Tribute to Ritwik Ghatak: Article

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Memories of the Future: Today's Sudan Glimmering in Ritwik Ghatak's Eyes

Chapter 1

One long leg is stretched straight out in front of him. It is the right leg. The underside of this foot has turned dark.

The darkness does not look accidental.

It looks earned. It feels permanent. This is what remains after years of walking. After years of roads. After years of dust from paths and soil from fields settling slowly into the skin.

This foot has carried dust for a long time. It will carry more.

The left leg is folded at the knee. So the sole of the left foot cannot be seen.

The man whose dust-marked sole we are looking at is sitting on the floor now, leaning against the wall.

He is still.

He is quiet.

He seems indifferent.

And yet, this kind of indifference was not expected at this moment. Why? Because at this very moment his wife is leaving him. She is leaving him for good.

She is taking everything with her — all the furniture, all the rare books, the lifelong collection of classical records.

Is that all?

She is also taking their only son.

So the room in which the man sits with his legs stretched out is becoming empty.
And within a few moments, his chest too will become empty.

Each time we have seen him from the wife's point of view, our eyes have returned to his dust-marked soles.

In this film, those soles rise beyond realism. They become a symbol that does not belong to time alone.

The film is — 'Jukti, Takko Aar Gappo' (Arguments, Fallacies, and a Story).

In the very first scene of the film, there is a deeply meaningful shot that connects the son's white kite with the father's dust-marked feet. How was this shot created?

The son is completely ready to "go on a trip" with his mother. He is not old enough to understand the weight of what is happening.
So his hands are full now — with a kite, with a spool, and with a toy gun that throws out electric sparks and makes a rattling sound when the trigger is pulled.

At one point, he places the white kite and the spool wrapped in white string on the floor. We see it — a close-up of the kite and the spool lying there.

Then, suddenly, the camera makes a small pan to the right. It leaves the white kite behind. It arrives at a close-up of those soil-stained soles.

This single panning shot forms one of the film's central visual metaphors.
It introduces two different directions of movement — belonging to two generations. How?

The son stands for the future.
The white kite in the hands of this future is a sign of dreams. Through this kite, the sense of an endless sky — shaped by those dreams — becomes visible. In other words, the son's chest is filled with limitless dreams.

Then what is left for the father?

For him remain two long legs.

Legs on which the dust and soil of countless centuries of the country have settled. What remains for the father is walking.
Walking without measure.

Walking without end.

But where will he go?

Does he know his destination?

Before telling the story of this tall man's walking, another story of walking must be told. That walking is deeply relevant.

Chapter 2
Internal Migration: Khartoum And the Long Summer March, 2025

Internal migration often begins quietly—when a beloved city grows too close to danger.

Khartoum, resting beside the slow, dignified sweep of the Nile, has long been a place where art flourishes, literature finds eager listeners, physics classrooms glow with discovery, and export trade binds the city to the wider world. Yet even such a cultured

centre cannot hold its people when the frontlines inch too near.

And so, in the fierce brightness of summer, families begin to walk away.
The sun hangs above them like a hard, unblinking eye, and the heat presses down as if testing the strength of each traveller.

Men, women, and children step onto the pale, trembling roads leading out of Khartoum toward places like Wad Madani or, farther west, El Fasher—towns that offer not perfection but distance, and therefore a little more safety. They trust that danger weakens as it travels, and that a few extra miles might give them the time they need.

The land they cross is wide and sun-scoured.

Each footstep stirs up small spirals of dust that rise softly, then fall back into the heat—a momentary breath of the earth beneath their cracked feet. The procession moves slowly but steadily, a quiet river of people flowing through a landscape that seems to shimmer with exhaustion.

Then, within that moving crowd, a voice breaks through the hum of footsteps.
An elderly woman begins reciting Mahjoub Sharif's 'A Homesick Sparrow'.

Her voice is thin but sure, carrying through the dry air:
“A homesick sparrow
Perching on the heart's window
With longing eyes
It cranes out to glance at the houses
At the distant skies
Waiting for a cheerful morning
With promises laden...”

