



# Serenading the sublime souls of the soil

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

of the country, who was the first artist to take up sculpture in independent Bangladesh. His 'Jagroto Chowrongi' is considered one of the best sculptures in Bangladesh, considering both form and theme. Located in Joydebpur, Gazipur, and built in 1973, it is the first post-Liberation War sculpture. It depicts a Freedom Fighter with a grenade in his right hand and a rifle in his left hand. The sculpture is an 18 feet high concrete piece on a 24 feet pedestal.

Syed Abdullah Khalid's 'Aparajeyo Bangla', located on the Dhaka University campus, has become an iconic sculpture in the post-independent Bangladesh. The sculpture is a reflection of the Bangalees' indomitable yearning for freedom. The project was launched in 1973 when this artist was a young teacher at the Department of Fine Arts, Chittagong University. Hasina Ahmed, Syed Hamid Moksood and Badrul Alam Benu, who were very close to Khalid, modelled for 'Aparajeyo Bangla'. On August 15, 1975, the work suddenly came to a halt because of the heinous murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Political instability and the arrest of the then Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, also disrupted the work.

The project remained incomplete till the end of 1978. Some extremist groups tried to demolish the sculpture in 1977. However, the brave students of Dhaka University fiercely guarded the work. After a long hiatus, the work began once more in the beginning of 1979 -- with a new vision. At last the project was finished on December 16, 1979. The sculpture was inaugurated by the wounded Freedom Fighters.

Hamiduzzaman Khan, a renowned sculptor and painter, created many sculptures on the theme of Liberation War. One can detect Khan's endeavour to mix architectural or geometrical shapes with local materials in his creations. His prime concerns revolve around form and theme. After 1971, the sculptor tried to understand the significance of sculptures and took



Painting by Aminul Islam.

interest in this form of art. During that time, he concentrated on the Liberation War as a theme, and the subject was a great source of inspiration for Bangladeshi artists. One of his most moving creations is 'Shongshoptok'. It stands 28 feet high, including the base. It is constructed of steel armature and brass steel. The work has been placed in front of the Central Library, Jahangirnagar University. It depicts a Freedom Fighter with a hand missing, yet ready to fight against the Pakistani forces. The fighter carries a rifle in his hand. It is a sign of the Freedom Fighters' valour and their dedication to free the country. Hamiduzzaman Khan's other iconic sculptures on the theme include 'Joy Bangla', placed at the Patuakhali University of Science and Technology; 'Freedom', a 120-foot long mural located at

the National University and 'Remembrance '71', placed at the Open University campus premises in Gazipur.

'Shonarjito Shadhinata' by Shamim Sikder also evokes the memory of the Liberation War. Located at TSC in Dhaka University it was built in the early 1990 and is a rather complex structure demonstrating many facets of 1971.

The Museum of Independence in Dhaka depicts the struggle for independence of Bangladesh showcasing the rich history of the nation. It is the first and only underground museum in the country. The museum is part of a 67-acre complex at Suhrawardy Udyan, the site from where Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave his historic 7th March Speech declaring the struggle for independence, and where the Pakistani forces surrendered after the War of Liberation on 16 December 1971. The entrance of the museum is adorned with a fascinating terracotta mural that delineates country's chronological history, heritage and glorious movements shedding light on the 1947 partition and 1952 Language Movement to the Victory of 1971 Liberation War. A five-member artist group named 'The Artist' led the execution of the gigantic terracotta mural, which is regarded as the largest one in Asia. Renowned artists and sculptors – Professor Mohammad Eunos, Shyamal Chowdhury, Shishir Bhattacharjee, Iftikhar Uddin Ahmed and Mukul Muksuddin Rana – competed for portraying the work. About 200 artists and sculptors assisted the five artists to complete it.

Another important memorial complex on Liberation War is the 'Mujibnagar Smriti Soudha', which has been built at the site of the oath taking ceremony in Mujibnagar, Meherpur. The memorial, covering an area of 20.10 acres, is the symbol of our Liberation War and the sacrifice of the Bangalees. This monument was erected on twenty-three triangular shaped concreted pillars, and appears to be a symbol of the rising sun in its design planned by architect

Tanveer Naquib.

Renowned sculptor Mojibur Rahman led a 15-member artist team to depict a number of sculptures highlighting various events and happenings of the wartime Bangladesh. Nearly half a century later, sculptures highlighting key events of Bangladesh's Liberation War are being installed there to inform people about the nation's struggle for freedom. The multi-million taka projects include infrastructural development, Liberation War-based memorial map and a museum.

The map also depicts the Pakistani occupation force's massacre at Rajarbagh Police Lines and Jagannath Hall in Dhaka University, Pahartali in Chattogram and Rajshahi, the destruction of the Jatiya Press Club, attack on Secretariat and Pikhana, the killing of intellectuals and the Rayer Bazar mass killing ground.

Forty sculptures have been installed around the map showing the courageous leadership and roles of the leaders during the Liberation War. The museum contains images of four national leaders, the then army chief, deputy chief, Bir Uttam and Bir Protik Taramon Bibi and Setara Begum. There are 29 bronze busts and oil paintings of 30 important national leaders.

The outer side of the map has been decorated with a mural depicting Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech, the dark night of March 25, rape and torture of women by Pakistani occupation forces, and torching of Freedom Fighters' houses.

Other historical events, such as the oath-taking of the Mujibnagar Government and the guard of honour, clandestine meeting of sector commanders in Sylhet's Teliapara, and surrender of Pakistani forces, have been depicted with life-size statues.

Bharat-Bangladesh Maitree Udyan (India-Bangladesh Friendship Park) in Chottakhola, Tripura, was one of the base



'Nobbo Rajakarer Kobole Desh' by artist Swapan Chowdhury from the book 'Ekattorer Chitroguchchho', Acrylic on Canvas.