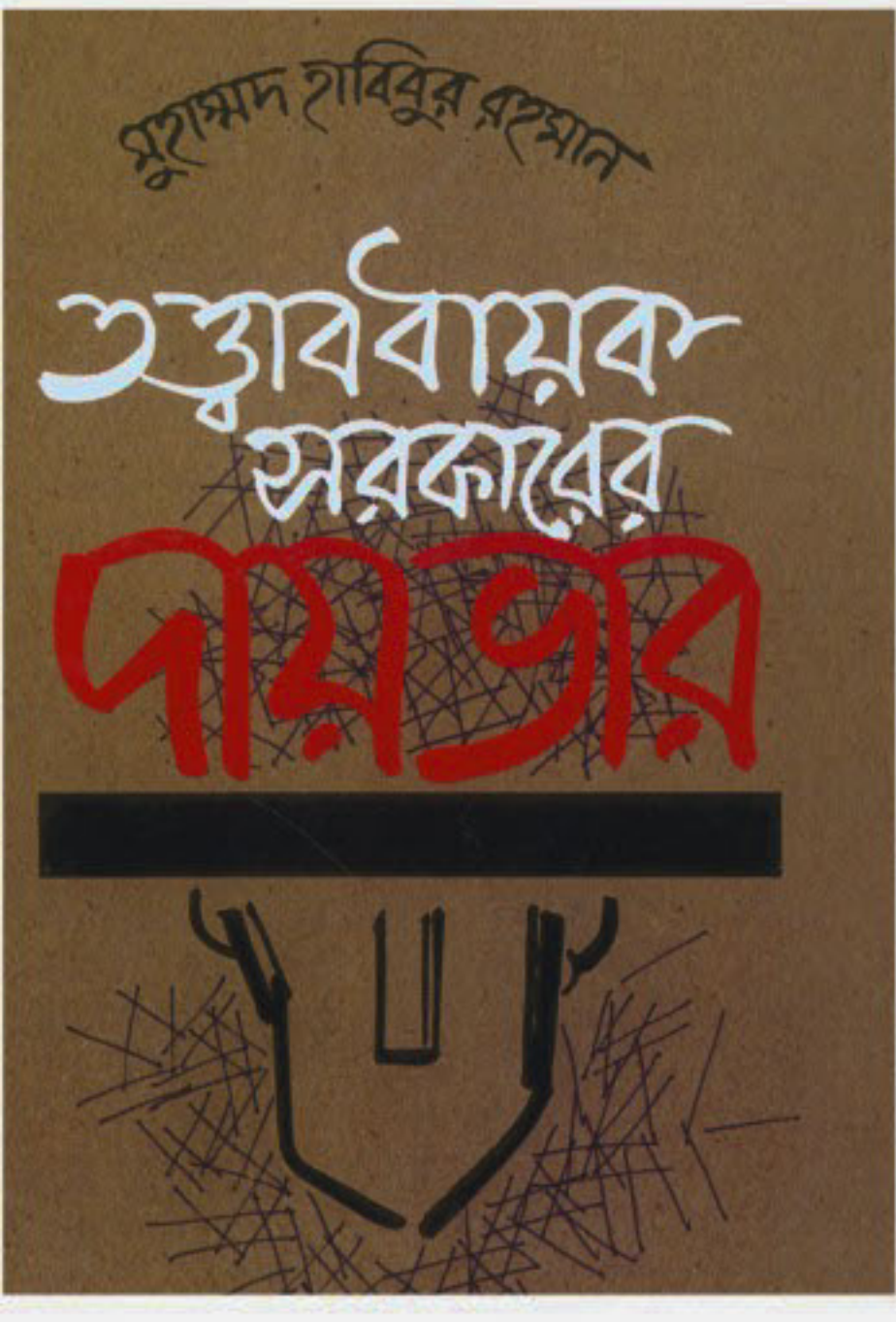


Three reviews from Syed Badrul Ahsan
How to govern a nation, briefly...



