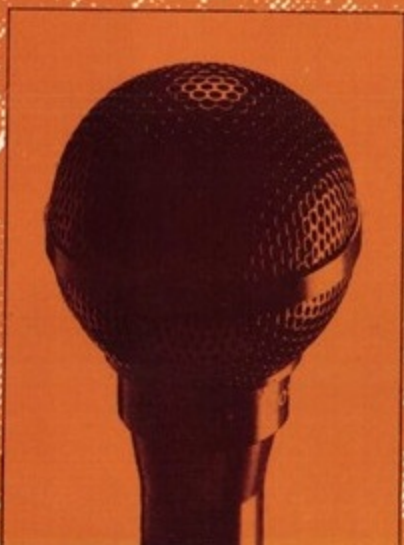


**A HANDBOOK OF ORAL HISTORY**

**BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM**



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**ABSTRACTS OF INTERVIEWS TAKEN  
BY THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**



**BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM  
DHAKA**

**A HANDBOOK OF ORAL HISTORY**  
Abstracts of interviews taken by the  
Oral History Project

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## INTRODUCTION

Oral history is comparatively a new method of historical investigation. Historians rely mainly on written documents such as government records, books, letters and diaries. Oral history is different in the sense that it is based on documents that are spoken. Folklore and legend are one kind of spoken documents. Songs speeches, interviews and formal and informal conversation are also verbal documents useful for history.

Documents, however, are only useful for history if they are in some way preserved. Some kind of speech including folklore, legend and song, are preserved by memory and later spoken again to the next generation. In illiterate societies there are often found professional story-tellers (or historians) whose task is to learn the story of the past from the elders and then pass it on to the next generation. Such oral documents are the basis of much of *Roots* the famous book in which Alex Haley traces his slave ancestors back to Africa. Though there is controversy about the accuracy of Haley's oral research in Africa, such documents can be accurate and useful and are in any case the only verbal source about the history of many peoples.

Oral history involves a process of collecting of any individual's spoken memories of his life, of people he has known, and events he has witnessed or participated in. Oral history is not a substitute for written records but a complement to them. The greatest advantage of oral over written documents is that the historian actively participates, as interviewer, in creating the oral document, and therefore,

he can try to get the information that he needs. Another way in which oral history can complement written document is by encouraging and enabling the ordinary as well as the famous citizen to leave an autobiographical account of his life. Oral records can be similarly useful for prominent people who are too busy to write or whose talents lie along other lines. Because oral history can be used to study ordinary people as well as the elite, it is sometimes asserted that it is an essentially democratic form of research.

Again, oral history can help provide knowledge of the inner feelings that are precisely what the historian must have to explain the 'why' as well as the 'how'. We are likely to be more spontaneous in talking about our feelings than in writing about them, and many people speak to the oral historian with great candour and courage. These spoken memories are the essential human stuff of our time, for they reveal inner sources and motives. In order to preserve as many such documents as possible, oral historians have focussed on the important task of collecting tape-recorded interviews, often conducted with old people before their memories are permanently lost or they pass away.<sup>1</sup>

Oral history is thus a method of gathering a body of historical information in oral form usually on tape. For obtaining useful documentation for contemporary history of Bangladesh a well-organized oral history programme appears to be of prime importance.

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<sup>1</sup> James Hoopes, *Oral History : An Introduction For Students*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1979. pp5-17

The country is now passing through a period of transition. Far reaching developments are taking place in the political, social and economic fields. It would be worthwhile to record the experiences of those people who have been involved in these many-sided developments. Most of the leaders of the country, however, have not written their reminiscences or memoirs and authentic documentation of recent history is comparatively scanty. There are, however, many living persons possessing useful data—virtually human repositories of knowledge—and it would be valuable to capture and record before it is too late, the knowledge possessed by them which may not find its way into print. Such a programme's principal objective would be to augment the quality of sources on various facets of contemporary history of Bangladesh, filling the essential gaps in documentation and to illuminate obscure and lesser known aspects of the country's recent past.

The need for an oral history programme is greater because as Allan Nevins has observed, "new inventions in communication, and the modern emphasis on speed, have dried up many of the old sources of historical documentation. Rarely now does a statesman keep a diary. The lengthy and often intimate correspondence of an older time has been largely replaced by the telephone, or by unprepared conferences to which busy men and women travel by express train or airplane."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Louis M. Starr. "Oral History : Problems and Prospects" in *Advances in Librarianship*, vol. 2, Seminar Press, New York. 1971 p. 297.

It is with this aim that the Oral History Project was undertaken by the Bangladesh National Museum. The project was approved by the Government of Bangladesh and the Ford Foundation came forward to provide necessary financial support. The project was launched in March 1985. Initially it was decided to conduct the project for one year on an experimental basis. Further extension or continuation of the project, it was felt, would depend on the experiences gained and results obtained during this trial period.

Between March 1985 and February 1986 fifty persons were interviewed. These included a former President of Bangladesh, Justice Abdus Sattar (he was interviewed just a few months before he died); seniormost living journalist and literary figure Mohammad Nasiruddin, now over hundred year old but still active in his field; poet, social worker and a leading figure in women's movement, Begum Sufia Kamal; and the distinguished painter Qamrul Hasah (died in 1988).

Experience gained during one year was both fascinating and rewarding. The story of social and political transformation of Bangladesh that had taken place over the past 60/70 years was intimately told by some of those who had not only witnessed this transformation but had been involved in bringing it about. Thus, Begum Sufia Kamal narrated in her inimitable language how she had to struggle hard to come out of seclusion (*purdah*) of traditional conservative Muslim family of a remote village of Barisal in southern Bengal. The language of the family which represented the *ashraf* (aristocratic) class was Urdu, but she managed to learn Bengali so well that she began to compose poems in this



language secretly, cast off the veil and in course of time established herself as a leading poet and social worker and a fearless fighter for women's rights. At 80 she is still active. Another remarkable personality interviewed was Muhammad Nasiruddin, the doyen of Bengali journalism. He is a father figure who since 1918 has promoted countless number of Bengali Muslim literary personages starting from the great 'rebel' poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Now a centenarian Muhammad Nasiruddin is still in full possession of his mental faculties. His life story is as fascinating as it is instructive. Born in a remote riverside village of East Bengal, he had his early education at his village school. Though he never had a good formal education, his quest for knowledge was insatiable and he managed to educate himself. At some crucial stage of his life he received generous assistance and encouragement from his Hindu neighbours and friends and this had a lasting effect on his life. He could outgrow the religious and social parochialism of his village environment and had imbibed a somewhat liberal and humanist outlook. He moved to Calcutta where he established his own Bengali journal *Saogat* in 1918 which became the mouthpiece of Bengali Muslim renaissance of our time.

In the light of experience gained during the first year it was decided that the project would continue for another two years (July 1986-June 1988). Further extension was accorded till June 1990. The Ford Foundation readily agreed to provide additional grant.

During the second phase care was taken to conduct the project in a more methodical manner through a better conceived plan. During the first phase interviews were taken without much adequate preparation in a somewhat hurried and haphazard manner. During the subsequent phases the following procedure was followed:

- (a) Background information relating to persons who were selected for interview was collected.
- (b) Comprehensive questionnaire was drawn up on the basis of information collected.
- (c) Persons to be interviewed were contacted and interviews taken in accordance with the convenience of the interviewees.

It should be noted that interviews as conceived in the project could not just be a mechanical affair but a human interaction. Some close personal rapport had to be established between the interviewer and the interviewee in order to obtain meaningful result. The process therefore involved considerable time. Hence the number of interviews could not be large. Those interviewed during the second phase of the project included two former Presidents of Bangladesh, namely, Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury (his interview was taken about a month before his death), and former chief Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem. Among others who were interviewed were former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and a well-known educationist National Professor Muhammad Shams-ul Huq; National Professor

**Abdur Razzaque**; distinguished historian and former Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University and one-time Cabinet Minister **Professor A.R. Mallick**; distinguished economist and former Vice-President of Bangladesh **Professor M.N. Huda**; and distinguished literary personage, National Professor **Syed Ali Ahsan**.