The words drift across the group. For a moment, the restless murmur of the march softens. Children slow their steps. Adults lift their eyes.

The poem becomes a small, shared shelter—a reminder that even while they walk away from home, home still speaks to them through the language of a familiar poet.

Chapter 3

Bengal: The Monsoon Roads to Calcutta, 1943

If Sudan's displaced walk beneath a blazing summer, Bengal's famine migrants of 1943 walked beneath a sky swollen with rain.

Starvation drove them from their villages, pushing them toward Calcutta—the great city on the banks of the Bhagirathi Ganga, a city whose arts, literature, sciences, and industries shone brightly even in dark times.

Just as Khartoum stands by the Nile, Calcutta stood by its own mighty river; and, just as Khartoum drew people in times of danger, Calcutta too seemed to hold the faint promise of survival.

But the road to Calcutta was nothing like the Sudanese plains. There, dust rose underfoot.

Here, the earth itself swallowed the tired. The monsoon clouds hung low, stitching the sky with thunder.

Rain came in long, heavy curtains, soaking everything it touched. Village paths turned into thick, sticky mud that clung to the travellers' ankles and refused to let go.

Starved bodies—already drained of strength—struggled to lift themselves out of the sucking ground with every step. Each movement forward felt like a quiet battle.

Yet even then, love did not weaken.

Younger men, their own shoulders trembling from hunger, carried their motionless great-grandparents on their backs or in makeshift bamboo slings. Families stayed close, hoping that Calcutta—with its lamps, its schools, its mills, its river winds—might let them begin again.

Across these two histories—Sudan in 2025 and Bengal in 1943—the weather changes, the earth changes, the reasons change.

But the heart of the story remains the same.

Both are journeys of internal migration.

Neither group crossed a border.

Neither sought a foreign land.

They walked simply because walking seemed safer than staying.

For this truth is unforgettable: that human beings, whether stepping through Sudan's rising dust or Bengal's sucking monsoon mud, move forward with the same quiet courage.

They walk not because they fully understand the forces that shape their suffering, but because hope—even a thin, trembling hope—still leads them onward.

Two different climates. Two different roads.

One shared human story, carried in tired feet and unbroken hearts.

Chapter 4
Must Every Departure Happen Only in Crowd?
A Quite Departure from Dhaka to Mymensingh, 1971

Thousands of people were leaving the city of Khartoum in groups, seeking safety in numbers.

But must every departure happen only in crowds?

Some journeys are quiet— a single person leaving without telling anyone, walking alone away from an endangered city. Let me tell you about such a moment.

Not from Sudan— but from East Pakistan, a land that had not yet received the name Bangladesh.

The night was repeatedly torn by harsh sounds, and sudden flashes of light kept blinding the eyes.

It was midnight.

25 March, 1971.

Even from far away, it was clear that the Pakistan Army had attacked Dhaka University. Unable to properly understand what was happening inside the University, a poet began to walk, before dawn, straight toward Mymensingh.

He knew that even at a calm, steady pace, it would take at least nine days to reach.

The poet was Nirmalendu Goon.

He started walking along a deeply dark road. From the open fields on both sides came the soft, damp smell of wet earth.

But the road still carried dust, and in that dust he hummed a song by Kazi Nazrul Islam— well before any storm arrived:

"I walk the dusty road, a wanderer of your name.
My little ektara sings only your song,
O Shyam."

Here, Shyam refers to Lord Krishna.

The road lay empty.

There was no sign of any human presence anywhere. Even in villages far away,

not a single house showed light in its windows. The countryside stood completely dark.

By afternoon, dark clouds gathered in the northeastern sky. From far away came the low, rolling roar of an approaching nor'wester (Kalbaishakhi).

Then a fierce wind rose, throwing dust into the air. Rain followed in large, heavy drops.

The poet took shelter beneath a vast banyan tree.

The storm passed quickly.

After the rain, the continuous, piercing call of crickets filled the night.

