil-military authoritarian rule before the parliamentary form of government was reintroduced in Bangladesh in 1991 through the 12th amendment to the constitution. It was indeed a positive development since the amendment was carried through bipartisan move i.e., with the consensus of the two major political parties, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League. Great hope was raised in the country about the successful operation of parliamentary government. Unfortunately, however, expectations regarding an effective parliamentary system ensuring good governance in the country remained as elusive as ever despite bringing in the institution of non-party, neutral caretaker government, against the backdrop of confrontation between the AL and the BNP over the holding of free and fair elections.

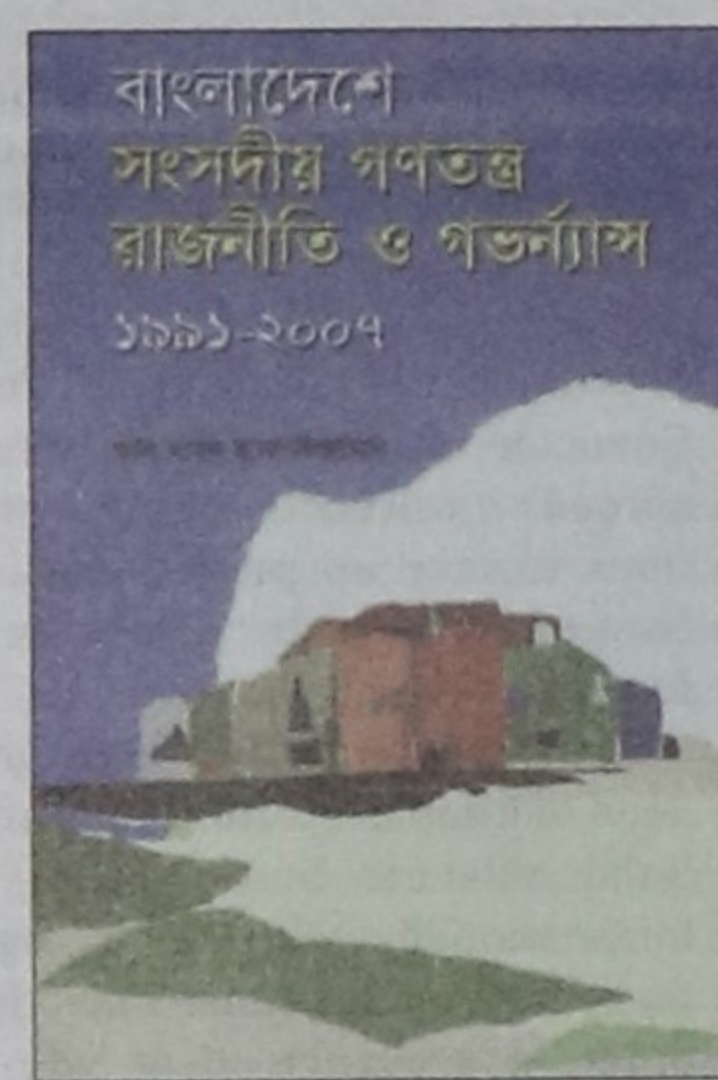
In this context, *Bangladesher Shongshodiyo Gonotantira, Rajniti O Governance: 1991-2007* by

Professor Al Masud Hasanuzzaman deserves special attention. The author covers a period which has been very critical in our attempts to restore and stabilize our much vaunted democratic order, and critically analyses where we went wrong and what needs to be done in order to rectify the mistakes. He begins his book by giving a meaningful theoretical and historical account of the evolution of parliament in Great Britain. He then goes on to discuss how the British colonial rulers helped its phase-wise growth in the British Indian subcontinent, and how erstwhile Pakistan, after its independence from British rule in 1947, struggled to establish a functional parliament and how its experimentation failed, giving rise to the facade of a presidential form of government. This historical account will generate huge interest about parliament and the parliamentary form of government itself.