**Project Administration.** The project was conducted by a team of scholars drawn from various fields. They were **Professor A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed** of Department of History, Dhaka University; **Professor Mustafa Nur-ul Islam** of Department of Bengali, Jahangirnagar University; **Mr. Sardar Fazlul Karim**, Associate Professor of Political Science, Dhaka University; and **Dr. Enamul Haque**, Director-General of Bangladesh National Museum. All the interviews were conducted by them. They were assisted in various stages by a number of Research Associates, namely, **Dr. Muntasir Mamoon**, **Mr. Mahbubur Rahman**, **Mrs. Baby Moudud**, **Mr. Aminur Rahman**, **Mrs. Basanti Guhathakurta** and **Dr. Tayebul Hasan Khan**. Their main responsibilities were: (a) to collect background information on the persons to be interviewed, and (b) to transcribe the interviews recorded by the interviewers on cassettes. The secretarial work was done by **Mr. Abdul Motalib**. The Museum also provided the service of an office peon.

**Arrangements with the National Museum.** The office of the Oral History Project was set up in the extension block behind the main building of the Bangladesh National Museum. One fairly large room with furniture and telephone were made available for the project office.

**Project output.** Till December 1990 one hundred twenty individuals were interviewed. The transcriptions of the interviews taken are kept in bound volumes in the archives of the National Museum and would soon be available for use by scholars. In this hand-book abstracts of transcriptions of one hundred interviews are published. It would, we believe, serve as a useful guide to any scholar who would like to obtain fuller information contained in the recorded interviews.

The Oral History Project which was started on an experimental basis has now proved its utility and it is hoped that the new method of collecting historical information would be widely used by scholars of contemporary history. I am particularly thankful to the former Ford Foundation Representative Ms. Andriene Germain and Ford Foundation's Cultural Advisor Mr. V. C. Joshi for the great interest they had taken in the project. In fact, it was chiefly due to their personal initiative that the necessary grant was made available from the Foundation. Dr. Charles Bailey who succeeded Ms. Germain as Representative of the Ford Foundation also took keen interest in the project and had enthusiastically supported its continuation for the second term. Their contribution is gratefully acknowledged by all of us associated with the project.

I am grateful to Dr. Enamul Haque, former Director General of Bangladesh National Museum for the help and cooperation that I had received from him in conducting the project. My special thanks are due to the succeeding Acting Directors General of the National Museum,

Dr. Mohammad Nizamuddin and Mr. Chowdhury Golam Mowla for the cooperation they had extended to enable us to complete the project. Thanks are also due to Mr. Mohammad Mohsin, Keeper, Public Education Department, Mr. Jahangir Hussain, Senior Administrative Officer, Mr. Wahidul Haque, Librarian and Mr. Sankar Kumar Shaha Publication Assistant of the Bangladesh National Museum for the invaluable assistance they have rendered in the matter of production and publication of this Handbook.

Dhaka  
March 1992

A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed  
Principal Investigator and  
Project Director  
Oral History Project  
Bangladesh National Museum



## LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

- |    |                            |   |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 1  | Abdul Ahad                 | Music artist and composer                               |
| 2  | Abdul Bari                 | Freedom fighter   |
| 3  | Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury     | Journalist and poet                                     |
| 4  | Abdul Hafiz                | Former police officer and writer                        |
| 5  | Abdul Halim Sardar         | Politician  |
| 6  | Abdul Huq Chowdhury        | Local historian   |
| 7  | Abdul Karim                | Historian and former Vice-Chancellor                    |
| 8  | Abdul Matin                | Journalist  |
| 9  | Abdul Wahhab               | Journalist  |
| 10 | Abdur Razzaque             | National Professor                                      |
| 11 | Abdur Rob                  | Freedom fighter   |
| 12 | Abdus Samad                | Politician  |
| 13 | Abdus Sattar               | Justice, former President of Bangladesh                 |
| 14 | A. B. M. Mahbubur Rahman   | Air commodore (retired)                                 |
| 15 | Abul Fazl Mohammad Yusuf   | Physician and politician                                |
| 16 | Abul Khair Mohammad Sayeed | Drama artist  |
| 17 | Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem   | Former Chief Justice and President of Bangladesh        |
| 18 | Abu Sayeed Chowdhury       | Justice, former President of Bangladesh                 |
| 19 | Abu Taher                  | Educationist  |
| 20 | Abu Jafar Shamsuddin       | Writer and journalist                                   |
| 21 | Ahsabuddin                 | Teacher and political activist                          |
| 22 | A. K. Bazlul Karim         | Former Civil servant                                    |
| 23 | Akhtar Imam                | Educationist  |
| 24 | Akhtaruzzaman              | I. C. S (retired)                                       |
| 25 | A.K. Khan                  | Industrialist   |
| 26 | Anil Kumar Guha            | Attorney, former political activist                     |
| 27 | Anwara Bahar Chowdhury     | Teacher and social worker                               |
| 28 | Araz Ali Matabbar          | Village community leader                                |
| 29 | A.R. Mallick               | Historian, former Vice-Chancellor and Cabinet Minister. |

30	Ashabul Huq	Physician and political leader
31	Ataur Rahman Khan	Political leader, former Prime Minister
32	A.T.M. Wali Ashraf	Journalist and politician
33	A.W.Mahmood	Historian and educationist
34	Barin Dutta	Politician
35	Barun Roy	Politician
36	Basanti Guhathakurta	Teacher, writer and social worker
37	B.D. Habibullah	Political worker
38	Binod Bihari Chowdhuri (1)	Teacher and former revolutionary activist
39	Binod Bihari Chowdhuri (2)	Former Zamindar
40	Charubala Barua	School teacher and Buddhist community leader
41	Daud Khan Majlis	Journalist
42	David Hicks	British architect
43	Deben Ghosh	Social and political worker
44	Dewan Mohammad Azraf	Philosopher and educationist
45	E. R. Kitchin	Former I. C. S.
46	Ferdous Ara	Social worker
47	F. O. Bell	Former I. C. S.
48	Gopal Chandra Dey	Car driver of late Professor J. Guhathakurta
49	Gour Kishore Ghosh	Journalist and writer
50	Habibuddin Ahmed	Former Civil Servant and Newspaper publisher
51	Hallam Tennyson	Social worker, grandson of eminent British poet Lord Tennyson
52	Hena Das	Teacher and leader of women's movement
53	Jahanara Imam	Teacher, writer and social worker
54	Jamaluddin Ahmed Chowdhury	Political worker
55	Kabir Chowdhury	Educationist and literary critic



- 56 **Kamala Mukherjee** Revolutionary activist and social worker
- 57 **Khondokar Ashraf Hossain** Politician
- 58 **Laila Arjumand Banu** Leading music personality
- 59 **Mahmuda Khatun** Social worker
- 60 **Maidul Hasan** Journalist and political analyst
- 61 **M. A. Khan** Dentist
- 62 **Mansur Habibullah** Politician and former Law Minister of West Bengal
- 63 **Manizur Morshed Talukdar** Physician and Journalist
- 64 **Mirza Nurul Huda** Economist, educationist, former Cabinet Minister and Vice-President of Bangladesh
- 65 **Monindra Krishna Das** Former revolutionary
- 66 **Monorama Basu** Revolutionary and social worker
- 67 **M. R. Siddiqui** Industrialist and politician
- 68 **Muhammad Mansooruddin** Professor of Bengali and folk lore specialist
- 69 **Muhammad Nasiruddin** Litterateur and editor of Saugat
- 70 **Muhammad Shams-ul Huq** National Professor, former Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Bangladesh
- 71 **Muhammad Talebar Ali** Drama artist
- 72 **Muhammad Tofazzal Hossain** Dramatist
- 73 **Mukhlesur Rahman** Social worker and patron of cultural activities
- 74 **Mukul Sen** Revolutionary politician
- 75 **Nirad C. Chowdhury** Famous writer
- 76 **Pamela Mountbatten** Daughter of Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of British India.
- 77 **P.R. Barua** Educationist and Buddhist community leader
- 78 **Prokash Chandra Chowdhury** Teacher and literary personage
- 79 **Pulin Dey** Politician
- 80 **Qamrul Hasan** Artist

