

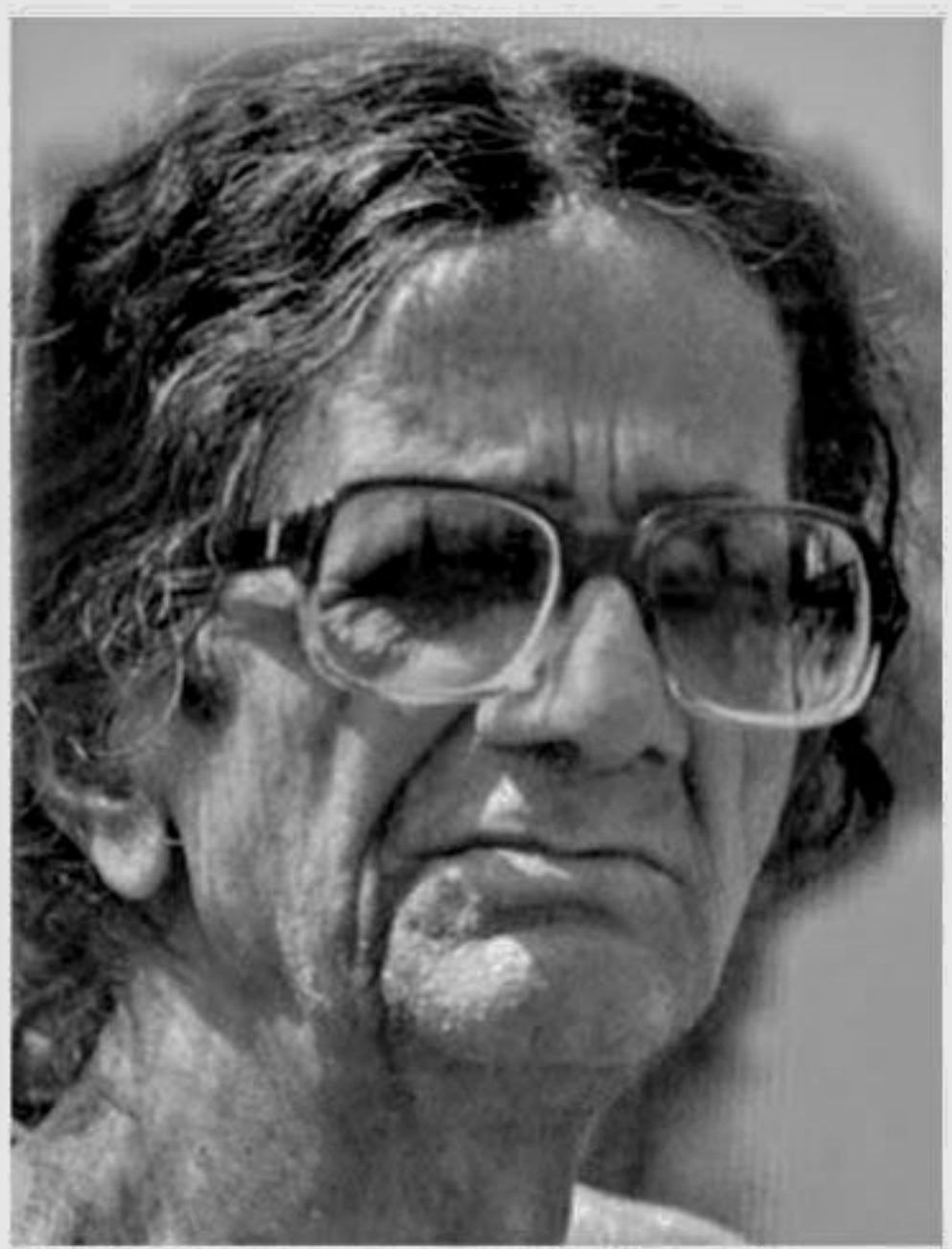


"I Don't Like Twirling the Baton of Politics"

Here we publish an excerpt from 'Jiboner Jolrong', the autobiography of legendary artist S.M. Sultan, as dictated to Mohsin Hosayn.

