In the past month, Shahbagh has been transformed, literally and metaphorically, into a polyphonic "glorious garden". It is fitting that we have seen the birth of our "Bangla Spring" here, within the large radius of the University of Dhaka campus, in front of the vibrant flower stalls opposite the National Museum. This Falgun will become part of our national consciousness – the memory of this event will be carried forward into history in inspiring song and hopeful revolutionary declamations for change and renewal. New leaders are emerging. New voices are leading this generation.

We, who belong to the earlier generation, proud graduates of Dhaka University born in the forties and fifties, have a vision of national identity, driven by passion for our land, for our people and the Bangla language. We continually struggle to uphold the pride and defend the integrity of our nation. Now, as teachers and public servants who are near the end of term of service, it is heartening to see the light of our vision held aloft by the invigorated youth of today. Change is constant in the nature of all things upon this earth, especially in a world defined by boundaries and mortality. The old order yields to the new, time after time, generation after generation. I salute and welcome the new voices, harbingers of good fortune and dedicated service in the harsh journey forward.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Salutation Shahbagh Shining

REBECCA HAQUE

The new generation, however, must rekindle its own torch to light the path forward to richer, more just and equitable society. We are proud of our secular tradition, of tolerance of all races and religions, caste and communities. Our fertile Gangetic delta, with its lush paddy fields, its meandering plain of graceful talented brown and fair people, is a dynamic, throbbing nexus of many cultures, inviting cohesion and acculturation. Like the cyclical ebb and flow of tidal waves on the shores of the mighty Bay of Bengal, the blood of East Bengal has been enriched by the succeeding centuries of civilising codes: the laws and beliefs, the literature and language and music, of the Pals, the Sens, the Arabs, the Persians, the Greeks, the Portuguese, the Turks, the Chinese, and the English. We are a tough resilient people, with passion and poetry in our hearts. By nature and the genetic code seeded into the clay of this fertile green confluence of invaders and traders, we have not become warriors of battle and blood and gore. We are makers of art and artifacts, with shining eyes, elastic minds, and plastic hands. We are artists and artisans; we are growers of jute and silk and sustaining crops; we are fisherfolk; we are skilled weavers and potters and goldsmiths; we are singers and dancers and musicians and wordsmiths all. Versatile and free-spirited – this is our native tradition and glorious heritage.