

IN MEMORY OF QAMRUL HASSAN BHUIYAN

# A freedom fighter and Liberation War researcher

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

OUR imagination seldom can reach beyond the immediacy of time. We are free to jump on an illusory time-machine to traverse from a million year old

Akashvani (radio) Calcutta used to then broadcast a special on Bangla music in the afternoon, close to our study time. Romantic Qamrul would not miss it for the world. Often he would hurry breathlessly to the college block to be not marked late and punished. But, those few songs were his oxygen till the next afternoon.

Qamrul reached Melaghar (HQ Sector 2) near Agartala, India a month or so after us. Around sunset Mukarrimul Huq (now Engineer) rushed to announce the arrival of another JCC chap. Although thrilled, we were quizzical how he landed in the Operations camp. Explained Qamrul with all his teeth bared, "When freedom-fighters were stationed in our village, I got to handle their arms and ammunition. Also, I had Military Science in college, remember, and I told them so". Not having to go through

knowing the respective password of the night. Received cordially by the officers, the sealed letters from HQ were delivered. That was easy.

We returned to Melaghar at dawn. The camp was asleep. We were tired. Qamrul and I lay down in the yard of the Officers Mess where Haider Bhai and others camped. When we awoke, there was sunshine and buzz. Our SMG was not with us. Sheepishly we queued with others returning from similar or other missions. Haider Bhai formally noted down our feedback, and then as a matter-of-fact asked us to return the *hatiyar*. We were blasted and told we could all have been killed if an enemy got hold of the weapon. Qamrul remained a favourite despite that ordeal.

Tragedy struck Qamrul's family in the late 1980s when his loving and only son two-and-half-year old Sabit died of cancer. Qamrul wanted his child's grave to be framed. "I have some

Committee, having missed the ceremony, Rotarian Qamrul (Charter president of Rotary Club of Mukto Swadesh Dhaka) presented me with my crest at his book-studded den.

Qamrul lay there (also his home) in a white shroud, draped in the flag for which he fought and that of Bangladesh Army; his face beaming in heavenly bliss. Devoutly religious, Qamrul was prepared for death, more so as his health deteriorated, organ by organ, reminding us of mortality. Over the past several years, he was a regular resident of Dhaka's CMH. Visitors were always welcome. Once I went for fifteen minutes and spent two hours, reminiscing about Cadet College, the war, army and friends.