The second chapter is devoted to the actual functioning of parliament in Bangladesh during 1991-2007. In this context, the author analyses the issues in detail, beginning from the structure of the House, composition of the Fifth, Seventh and Eighth Parliaments, the legislative procedure of each House, a chronological development through which women's participation in parliament was ensured. The most outstanding discussion of this chapter is the author's analysis of the Committee System. His analysis covers the slow and gradual evolution of the Committee System from the Fifth through the

Eighth Parliaments and pinpoints the weaknesses of the system. He concludes by stating that the achievements of the Committee System in Parliament since 1991 till 2007 have been mixed and the outcome is not very helpful.

The third chapter is about the party system in Bangladesh. It is



Bangladesher Shongshodiyo
Gonotantira, Rajniti and
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Professor Al Masud Hasanuzzaman
The University Press Limited

common knowledge that parties are the 'life-lines' of democracy. Without a democratic and functional party system democracy cannot take root in any country. And Bangladesh is no exception. Unfortunately, however, as the author points out, the evolution of an effective and democratic party-

system, which could have been the precursors of Bangladesh politics, did not happen in the then Pakistan. It is discerned that politics in the then East Pakistan (as part of erstwhile Pakistan) was characterized by civil-military authoritarian rule, and as such, in the absence of a democratic process the political development of political parties remained elusive. Similar development is also discerned in the political history of Bangladesh. The regrettable fact is that the political parties in Bangladesh, even during the much vaunted democratic order beginning in 1991, did not evolve into effective democratic institutions. The author in this chapter gives an account of the malaise that afflicts the major political parties, including the much needed internal democracy within the political parties.

In chapter four, the discussion revolves around a very interesting phenomenon in Bangladesh. Such a phenomenon came to the fore in the context of holding free and fair elections against the backdrop of alleged rigging in a Magura by-election when the major opposition party, the AL, propagated the idea that no free and fair elections could take place under a party government. The author reflects on why such a unique concept of a non-partisan caretaker government, in order to hold a free and fair elections, was incorporated, through the 13th amendment, into the constitution of the country. He also highlights the amended constitutional provisions as well as the caretaker regime's functioning and how it became controversial

over the years, giving rise to an army-backed caretaker government that remained in power for two years instead of its constitutionally ordained mandate of three years. The future of democracy and its stabilization depended on a free and fair election under the aegis of a controversial army-backed caretaker government.

In the concluding chapter, the author cites various reasons for which even after the restoration of the parliamentary system in 1991, democratic order could not be established fully. The failure to establish a functional parliament has been cited as a major cause that has undermined the stabilization of democracy and good governance in the country. The author's recommendations in this regard are noteworthy and must be looked into and considered by the relevant segments of society.

Professor Al Masud Hasanuzzaman deserves our special thanks for bringing issues relating to a functional parliament and good governance in the country under one cover. He has remained focused all through on the issues concerned and provided recommendations that could alleviate the situation. The book is informative, has a rich bibliography and is a noteworthy reference work for a wide range of readers. The volume is thus required reading for all academics, researchers, and students both at home and abroad.

Professor Dilara Choudhury is an academic, political scientist and columnist.

Metaphysical exploration of life's mysteries

Farida Shaikh goes philosophical over a tale

Life of Pi is a survival story by Canadian writer Yann Martel. Ironically, it is perhaps, if not more, a survival story for the writer himself!

The book is about Pi of Pondicherry who with his family on board a cargo ship sets on a migration journey to Canada. A sea storm strikes, the ship sinks. Pi is the sole survivor on a lifeboat in the company of animals, including a Royal Bengal Tiger.

Martel named the tiger Richard Parker after an Edgar Allan Poe character from *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838). This was 'a clerical error,' and the given name of the animal, 'Thirsty,' was dropped for 'of hunger and thirst, thirst is the greater imperative.' This is one of the many instances of satirical humour in the book.

Martel is grateful to Piscine Molitor Patel whose life story he narrated in the first person. He is thankful at meeting accidentally Mr. Francis Adirubasamy in the coffee house on Nehru Street who got him the connections to Patel, the main character of the story and made him 'believe in God.' This happened in Pondicherry, a town with a zoo and a botanical garden and was the capital of French India

for long.