- |     |                                       |   |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 81  | <b>Q.G. Ajmeri</b>                    | <b>Businessman and politician</b>                                       |
| 82  | <b>Rashiduzzaman</b>                  | <b>Engineer and social worker</b>                                       |
| 83  | <b>Renukana Barua</b>                 | <b>Physician and Buddhist community leader</b>                          |
| 84  | <b>Safar Ali</b>                      | <b>Former police officer</b>  |
| 85  | <b>Santimoy Roy</b>                   | <b>Educationist, political and social worker</b>                        |
| 86  | <b>Shaktibhuti Chowdhury</b>          | <b>Political worker and journalist</b>                                  |
| 87  | <b>Sayedur Rahman</b>                 | <b>Educationist and philosopher</b>                                     |
| 88  | <b>Sirajur Rahman</b>                 | <b>Broadcaster, Bengali Division BBC London</b>                         |
| 89  | <b>S. N. Q. Zulfiqar Ali</b>          | <b>Educationist</b>   |
| 90  | <b>Sufia Kamal</b>                    | <b>Leading poet and social worker</b>                                   |
| 91  | <b>Suniti Bijoy Hazari</b>            | <b>Lawyer and former political activist</b>                             |
| 92  | <b>Syed Ali Ahsan</b>                 | <b>National Professor, poet, educationist</b>                           |
| 93  | <b>Syed Didarul Huq</b>               | <b>Discendant of a religious Preacher belonging to Matsbhandar sect</b> |
| 94  | <b>Syed Mannan Baksh</b>              | <b>Retired police officer</b>   |
| 95  | <b>Syed Mansur Jilany</b>             | <b>Son of Syed Nawsher Ali, a former political leader</b>               |
| 96  | <b>Tajul Hossain</b>                  | <b>Physician and freedom fighter</b>                                    |
| 97  | <b>Tapan Kumar Ray Chaudhuri</b>      | <b>Historian</b>  |
| 98  | <b>Umratul Fazal</b>                  | <b>Social worker and writer</b>   |
| 99  | <b>W. H. Samaurez Smith, O. B. E.</b> | <b>Former I.C.S</b>   |
| 100 | <b>Zobeda Khatun Chowdhury</b>        | <b>Social and political worker</b>                                      |

## 1 Abdul Ahad

Distinguished music composer and a leading exponent of Tagore music. Had the rare privilege to study music at Santiniketan while Tagore was alive. Born in 1918 at Rajshahi; ancestral home in Faridpur. Received his early education at Rajshahi and Pabna. Then he went to Calcutta for College education. He has narrated how since his boyhood he was drawn to music, stood first in All Bengal Music Competition and was awarded a scholarship to study music at Viswa Bharati, Santiniketan, came in contact not only with Tagore but some of the distinguished music personalities of the time. After graduating from Santiniketan Mr. Ahad went to Bombay and stayed there for a year working on films. Finding the Bombay life not congenial he came back to Calcutta and joined His Master's Voice Company as a Music Trainer. Was a member of the Viswa Bharati Music Board. Quite a number of Tagore songs sung by well-known artists e.g. Pankaj Mallick, Hemanta Mukherjee, Suchitra Sen and others were recorded under his direction. After 1947 Partition Mr. Ahad came over to Dhaka and joined as Senior Music Producer, Dhaka Radio station. Here he embarked on his new career as a Music Composer and soon won fame as one of the leading music composers of the country.

## 2 Abdul Bari

A resident of Daulatpur in Narsinghdi upazilla. Was Secretary of local Awami League and actively participated in 1971 Liberation war. In this interview Mr. Bari has described the various activities of the freedom fighters and the response of the local people towards the war.

### 3 Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury

Poet and journalist. Born in village Ulania in Barisal. His father Haji Wahed Reza Chowdhury was a landlord whose fortune was declining. His father was involved in politics. In this interview Mr. Gaffar Chowdhury has narrated his father's political affiliation and his role in pre-Partition Bengal politics, his reminiscences of his father's association with political leaders of the time, his family environment, his own attraction towards politics and political movements, his leanings towards the Communist party, his activities during the historic language movement, his composition of the famous poem of the language movement *Amar bhayer rakte rangano ekushey February*, experiences of his student life in Dhaka, his entry into journalism, reminiscences of 1971, his work as editor of *Joy Bangla* weekly published from Calcutta. Mr. Chowdhury has also commented on the role of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman up to 25 March 1971 and of other political leaders during the Liberation war. He has also given his views on post-Liberation politics.

#### 4 **Abdul Hafiz**

Born in 1908 in a village near Brahmanbaria. Belonged to a conservative family. Had his early education in madrasa. Later he studied at Dhaka University. After obtaining his B.A. degree he joined the Police Service. He is a noted writer.

In this interview Mr. Hafiz has recorded his reminiscences of life in Dhaka in the thirties particularly the educational and cultural atmosphere of Dhaka University during his time. He has also narrated his experience as a police officer and has recounted his recollections of some principal events such as 1946 Hindu-Muslim riots and partition of British India and subsequent Political developments.

## 5 Abdul Halim Sardar

Born in 1930 at Dhaka. He has recounted his reminiscences of the past days of Dhaka city, its educational and cultural environment, Hindu-Muslim relations, role of Dhaka Nawab family in politics of his time, the *Panchayet* system of Dhaka, peculiarities of language, dress and manners of the Dhaka people. He has also recounted some of the tragic events like killing of student leader Nazir Ahmed who was trying to promote communal Harmony, and also the murder of progressive writer Somen Chanda. Mr. Halim Sardar was himself involved in politics and has given his impression of some of the leading political leaders of his time.

## 6 Abdul Huq Chowdhury

Born in 1327 Bengali year in Chittagong. Author of a number of books on the regional history of Chittagong. In this interview Mr. Chowdhury has recorded his reminiscences of the events during 1971 Liberation war in Chittagong region particularly the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani invaders and the criminal activities of the Razakars. Mr. Chowdhury has also commented on the social changes in Chittagong, Hindu-Muslim relations and political developments during his time. He has also given his personal impression of some of the great literary figures of Chittagong, namely, Abdul Karim Shahitya Bisharad, Dr. Muhammad Enamul Huq and Dr. Ahmed Sharif.



## 7 Abdul Karim

Historian and educationist. Former Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University. Born on 1st June 1928 in village Chapachari in Chittagong. In this interview is recorded Dr. Karim's reminiscences of his childhood, his family and social surroundings, social life in his village, Hindu-Muslim relations which according to him were very cordial, influence of religion in society, the condition of women, social stratification, and the type of education prevalent in the *maktab*, *madrassa* and village *pathsala*. After completing his early education in his village he moved to Chittagong for further education. He has narrated the educational and social environment of Chittagong, the experience of life in Chittagong during the Second World War and reminiscences of his student days in Chittagong Islamic Intermediate College. After passing the Intermediate Examination in the first division he came to Dhaka, took his B. A Honours and M. A. degrees in History from Dhaka University and joined the History department as a Lecturer. He was now on the threshold of his remarkable professional career. The interview is incomplete.