Above the washed sky appeared the moon of the twelfth lunar day (Dwadashi)— a slim, steady moon that follows the full moon, quiet and restrained in light. Yet the darkness did not remain entirely blind.

Across the fields, the poet searched in vain for the familiar comfort of village lamps—

a lantern, a window, even a weak wick burning behind cloth.

There was none.

Instead, another kind of light appeared. It was cold light. Bluish-white, gentle, almost shy. It flickered, vanished, and returned again.

They were fireflies. Clusters of them drifted and danced around the thick trunks of trees, circling again and again, as if the darkness itself were breathing in pulses of light. They did not burn like flames; they glowed like thoughts that refuse to die.

For a moment, the poet felt that the night was not empty after all— that even in fear, something small and living was still quietly shining.

Chapter 5
Near The East Pakistan Ordnance Factory

Through this dense darkness, the poet continued toward Mymensingh. Reaching the town would take eight or nine days—perhaps a relief, for distance meant moving farther away from the army's movements.

Around midnight he reached Gazipur.

Though a small town, its name had suddenly become widely known. Why ?

About a year and a half earlier, a factory for making cannons and ammunition had been established there— the East Pakistan Ordnance Factory, a project given special importance by General Yahya Khan, the President of Pakistan.

From a distance, the poet saw the area near the main gate glowing with bright new lights. He slipped behind an Arjun tree and froze.

The factory did not seem asleep. It seemed awake— wide awake—and angry.

From inside its walls burst out terrifying sounds: metal screaming against metal, iron shrieking as if in pain, followed by dull, monstrous thuds that shook the ground beneath his feet. It felt as though some giant beast inside the factory was chewing steel with its teeth.

Shadows moved.

Trucks growled.

Cannons—new, dark, heavy— were being hauled up like freshly sharpened claws.

As Urdu-speaking soldiers climbed onto the vehicles, three or four Bengali officers suddenly rushed forward, their voices sharp with urgency.

Orders were shouted.

Arguments exploded.

Then—without warning— a service revolver flashed. A single shot cracked the night open.

One Bengali officer collapsed, as if the darkness itself had pulled him down.

No alarm rang. No one screamed.

The truck roared away toward Dhaka, its engine growling, then fading, then dissolving into an awful, knowing silence.

Behind the Arjun tree, the poet discovered that his body was trembling—not gently, but like a leaf that knows winter has arrived.

A thought crept into his mind, cold and sharp.

The factory had not even completed its first year. The land around it was still unfinished. And yet— so many weapons were already ready.

How?

The obvious answer frightened him.

Perhaps this war had been planned long ago. Perhaps Dhaka had been marked in advance.

A factory only forty miles away— far too close to be innocent.

Bringing cannons from forty miles was easier than bringing them from fifteen hundred miles.

And soon, these very cannons might turn their dark mouths toward Mymensingh. The poet understood then that he had not been running toward safety— only changing corners within the same burning house.

Soon, there might be nowhere left to hide.

Chapter 6
Ritwik Ghatak and Solitary Journeys

Just as the Bengali poet Nirmalendu Goon walked alone from his threatened workplace --- The Daily People --- the office of a Dhaka newspaper, another solitary journey took place.

An elderly village schoolteacher— a man who taught Sanskrit language and literature in a rural school— also left on foot for Calcutta.

His name was Jagabandhu Bhattacharya, whom we see in Ritwik Ghatak's film, 'Jukti Takko Aar Gappo'.

Behind his house lay a pond that had always behaved itself. It held rainwater, reflected trees, and kept village secrets politely to itself.

One morning, it misbehaved. Two bodies floated up— slowly, stubbornly— as if the water itself had decided it could not carry the weight of terror any longer.

The bodies had no heads!

At first, no one screamed.

People simply stared, their minds refusing to finish the sentence their eyes had begun.

Then the police arrived.

They dragged the bodies out with brisk efficiency, as if pulling up sacks of grain, their boots squelching their voices loud and careless in the stunned silence.

