

Drawings, pen and ink, 2007.

ART TO EXPOSE THE TRUTH

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During the nation's struggle for independence painter Biren Shome played a vital role in trying to expose the heinous and brutal ways of the Pak army. He painted and drew posters and notices along with others from Bangladesh against the monster Yahya Khan. The bombing, looting and pillage were shown in graphic details in his exhibitions. The efforts of the Muktiyoddhas their passionate nine – month struggle against a much more powerful force did not go unsung.

On the twenty-fifth of March, Biren Shome went to Jamalpur from Dhaka. At first he and his companion fled to Tangail, next to Modhupur and finally Jamalpur. They came on two trucks and faced aerial bombing and brush fire. On April 27 he reached Jamalpur and the camp training began. The house where they had taken shelter was bombed. The group then took shelter. Then they escaped to Sherpur, crossing Brahmaputra River. They were shot at from a jet fighter that left many dead and injured.

From the Sherpur crossing, through



United We Struggle, acrylic on canvas, 2008.

Mahendrapurganj the group entered India. Here there were 10,000 buses, cattle carts and vans full of people escaping the dangers of the invading army. In Chichingapara school and bazaar the group took refuge. At this relief camp the group rested for 20 days. Through Tura, Dubli and finally Farakka they went to Kolkatta. They then saw the news in Ananda Bazaar Patrika that artists were wanted in Kolkatta.

When in Kolkatta Art College, the principal, Chintamoni Kar, called for the artists to join. They saw Quamrul Hassan, Mustafa Manwar, Devdas Chakravarty, Kazi Gias, Bijoy Sen, Shekah Dey, Ranjit Noibi and others. They gathered canvas, brush and paints to have an exhibition. This exhibition was carried to New Delhi and Mumbai. There were 7 artists doing 67 paintings. The paintings were first hung at Birla Academy to show what was happening in Bangladesh.

The artists stayed at the Calcutta Art College canteen. After 5pm, the artists worked all night. They painted for a period of a month, these pictures were exhibited at the Birla Academy. The exhibition travelled through Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai. There were seven artists from Bangladesh, with 67 paintings, depicting rape, murder, torture and burning of homes. The art works had a deep impact on people. These pictures were sold and the money was given to the Muktiyoddhas.

In Lenin Street, Waheedul Huq and Sanjeeda Khatun began a song squad *Bangladesh Mukti Shangrami Shilpi Shangstha* in collaboration with *Kolkata Buddhijibi*. All the singers began rehearsal. They sang "Joy Bangla" and other patriotic songs. These people, with their music, says Biren, went to Rabindra Shadan where there was a huge function, the team leaders, he says, were Waheedul Huq and Sanjeeda Khatun; Biren Shome, and Ghulam Mustafa were the set designers. They had functions at Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi to prepare the minds of the people. They went to the border to pick up the

singers. By now, it was November and on the opposite side where they were singing was Benapole. Through their art and songs these artistes and painters evoked the spirit of Liberation among the people who had fled from their motherland.

Among the paintings of Biren Shome celebrating the Liberation Movement. There was 'Tranquility

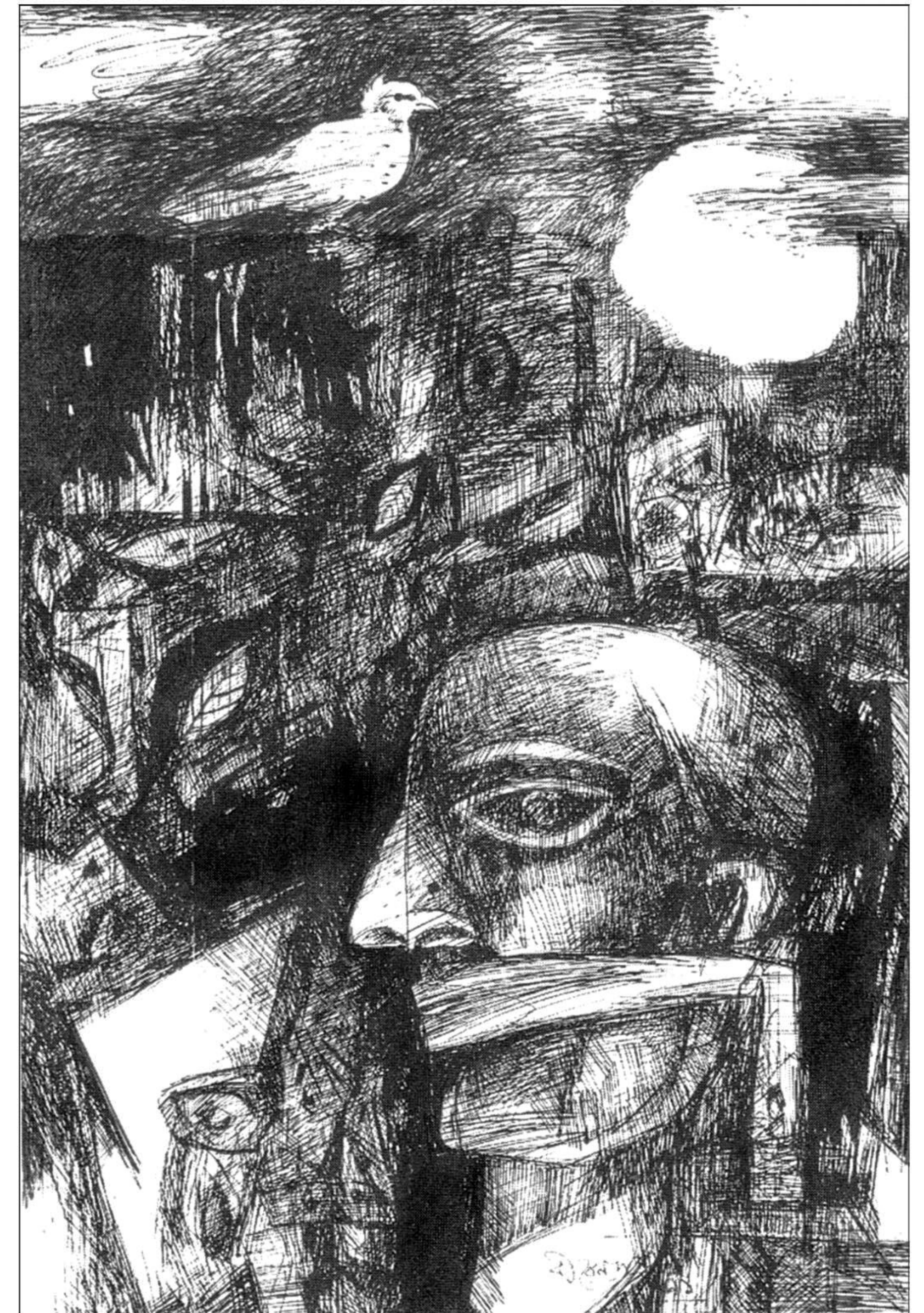


Image 1971, pen and ink, 1991.

After Ravages' an acrylic on canvas. This had a man's image with a bird and a disc of the sun. Another one by him was 'Victory at a Very High Cost' - an acrylic on canvas bearing the flag of Bangladesh amidst a stream of blood. 'We struggle' had hands aloft, the fists of angry men raised with the sun in the backdrop.