## 8 Abdul Matin

Born in Noakhali. Was a student of Dhaka University from 1940 to 1946. Was involved in left politics and was associated with literary and cultural activities. After completing his education Mr. Matin took up journalism as a career. He was responsible for setting up the Dhaka branch of the United Press of India. Later he migrated to Britain and continued in his journalistic profession.

In this interview Mr. Matin has narrated his experience as a working journalist, his reminiscences of the 1952 language movement and subsequent events up to 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war and after. He has also given his personal impression of some of the important leaders such as H.S. Suhrawardy, Maulana Bhashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mr. Matin has also discussed in detail the activities of the Bengali community in Britain during and after the Liberation war.

## • Abdul Wahhab

Born in 1916 at Burdwan, West Bengal. Educated in Calcutta. His father was an accomplished scholar in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. He was personally acquainted with many distinguished educationists, literary figures, drama personalities, journalists and political leaders such as Professor Humayun Kabir, Dr. Mahmud Hasan, Sambhu Mitra, Khwaja Nazimuddin and Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy. He himself became a distinguished journalist starting his career in the Calcutta *Statesman* of which he was the Dhaka correspondent for many years. He also worked in *The Morning News* Dhaka for sometime. In this interview he has commented on the nature of Pakistan movement, the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1946, and social and cultural environment in Dhaka.

## 10 **Abdur Razzaque**

In this interview National Professor Abdur Razzaque has described the discriminatory policies pursued by the Pakistan Central Government towards the Bengalis of the eastern region. In this connection he criticized the recently published Memoirs of Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhry. He pointed out that it was the late Dr. Sadeque the renowned economist, who for the first time had clearly shown the widening disparity in economic development between East and West Pakistan for which he had incurred the warth of the then Pakistan Government. Professor Razzaque has also narrated the history of the creation of the East Pakistan Planning Board by the then Chief Minister Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan. The interview is incomplete.

## **11 Abdur Rob**

**Businessman, a permanent resident of Narsinghdi. Active participant in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war. Received his education at Narsinghdi, Mymensingh and Dhaka. Inspired by patriotic feeling he had joined the Liberation war. Was a member of Mujib Bahini. He has narrated his experience while receiving military training in India and has commented on the attitude of India towards the Liberation war and also on developments in the post-Liberation period in Bangladesh. He has also recorded his impression of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni, ASM Abdur Rab, Tofail Ahmed, Abdur Razzaque and other leaders of the Awami League.**

## 12 **Abdus Samad**

Uncle of Well-known Awami League leader M. Qamruzzaman who was killed while in judicial custody inside Dhaka Central Jail in early November 1975 by armed men from the Dhaka Cantonment – the same gang who had killed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975. In this interview Mr. Samad has narrated his reminiscences of men and events of his time.

### 13 Abdus Sattar

The late Justice Abdus Sattar was born on September 1, 1906 in a village in West Bengal. He practiced as a lawyer in the Calcutta High Court till 1949. He migrated to Dhaka in 1950 and began practicing at the Dhaka High Court. In his early life Justice Sattar was closely associated with Muslim League politics and worked under the leadership of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq and Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. After coming to Dhaka Justice Sattar gave up Muslim League politics and joined hands with Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani in organizing the United Front against the Muslim League Government which had become very unpopular. After the rout of the Muslim League in 1954 elections Justice Sattar was appointed Minister of Interior and Education in the Pakistan Central Cabinet. Later he held important judicial and administrative positions e. g., Judge of the Pakistan Supreme Court, Chief Election Commissioner. During the Bangladesh Liberation War he was in Islamabad. After Liberation he escaped from Pakistan performing hazardous journey and arrived in Dhaka via Kabul and New Delhi. In 1976 he was appointed Special Assistant to President of Bangladesh Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem. Later when Major General Ziaur Rahman became President, Justice Sattar was appointed Vice-President. After the assassination of President Zia, Justice Sattar was elected President of Bangladesh. In March 1983 he was overthrown or rather forced to resign as a result of a military coup by General H. M. Ershad.

In this interview Mr. Sattar has narrated the important events of his life especially his experiences during 1971 war and his dramatic escape from Pakistan. He has also narrated the circumstances which led to the coming of Ziaur Rahman to power by dislodging President Sayem.

## **14 A. B. M. Mahbubur Rahman**

Retired Air Commodore. He was one of the first Bengalis who held senior positions in the Pakistan Air Force. In this interview Mr. Rahman has described how Bengali officers in the Pakistan armed forces suffered from discrimination at hands of Non-Bengali, mainly Punjabi senior officers and colleagues. During the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war Air Commodore Rahman was arrested on charge of attempting to communicate with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman whom he knew personally since his student days in Calcutta. He has given a vivid description of the torture that was meted out to him while in detention in the Dhaka Cantonment.



## **15 Abul Faiz Mohammad Yusuf**

Well-known medical practitioner, social worker and political leader of Chittagong. Born in 1926 in Chittagong. Had his education mostly in Chittagong and Calcutta. While a student of Calcutta Medical College he became involved in student movement and became acquainted with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Closely associated with Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) since its inception. He personally knew President Ziaur Rahman and was present in Chittagong when President Zia was killed.

In this interview Dr. Yusuf has narrated in detail the social cultural and political life in Chittagong since the forties of the present century. He has also recorded his reminiscences of some of the leading personages he had known and the important events he had witnessed.

## **16 Abul Khair Mohammad Sayeed**

**Born at Rajshahi in 1920. A veteran drama artist. In this interview he has given many details of the theatre movement and the state of drama in Rajshahi, the stage settings, the background of the actors, the themes of the plays enacted and impact on society.**

## **17 Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem**

Former President of Bangladesh. In this interview Justice Sayem has narrated the circumstances under which he was called upon to assume the office of President of Bangladesh on 6th November 1975. The situation at that time was very critical. He thought of giving some kind of legitimacy to the government by holding a general election. Hence he appointed Justice Abdus Sattar as Special Assistant to the President. It may be recalled that Mr. Sattar as Chief Election Commissioner had earned fame by successfully conducting the general elections in Pakistan in 1970. Justice Sattar was given the responsibility of carrying on dialogue with the political leaders in order to prepare the ground for holding election in Bangladesh. But Justice Sayem later learnt to his dismay that Justice Sattar instead of talking to the political leaders started visiting the Cantonment for holding talks with the army leaders and, in fact, became very close to the then Chief of the armed forces Lt. General Ziaur Rahman. In this way President Sayem's plan to civilianize the administration through holding election was subverted. Not only that, Justice Sayem has recalled with regret that Justice Sattar had started putting pressure on him to resign from the presidency and hand over power to General Zia. In fact, he was pleading it on behalf of Zia.

In this situation Justice Sayem was forced to resign from the office of President. What had pained Sayem most was the fact that General Zia after becoming President, with the help of Mr. Sattar appointed the latter as Vice-President a position which Mr. Sattar did not hesitate to accept. Shortly after coming to power President Ziaur Rahman with the help of Justice Sattar floated a new political party called Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in order to strengthen his political base.

In this interview Justice Sayem has regretfully observed that the recent tendency on the part of some military leaders to seize the state power cannot bring any good to the country, because the military leaders have no experience of conducting the civilian administration. Besides, they have little knowledge of political and economic matters. Hence they are incapable of solving any problem. This creates adverse reaction. On the other hand, political leaders also become dissatisfied because capture of power by military men deprive them of their legitimate right to govern.

This interview was taken on 31 March 1987 at Justice Sayem's Dhaka residence. Quite sometime later his book *At Bangabhaban : Last Phase* was published.