Questions were fired.

Threats followed.

Accusations fell wildly, landing on the wrong people, in the wrong houses, with frightening ease.

The pond stood empty again, but it had already done its damage.

That night, the schoolteacher did not sleep.

Every sound felt sharp.

Every shadow seemed to know his name. The pond, once quiet, now seemed to whisper— not with words, but with a warning.

By morning, he understood something clearly: in times like these, innocence was not protection— it was danger.

So he left.

On foot.

Without announcements.

Without farewells.

A quiet journey, born from a horror so complete that it pushed a man out of his own life and sent him walking toward uncertainty.

And now, we shall see how such movements— in Sudan of 2025
and Bangladesh of 1971— find their expression in Ritwik Ghatak's final film.

Chapter 7

Distance, Coincidence, And the Courage: To Walk Alone

Here, once again, we return to the story of that poet--- a man who remains, even today, one of the most respected voices in Bengali literature: Nirmalendu Goon

At nearly the same historical hour when the poet began to walk out of Dhaka, far away another man made a similar choice. From Calcutta, Ritwik Ghatak decided to walk—through villages, on foot.

Nirmalendu Goon was exactly nineteen years younger than Ghatak. Yet age did not place a wall between them.

What joined them was quieter than influence, deeper than coincidence.
Neither man was searching for heroism. They walked because staying had become painful. Because the air around them had grown too heavy to breathe. When history tightens its grip, the body understands before the mind does.

Time usually separates people. Here, it folded in on itself.

Their likeness did not come from shared lives or shared beliefs. It came from a shared human moment—when the road ahead, however uncertain, felt truer than the ground beneath their feet.

And walking, even without knowing where it would end, became a small act of care toward the self.

This is how resemblance is born.

Not through ambition.

Not through time.

But through quiet endurance.

And yet, there is a distance of nearly 335 kilometres between the two men. No shared rooms, no shared streets—only separation.

Still, at almost the same moment, they arrive at the same decision. This simultaneity cannot be dismissed as chance. Between the poet Nirmalendu Goon and Neelkantha Bagchi—Ritwik Ghatak himself—there are at least five striking similarities that refuse to be ignored.

1. Both are creative minds.
2. Both are tall, almost stretched figures.
3. Both are lean, carrying their bodies lightly, as if burdened more by thought than by flesh.
4. Both live richly in imagination.
5. And both, from time to time, take decisions that appear irrational, even risky, to the world around them.

At this point, a question quietly rises. Did creativity and imagination themselves push these two men toward becoming solitary migrants? Was this decision an unavoidable

consequence of the way their minds worked—restless, questioning, unwilling to settle? The answer to this question, we are told, will come a little later.

Chapter 8
Now Enters Durga (Tripti Mitra)

Confused and exhausted by her husband's life without schedules, his continuous unemployment, and his unpredictable, whimsical behaviour, Durga chooses to leave Neelkantha.

Alone, she travels far away to take up a teaching job at a rural girls' school. In doing so, she too becomes a solitary migrant. But unlike Neelkantha, she arrives at this condition by choice.

Why does she do it?

Is there any practical value in suddenly being alone?

Does leaving everyone behind serve any real purpose?

To leave, after all, also means refusing—very directly—to carry the everyday responsibilities of family life. At first glance, this seems like the height of selfishness.

So how does a socially conscious woman like Durga come to make such a harsh decision? Did she feel no pain of conscience at all?

The simplest answer is also the most humane. With her income alone, she can keep her child alive. She can educate the child. She can at least try to nurture the child's talent.

But with that same income, she cannot carry the responsibility of a husband who is, in her eyes, excessively thoughtful—lost in ideas, detached from survival.

Moreover—and this is crucial—Durga begins to feel that her husband's thoughts on aesthetics, humanism, Marxism, Indian philosophy, and the endlessly changing nature of society have lost their usefulness in the real world. In her understanding, his ideas no longer translate into action, stability, or dignity.

She no longer believes that Neelkantha, her husband, will receive any position of responsibility that society might recognise as respectable.