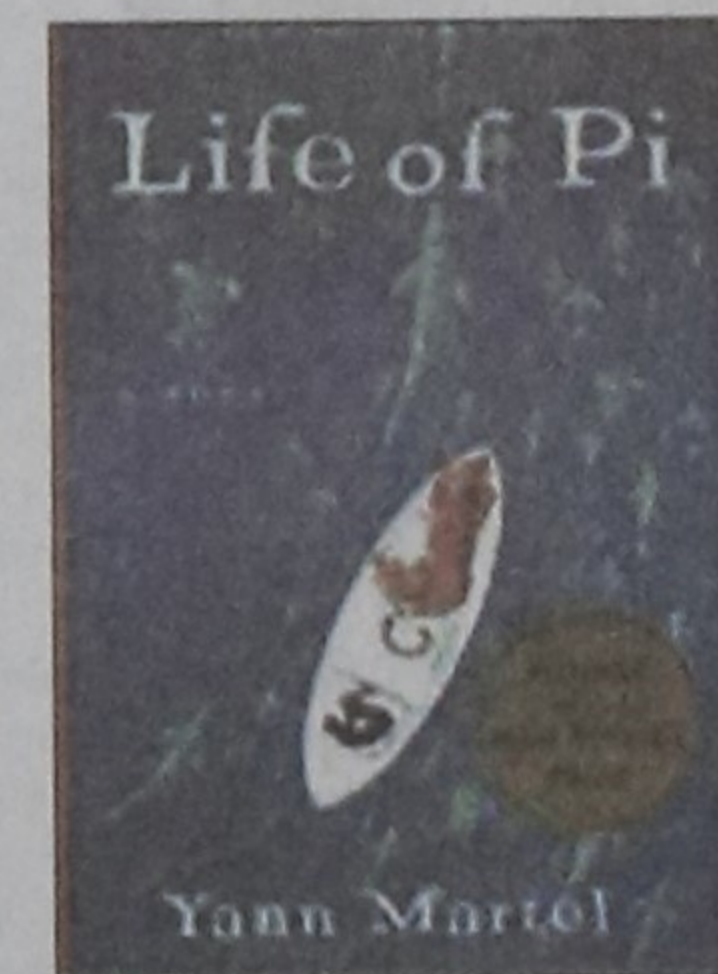
The Penguin India edition of the novel is like a textbook with class assignments on each of the chapters to make it suitable for a college curriculum. The cover design and illustration is by Anoop Patnak. Croatian artist Tomislav Torjanac has illustrated the new 2007 edition after publishers and newspapers launched a worldwide competition to find an artist to illustrate *Life of Pi*.

In 2003 and again in 2008, two theatre groups in England produced the adaptation of the novel into a play. Alfonso Cuaron, director of the third Harry Potter movie, expressed interest in making a film from the novel. For the French version of the book, Martel was also awarded and he wrote the text of the musical composition 'you are where you are'.

The book in three parts presents the life of Pi as an adult in the first and last part; the second part is the major section and deals with Pi as a lone teenager struggling to survive.

Martel also expresses his gratitude to three Japanese professionals for help in completing the book. In a letter, Mr. Okamoto of the Japanese Ministry of Transport

notes that investigation on the accident failed to locate the possible cause for the sinking of the ship---Tsimsum. The points examined were major hull breach,



Life of Pi
Yann Martel
Penguin Books India

major weather disturbance in the region on that particular day, other ship mishaps in the area, and one ship colliding with another ship. Tsimsum was 29 years old and

refitted in 1970.

This refers to the end part of the book. The reader by then has sailed through 227 pages of Pi's struggling survival experience, and the long drawn climax of the story. The reader begins to believe that it was fate that Pi and Richard Parker survived the shipwreck; only to be jolted back by the finding that there was no plausible cause for the cargo ship to sink and turning Pi into an orphan! Is this then only a make believe story? Is it what Kierkegaard meant when he said, 'Life is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be experienced?' The end of the story is anticlimactic.