## 18 Abu Sayeed Chowdhury

Born on 31 January 1921 in an old aristocratic family in Tangail. His father Abdul Hamid Chowdhury was a land lord and Deputy Speaker of Legislative Assembly of undivided Bengal. In this interview Justice Chowdhury has narrated his reminiscences of the social and political changes that have taken place during his time. He has described with emotion his childhood days and the very cordial relations that existed between Hindus and Muslims in his home town. He has also narrated the experiences of his student life in Calcutta, particularly relating to student politics of those days. After obtaining his Master's degree in History and Bachelor of Law degree from Calcutta University, he went to Britain for undertaking the Barrister's course. After his enrolment as a Barrister Justice Chowdhury came over to Dhaka and began to practice at the High Court. In course of time he was elevated to the bench. As a High Court Judge he had attained considerable reputation. In 1970 he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University while retaining his judicial position. Justice Chowdhury has recollected his fascinating experiences both as a Judge and Vice-Chancellor. When the Bangladesh Liberation War broke out in March 1971 Justice Chowdhury was in Europe to attend a meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission. When he learnt about the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani army in Bangladesh he decided to join the movement for Bangladesh Liberation and was actively involved in organizing international support for Bangladesh cause visiting various countries as roving ambassador of Bangladesh government in exile (Mujibnagar Government). After independence Justice Chowdhury was appointed the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Later he resigned from this position and was for a brief period a

**Minister in Sheikh Mujib's Cabinet. After the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Justice Chowdhury was forced by circumstances to serve for some time as Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. He has recounted his sad experiences of those days. Just a few days after this interview was taken, Justice Chowdhury went to London where he died suddenly on 1st August 1987.**

## **19 Abu Taher**

Educationist. Ancestral home in Shibpur in Narsinghdi district. Father of Asaduzzaman (Shaheed Asad) hero of 1969 mass uprising against the dictatorial regime of General Ayub Khan of Pakistan. In this interview Mr. Taher has recounted the experiences of his life and times.

## 20 Abu Jafar Shamsuddin

Literary figure and journalist. Born in 1911 in a village near Gazipur. Educated in madrasa and Dhaka Intermediate College. In this interview Mr. Shamsuddin has narrated many interesting aspects of the social and cultural life of Dhaka in the early decades of twentieth century. In 1930 he moved to Calcutta and became a career journalist. He has described in this interview his contacts with some leaders of the revolutionary movement and its impact on his life. In 1945 he came over to Dhaka and undertook the responsibility of establishing the office of the Bengali newspaper *Azad*. He has described in detail his experiences in his journalistic career, his reminiscences of men and events. He was also engaged in literary pursuits and wrote and published a number of short stories and novels. His monumental novel *Padma Meghna Jamuna* depicts the social transformation of Bengali Muslim community during the first half of the twentieth century. During the last years of his life Mr. Shamsuddin earned fame and respect as a newspaper columnist who courageously wrote against the rule of military dictators and strongly advocated the cause of democracy and secularism.



## 21 Ahsabuddin

Born in 1914 at Chittagong. College teacher, social worker and political activist. He has narrated the political, social and economic changes that he has witnessed in his lifetime. He became actively involved in revolutionary left politics during Pakistani regime and lived in underground for 15 years. He has given his reminiscences of 1952 language movement, the democratic struggle against Ayub regime, the general elections of 1970 and the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971.

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## **22 A. K. Bazlul Karim**

**Born in 1902 in former Comilla district. Graduated from Presidency College, Calcutta and took his M. A. Degree from Calcutta University in 1925. He then entered the Bengal Provincial Civil Service. In this interview he has given his recollections of his early life in village surroundings, the economic and social condition of the Muslims, Hindu-Muslim relation, his meeting with poets Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam and varied experience of his service career.**

## **23 Akhtar Imam**

**Educationist and writer. Obtained M.A degree in Philosophy from Dhaka and London Universities. Started her teaching career as Lecturer in Philosophy at the Eden Girls' College Dhaka. Later she joined as first Provost of Rokeya Hall (Women's Hall of Residence), Dhaka University and was also attached to the University in the Department of Philosophy with the status of Associate Professor. Her published works include a book on Philosophy and several autobiographical writings.**

**In this interview Mrs. Akhtar Imam has recounted her traumatic experience during 1971 Liberation war particularly the criminal activities of the Pakistani hordes when they attacked the Women's Hall and killed several employees.**

## 24 Akhtaruzzaman

Retired I.C.S. First Bengali Muslim who entered the Indian Civil Service through open competition. Born at Comilla in 1917. His father was a Deputy Magistrate. His ancestral home was in Vikrampur in Munshiganj District. Graduated with a first class honours in History from the Presidency College Calcutta in 1936. Went to Oxford and obtained B.A. Honours degree in Modern History from Exeter College in 1938. Appeared in the I. C. S. Examination from England and was selected for appointment. Between 1939 and 1947 Mr. Zaman was posted in several sub-divisions and districts in East and West Bengal. He has recounted his experiences during the 1942 Quit India Movement started by the Indian National Congress against the British and has also commented on the British Government Policy during the 1943 famine. Mr. Zaman has also narrated his varied experience while serving as Sub-divisional Officer at Narayanganj in 1944-45. That was the time of frequent Hindu-Muslim riots. Mr. Zaman was posted as Additional District Magistrate at Noakhali when communal disturbances were taking place there in late 1946. At that time Mahatma Gandhi was visiting Noakhali on his famous peace mission. Mr. Zaman has given a fascinating account of Gandhiji's activities in Noakhali. Although Mr. Zaman's ancestral home was in East Bengal he decided to opt for India at the time of the Partition because like his illustrious maternal uncle Professor Humayun Kabir he had no faith in communalism and Pakistan. Before his retirement from service Mr. Zaman held important posts under West Bengal Government and Government of India. In this interview Mr. Zaman has given his reminiscences of the West Bengal Chief Minister Dr. B. C. Roy and the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Well-known industrialist. Born in 1905 in an old traditional family of Chittagong. After completing his school education in Chittagong he went to Calcutta for higher education. In 1927 he graduated with honours in English from the Presidency College and then proceeded to study M.A. and law courses at the Calcutta University simultaneously. Appeared at the I.C.S. Examination but did not succeed; nor could he complete the M.A. course. After practising at the Calcutta High Court for some time he took the post of Munsif (subordinate law officer). He was able to gain reputation for administering justice in honest and upright manner.

In this interview Mr. Khan has narrated his experience in judicial service. His father-in law had a flourishing business in Burma. During the Second World War he came over to Chittagong and set up his business there. Mr. Khan gave up government service in response to the wishes of his father-in law and eventually took over the business. Soon he was able to establish himself as a leading businessman and industrialist. He then started taking part in politics. He became President of Chittagong Muslim League. In 1947 he was elected a member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. He has described the political situation of that time and also his own political involvement. He was Minister of Industries in the Presidential Cabinet of General Ayub Khan. In that capacity he did his best to promote industrial development of the then East Pakistan. During the 1971 Liberation war of Bangladesh Mr. Khan refused to cooperate with the Pakistan government and went over to Calcutta. From there he went to London and then to Washington where his son-in-law Mr. M. R. Siddiqui, a leader of the Awami League, was

posted as Ambassador of Mujibnagar Government (Bangladesh Government in exile). Commenting on the political situation in Bangladesh Mr. A. K. Khan observed that the worst aspect of our national character was that we hesitate to give everyone his due. In this interview one gets glimpses of three eras, British, Pakistani and Bangladesh.

## 26 Anil Kumar Guha

Born in 1904 at Chittagong. Was a member of secret revolutionary terrorist party *Anushilan* and participated in the anti-imperialist movement. Later he abjured terrorist politics and became a follower of revolutionary philosopher M.N. Roy and became a Radical Humanist. He was also involved in social work and cultural activities. Music became his great passion and he was actively associated with *Arya Sangeet Samiti* of which he was President for many years. Mr. Guha eventually took up law as his profession and became a leading Attorney in Chittagong.

In this interview Mr. Guha records his reminiscences of the terrorist movement of the early decades of twentieth century, the non-cooperation movement of the 1920s, the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930, Hindu-Muslim relations, the Pakistan movement, and the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971.