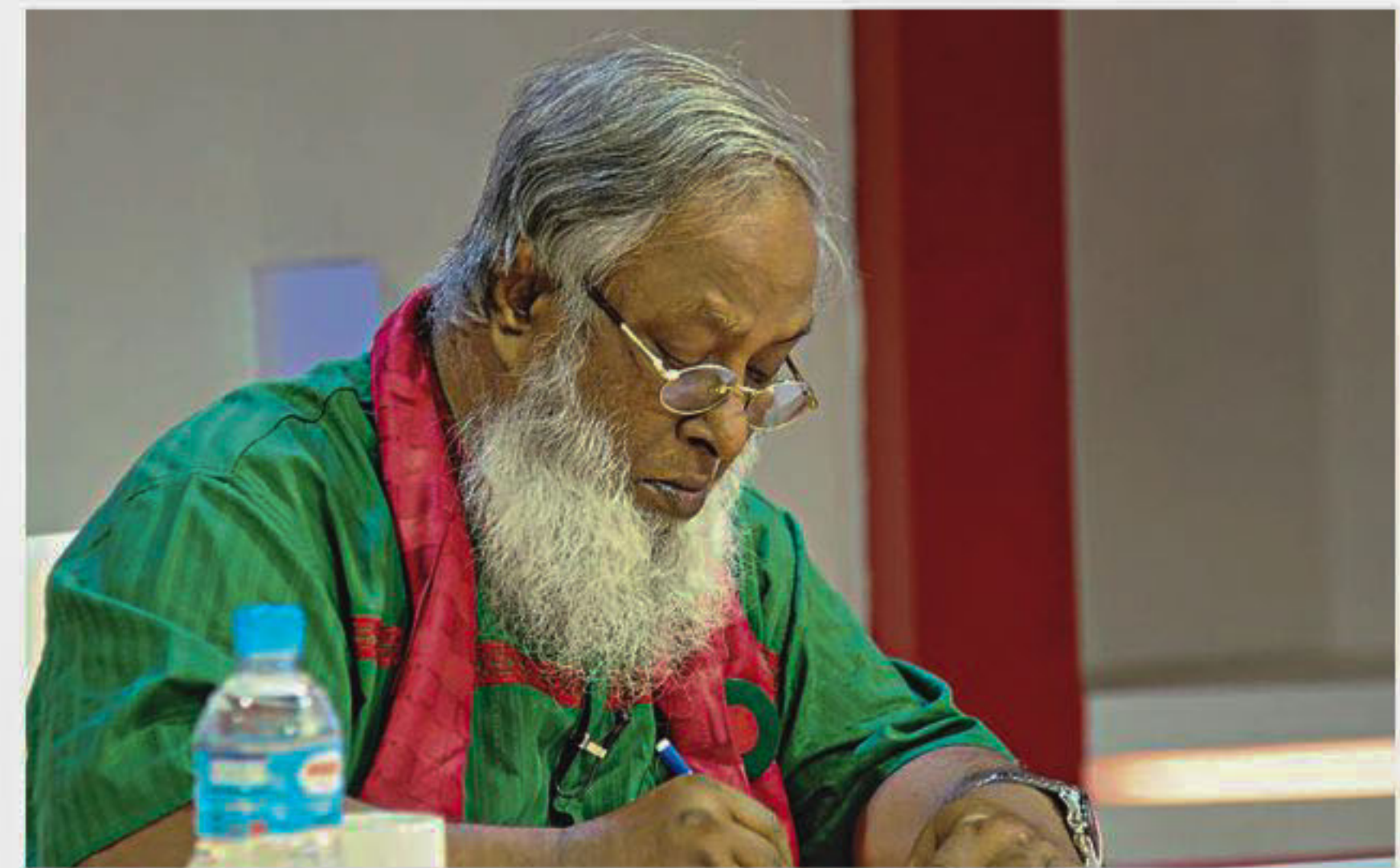
Twenty-nine titles emerged from his continuous research expanding five decades. Fluent in Chinese language, Qamrul's books in Bangla (*Janojuddher Ganojodha*, *Bijoyee hoye firbo noilay firboee na*, *Ekaturrer konya jaya jononira*, *Patakar proti pranadona*, *Shahdinata* Vol. I-V and more) reflect one man's passion for 1971. Queried about his political ideology, he did say, "I do not talk about anything beyond December 16". His focus on a people and their armed struggle for emancipation earned him the Bangla Academy Literary Award 2017.

In spite of being a prolific writer, of all the books he wrote, Qamrul was particularly joyous about the one that carried the name of his then three-year old granddaughter Yusra as author. Titled "*Amar nanabhai neel kalo nanabhai*" (My granddad, blue-black granddad), it was an album of loving words that Yusra had uttered. Qamrul inquired of the child why she did not just say black. Yusra would retort, "No, my Nanabhai is blue-black".

On a blue-black night, Qamrul was buried with full national and military honours, including three-gun salute. As the funeral march commenced, silencing further the graveyard silence, the hearse carrying Qamrul made its way to his eternal resting place to the accompaniment of Quranic recitation. The muteness broken momentarily by burdened wailing, perhaps of his wife Rifat Nigar Shapla and daughters Chumki and Rumki.

I did not care what attending ageing freedom-fighter comrades, formally-dressed Army personnel, dignitaries, and younger men and women would think. I gave Qamrul a long salute deserving of one of the most unadulterated and dedicated freedom-fighters.

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Qamrul Hassan Bhuiyan (1952-2018)

rigorous training did not stop him from becoming a very accomplished Commander of (Comilla's) Muradnagar Thana Muktiduddho Command.

It may be difficult for today's youth to comprehend how we fought a war to liberate Bangladesh from the heinous Pakistani forces without mobile telephones; landlines too were rickety. Information had to be passed by post or in person. Capt ATM Haider, Bir Uttam, required letters to be delivered to three frontline camps overnight. Who does he choose? Qamrul, of course. No prizes for guessing who Qamrul chose. We set off on a military jeep with a SMG, which Qamrul handed over to me because of my training. Our driver manoeuvred through thick forest, up and down hills, on rugged unlit border roads. We were "arrested" at all three camps for not

money left from his treatment. I don't care what people may say. Give me a design" said he. Qamrul took me to the "site" and soon construction began. Monday night, after his burial, when I passed by the child's grave his family was whimpering. Death do us apart, but painful memory lingers on. My design was intact.