The novel has a philosophical flair similar to Martel's up coming work in 2010. It comes together with an essay with the same title, 'A 20th century shirt' that deals with holocaust and talk between a monkey and a donkey over a shirt.

Pi is an agnostic; he is born into Hinduism, then he transfers himself without a qualm to Christianity, and then he gets drawn to bonds of brotherhood in Islam.

Pi as a young man, takes a double major in religious studies and zoology. He chooses to study sloth

because all these are 'calm, quiet and introspective,' and 'sooth my shattered self.'

Martel in beautiful text makes the reader aware of the abundance of wealth in the Pacific. '...Life is a peephole' and 'only fear can defeat life.' The conscious realization that 'the presence of God is the finest of rewards' and 'I felt I saw her I don't quite mean it literally, I felt I saw her' is Pi's revelation, sense of peace, unity harmony, of science and religion. And also 'I felt like a small circle coinciding with the centre of a larger one.' According to Martel, Islam is a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion; and then he questions, 'Was there any reward greater than life, and any punishment worse than death?'

Life of Pi is an imaginative story of survival and faith, on man's relationship to God and nature---animals. Man's survival is deeply rooted in faith, 'believing something sincerely can make it, if not completely real, at least close to it'. Martel's book is a metaphysical exploration into the deepest of life's mysteries.

Farida Shaikh is a critic and social analyst.

Tale of a martyr

Jackie Kabir is touched by a soldier's tragedy

Crutcher Kornel, one might be intrigued by the title of the book. It starts with a quotation from Ho Chi Minh:

'Remember, the storm is a good opportunity for the pine and the cypress to show their strength and their stability.'

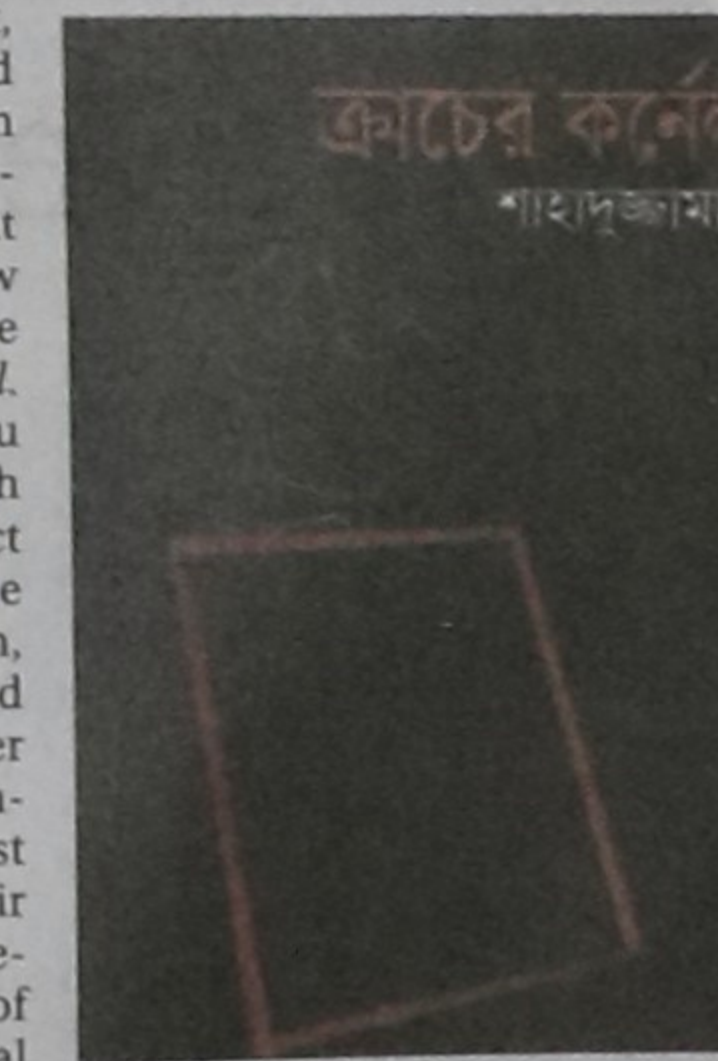
Even though the writer calls it a novel, it really depicts the life and fate of Colonel Taher, one of the sector commanders of the liberation war of Bangladesh. It is very informative and interesting as the narrator gives a vivid description of Taher's life, starting from his revolutionary days till his untimely death on the gallows. It is said that he walked on his wooden leg as he approached death. He is compared with Khudiram by some.