Yet one thing must be said here.

From the words of Neelkantha Bagchi's wife, she may appear harsh—almost unfeeling.

But the truth is quieter, and far less cruel.

She knew something important. She knew that her husband was not alone in the world. Across society, in its corners and forgotten lanes, many young followers carried him within them. The moment they learned that Neelkantha had been left on his own, they would step forward—without being asked—and take responsibility for him, each in their own way.

There was another, even firmer reason for her trust.

Within their own household lived a devoted disciple, bound not by duty but by faith. His name was Nachiketa. This young man would remain beside Neelkantha day and night, like a shadow that does not abandon the body it follows. He would watch, listen, and stay—without impatience.

So it would be unfair to accuse her of abandoning her husband to death as she migrated to the countryside. She was not turning away from him. She was placing

him—carefully—into hands she believed were steadier, younger, and better prepared to endure what lay ahead.

Sometimes care does not look like staying.

Sometimes it looks like knowing when to step back— and trusting that others will step forward.

Chapter 9

Bangabala (Shaonli Mitra)

Was the young disciple the only one left with Neelkantha— at least at this moment?

No. That would be inaccurate.

Someone else came.

Like a leaf carried by a sudden storm, a girl was blown into Neelkantha's life.

She arrived at the ground-floor room of his house without warning, almost without sound.

Her arrival did not ask for permission.

It simply happened.

The girl's name was Bangabala.

At that instant, nothing more was known.

Bangabala was fifteen when she began walking alone through the streets of Calcutta. No one knows exactly how she crossed the international border.

No one recorded the road she took, or the moment she entered another country.

What remains certain is this: she arrived alone.

Before that, she had watched her family die. The Pakistani invading forces came with newly sharpened weapons. Her mother, father, brother, sister—cut down before her eyes.

Fragments of living flesh struck the walls. They scattered across floors, wet soil, and fresh monsoon grass.

She saw everything.

She did not look away.

She was fifteen.

From that moment, Bangabala became what we may call a solitary migrant.

But her life does not follow the same design as others we speak of. Why ?

Because, when poets and thinkers move alone within a country, the reasons are different.

Nirmalendu Goon did not cross an international border. He walked on foot from Dhaka district to Mymensingh district.

Neelkantha Bagchi, too, did not leave the country. He walked nearly two hundred kilometres on foot—from Calcutta to Birbhum district. In that district, in the village of Kanchanpur, near Shiuri, his wife Durga took up a teaching post at a girls' school.

Therefore, Neelkantha and Nirmalendu's journeys were examples of internal migration—movement inside a nation's own boundaries.

They did not leave their country.

They did not cross the Indo-Pak border.

We are, for the most part, speaking of such internal migrations.

But Bangabala's journey belongs to another order altogether. She crossed an international border—from East Pakistan into India.

Her migration was not a passage within a homeland, but an escape from it. Not a change of district, but a break in history.

Nirmalendu Goon and Nilkantha Bagchi carried thought, memory, and hope with them.

Their solitude had explanation.

It could be spoken.

Bangabala’s could not.

Her migration did not begin with ideology, belief, or intention.

It began with violence witnessed by a child. With terror. With a body that kept moving because stopping meant death.

She did not choose to be alone.

Aloneness happened to her.

That is why, although she too is a solitary migrant, her life follows a different pattern— not the pattern of creators or thinkers, but the pattern carved by blood, silence, and survival.

She arrived without documents.

Without language strong enough to explain what she had seen.

And yet— she walked on. Alone.

Chapter 10
Does Walking Alone Save A Life?

If you migrate alone—or if three people walk together across long distances—the chances of finding work may increase.

But does the certainty of survival increase as well?

Some who migrated alone did survive.

The Bangladeshi poet Nirmalendu Goon was one of them.

He did not settle even in Mymensingh town. From there, he walked another sixty or sixty-five kilometres, alone, to a village in the Barhatta area. At that time, Barhatta was deep countryside in the Netrokona subdivision.