S.M. SULTAN

BEFORE we knew it, it was the year 1970. There were political movements all around. The confrontations of the students and the public of East Bengal had reached their peak. A troubling time came then – everything seemed to be in a state of vexation. There was no tolerance anywhere, for anything. The growth of artistic sensibilities and the fine arts came to a halt. All around there were propagandas for the election; there was a sense of excessiveness, excitement regarding the election everywhere. The Pakistani supporters suffered a terrible defeat at the elections. The supporters of independence were victorious. I wasn't able to reflect the expression of art in anybody. Gradually, the difference between night and day began to dissolve in my eyes. After overcoming every layer of time, Bangalis achieved victory in the elections. Ordinary people were overwhelmed by the happiness brought about by this triumph. However, Yahya and Bhutto did not want the power of the state to be handed over to the Bangalis. After that, what happened was inevitable. On the dark night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistani military began to murder the Bangalis in Dhaka. Then came the sovereign Liberation War. All over the country, some people went against the liberation movement. They initiated the Shanti Bahini, the Rajakar Bahini, the Al-Badr and Al Shams Bahini. They started murdering innocent citizens. The leader of such forces in Narail was Solaiman Maulana of the village Tularampur. This notorious leader of the Rajakar force had murdered thousands of people. He buried alive eight to nine members of the Tarafdar family near the Wapda rest house in Rugganj. The mass grave has been conserved. Even today, this mass grave brings tears to the eyes of people. Every night Solaiman's men would slaughter people and throw their bodies in the River Chitra. In the morning, one could see the bodies floating over the Chitra. The people of the locality were murdered. People who did not belong to the locality were also murdered. Those who were captured by the Rajakars on their way to India were taken and murdered by Solaiman's men at the launch ghat. The residents of Narail are not unaware about this. It