## 27 Anwara Bahar Chowdhury

Born in 1920(?). Ancestral home in Dhaka. A distinguished teacher and social worker. Married to a well-known literary person and political leader Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury who was for sometime a Minister in former East Pakistan Provincial Cabinet. Mrs. Chowdhury was educated in Dhaka and Calcutta. After obtaining her B.A. and B.T. degrees from Calcutta University she joined the Sakhawat Memorial Girl's High School in Calcutta as a teacher in 1941. She served for sometime as secretary of a women's social welfare organization known as Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam.

After the Partition of India in 1947 Begum Chowdhury moved to the then East Pakistan. She served as Head Mistress in the following institutions: Vidyamayee Girls' School, Mymensingh; Kamrunnesa Girls' School, and Banglabazar Girls' School, Dhaka. Her family represented a liberal cultural tradition. Her husband Habibullah Bahar and husband's sister Begum Shamsunnahar Mahmood were distinguished literary personages who were well-acquainted with the great poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. In this interview Begum Anwara Bahar has narrated in her eloquent language her own impression of some of her illustrious contemporaries such as Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Mrs. Fazilatunnesa Zoha and others, and the social and cultural environment of her time. She has also given her assessment of the state of women's education. She has also recollected her experiences during the 1952 language movement and the 1971 Liberation war especially the involvement of women in it.



## 28 Araz Ali Matabbar

Born in Bengali year 1307 in village Namchari in former Barisal district. Although he did not receive any formal education, he was a self-educated man of profound understanding and knowledge. He derived his philosophy from life's bitter experience.

In this interview he has recounted a remarkable event which proved to be turning point of his life. He had lost his father soon after he was born. He was brought up by his mother to whom he was deeply attached. While he was about 15 years of age his mother suddenly died. He was so overtaken by grief that he took a photograph of his dead mother's body before burial. The photo was taken by a Hindu photographer from nearby town. This was considered a sacrilegious act by the orthodox Muslim village elders who excommunicated him and refused to bury the body of his mother according to Islamic religious rites. In sheer desperation he was forced dig the grave with the help of some of his friends and bury his mother's body without any religious ritual. This incident had such a profound impact on him that he began to question the veracity of the religious faith and in course of time lost faith in all conventional religions and became a free thinker and a rationalist. He was deeply imbued with humanist philosophy and devoted his life to social work. This interview was taken a few months before his death. He had proclaimed his disbelief in God and afterlife. So strong was his conviction that he had made a will before his death by which he had donated his body to the Barisal Medical College for the cause of research in medical science.

Mr. Araz Ali Matabbar is the author of a number of booklets such as *Mukta Mon*, *Sristeer Rahasya* and *Satyer Sandhan*.

Born on 31 December 1919 in village Rajapur near Dhaka. Well-known historian and educationist Dr. Azizur Rahman Mallick has had a chequered academic and public career. Educated at Dhaka and London Universities he had held such academic positions as Lecturer in History at Dhaka University, Professor of History at Rajshahi Government College, Professor of History and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Rajshahi University and finally Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University. In 1971 Professor Mallick joined the Bangladesh Liberation movement. Left Cittaogong in face of Pakistani army invasion and crossed over to India to organize resistance to Pakistani aggression and genocide in Bangladesh. He became actively involved in mobilizing public opinion in India in support of the Liberation war of Bangladesh. He also visited Britain and the United States and lectured in different Universities to gain international support for the cause of Bangladesh.

After independence of Bangladesh Dr. Mallick was appointed Secretary, Ministry of Education. Later he was made High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India. In late 1974 he was appointed Minister of Finance in the Presidential Cabinet of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. After 1975 military coup Dr. Mallick joined Jahangirnagar University as a supernumerary Professor in the Department of History; later he was made Professor Emeritus in the same University. He is also Chairman of the National Bank Limited.

In this interview Dr. Mallick has given his reminiscences of the political developments that he has witnessed during his time such as the anti-British nationalist movement, the rise of communal politics and Hindu-Muslim conflict, Pakistan movement and The role of the Bengali Muslims in it and also

their introspection after the creation of Pakistan, the growth of secular nationalist consciousness in East Bengal, the language movement and student unrest. Dr. Mallick has also recounted his varied experience first as a student and then as a teacher at Dhaka University.

He has given many details of the teacher-student relationship at Dhaka University, the social and cultural life of Dhaka in particular and East Bengal in general during those days. He has also narrated his experience during his long association with Rajshahi Government College and Rajshahi University. He has also given a fascinating account of the student movement against the autocratic regime of General Ayub Khan and has revealed how he as Head of the Department of History and also Dean and Provost had personally tried to protect the students from repression by Government agencies. In 1965 Dr. Mallick was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the newly established Chittagong University. He has given a lively account of his relations with the then Governor of the Province Abdul Monem Khan. He has also narrated the serious and complicated problems that he had to face while building up the new University. Dr. Mallick has also narrated in detail how he was involved in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, the circumstances in which he had to lead the exodus of teachers and their families to India in face of the Pakistani invasion. Dr. Mallick has also recalled his conversation with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi relating to problems facing Bangladesh and India. He has also explained how and under what circumstance he had to join the Cabinet of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Finance Minister and has narrated some of the important steps which were taken during his tenure of office as Finance Minister. In this interview he has given much significant information on the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib on 15 August 1975 and the subsequent developments.

### 30 Ashabul Huq

Born in 1921 at Chuadanga. Professional physician and social worker. During his student days in Calcutta he came in contact with the famous revolutionary leaders M. N. Roy and was converted to his philosophy of radical humanism. He was actively involved with the relief work of the Indian Red Cross Society in Calcutta and Bihar after the large scale communal riots of 1946. After Partition of 1947 Dr. Huq settled down at his hometown Chuadanga and was involved in the movement for establishment of a democratic government in Pakistan. He joined the Awami League and was elected a member of the Provincial Assembly in the elections held in 1970. When the Liberation war broke out in March 1971 Dr. Ashabul Huq was active in organizing local resistance to Pakistan army in the Chuadanga area. He was one of the first to cross over to India and establish contacts with Indian journalists. He also helped Tajuddin Ahmed and some other prominent leaders of the Awami League to cross over to India. Subsequently, he himself moved to India and joined the Mujibnagar Government. He also visited the United States along with Professor A. R. Mallick to organize public opinion in support of Bangladesh.

In this interview Dr. Ashabul Huq has also narrated his experience particularly with regard to changing developments in Bangladesh. After the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and overthrow of his government in August 1975 Dr. Huq along with other prominent leaders of the Awami League were arrested and confined in Dhaka Central Jail. He was there when his other jail mates namely, Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Mansur Ali and Qamruzzaman were brutally killed inside the jail premises. Dr. Huq has given vivid description of the gruesome tragedy.

### 31. Ataur Rahman Khan.

Elder statesman. Born in 1905 in a village near Dhaka. In this interview he has given his reminiscences of his student life in Dhaka during the twenties of the present century. He fondly remembers some of the renowned teachers of Dhaka University like A. F. Rahman (later Sir) who exercised lasting influence on him. He remembers the rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam attending a meeting of *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* in Dhaka in 1927. The Samaj was a forum of progressive Muslim intellectuals of Dhaka who were opposed to all kinds of social and religious prejudices. Their motto was "emancipation of intellect". Mr. Khan has commented on the social and educational environment of his time. But he refused to say anything on his long and eventful political career. His two books: *Shairacharer Dash Bachar* (Ten Years of Despotism) and *Ozarotir Dui Bachar* (Two Years of Ministership) depict his political experiences.

Born in 1940 at Brahmanbaria. Migrated to Britain. Editor and publisher of the first Bengali weekly newspaper brought out in London-*Janamat*. Before going to U. K. Mr. Wali Ashraf was a practicing journalist in Dhaka. He moved to London in 1966 and was associated with the BBC Bengali Department. In 1971 he was actively involved in organizing public opinion in Britain in support of the Bangladesh Liberation war.