The entire book is divided into short chapters with suitable headings. So it's very easily grasped by the reader. The historical facts are also portrayed in vivid detail, so much so that the visual effect is almost there. The leftist movement in Bangladesh, the formation of the Awami League and the formation of the first government of Bangladesh, all are described here. Before that, how the partition of India and Pakistan took place is shown through the eyes of a Bengali revolutionary. The major event that shaped the formation of the new country named Bangladesh is the central focus in *Crutcher Kornel*. This starts with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech on the 7th of March. This was in fact the beginning of the birth of the nation. As his speech was going on, General Tikka Khan's plane landed at Dhaka Kurmitola Airport. Taher was sent to West Pakistan for training at this time as the people of East Pakistan were fighting for their freedom. This fight was in fact preceded by the Six Point demand of Bangabandhu and the electoral triumph of the Awami League in December 1970.

The Taher family, comprising ten children and including Ashrafunnessa (Taher's mother) has been depicted with dexterity by Shahaduzzaman. A simple village woman who reared so many children but with such perseverance that all of them were united and ready to sacrifice their lives for their motherland at a time of crisis. As children they shared the household work according to their mother's instructions. They were trained not to bow down under even the most severe pressure. In later years we see them standing close to one another in the battlefield; even when Colonel Taher lost his leg most of his siblings were in close proximity. Taher's wife and children were sent away to live in Ishwar Ganj, Lutfa's native town, while his parents and sister were arrested and were confined in Mymensingh circuit house. One of his brothers was sent off to West Pakistan. Taher was busy planning the most critical episode of the war, the Kamalpur operation. Major Zia was already planning an attack in Kamalpur on 3 July but was unsuccessful in executing it. So

General Osmani later gave orders to Taher to attack Kamalpur. The date was 14 September, Taher's birthday. It was on that day he got shot in his leg. He was taken to Gauhati for his treatment. The country was liberated by the time he got back. He came back to the country in 1972 with an amputated leg and a crutch. He was awarded the highest title 'Bir Uttom' for his contribution to the war of independence. His rank was upgraded to colonel and he was appointed adjutant general of the army. Colonel Taher was not content with the state of the country; he always talked about the unfinished war. To him the war meant rebuilding the nation. He never considered himself as an invalid and refused to join the forum of wounded freedom fighters. The condition of the war battered country and the deeds of the Awami League right after the war pained him, to a point where he dreamt of a revolution to bring about change in the country.

Sheikh Mujib was assassinated by a group of army officers on 15 August 1975. Then the political scene in Bangladesh changed com-



Crutcher Kornel
Shahaduzzaman
Mawla Brothers

pletely. Colonel Taher was informed about the killing on the same day and he refused to be part of the game. Even then Taher was suspected to have been associated with the evil deeds of 15 August. Then there was the jail killing of 3 November, followed by the rebellion of 7 November. He had to pay a heavy price for his revolutionary role. He was hanged after a sham of a trial in July 1976.

The book is well written and keeps the reader glued to its pages till the very end. Even though the writer says that it is a historical novel based on research work, the questions about the conversations, the chronology of events, if they did actually take place, are not answered. If it is a work of fiction then it is accepted that it is all imaginary. But then most of the characters in the book are still living. That would put the book in the non-fiction category.

Jackie Kabir is a critic and teacher.