

BOOK

ABUL MANSUR AHMAD SHARAKGRANTHA HONOURING OUR NATION'S CONSCIENCE

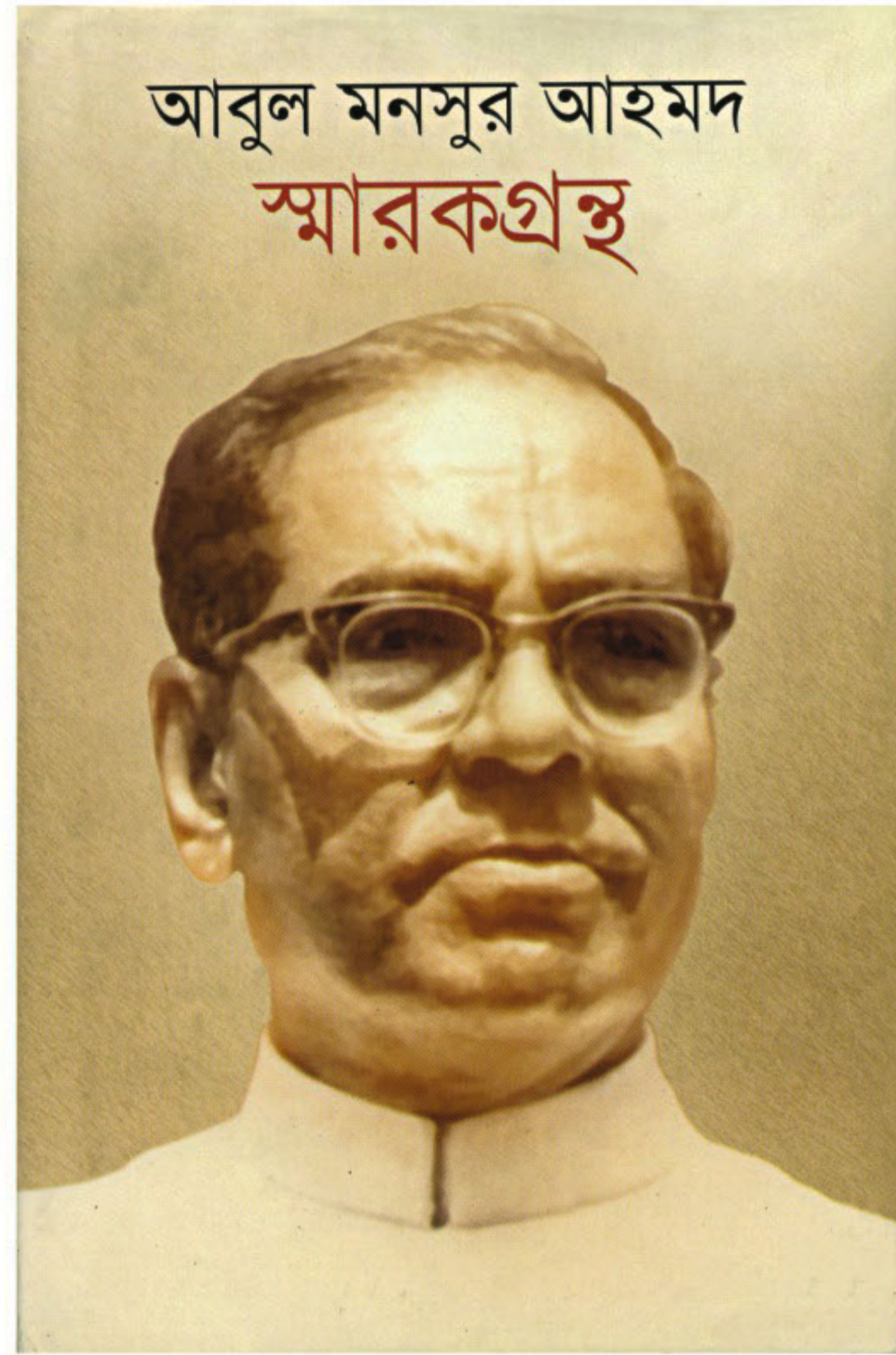
MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Thirty five years ago today, Bangladesh lost one of its vanguards of its movement for emancipation. He is Abul Mansur Ahmad, the pioneering intellectual leader whose literary works and revolutionary thoughts have laid the foundation of an independent Bangladesh. Ahmad's uncompromising activism for democracy, ethics and transparency showed us the path to a democratic, harmonious and progressive Bangladesh. Besides his political wisdom, Ahmad was also a gifted writer. His autobiographies and satirical writings are some of the best creations in the history of Bengali literature. However, after his demise, Bangladesh started to forget the legacy of this great philosophical leader. His literary works and enlightening articles were about to be forgotten.