Pakistani troops later entered Netrokona. Fierce battles were raging with the Mukti Bahini.

By some unimaginable stroke of fortune, Nirmalendu Goon remained alive.

But fortune is not a rule. It is an accident.

In 'Jukti, Takko Aar Gappo', the two solitary migrants—both around fifty—were not as lucky as the poet who was then thirty.

Accompanying Neelkantha, Nachiketa and Bangabala --- the Sanskrit scholar Jagabandhu Bhattacharya was crossing an open field when he was shot.

A powerful landlord named Madhab was patrolling the fields with a large double-barrelled gun, terrorising the peasants. He fired to frighten, not to kill. Yet the bullet travelled its own logic. It entered Jagabandhu’s stomach.

He had migrated in search of rice for his empty belly. Instead of warm food, a burning bullet found its way inside him.

The same fate waited for Neelkantha Bagchi.

One night, deep inside a forest, he stayed awake, speaking with young Naxalites, hiding in the jungle, about ideas that mattered—about sacrifice, about where such fierce courage comes from. He questioned them honestly. They argued. They listened. The night passed like that, in words and thought.

At dawn, his wife Durga was supposed to bring cooked food.

In the morning light, a lonely father wished to see his son’s smiling face.

When Neelkantha noticed his wife approaching, he stepped out of the forest to meet her.

At that precise moment, a massive police force surrounded the area. Gunfire

erupted. A police bullet tore into Neelkantha's stomach.

Once again, Ghatak returned to the same cruel image: not warm breakfast, but a burning bullet.

So migration offers no guarantee of escape.

Chapter 11

Are These Merely Isolated Stories?

Are these merely isolated stories — artistic inventions born from a troubled mind?

No. We cannot say that.

The same ending repeats itself in Sudan, even in 2025.

Those who fled the attacked capital, Khartoum, were chased. The killers followed them.

Like Neelkantha Bagchi, they too discovered that distance does not always protect a human life.

Sometimes, walking away only changes the place where death arrives.

But why didn't we find the Khartoum model ---- being mingled in large groups --- in Neelkantha's life as well ?

Some people cannot walk inside a crowd. They know—almost instinctively— that a crowd makes noise, demands answers, asks questions they no longer have the strength to reply to.

So they walk alone.

Neelkantha Bagchi of Kolkata was one of them. So was Nirmalendu Goon of Dhaka. They did not live in groups.

They left quietly, one person at a time.

The reason was not complicated.

It was painfully simple.

When you walk alone, you can step into an unknown village, enter a small grocery shop, or stand at the door of a modest roadside hotel and ask for work.

Sometimes, someone listens.

If there are two or three people, a conversation may still happen.

But when a hundred people arrive together, no door opens.

No eyes rise to meet theirs.

Those who choose to become solitary migrants understand this truth very early.

They are not escaping responsibility; they are protecting the last remaining chance to be useful, to be accepted, to survive with dignity.

Neelkantha Bagchi might have found work as a schoolteacher in a village. That possibility existed.

The same was true for Nirmalendu Goon.

And for the Sanskrit scholar who fled his village after seeing two headless bodies floating in the pond behind his house— even he carried the same fragile hope of employment somewhere else.

When a capital city is wounded, when war brings business to a halt and shutters fall over entire streets, people have no choice but to move toward the countryside. Staying in a big city is no longer possible.

Only when mass organized killings begin, do thousands flee together.

But when violence arrives quietly— through isolated murders, through whispers and sudden silences— people leave alone. Neelkantha Bagchi and Nirmalendu Goon both walked away from what seemed like small unrest.

Nirmalendu Goon could not yet imagine what had already happened in secret inside Dhaka University.

Neelkantha Bagchi did not know the full weight of history that had begun to fall.

They only knew one thing: if they stayed a little longer, breathing itself would become unbearable. And so, gently, carefully—they began to walk alone.

