

THE SONGS OF FREEDOM

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SONGS THAT DEFINE US AS A NATION, BEING CREATED AT A MOMENTOUS TIME IN OUR HISTORY. BUT WHO WROTE THOSE THREE MOST SIGNIFICANT SONGS OF FREEDOM?

ANANTA YUSUF

Powerful lyrics can be turned into lethal weapons. Even today we are moved by the songs of 'Joy Bangla'r Gaan' (The songs of freedom). These songs have remained in the hearts of countless individuals since their creation in 1971. *Mora Ekti Phul Ke Bachabo Bole Juddho Kori, Purbo Digonte Shurjo Utheche and Ek Shagor Rokter Binomoye* have inspired generation after generation of Bangladeshis. For these gems, we, the nationals of Bangladesh, will forever be indebted to Govinda Halder – the man behind the immortal words.

On March 25, 1971 - the war broke out in every corner of the country. With limited resources and abilities, people from all walks of life joined the struggle for freedom. By the end of May, Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, a clandestine radio station of the resistance, started its second phrase, as it aired revolutionary programmes from Baliganj Circular Road, Calcutta (now Kolkata). And this became an invaluable instrument of inspiration during the war.

Apart from the news bulletins, it was the fiery, emotion-filled songs inspiring people to protest for a free Bangladesh that became an indivisible part of the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. For freedom fighters and thousands fighting for their rights, this station and its patriotic songs were the only way they could endure the trauma, bloodshed and agony of war.

At that time, radio officials thought of introducing something new for their audience - something that would break away from the tradition of playing old recorded songs and regale them with rousing music performed live. Renowned activist and the news



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editor of the revolutionary radio station, Kamal Lohani, shared his desperate search to find strong lyricists with one of his friends Kamal Ahmed, who lived in Kolkata. Ahmed informed him about a young man, who wrote songs about the struggle of the people.

Lohani asked him to set up a meeting with the young lyricist. "While we were searching for a lyricist who could capture the essence of our country's struggle, Govinda Halder appeared like a saviour with two notebooks loaded with 24 to 30 songs," Lohani says.

At the beginning, Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra



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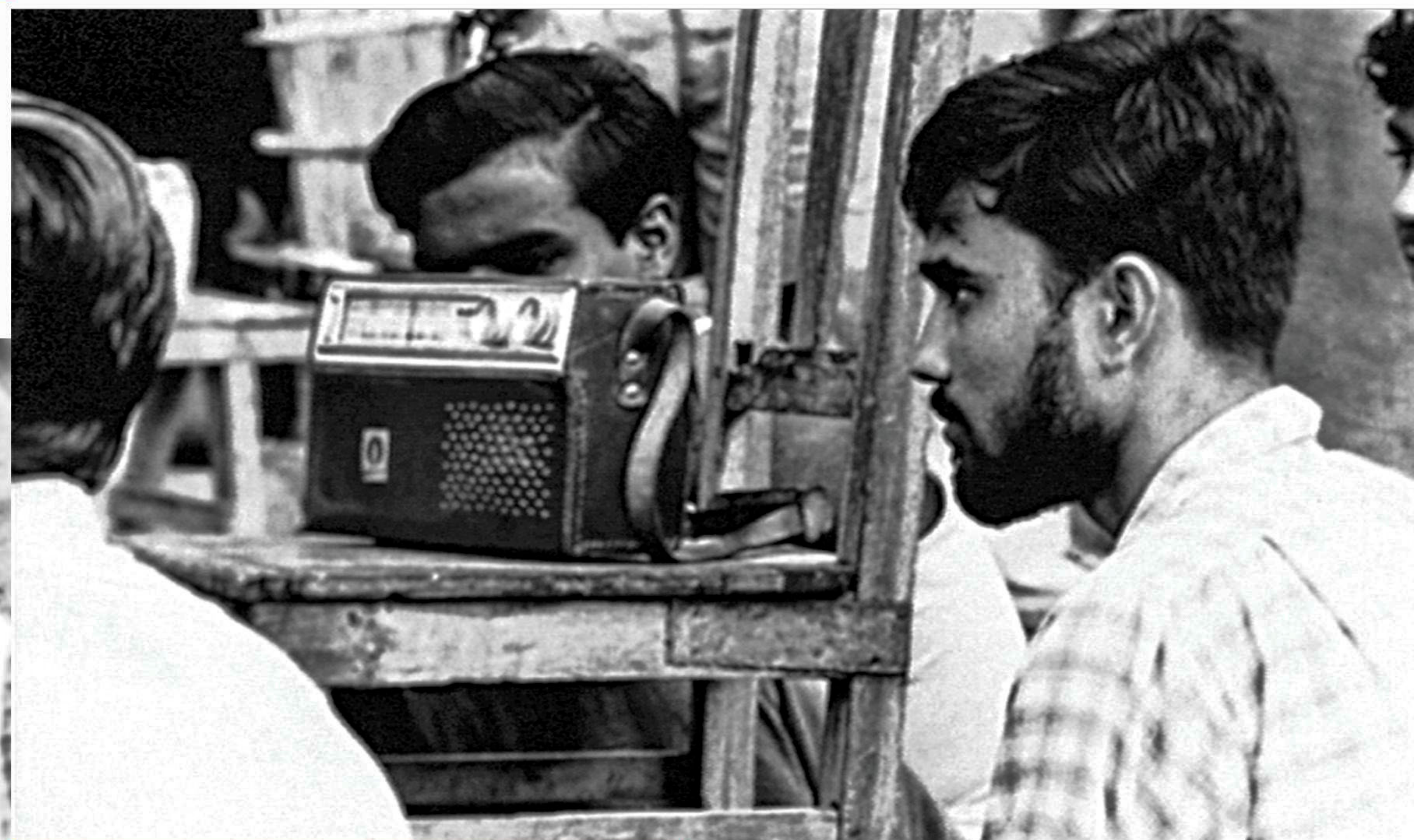


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