Totyabodhyak Shorkarer Daayebhar
Muhammad Habibur Rahman
Prothoma Prokashon

RUNNING a government, even if it is an interim one, is serious business. And writing about it is a good deal more...

But what we do have at this point is a rather penetrating account from Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman of his time as chief advisor of the caretaker government...

Habibur Rahman, a noted scholar beyond his professional calling, speaks in calm, detached manner of the way he went about shaping his three-month administration.

But where Hasina was guided by a sense of welfare relating to the chief advisor, Khaleda Zia demonstrated no such niceties when dealing with Justice Rahman.

A major crisis the Habibur Rahman caretaker government ran into centred around the dismissal of two senior army officers by the president.

There are the snippets that come with the weightier aspects of Rahman's story. The chief advisor has the Chinese ambassador calling on him.

few days earlier, BNP leader Khaleda Zia, momentarily unaware of the implications of any foreign-policy related pronouncement on her part, had warned her political rivals that her party would not let Bangladesh become another Bhutan.

The work is an enumeration of the travails which sometimes assail those who govern, no matter how brief the period of governance might be.

... Bengali diplomacy

SUPERANNUATED diplomats sometimes surprise us with their considered view of the profession they have been part of.

Book cover for 'Bangladesh Foreign Policy: Realities, Priorities and Challenges' by Harun ur Rashid

Bangladesh Foreign Policy
Realities, Priorities and Challenges
Harun ur Rashid
Academic Press and Publishers Ltd

have done a good job of recording their assessments of the history of Indian foreign policy. In quite a few instances, Pakistan has produced a good number of its former diplomats willing to reflect on the times in which they have served the country.

In Bangladesh, an early instance of a diplomatic record of events came from Fakhruddin Ahmed, twice foreign secretary and one of the earliest members in a band of former Bengalis in the Pakistan foreign service to forge a foreign policy for Bangladesh.

That sense of politics, or call it his understanding of history, is what Rashid brings to the fore in Bangladesh Foreign Policy.

The formative years for Bangladesh's diplomacy were of course the times in which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman symbolized the national spirit.

1972: repatriation of Bengali civilian and military officials from Pakistan; recognition from the international community; admission into the United Nations and trial of the 195 Pakistani military officers for wartime offences committed in 1971.

Foreign policy under Bangabandhu's government was affected, naturally, by the turbulence that the era typified. And yet it was a time when Bangladesh did succeed in some major diplomatic areas.

Diplomacy then took a wholly new turn. The catalyst was of course the assassination of the Father of the Nation in August 1975.

Turn the pages. You will come by somewhat of an idea of foreign policy as forged and practised by a nation buffeted by gales on many fronts.

The tears of the lonely...

THERE are tears that never dry up. And there are the cracked hearts that will likely never heal. You do not need a book to tell you all this.

Observed from such a perspective, the murder of seventy individuals, fifty seven of them senior and mid ranking army officers, through a mutiny at Bangladesh Rifles in February 2009 is but a continuation of the long tragic story that has defined life independent Bangladesh.

Book cover for 'Shradhanjali' by Amader Shurjoshontander Jonno

Shradhanjali
25-26 February to Harano
Amader Shurjoshontander Jonno
Colonel Mojib Trust

gle normally waged for political supremacy or power. For another, the very fact that a well-organized conspiracy was afoot to dispense with their lives was never suspected, let alone apprehended, by the state.

Recall the sheer cruelty of the men who went about murdering their commanding officers and then molesting the families of the dead.

It is a tale that makes a nation remember. The tears will come again. The cracks in the heart get wider.

Syed Badrul Ahsan is Editor, Current Affairs/Literary Editor, The Daily Star

Taking a peek into a lost era

Subrata Kumar Das enjoys reading on men and events

PROFESSOR Mozaffar Hossain, though not a very well acquainted literary figure, has been contributing enormously to the liberal arts in the last decade.