In this interview Mr. Ashraf has narrated his family background, his involvement in politics, his journalistic experience, circumstances that led him to publish *Janamat* from London, role of the overseas Bengali community in the Liberation war of Bangladesh. He has also given his personal impression of important political leaders such as Maulana Bhashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Mr. Ashraf has also commented on political developments in Bangladesh after independence.

Born in 1910 at Comilla. Ancestral home in Brahmanbaria. Obtained B.A. Honours and M. A. degrees in History from Dhaka University securing first class in both and subsequently went to Oxford on state scholarship and earned his B. Litt. degree. On return from England he joined the Provincial Education Service and served in various government Colleges as Professor of History.

In this interview Professor Mahmood has given his reminiscences of his life as a student in Dhaka University, his experience as a teacher, particularly in Chittagong College and Calcutta Presidency College, Hindu-Muslim relations and political developments he had witnessed. Mr. Mahmood did not believe in Partition of India on communal lines. Although he belonged to East Bengal, he decided to opt for India. He continued to serve in India after Partition of 1947. and after retirement from West Bengal Senior Education Service settled down in Calcutta. Professor Mahmood has commented on the growth of communalism in the Sub-continent, the psychology of the minorities, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri mosque controversy and the future of democracy in India.

### 34 Barin Dutta

Born in 1911 in Sylhet. Was one of the leaders of the peasant movement in Sylhet and Habiganj. He was associated with secret revolutionary societies known as *Anushilan* and *Jugantar* in the British days. He is known by his pseudonym *Salam Bhai*. He has given his reminiscences of the political movements and the nationalist leaders of his time. Has also commented on the political and social changes taking place in the thirties and the forties.



### 35. Barun Roy

Born in 1922 at Patna, Ancestral home in Sylhet. Was actively involved in the peasant movement. In this interview he has given his reminiscences of the Bengal famine of 1943, his imprisonment during British rule on account of his active involvement in political activities, the oppression of the peasantry by the landlords in several districts in Assam, particularly Habiganj, Karimganj and Sylhet districts, the peasant revolt (the nankar uprising), Hindu-Muslim relations and the nature and limitations of the left movement.

### 36 Basanti Guhathakurta

Born in 1922 in village Fatulla in Narayanganj district. Teacher and social worker. Was Head Mistress of Gendaria Girl's School for long forty-three years. Has narrated the social and political changes that she had witnessed. She obtained her B.A., B.T. and M.A. degrees from Dhaka University and Diploma in Teaching from the University of London. Married to Professor Jyotirmay Guhathakurta of English Department, Dhaka University who was killed by the Pakistani soldiers in March 1971. Mrs. Guhathakurta is the author of *Ekatturer Smriti* in which she has narrated her traumatic experience during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war when she lived the life of a fugitive in Dhaka city moving from place to place with her only child Meghna.

A close associate of the great Bengali leader Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq. In this interview he has eulogized the role of Fazlul Huq in protecting the interests of the peasants and small tenant holders from the oppression of the landlords and money-lenders. He has also given his reminiscences of the formation of the *Krishak Proja Party*, the Pakistan movement, and the political and social changes that he has witnessed. He has also given his personal impression of some political leaders like A.K. Fazlul Huq, H. S. Suhrawardy, Maulana Bhashani, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Yusuf Hossain Chowdhury (Mohan meo). He has also recounted the events during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war. Has also commented on post-war developments.

### 38 Binod Bihari Chowdhuri (1)

Born in 1911 at Chittagong. Was a revolutionary political activist and freedom fighter in the days of British rule. From his early youth he was involved in political activities and was drawn to anti-British revolutionary terrorist movement and became a follower of the legendary hero of the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1931. Chowdhury was then a lad of fifteen years. He took part in the raid and was injured. But he was one of the few who escaped arrest. For several years he remained in hiding serving as a private tutor in several places. In this interview he has narrated his life story which is full of excitement and adventure. Now he leads a quiet life, earns his livelihood by offering private coaching at his modest home in Chittagong.

### **39 Binod Bihari Chowdhuri (2)**

**Born in 1905 at Noakhali now settled at Chittagong. Formerly a leading landlord of the region. In this interview he has narrated the principal events of his life, the political and social changes that he has witnessed, Hindu-Muslim relations, the impact of the abolition of Zamindary and the position of the Hindu community after 1947.**

#### **40. Charubala Barua**

**Born in 1916, at Chittagong in a Buddhist middle class family. She has been all through her life a dedicated school teacher widely respected by all communities. After retirement she has devoted herself to social work and has contributed almost all her savings to the upliftment of the Buddhist community of which she is now an acknowledged leader. In this interview Miss Barua has narrated the main events of her life and has recounted her traumatic experience during the 1971 war.**

## 41 Daud Khan Majlis

A long time journalist Daud Khan Majlis was Press Adviser to the President of Bangladesh Lt. Gen. Ziaur Rahman. Started his journalistic career in 1949. He has been associated with a number of national and foreign newspapers. Between 1955 and 1960 he was in the USA working for the Voice of America. For some time he was Film Producer in the Film and Publication Division of the Pakistan Government's Ministry of Information and was posted in Karachi. He has also worked in the External Publicity Cell of the Information Ministry. After independence of Bangladesh he continued to work in the Information Ministry and acted as Managing Director of Film Development Corporation. He was also associated with Bangladesh Television. Mr. D. K. Majlis has also worked as correspondent of the *Financial Times* (London) and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hongkong). In 1981 he was appointed Press Adviser to President Ziaur Rahman. After the assassination of the President he left the USA and joined the VOA once again.

In this interview Mr. Khan Majlis has given his version of Bangladesh's political developments in the seventies. He has commented on the role of the politicians, the formation of new political forces and the nature of power politics in Bangladesh. He has also explained the background of his association with President Ziaur Rahman and assessed his contribution.

## 42 David Hicks

Famous British architect and art specialist and consultant. Married to Pamela, second daughter of Lord Louis Mountbatten the last Viceroy of British India and the first Governor-General of independent India. In this interview Mr. Hicks has described the close relationship that existed between the Mountbattens and the family of Jawaharlal Nehru the Prime Minister of India. He has also narrated the experiences of his visits to India and has made some profound comments on the art heritage of India.



### 43 Deben Ghosh

Born in 1890 at Barisal. Was involved in revolutionary politics and social work. Participated in anti-imperialist freedom movement and suffered imprisonment. In this interview he has narrated his reminiscences of 1902 Boer War in South Africa, the anti-Partition and Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905-11), the various kinds of social work undertaken by secret revolutionary parties like *Anushilan and Jugantar*. He has also commented on the different aspects of the nationalist movement in Bengal during his time.

## 44 Dewan Mohammad Azraf

Well-known educationist and philosopher. Born in 1906 in Sylhet. Grandson of the famous mystic poet Hasan Raja. In this interview he has spoken about his enlightened family background and recollected the cordial relationship that existed between Hindus and Muslims in his home town Sylhet. He Has explained the reasons of the rise of communal feeling in Bengal particularly after 1920. He has recollected the memories of his childhood and early youth in Sylhet and later the fascinating experience of his student life in Dhaka particularly the educational and cultural environment of Dhaka University. He has also given his personal impression of some distinguished persons he had seen or known such as poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Sir P. C. Ray, Sarojini Naidu and Professor Haridas Bhattacharya. He has also given an account of the condition of women in Bengali Muslim society.

