



Painting by Zainul Abedin.

## Serenading the sublime souls of the soil

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camps of Bangladeshi Freedom Fighters from where they launched a guerrilla warfare against the Pakistani army in Chattogram, Cumilla and greater Noakhali.

Located near the international border, the Maitree Udyan is a park built at Chottakhola as a tribute to the Bangladeshi Freedom Fighters and Indian soldiers, who sacrificed their lives during the Liberation War. A war museum, hillocks, verdant valleys, lakes, plants, sculptures, graveyards of Bangladeshi Freedom Fighters with various other elements, this is not just a park but much more than that.

The memorial park was a long cherished demand of Tripura people as they were actively involved in the Liberation War. They provided all-out support to Freedom Fighters and sheltered around 1.6 million people, a number exceeding the then population of the state.

Chottakhola, 130 kilometres from Tripura's capital Agartala, had functioned as one of the 11 warfront-camps in Tripura in 1971. The then Bangladesh's Foreign



Epitaph for the Martyrs 27, Oil on Canvas, Murtaja Baseer.

Minister Dipu Moni laid the foundation stone of the park on 11 November 2010.

The beautiful location comprises seven hillocks partly separated by a natural lake over 20 hectares of land. It saw intense activities during the Liberation War and still bears its memorabilia in the form of remnants of a number of bunkers and trenches built on it in 1971.

The park includes an elaborate garden, museum, children's park and helipad, and is connected to the neighbouring handicraft producing village with another wooden bridge. Accommodations with modern facilities, with village-home decoration, are situated across the road running by the side of the site. A chestnut garden flanks the other side of the park.

Former Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar inaugurated the memorial and park in the presence of Indian and Bangladeshi artists, intellectuals and freedom fighters on December 16, the Victory Day of Bangladesh.

Statues of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the founder of Bangladesh,

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have also been erected in the park.

Renowned artists from Tripura and Bangladesh are part of the project with their creations -- from statues to paintings -- that added to the memorial's attraction. Bangladeshi artists and sculptors Hashem Khan, Mahmudul Hasan Shohag, Shyamal Chowdhury and Tejosh Halder Josh depicted sculptures for the park.

The memorial park would help successive generations of Bangladesh learn the history of their hard won independence and how the two friendly neighbours joined forces to bring about the country's liberation.

Artist Professor Nisar Hossain, also Dean of the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, however, thinks that artists have not depicted enough work on the Liberation War. He suggests that the new generation of artists should depict more artworks on the theme so that the forthcoming generations are inspired to create art on the Liberation War.

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