Chapter 12
Disappearances Are Common, Answers Are Rare

When people flee far from a wounded capital, war sends its hunters ahead—finding them in forgotten villages, stripping away not only their shelter, but their last belief that life can be spared.

This is how the war in Sudan follows its people. It does not remain on front lines or inside headlines. It enters kitchens, classrooms, and sleep. Refugees who reached South Sudan speak not of strategy or victory, but of moments—short, sharp, unforgettable—when life broke apart.

Suba Dafallah remembers returning home to find her mother and two sisters killed by gunfire. Another sister was taken by fighters from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). When Suba tried to stop them, she was beaten with a rifle.

There was no explanation, no accusation—only force.

After burying her family, she became a Solitary Migrant.

Suba Dafallah reminds us of Bangabala in 'Jukti, Takko Aar Gappo'.

She walked hundreds of miles to the Renk refugee camp, carrying grief that had no place to rest.

Adults speak, but children are present in every sentence.

Many children fled without parents.

Some watched fathers disappear at checkpoints.

Others were pulled from houses and told to carry weapons larger than their own bodies.

In this war, childhood is not protected; it is recruited. Boys are forced to choose between joining armed groups or being suspected as enemies. Refusal itself becomes a crime.

Girls describe hiding in silence as gunfire passed through their streets, learning early that fear must not make a sound.

Schools closed, then vanished.

Lessons were replaced by survival: how to run, how not to cry, how to forget.

Gamal Issa arrived at the camp with a shattered leg. His two children are still missing. He does not know whether to mourn or to wait. Many parents live inside this pause—unable to complete grief, unable to begin hope.

Both the Sudanese army and the RSF are accused of forced recruitment. Civilians are trapped between uniforms that promise protection but deliver loss. Disappearances are common; answers are rare.

What the refugees describe is not chaos, but repetition: the same fear moving from town to town, the same silence after violence, the same children growing suddenly old.

This war is counted in numbers by the world. But here, it survives as memory—spoken softly, carefully—by those who are still alive, and by children who learned too early what it means to endure.

Chapter 13

Is Survival Impossible?

Majid was a solitary migrant.

Like Nilkantha Bagchi, like the poet Nirmalendu Goon—he walked alone.

But this was many years ago. The year was 1948.

Pakistan was a new country then.
Within six months of its birth, people had already understood something painful: this new country was failing.

How did they understand it?

In March 1948, Muhammad Ali Jinnah came to Dhaka. At a massive public gathering at the Race Course Maidan on 21 March, he made an announcement: from now on, all official work would be conducted in Urdu.
Bengali would no longer function.

The moment Bengali youths heard this, they understood the truth. They would never get government jobs. Learning to read and write Urdu that fast was impossible.

So they left the cities.

They began to move—from one village to another—across East Pakistan.

Majid was one of them.

He believed that somewhere far from Dhaka, in some distant district, he would find a place to settle down and build a life.

And he did find such a place.

The village where Majid decided to stay was completely unknown to him.

He had no relatives there.

No history.

No memories.

So why did he choose this village?

Outside the village, there was a bamboo forest. Tall, thick, yellowing, old bamboo.

Inside that forest, the sound never stopped— crickets calling steadily from the ground, cicadas rising and falling like breath, an occasional sharp cry of a woodpecker cutting through the stillness.

The forest spoke softly, but without pause.

Inside that forest, covered with vines, bushes, and moss, stood an ancient Islamic grave.

A shrine.

A mazar.

Majid looked at its condition and understood something immediately: this shrine meant nothing to the people of this area. It had no power. No importance.

That was when an idea entered his mind.

As soon as he entered the village, Majid called for a meeting. He gathered the villagers and said:

"This shrine belongs to a great holy man—an ancient pir. Neglecting his grave is not a small matter. It shows disrespect toward sacred Islamic tradition. Why has this happened?
Because true education has never reached this village. Ignoring an ancient mazar is a grave sin.”

The villagers lowered their heads.

Tears rolled down the eyes of the elders.

