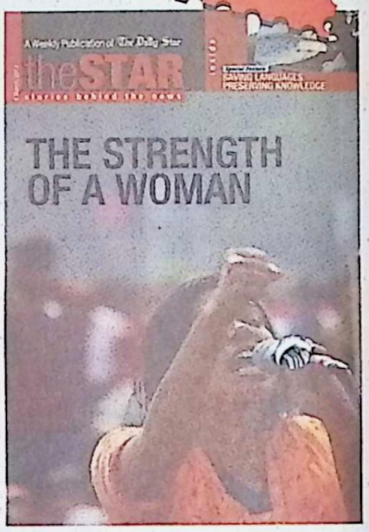
letters



The Spirit of Resistance

I really enjoyed last week's cover story about the role of Bangladeshi women in the movements of our past. It was a fitting tribute to International Women's Day as the occasion, which I was surprised to find out has been celebrated for 102 years, epitomises what women have achieved politically and socially.

I would go as far as to twist the saying 'behind every great man is a great woman' and say, 'behind every great movement there are great women' – and this article featured some very brave and noble ladies. From an era and culture that expected them to be submissive and house-bound, the examples the writer chose to feature are remarkable stories. Pritilata Waddedar was part of a plan to blow up a club which that denied entry to 'Dogs and Indians'. Indians did not come before a dog, that's how low they were placed in the eyes of the colonial powers at the time! Sadly she took her life so not to be captured, what a premature end for a woman who clearly had guts. Karuna Begum joined the liberation force after she watched her freedom fighter husband murdered by Pakistani soldiers. For a young mother to become a fighter and risk her child losing another parent is a choice no one should face and yet she embraced it because she believed in change and freedom. I was gripped by her story as she disguised herself as a man by cutting her hair and wearing men's clothes and was only discovered as a woman after many guerrilla operations. I always thought this was the stuff of fiction, like a Shakespeare play or Disney movie. Karuna Begum was Bangladesh's real life Mulan (those of the Disney generation will know who I'm talking about) and this is just one example of stories that need to feature more in our history books.

As the writer points out, many tortured and sexually abused women who survived were ostracised by their families or society – what does this say about us as a nation when we cannot recognise the sacrifice our women have given? We really ought to be acknowledging the female victims of our liberation war as heroes rather than survivors. They fought their own battles and deserve to be recognised so that future generations of women are also encouraged to not just survive struggle but own it and fight for what they want and believe in.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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