

Must-watch movies for a fresh perspective on the liberation war

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As the country comes together to commemorate Bangladesh's 50th anniversary of independence, here is a list of five liberation war films that deviate from the done-to-the-death narrative of frontline war and offers us a fresh perspective of the era.



CHILDREN OF WAR (2014)

Children of War tells the story of a journalist (Indraneil Sengupta) who is separated from his wife (Raima Sen), a young brother and sister who are the only residents of a village, and an old man (Victor Banerjee) who is leading his people to safety during the turbulent period.

Shots that are mildly unsettling with an undercurrent of violence may put you on edge, but Mritunjay Devvrat's debut film Children of War moves at such a fluid pace that the film will not let you down, even with all the extremes.



MUKTIIR GAAN (1995)

One of the finest documentaries about the war, Muktiir Gaan is the account of a trip by a Bangladeshi cultural troupe to inspire Bangladeshi refugees and freedom fighters.

The film focuses on a group of musicians who travel through refugee camps and war zones and tells the story of the birth of a country and the ideals of secularism and tolerance by combining documentary and fictional genres in a musical structure.

Tareque and Catherine Masud, the filmmakers, have combined footage shot by American filmmaker Lear Levin in 1971 with historic footage gathered from archives around the world.



MEGHMALLAR (2015)

Meghmallar tells the story of a family during the war when the Pakistani Army and the then administration tried all they could to control and monitor schools, people of all kinds, and intellectuals through civil servants and local collaborators.

Based on the story "Raincoat" by Akhteruzzaman Ilias, the film uses a cinematic approach to represent the struggle of ordinary people during the 1971 Liberation War.

MEHERJAAN (2011)

Meherjaan tells the story of Meher, a Bengali woman (Shayna Amin/Jaya Bacchan) who falls in love with a Pakistani soldier (Omar Rahim) during the war.

The fate of the young Meher is written by the machinations of the times, and the lovers are powerless to keep their love alive. Parallel to her story is that of her cousin Neela (Reetu Abdus Sattar)--a broken woman, bitter and disturbed after being raped by Pakistani soldiers--who arrives in the village to live with their maternal grandfather.

The film's cinematography, dialogue, and characterisation represent the story of two lovers, one Pakistani and the other Bengali, is woven around the theme of 'love thy enemy.'

The film was subjected to controversy after its release due its portrayal of an affair between a Bengali woman and a Pakistani soldier.



NOROSHUNDOR (2009)

In 1971, the Pakistan Army raids on the residence of a local rebel in search of freedom fighters. The young man they are looking for flees through Old Dhaka's narrow alleyways and comes across a barbershop. To disguise himself, he quickly decides to shave.

The young man quickly realises that he has put himself in even more danger at the barbershop, where all of the barbers are Urdu-speaking Biharis--most of whom were collaborators with the Pakistani army during the war. What does fate have in store for the young man?

The tense and gripping short film by Tareque Masud is a unique account of the wartime era and is available on YouTube to watch for free.



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