

A Tale of Towering Temper

FAYZA HAQ

Proshanto Karmaker who has been guided by his well-known elder brother Kalidas, has found in photography and painting his calling—winning accolades and prizes overseas for his lens work. He has held exhibitions of his work black and white and otherwise, at Alliance Fancaise, Shilpangan etc. His paintings remain soft and symbolic as evident in his work on the Independence Movement and more recently of the Shahbag movement. Proshanto picks up his camera and presents episodes from 1971 till today in a manner that has to be reckoned with.

He puts his artistic sensibility, energy and passion to show the crimes of the barbaric Pakistani army and the tears of the old and hungry in 1971, the cruelty of man to man. The bunkers, bridges and the protagonists of the vast conflict of the nine months have been shown in a graphic and artistic manner. When mothers and wives have been raped, sons have been cruelly mutilated – the inhuman brutality had to be condemned and never again repeated.

He has amalgamated the Independence War of 1971, with the Language Movement of 1952 and the Projonmo Chattar movement of today. George Harrison and other foreign friends of Bangladesh have not been forgotten either. The bright stars have been cleverly included with the common people who rose up against oppression as in France. Others like Stalin had led the people in World War II. His scroll - 3ft by 30 ft, is a combination of silk screen print and mixed media. Acrylic plays an important part in the prized work. The manner in which we see the photographs is not without craft and imagination.

He has brought in details as if in collages—which he has been good at in painting even five years back.



He has brought in the Freedom Fighters in *gamcha, lungi, dhoti* and women in simple white saris and *shalwar- kameez*. Tanks are brought in, following the footsteps of one of his ideals, Raghu Rai from India, who had covered the 1971 freedom movement more aptly than most other photographers of his time. There is barbed wire, an integral part of warfare, the Chittagong bridge being broken to prevent the Pakistani army from entering the city, although the barbarians eventually did, by another roundabout route.

A child is depicted carrying the freedom slogan, freedom fighters carrying guns are crossing the river—some carry bedding and food in wicker baskets on their heads.The freedom fighters are shown dragging the corpses of their fellow *muktijoddhas*. The historic March 7 statement of Bangabandhu is there too. Ziaur Rahman as a major is seen too. Qamrul Hassan the artist, who was active in the independence movement has been included. Women fighters are shown with their determination and passion. The vignettes remain heart wrenching and moving. The training of the *muktijoddhas* is seen. One comes cross a Chinese rifle too – enlarged for emphasis.

We are transported to 2013 where another movement, initiated by youth is captured on lens. The people are being led here by Dr. Imran, the national flag of the country is depicted overhead—to bring home the fact that the common man is with him. The teachers of the Dhaka Art College who made satirical cartoons of the traitors of the country and the invaders of the homeland of the Bengalis have been included. The distorted faces, in the form of reptiles were the depiction of individuals who were traitors. For them the Bengalis' interest was of little importance. Ghulam Azam is