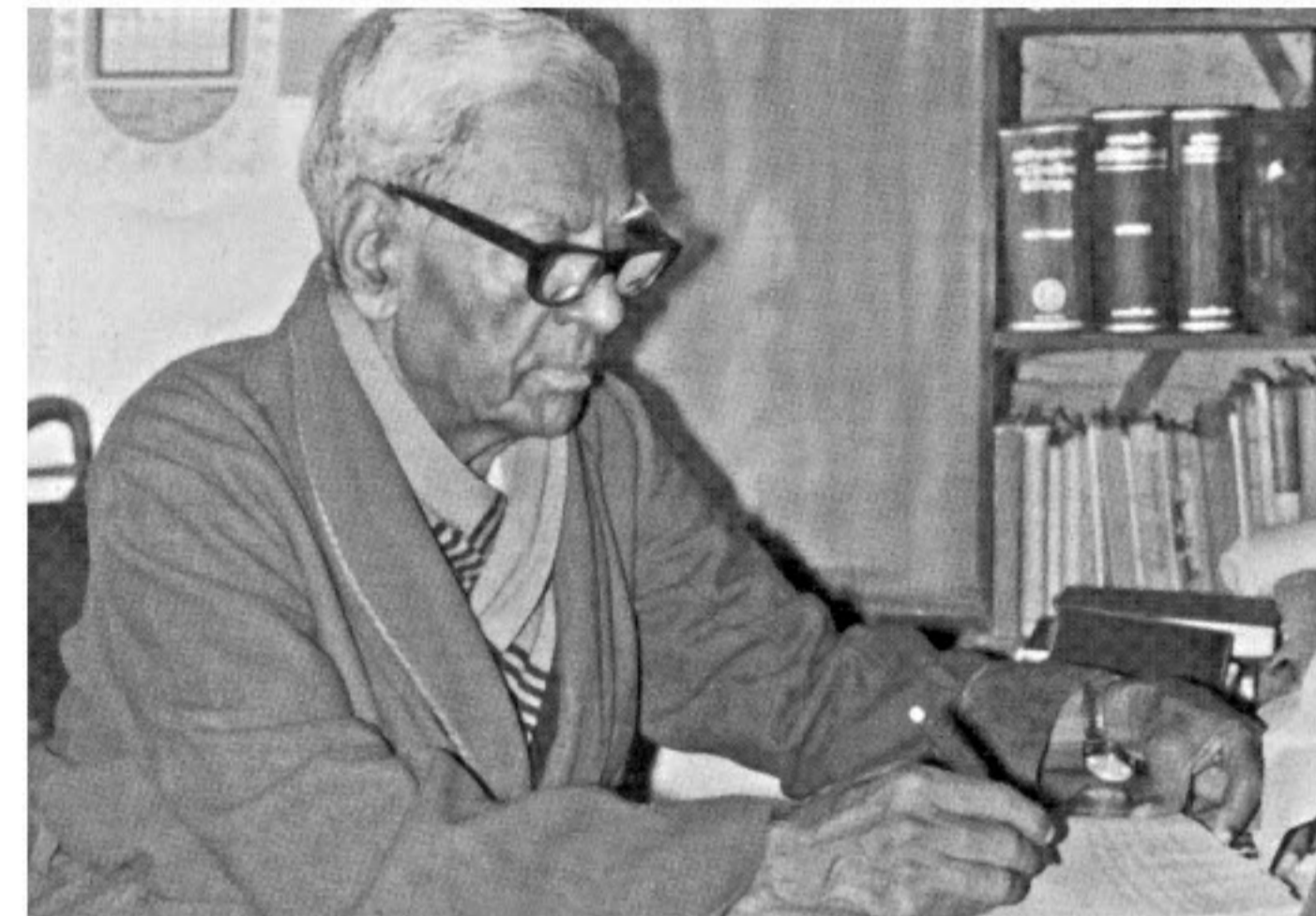
Just a couple of years ago, a young writer and researcher named Emran Mahfuz started to bring back the works of Abul Mansur Ahmad through his literary magazine called Kaler Dhoni. During his research, Mahfuz managed to obtain a number of valuable articles written by the leading scholars and authors on the life and works of Abul Mansur Ahmad.

With these articles, Prothoma, one of Bangladesh's leading publication houses, has published a voluminous book called "Abul Mansur Ahmad Sharakgrontho". Edited by Emran Mahfuz and a panel of expert editors such as Professor Rafiqul Islam, Syed Shamsul Haq, Professor Anisuzzaman, Shamsuzzaman Khan and Syed Abul Maksud, this impressive book of 352 pages has included a wide range of essays on different aspects of Abul Mansur Ahmad's life and works. Scholars like Professor Dr Anisuzzaman, Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury have written on his intellectual and literary writings, the articles of pioneering journalists such as S M Ali and Muhammad Jahangir have reflected the lesser known but groundbreaking contribution of Ahmad in the field of journalism and freedom of press.