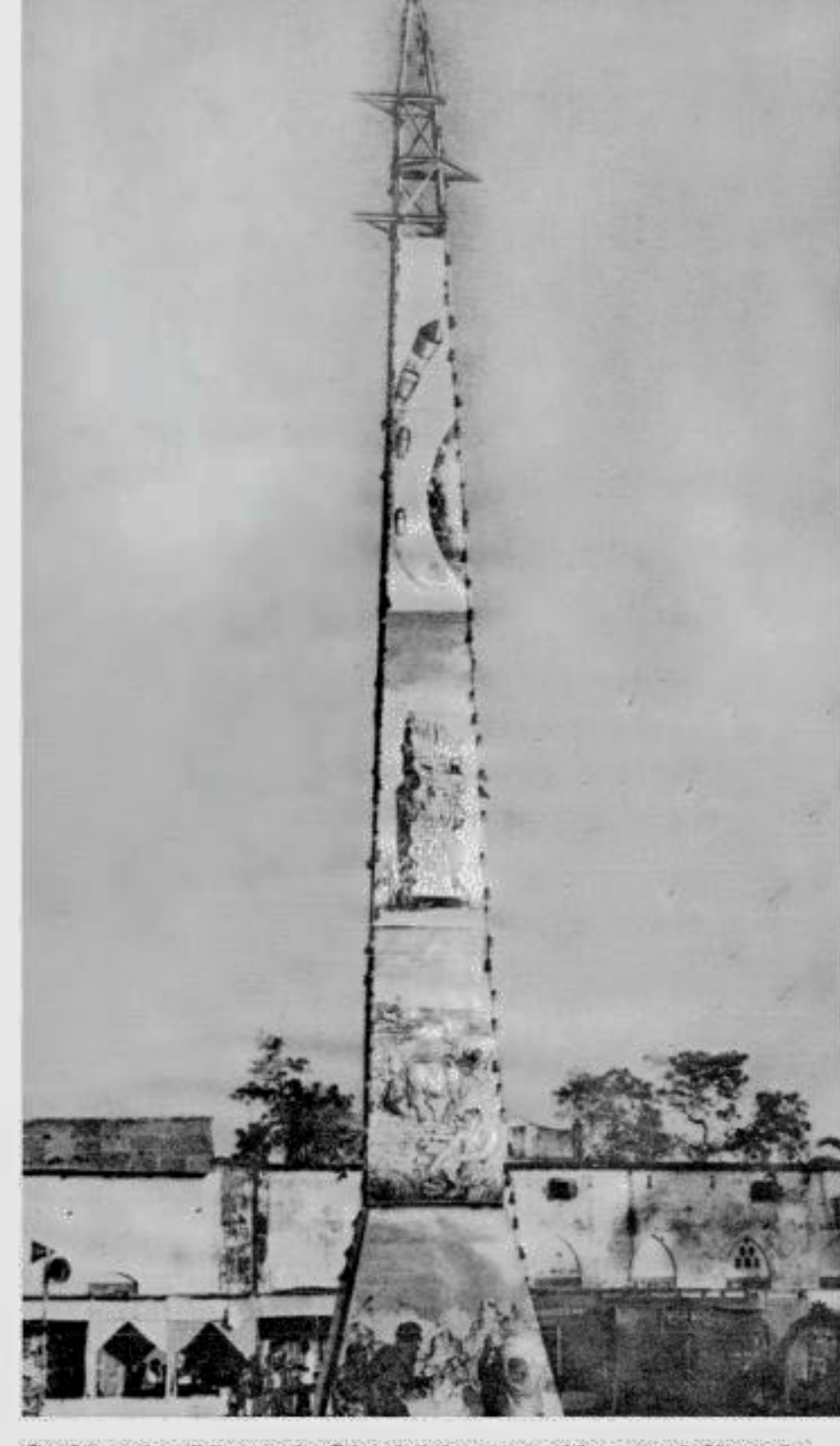


S.M. Sultan (1923-1994)

isn't possible to make anyone realise in words what we had gone through in those terrible days and nights. I don't want to understand any kind of politics. I don't like the twirling of political batons. I love my country, people and the earth. Am I Muslim in the eyes of religious fanatics? I am guilty of many sins. I paint pictures, but can't give life to them. I socialise with the people of the *najayez* (illegitimate) people of the Hindu community. I stay with them. That's why they wouldn't let me survive. The notorious rajakars of this place, Ghafur, Jabbar, Shafiraddi, Abu, Bajlu threatened to kill me. The names of the people I listed were killers; no one can say how many men and women they murdered. Looting, pillaging, raping – they didn't leave anything aside. Disorder prevailed all around. From the people of remote villages, we learnt about their misfortune. The rajakars would plunder the houses of Hindus and set them on fire. People could see the smoke from burning houses, wounding into a ring and flying in the air. This was the scorched earth policy of the Pakistanis. But where could I go? I didn't have the scope to leave the city. I could under-

stand that the rajakars were keeping an eye on me. I devised a plan to play them at their own game. I learnt that the Pakistani captain who was stationed at the Wapda rest house in Bhowa Khali was a Sindhi. The Sindhi race was very different from the Panjabi race. There are more tolerant than Panjabis. One day I spoke to him. I introduced myself. I didn't forget to mention about my conversations and acquaintances with the former governor and prime minister of Sindh. I informed him about our long stay in Jamshed Road, Karachi. I explained everything to him in Urdu. Finally I informed him that the rajakars of that area had threatened to murder me. Meanwhile, the captain seemed to have melted. He accepted me as an elderly artist. For a couple of days, I travelled in the captain's car upon his request. In the meanwhile, the captain castigated the chief of the Rajakar Shanti Bahini, Solaiman Maulana, and his men. In a way I was free. I was free of the fear and misgivings of the Rajakars. I started to wander in a free manner. At that time my movements were no longer under the surveillance of the rajakars. So one day I walked past the *zamindar bari* of Hatbariya and gradually reached my former workstation in Chachuri-Puruliya. I first went to Anil Sarkar's house; Anil's house was situated in the west side of Chachuri Bazaar. While in Narail-Rugganj, I had heard about the suffering of ordinary people but had never witnessed it. Now I began to see the suffering. My heart was never ready to witness this scene. Thousands of women and men, young people were fleeing to the west in fear of their lives. The elderly were unable to walk; their family lifted them in a raised seat and were thus taking off with them. Behind them ash, burnt earth, the blood-splattered bodies of their loved ones, were all giving chase to their bloody terror. They were fleeing toward the west, past Chachuri-Puruliya, Musiya, Egarokhani. Further to the west – to the refugee camps on the land of India. I became completely quiet. I still shiver when I think how humanity was tainted during the Liberation War of 1971. I stayed in Indu Das' and Anil Sarkar's house, and protected my life through different tricks. I even saw the infernal activities of the Pak military. Bodies over bodies, people with their eyes

bound being murdered, a war carried out in protest, a mountain of dead bodies – later everything that emerged from my paint brush was all a result of my experience. I don't paint pictures from ideas taken on loan. 1971 is the bloodshed of my idea. I don't ever want to see it in a trivial light; there's no scope of seeing it in a light manner. There's no doubt that our artists effortlessly bring alive the liberation war on their canvas. However, how can that picture be complete if the artist hasn't seen or lived that reality? Many of them (the artists) haven't been able to capture the freedom fighters' anger, their grievances, their willingness to sacrifice for their country. Freedom fighters have been shown not as a fighter but in the guise of farmer with a *gamcha* on his head, as he chases his cows and shelters his crops. This is the result of not seeing a freedom fighter in real life; the result of only