Pata Ultaí is not a traditional autobiographical book as is generally found at the booksellers. Rather it is a compilation of write-ups, not necessarily essays in the true sense, that tell of a gradual tale of a man who is now on the verge of seventy five.

'Educated'? Mozaffar Hossain strongly states that the phrase 'educated person' is wrong terminology because 'educated' is one who has finished his education.

Your tongue is your friend, and not a less great foe.

Kindness to all living beings is a fake idea. If Gautama Buddha knew that plants have life too, what would he eat? But slaughtering animals in a festive way is an exaggeration.

One can give a speech or become a chairperson against his post, but cannot become a wise man.

Politeness and modesty are strengths, not weaknesses.

You may have failed to discover greatness in some aspect in one whom you consider less than great.

Man is not finally 'good' or 'bad'.

These are instances of some 121 pieces that Mozaffar Hossain, a man of simple living but high thinking, has arranged very amusing manner in the book.

The book comprises 19 chapters, big as well as small, along with some 23 sub-chapters. The sub-chapters are included in 'Khondo Chitro Ekattor', 'Bikshipto Smriti' and 'Smritir Manush'.

How does Mozaffar Hossain open his book? 'Je Karone ei Lekha', a one-page piece, makes the reader interested in diving into the remaining 140 pages.

Additionally the author has incorporated some informative pieces that shed light on many of the different phases of the writer's life.

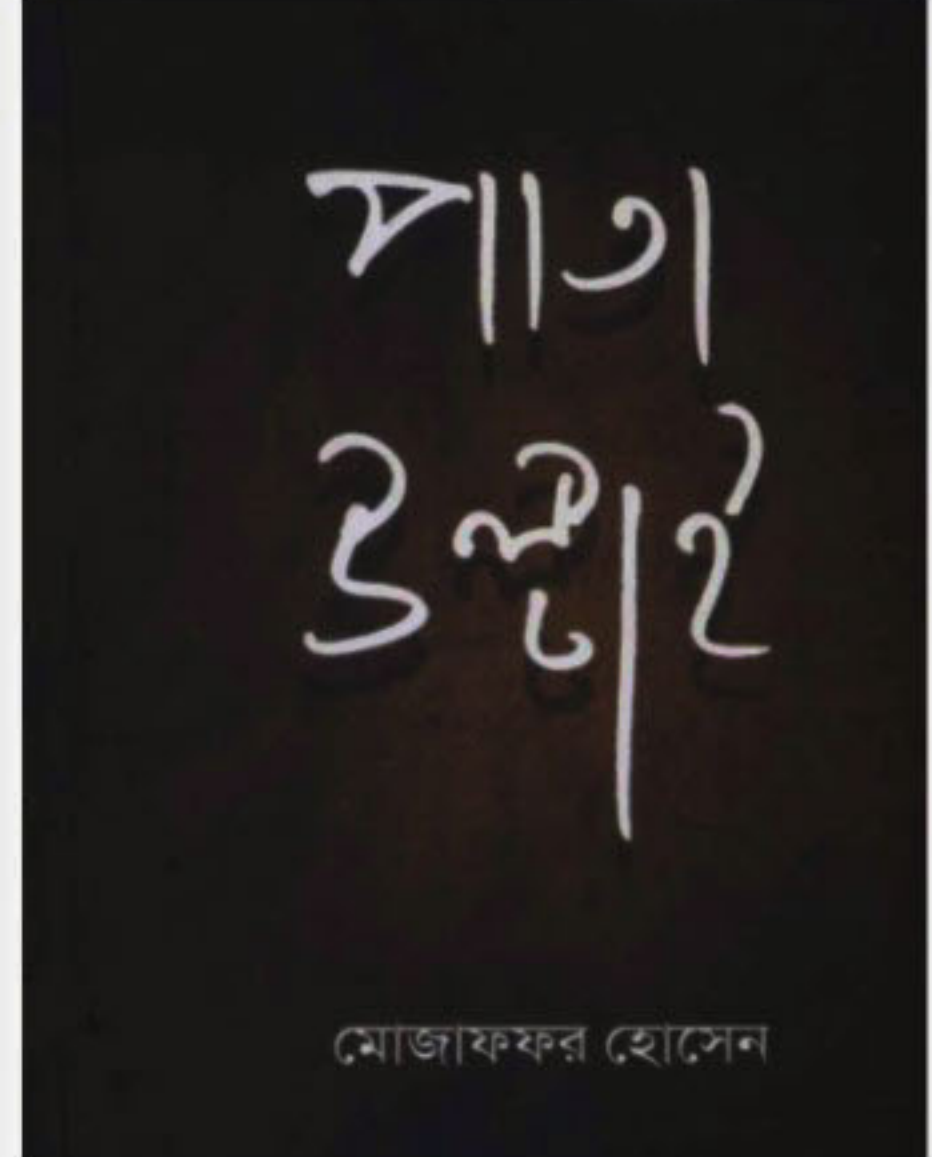
Later on came the eventful events of 1971. The

