



COVER STORY

GINSBERG AND SEPTEMBER 71

SEPTEMBER on Jessore Road is a poem by notable American poet, Allen Ginsberg. A scything critic of materialism that was rampant in the 70s, as it is today, Ginsberg's poetry dissected the political psyche of the time in an attempt to touch human consciousness during events like the Bangladesh's War of Liberation.

In the poem "September on Jessore Road," Ginsberg shies away from his familiar sentence structure and chooses an orthodox rhyme scheme (aabb), most notably used by romantics. This deliberate use of rhyme for a poem that portrays atrocity and struggle for survival renders a sense of mockery for the insolence shown to the plight of the 10 million refugees that had left their homes in the then East Pakistan to neighbouring Indian towns and localities.

Ginsberg has repeatedly referred to the characters in this poem as "fathers," "mothers," "aunts," - giving the poem a more humane character. He forces the reader to empathise with the characters by using pathos and paints a picture for one to see these characters as human beings, rather than targets for bombing.

A severe critic of American culture during the Cold War period, Ginsberg's words are as relevant today as they were four decades ago. After passing forty years we have once again engaged in an attempt to quantify the struggle Bangladeshis went through in those 266 days of struggle. We are once again forced to say – lives not numbers.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif

Photos from the collection of war memorabilia of the author.