Sultan's Manob Shobhottar Kromobikash

painting from stories heard about freedom fighters instead of actually seeing them. Yes, you are right, I haven't worked on the war. It wasn't possible for me to take part in the war. I heard and learnt about the war. How can I encapsulate it with my brush if I hadn't seen it? But I have borne the journey of the swelling protest of countless people. There is no pretension in that. I believe that the subject of the liberation war should first be instilled in thought and intellect. The creativity of an artist can in no way be taken lightly. You have to stand in support of the conscience. Either you will stand by the truth or you'll write and paint about the dishonest path. No fraud can take place in this regard. The conscience of the liberation war is not just a picture of fights and murders. The history of free thought, philosophy and the path to human progress will be a part of the conscience of the liberation war. We aren't able to do works of such good quality. Are there any good films on the liberation war? No work has yet been done like those following the Second World War. There also haven't been good artworks painted on the liberation war. An unknown work had been done on the liberation war in Narail in 1974. Agricultural, educational, cultural and artistic exhibitions are organised in the courtyard adjacent to the Government School in Narail. A huge tower, which is almost 90 feet in height, was built here. This tower focuses on the evolution of human beings from ancient times. I included five paintings here. The activities of the working people of ancient times found place in the lowest rank. The painting above that portrays the eternal rural people. The one above that reflects the civilisation of cities. And the one above that was a portrait of a journey into space. At the top of the tower was a huge globe which showcased the map of the whole world. This picture of the continuous evolution of civilisation carried the story of an inspired conscience, the history of human progress. It carried the tidings of freedom, of the liberation war. Publisher: Monon Prokash Translation: Upashana Salam

Can Obama sell the nuclear deal with Iran?

ABDUL MATIN

THE clock is ticking in Lausanne in Switzerland where the foreign ministers of the United States of America and five other countries have been meeting their counterpart from Iran. By March 30, Iran must come to terms with the six countries brokering a deal to limit its nuclear fuel enrichment programmes and bring it under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure that no nuclear material is diverted for making the atom bomb. In exchange, Iran wants all sanctions imposed against it to be lifted permanently. The six countries agree only to suspend sanctions initially so that they can be re-imposed if Iran violates the terms of the deal. If the deadline is missed, Iran will continue to suffer from sanctions initially imposed by the United States following the Iranian Revolution in 1979. In 2006, the UN Security Council passed a resolution imposing further sanctions after Iran refused to suspend its uranium enrichment programme. The sanctions covered exports of petroleum products and business dealings including banking and insurance transactions and shipping. Over the years, sanctions have crippled Iran's economy. Iran is now desperate to get rid of the sanctions. It badly needs the petrodollar and foreign investments to rejuvenate its economy. Iran insists that its nuclear programme is peaceful and will



President Hassan Rouhani and President Barack Obama

be happy to continue with enrichment in a limited scale under the terms of the deal. Natural uranium contains several isotopes of which only uranium-235 undergoes fission and is used in nuclear power reactors to produce electricity and also in making the atom bomb. The concentration of uranium-235 in natural uranium is only 0.71% by weight. It needs to be increased to 3-5% for use in most present day nuclear power reactors and to a much

higher level, around 80%, to make the bomb. The process of increasing the concentration of uranium-235 is known as enrichment. Gas centrifuge method is now widely used for enriching uranium. In a centrifuge plant, uranium in the form of a gas (uranium hexafluoride) is passed through a large number of cylinders rotating at very high speeds and arranged in cascades. The higher the number of cascades, the higher will be the enrichment that can be reached. The deal under negotia-