Soon, the vines and bushes were removed from the two-hundred-year-old shrine. The thick moss was scraped away. Much of the surrounding forest was cleared. With new bricks and fresh paint, the forgotten mazar was brought back to life.

And beside it, a new house was built—for Majid. He became the chief worshipper.

The villagers gifted him vast fields of paddy. His granary filled with crops.

Majid married and settled down— a man who had once walked alone.

This is the advantage of the solitary migrant.

We learn this story from Syed Waliullah's classic novel 'Lal Salu'.

Chapter 14

Ritwik Ghatak And His Innate Gift of Seeing the Future

So far, we have told the stories of several people.

They share two striking similarities.

First, all of them wanted to leave dangerous, disturbed regions behind.

Second, all of them travelled on foot—except one woman, Durga.

Some left Calcutta.

Neelkantha Bagchi and his wife Durga did so.

One man walked all the way to Calcutta from the Baruipur region. He was Jagabandhu Bhattacharya, a Sanskrit teacher.

Another person left the troubled city of Dhaka and began a solitary journey on foot towards Mymensingh.

His real destination, however, was a quiet village in the Netrakona subdivision.
He was the poet Nirmalendu Goon.

A Sudanese girl named Suba Dafallah watched her entire family being killed before her own eyes.

Even after that, she walked hundreds of kilometres completely alone and found a place of safety.

At the end of our narrative, we meet yet another solitary migrant.

His name is Majid.

He became the Pir of a mazar and settled down in a village.

Now we arrive at the central question.
In 'Arguments, Fallacies and A Story' (Jukti Takko Aar Gappo), how deeply do we see Ritwik Ghatak's natural ability to look into the future?

The first image that comes to mind is Bangabala. Carrying the unbearable pain of watching her entire family being murdered before her eyes, Bagabala began to walk.
In the end, she found a safe shelter.

Bangabala of 1971 feels like a prophecy of Suba Dafallah from Sudan of 2025.

Through Bangabala, Ghatak warns us about something crucial: in the future, thousands and thousands of girls like her will become solitary migrants, disappearing from their homes.

Historically, Bangabala is the most significant character in 'Jukti Takko Aar Gappo'.

In her wide, frightened, constantly alert eyes, we see the reflection of today—of 2025 and 2026— the reflection of thousands of lost girls from Sudan.

Ghatak's deep understanding of international politics takes poetic form through Bengabala.

There are also two male solitary migrants who are killed by gunfire.

Jagabandhu Bhattacharya and Nilkantha Bagchi.

Both believed that walking through unknown village paths would keep them safer.
But reality turned out to be the opposite.
By sheer coincidence, they came face to face with an armed landlord and armed police forces.

The political violence of their time chased them down.

They had to give their lives.

In these two deaths in West Bengal, we again see today's Sudan.

Millions of people fled Sudan's capital, Khartoum, walking on foot towards distant, unfamiliar rural areas. They imagined that killers would not follow them there.

But the opposite happened.

From Khartoum, two rival armed groups advanced in waves. Their burning bullets tore apart the bodies of those who had fled the capital.

So does that mean no one survives?

In Jukti Takko Aar Gappo, three people survive till the end— Bangabala, Durga, and Nachiketa.

Between March 1948 and March 1971, in East Pakistan, the poet Nirmalendu Goon survived.

So did Majid, the Pir of the mazar.

In January 2026, a shipwreck occurred in Sudan.

It was a rescue ship named Ocean Viking.

Despite the shipwreck, a human rights activist named Mohamed survived.

Just as Nachiketa survived a hail of bullets fired by a group of policemen in 'Jukti Takko Aar Gappo', Mohamed survived the shipwreck.

A shipwreck and a coordinated armed attack create similar levels of terror.

Yet even in such extreme situations, survival remains possible.

Through the survival of Nachiketa in the film's final scene, Ghatak shows us this truth.

The logical echo of that scene is Mohamed's survival after the Sudanese shipwreck.

Ritwik Ghatak possessed a rare power— the power to understand the future.

Not as prediction, but as a deep, human reading of history repeating itself.

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