There are many researchers and avid writers, but few can match the elephant's memory (sorry *Dosto*) that my friend held. He could incessantly narrate about child fighter Nuru, youths Ramzan and Salam, brave Iman Ali, freedom fighter boatman Abbas, and hundreds of fighters, razakars, battles and comrades.

He was most comfortable at his Baridhara DOHS-based Centre of Liberation War Studies, which he founded and chaired. As chair of Rotary District's Muktijuddho Awards

## It Takes Two to Tango

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

THE busy intersection is busier because people are confused as to what is to be followed (if at all) at the moment—the traffic lights or the hand signals of the police officer on duty. When the latter is not there, we stop at the red light, only to be honked at by the cars behind us. After all, we are a bunch of morons not going with the flow, and yes, not going with the flow of traffic. Cars on the left most lane make the tightest right turns and vice versa. Should there be a

fender bender or worse, then the person at fault is the one with the less expensive car or less number of cylinders, wheels, horsepower, displacement (cc) or simply with a lesser polish, a less louder voice, or a less fouler mouth.

But Salauddin Bhai ("Sal"), our driver, is a thorough gentleman with zero road rage and with an always obliging, "After you, sir!" demeanour. As such, we are stuck in traffic longer than others who are there for an eternally long time anyway. Even once when a man standing right in the middle of the intersection, clearly at fault of jaywalking, curses the daylight out of Sal, he remains calm like Mahatma Gandhi, rolls down the window, and tells the guy standing there like a stone statue, to just move aside and to be careful. He then starts driving. I am furious, I order him to stop the car so that I would get down and give the stone statue a piece of my mind. Sal calmly says, "Relax. He is on drugs. I could smell it in his breath." So, the stone statue is stoned. I wonder who will be blamed if he is run over...

But even Sal has his momentary lapses. On another day, he sees the green light, but not the hand of the police officer signalling to stop at that busy intersection. The police officer grimaces, Sal smiles, waves at him with a gesture to forgive him and drives off.

But it is the wife who is in the car this time. General Wife barks at Sal to stop and doles out her summary court martial: "Take your driver's license and the car registration and go to the police officer and tell him to give you a traffic violation ticket! On the double!!"

Sal is confused, bemused, shocked and in all other states faced by a shell shocked GI. He walks to the officer as the wife watches. It obviously takes several minutes for the officer to even comprehend (he probably pinches himself in disbelief) as to what this lunatic was asking. After some haggling, Sal comes back smiling. "Madam, he let me go and told me to not repeat the offence." "Madam" yells at him to go back to the cop and insist on issuing a ticket. Sal goes back and the cop simply can't believe that he would see the day when the haggling would be for a reverse cause where the cop does NOT want to book Sal but Sal is adamant about getting booked.

Another bout of haggling—a scene where one can see a cop being pestered by a little man at a busy intersection. Finally, the cop gives up, walks back to the car and asks "Madam" that it's ok, he didn't do anything drastic.

Madam asks a simple question, "Did he [Sal] break the rule by not stopping when asked to stop?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then you give him a ticket, right here, right now. Do what you are supposed to do!"

The officer scratches his head and issues the ticket, surely suppressing the urge to burst out laughing.

Sal is not a happy camper. For madam has not only had him booked, but he has to pay 50 percent of the fine (of Taka 400) out of his own pocket as a lesson learned. And it's not just the money, it's also the hassle and time to get the process completed.

As an afterthought, the officer tells the wife: "Madam, if only there were five other people like you, this country would be so different..." and he walks away, I am sure, totally bemused. Meanwhile, Sal does not talk much for the next two weeks—not until August hits. This time, the ice melts—Madam is not "*Et tu Brute?*" but rather, "*Et tu Confucius?*" The exercise that he had gone through is no longer lunacy, but a tiny step to avoid and perhaps eliminate the lunacy on the roads.

A lesson learned. It is the same lesson and the recent goings on that prompt me to download the landline application form from BTCL's website with my vow to stick it out through the entire process of getting the connection while not buckling to any temptation for a "speedy" process. After all, to commit a wrongdoing, it takes two to tango...

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