In total, this book presents thirty eight articles written by renowned scholars, authors, journalists and his fellow activists. In the contents, these thirty eight articles have been arranged under six topics such as literature, journalism, politics, intellectual practice, life and



memory. Thanks to this topical arrangement, a reader can easily explore a particular part of this great life. In addition to these articles, this book has twenty two pages of rare, historic photographs capturing some of the historic moments of Ahmad's eventful life and of Bangladesh as well. In the last page of the photographs, there are two scanned copies of the newspapers named The Nabajug and The Ittehad. By working as the editors of these two pioneering newspapers, Ahmad established the milestone of journalism without fear and favour in Bangladesh.



Abul Mansur Ahmad

Following these photographs, in the three addendum of the book, more valuable, enticing resources are waiting for the readers. In the first addendum, Ahmad's historic speech in Pakistan's National Assembly in 1956 has been documented in his own words. By studying this speech a reader can explore the historic facts how the West Pakistani rulers were depriving Bangladeshis from their rights from the very beginning and how leaders like Ahmad had to struggle for the rights of our countrymen, the struggle which ultimately led to the liberation war of Bangladesh.

A sample of Ahmad's own hand writing and his family tree has been given in the second and third addendum. A list of commentaries of noted personalities on Ahmad's contribution, a list of all of his publications and a detailed biographical timeline have also been added in the concluding pages of this epic, voluminous book.

In this tumultuous time, when the whole nation is divided; when corruption and mismanagement have polluted every layer of governance, this book can be an enlightening guideline for the young generation. This book enables the readers of this generation to delve into the history of our nation through the life of one of this nation's architect. This must-read book is available in all the outlets of Prothoma and in every prominent book stores. It can be obtained at only 550 Tk. ■

NUMBERS

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Is the number of people killed in a car bomb in the heart of the Turkish capital Ankara on Sunday and wounded 75 more, the governor's office said, less than a month after a similar attack killed 29 people just blocks away. Video footage showed burning debris showering down on what appeared to be the entrance to an underpass. The blast could be heard 2.5 km (1.5 miles) away and a large cloud of smoke could be seen rising over the city centre, a Reuters witness said.

Source: AFP

ENDEAVOUR

As soon as we stepped onto the basketball court of the Center for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), we witnessed a truly inspiring spectacle in front of us. A group of 16 women with disabilities, of different ages, were playing basketball in their wheelchairs, making basket after basket. We too shared the excitement of the players, when they shouted in joy every time they made a basket, and made playful jabs at each other for missing a shot. What seemed even more incredible to us, however, was the fact they were helping each other do better in a sport that a lot of them hadn't even heard of hitherto.

To help reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with disability, CRP in association with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is putting up a first of its kind training camp. Their goal is big, but attainable - to form a Women's Wheelchair Basketball Team that will be able to take part in different friendly matches, tournaments and eventually in the Paralympic Games.

Despite the hectic training schedule that starts at 8.30 in the morning and continues the whole day with a number of intervals in between, these players don't seem tired at all.

In Bangladesh it is not uncommon for people with physical disabilities to be stigmatised, as they are generally excluded from education, employment and community life, which deprive them of opportunities essential to their social development, health and well-being. A woman with disability from an underprivileged background is often times even more vulnerable to different forms of discrimination.

"The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) believes that, sport in this regard, helps reduce the stigma and discrimination because it can transform community attitudes about persons with disabilities by highlighting their skills and aptitudes, eventually highlighting the person rather than his/her disability," opines Rayhan Sultana, Communication officer, ICRC. "Engaging in sports, in turn, allows people with disabilities to get an opportunity to be as active as non-disabled people. In addition, the rehabilitative impact of being involved in a sport - physically and psychologically - is immeasurable."



PHOTO: COURTESY

TOWARDS A BIGGER DREAM

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

"Presently, there are 16 women participating in the training. As patients of CRP, they used to play basketball in the afternoon just as a recreational activity. During that time, they were not aware of the rules and regulations of the game. From these patients, we have shortlisted 16 women, depending on the stage of their disability and their knowledge about the game," says Nahid Parvez, the coach who has been arduously training these talented women for the last two weeks.

Parvez himself was a basketball player, but when it comes to wheelchair basketball, the rules and regulations are completely different, he says. In order to teach them the game, he had to first learn

the rules himself. He completed a one-month training in wheelchair basketball and did some background research by surfing the internet.

"Operating the wheelchair while passing the ball within a strict time span - the idea seemed totally impossible to me in the beginning. But now we feel like playing all the time. This is the only time when we can set aside our sadness of being wheelchair ridden, and concentrate on our potential and ability," says Kamrun Nahar Shampa, who has come all the way from Jessore.

"I remember the first day we played, our hands were aching. Later, after we were given therapy, the situation started

becoming easier for us. It's a new sport for many of us, but that is the challenge that all of us have embraced, happily and eagerly," says Marzana Akhtar, who previously was a patient of CRP. This time, however, she has a very different goal, something that will help her break the constant stigma that she faces for being differently-abled, believes Marzana.

The journey of achieving the goal of forming a national team that would be able to engage in different international tournaments is not an easy one. But if proper assistance from the government and other non-government organisations is provided, nothing can keep the team from fulfilling their dream. ■



PHOTO: AFP