writer has incorporated six pieces on the 1971 War of Liberation. These are not the usual Muktiyuddho writings, but have some special touches that make them worthy of being read.

Mozaffar Hossain has given accounts of his personal encounter with people of great importance, some of whom were his teachers. Some were colleagues, some were teachers cum colleagues, and some were his friends.

Failing to control temptation, I am presenting below some of the excerpts (in my own translation) from those outstanding prose pieces:

'At Bahadurabad Ghat, the checker of the ferry challenged him (Dr Govinda Chandra Dev) as a passenger of the first class. Maybe it was because of



Pata Ultaí
Mozaffar Hossain
Bodhi, Dhaka

his shabby outfit. Being asked to show his first class ticket Dr Dev responded, 'I am a man of first class though I look third class.'

'Mizan Bhai (the editor of Meezanur Rahmaner Troimashik Potrika) observed the riots of 1946 that he later recounted in his book Krishno Sholoi (The Black Sixteenth). ... We all know that Hindus and Muslims killed people of each other's community in the riots. But we know little about those who sacrificed their lives to save people of the other community.'

'The man (Rajendranath Das) left the government job lest he might have to leave Dinajpur. But what a tragedy that he had to leave the country! He had to do it as a result of some conspiracies that caused insecurity for him.'

'No contemporary time shows due respect to its revolutionary genius. If sometimes it does, it is earned as a reward of much oppression and tribute.... At the end of his (Aroj Ali Matobbar's) life, he could draw respect from some kind souls.'

Bodhi, a sister organisation of Takshashila, has set a good example through publishing this non-profitable book. We believe readers in Bangladesh as well as West Bengal will applaud the writer and publisher of Pata Ultaí in terms of its contents and material qualities.

Subrata Kumar Das, a teacher and essayist, has set up a web site called

Light in the dark

Md. Zahidul Haque celebrates an endeavour

SPARK of Light In Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development for a Quarter Century is actually a research report composed by two eminent faculty members of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU), Dhaka.

Poverty is one of the major problems in Bangladesh. It signifies an inability to afford basic food and non-food items to people. The Bangladesh government has been working hard to alleviate poverty.

Professor M Zahidul Haque is associated with Sher-e-Bangla University, Dhaka.

people of its project area and sanitary latrines for 47.9% beneficiaries.

In a nutshell, Dipshikha has made remarkable achievements in making people self-reliant and poverty-free.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter focuses on the development perspectives in Bangladesh by the government and NGOs in relation to the national and millennium goals (MDGs) set by the United Nations.

The work indeed shows the spark of light gener-

Book cover for 'Spark of Light' by Dipshikha

Spark of Light in Poverty Alleviation
And Rural Development for a Quarter
Century
Mohammad Hossain Bhuiyan
Md. Sekender Ali
Dipshikha

ated by the persistent efforts of Dipshikha towards promoting human welfare and rural development. The book can serve as an excellent reference for development workers as also for those planning development projects in rural Bangladesh.