tion will restrict the number of cascades in the centrifuge plants so that the enrichment of uranium cannot exceed a certain level (~5%) and bring all the centrifuge plants under the surveillance of the IAEA, the international watch-dog to prevent nuclear proliferation. Even though all previous negotiations failed, it appears that a deal is at the final stage in Lausanne. US President Barack Obama told the Iranian people that a deal to transform the relationship between the two countries could be within reach. As the deadline is approaching, questions are being asked how far he will be able to sell it at home and abroad. Republican senators are already skeptical of any provision in the deal that allows the continuation of Iran's enrichment programme. They believe that Iran will secretly use the enrichment technology to build the atom bomb. Earlier this month, forty seven Republican senators warned that any deal on Tehran's nuclear programme could be revoked once Obama leaves office. Externally, Israel, the United States' closest ally in the Middle East, has been opposing any deal with Iran. In a recent speech to the US Congress, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu depicted Iran as a "threat to the entire world". It may be mentioned here that Israel is the only country in the Middle East which is believed to be in possession of a nuclear arsenal. Officially, it neither denies nor con-

firms the possession of nuclear weapons. Its western allies also remain mysteriously silent on this matter. Now Saudi Arabia expressed its opposition to any deal with Iran that allows continuation of its enrichment programme. A senior member of the Saudi royal family has warned that a deal on Iran's nuclear programme could prompt other regional states to develop atomic fuel. He told the BBC that Saudi Arabia would then seek the same right, as would other nations. The Saudi claim may add a new dimension to the deal under negotiations in Lausanne. This brings us to the crux of the problem: the secret possession of a nuclear arsenal by Israel which did not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While sanctions were imposed against all other countries which had detonated nuclear devices, no sanction was ever imposed against Israel and no inspector of the IAEA visited Israel to inspect its nuclear weapons programme. So long as Israel continues to possess nuclear weapons, the danger of rivalry over possession of nuclear weapons cannot be ruled out in the region. It is, therefore, important that a uniform standard against proliferation of nuclear weapons should be applied in the region without any preferential treatment. This will be the only way to create a nuclear weapon free zone in the volatile Middle East. The writer is a retired nuclear engineer.

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QUOTABLE Quote

We'd all like to vote for the best man, but he's never a candidate.

Kin Hubbard

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- Time for showers
- Ninny
- Most writing
- Annual visitor
- Drilled
- Ninies
- Not active
- Surgeon's implement
- Supply voices for
- Model buy
- Hosp sections
- Enlarged proportionately
- Low card
- Like the Sahara
- Found with difficulty
- Fido's foot
- Some
- Sushi choice
- Noted trumpeter
- Art's art
- Position
- Caesar, for one
- Negotiations
- Make a speech
- Aphrodite's love

DOWN

- Declines
- Plant pests
- Ad focus
- Sports vehicle feature
- "Got it"
- Went ahead
- Forest youngster
- In reserve
- Mink's cousin
- Survives
- Sculptor's output
- Pot part
- Hotel door openers
- French article
- Opposite of post
- Company thinker
- Library stamp
- Leaf lifter
- Runway sights
- Trattoria fare
- Church sight
- Seapouter
- Autographs
- TV explorer
- Quarrel

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

L	A	P	I	S	T	I	A	R	A	
A	B	I	D	E	R	A	T	E	S	
S	O	L	A	R	P	A	N	E	L	S
E	V	E	B	A	D	C	I	A		
R	E	D	P	I	N	E	R	E	Y	
S	U	S	A	N						
A	N	T	S		P	U	N			
D	I	E	B	E	S	T	B	E	T	
I	C	E	A	R	T	O	D	E		
S	O	L	A	R	P	L	E	X	U	S
T	R	I	P	E						
S	N	E	E	R						
R	I	S	E	S						

CRYPTOQUOTE

DU, MC MS IA SD PUDDJA HBY PHRR SUIA WMBA, RDKA, SUDE HFS AKAFO YHO WO KHRABMSBA!

-- SUDWHJ UDDY

YESTERDAY'S Cryptoquote: LOVE IS A CANVAS FURNISHED BY NATURE AND EMBROIDERED BY IMAGINATION.

-- VOLTAIRE

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

KEEP GOING, COOKIE! LOAD ME UP!

OKAY

I WAS AFRAID THAT WOULD HAPPEN!

GREGG MORT WALKER

HENRY by Don Trachte

AH, THIS LITTLE BUG BELONGS TO THE GERANIUM FAMILY!

J.G. GERANIUM

YESTERDAY'S CRYPTOQUOTE: LOVE IS A CANVAS FURNISHED BY NATURE AND EMBROIDERED BY IMAGINATION.

-- VOLTAIRE