



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Freedom Fighter Qayyum Khan

After nine months of atrocities and fierce fighting with Pakistan army a new nation called Bangladesh was born. But the freedom fighters who once fought selflessly for the liberation witnessed a different picture. Freedom fighter Qayyum Khan says, "After the war, the freedom fighters who actually fought for the country were cornered and demobilized. Ironically those who didn't participate in the war were brandishing their arms in the street."

After several post war calamities such as the famine of 1974, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated by a gang of rebellious army officers. Salil's interview with Colonel Faruque Rahman, who led the assassination made this book an account of forgotten history. Salil shares his experience in the session, "When I interviewed Colonel Faruque I found him very boastful of what he did in 1975. He showed no repentance. In the interview he actually sees himself as the saviour of the nation."

The name of Salil's book is actually to signify that

THE SAGA OF A BRAVE NATION

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

The tragic atrocities committed during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 are one of the less heard and less recognized histories of the world. The fact is there are few accounts in English which have portrayed the war crimes and the sufferings of common people during and after the war. Renowned Indian journalist and author Salil Tripathi has come forward to fill this gap by describing the sufferings of common Bangladeshis in their war torn country.

A discussion session at this year's Hay Festival with Salil and freedom fighter Qayyum Khan on Salil's newly published book "The Colonel Who Would Not Repent" reveals the author's experience with the freedom fighters, war survivors and his reflections on the post independence political turmoil in Bangladesh. In the discussion Salil shares one of the moving accounts from his books, "I talked with one of the witnesses Arshad Ali who was around 18 years old. He and his father were working in the jute field in Chuknagar, Khulna. At that time they saw military trucks coming. His father was waving to the truck to save his crops. The soldiers stopped the truck and shot his father. He saw his father falling before him and ran away. When he returned to fetch his father's body, he saw dead bodies all around the field. Arshad saw a baby still suckling its mother who was already dead. Arshad picked up the baby, and brought her up."



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Author Salil Tripathi

tragic assassination which changed the course of Bangladesh's history. Freedom fighter Qayyum Khan comments, "At first I thought that it was about the men who killed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Though the book begins with the author's interview with Colonel Faruque Rahman, this very well written book is actually on Bangladesh and its people during the liberation war."

Efforts like this should be encouraged to reveal the tragedy and heroic saga of our nation who wo



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Shahidul Alam at the Hay Festival session 'Once Upon a Time'.

ONCE UPON A TIME

ANANTA YUSUF

Human beings recorded personal history through dialogue long before there were any books. The oral tradition continues to this day. Till now, storytelling has played a momentous role in contemporary photography. In the beginning, photographers in Bangladesh used to present eye soothing, beautiful photographs. But the trend has changed, leading to a growth in the popularity of documentary movement in photography.

Celebrated photographer Shahidul Alam conducted a session "Once Upon a time" at the Hay festival this year, presenting us with insights into the craft of storytelling through pictures in the digital age. Interestingly, as a narrator he told us the art of storytelling from his memory and showed how narration becomes the history of our life. According to Alam, "The art of telling stories can be wiped away if there is no more weaving and spinning to go on. Photography as a medium does it and retains the precious memories of a person or a city or anything which is important."

Irrespective of age or culture, most people usually find stories more interesting when photographs

accompany the narrative. A single shot can be more enlightening than thousands of unfolding words. A single photograph can somehow bring a story alive, enabling us to imagine the little details and intricacies.

"I think a big job for a storyteller is to listen," says Alam. Listening can arouse our interest to look at other things happening around us. In a photo, we may not know about a character but the character allows us to think around that image and the impression that photographs gives us is very important for a storyteller. On the one hand it contextualises texts in a coherent narrative and on the other, it provides room for the reader to interpret the photographs with their own understanding.

Storytelling seems to be capturing the attention of people from every walk of life. And our photographers are coming up with ever-increasing number of exhibitions that feature strong narratives. Their works are not only factual representation, but rather have the ability to take the audience to a magical and fairytale-like world that the storyteller is preserving for the coming future.