## 45 E. R. Kitchin

Retired British officer of the Indian Civil Service. Born in 1911 in England. He joined the Indian Civil Service in 1934 and was posted in several districts of undivided Bengal. He has given his reminiscences of his service career in Bengal and has commented on relations between the British and Indians, between Hindus and Muslims and the freedom movement against British rule. According to him there were two parallel movements: one of the Hindus under the Congress, and the other of the Muslims under the Muslim League. He has also given his personal impression of some Bengali leaders like A. K. Fazlul Huq, H. S. Suhrawardy and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar. He Left India in January 1947.

## 46 Ferdous Ara

Born in 1926 at Chittagong. Daughter of Khan Bahadur Sirajul Islam, a descendant of Nawab Abdul Latif, Nineteenth Century Bengali Muslim modernizer. Married to Mr. Anwarul Karim, a senior railway official. She was educated mostly at home and had learnt Bengali, English, Urdu and Arabic from private tutors. Her family was very enlightened and many of her close relations were interested in music. She herself was a music lover and had met Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. In this interview she has narrated how she was emotionally driven to write a letter to Tagore and received a reply from the great poet.

## 47 F. O. Bell

Born in 1907 in England. Entered Indian Civil Service in 1930. Was posted in Calcutta and many districts of East and West Bengal. He was posted as District Magistrate Dhaka in 1943. He has recollected his experience during the great famine of 1943 and the communal riots that took place frequently in Dhaka in those days. He retired from ICS in 1947 and left for England the same year. Mr. Bell had visited Dhaka in 1976 and 1983.

## 48 Gopal Chandra Dey

He was the driver of the car belonging to Professor Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta who was killed by the Pakistan army on the night of 25 March 1971. Dr. Guhathakurta was then Provost of Jagannath Hall and Gopal was also serving as office peon of the Hall. He used to live at the residence of Dr. Guhathakurta. In this interview one gets an eye witness's account of the terrible happenings which took place around the Jagannath Hall area on 25 March and the subsequent days.

## 49 Gour Kishore Ghosh

Well-known writer and journalist of West Bengal (India). Born on 20 June 1923 at Jhenidah in former district of Jessore in Bangladesh. He Started his journalistic career in 1948 in Calcutta. He has been actively involved in the movement for the freedom of the press for which he had suffered imprisonment. He was awarded the Magsasay award for his outstanding contribution to journalism. He is a regular contributor to the famous Bengali weekly magazine *Desh* (Calcutta). In his famous novel *Prem Nei* (No love) he has depicted Hindu-Muslim relations with much objectivity and understanding.

In this interview he has narrated the story of his chequered career and varied experience.

## 50 Habibuddin Ahmed

Managing Director, *Daily Janapad* published from Dhaka. Was senior government official who served under the British India and Pakistan Governments. He has given his reminiscences of the social and cultural environment of his time and the political developments that he had witnessed. He has also given his impression of such political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Bose, Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Nurul Amin, Mohammad Ali of Bogra, Sabur Khan, Masiur Rahman (Jadu meo), Fazlul Quader Chowdhury and Ahmedul kabir. He has made interesting comments on Poet Qazi Nazrul Islam. In this interview Mr. Habibuddin Ahmed has also recollected his own experiences during the 1971 Liberation war.



## 51 Hallam Tennyson

Born in 1920 in an upper middle class enlightened English family. His great grandfather was the famous English poet Lord Alfred Tennyson. After finishing his education at Oxford Hallam Tennyson became actively involved in politics. He was a member of the Independent Labour Party of Britain during the Second World War. In 1945 he came to India on a social work project.

He has in this Interview given his personal reminiscences of Gandhi, Suhrawardy, Kripalani, Jayprakash Narayan, Jawaharlal Nehru, Poet Jasimuddin and Poet Rabindranath Tagore whom he had met much earlier before his death (1941). Mr. Tennyson has analyzed the political, economic and social factors which were responsible for communal antagonism and riots in Bengal during the pre-Partition period. He has expressed his dismay at the involvement of religion with politics and the growth of communalism. Mr. Tennyson had stayed in India till 1948. After that he had visited India, Pakistan and Bangladesh several times. He now lives in retirement in London. He is the author of several books on India.

## 52 Hena Das

Born on 12 February 1924 at Sylhet. A teacher by profession she was actively involved with the Communist movement. In this interview she has given a fascinating account of her underground life for long ten years (1948-1958). Mrs. Das was actively involved with the peasant movement in Sylhet known as Nankar movement, also had been an activist in women's liberation. She had been a leader of the women workers in the Manipur Tea gardens. She has also given her personal impression of some leading women political workers of Sylhet such as Mrs. Sarala Bala and begum Zobeda Khatun Chowdhury and others. In this interview she has given an interesting account of the social and cultural environment of Sylhet.

### **53 Jahanara Imam**

Born in 1921 in village Sunderpur in Murshidabad district in West Bengal (India). Her father Syed Abdul Ali was a Sub-Deputy Magistrate. In this interview Mrs. Imam has recollected some of the memorable events of her life : her student days in Rangpur and Calcutta before 1947 Partition, her marriage and family life, her son Rumi's involvement in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 and his martyrdom. She has also narrated her literary pursuits and commented on contemporary political developments. Mrs. Jahanara Imam is the author of *Ekatturer Deengooly* (Dhaka 1986) a remarkable book on reminiscences of 1971 which has been widely acclaimed as a moving saga of the Bangladesh Liberation War.

## 54 Jamaluddin Ahmed Chowdhury

Son of onetime famous nationalist Muslim and Congress leader of undivided Bengal Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chowdhury. He belonged to an old Zamindar family of Comilla. In this interview his only son Jamaluddin has narrated his illustrious father's chequered career and political ideas and activities.

## 55 Kabir Chowdhury

Born in 1923 at Brahmanbaria. His family home was in Noakhali. His father Abdul Halim Chowdhury belonged to Bengal Provincial Civil Service. Mr. Kabir had his early education at Perojpur and Dhaka. He obtained his B. A. Honours and M. A. degrees in English literature from Dhaka University (both first class). Subsequently he went to the USA and obtained a Master's degree in Public Administration. Mr. Chowdhury served as Professor of English and Principal in several Colleges and was appointed Secretary, Education Department. After resigning from this position he joined Dhaka University as Professor of English. Professor Kabir Chowdhury is a well known liberal intellectual and has won fame as a literary and drama critic and translator of Bengali poems into English.

In this interview Professor Chowdhury has narrated his reminiscences of his childhood and early life, educational environment during the British and Pakistani days, Hindu-Muslim relations, social and cultural life in Dhaka during the forties, communal and progressive political movements. He has also narrated his experience during the 1971 war and has commented on subsequent political developments.

## 56 Kamala Mukherjee

Born in 1913 at Mymensingh. Most of the members of her family were political activists and were involved in freedom movement against British rule. Early education in Mymensingh; later she moved to Calcutta where she became actively involved in anti-imperialist revolutionary politics. She was for quite sometime a member of the secret *Jugantar* party and was arrested and put under detention.

Ms. Kamala Mukherjee in this interview has narrated her reminiscences of the principal political events of her time, particularly the nature of the anti-British non-cooperation movement, the activities of the revolutionaries of Bengal and the condition of women in those days.

## 57 Khondokar Ashraf Hossain

Veteran lawyer of Rajshahi. Original home was in Murshidabad (India) . Had his education in Murshidabad, Burdwan and Calcutta. After 1947 Partition he migrated to Rajshahi and was involved in local politics. He also built up a lucrative practice. In this interview he has given his reminiscences of the principal events of his time, and his impression of some of the leading political figures he had seen. He has also recollected his experiences during 1971 Liberation War at Rajshahi.

## 58 Laila Arjumand Banu

Born in 1929 in a traditional family of old Dhaka city. Her ancestors came from Sonargaon onetime capital of Bengal during Afghan rule (15-16 centuries). Her father Syed Mohammad Taifoor was perhaps one of the last distinguished representative of the old Dhaka aristocracy. He became well-known particularly for his researches on the history of Dhaka.

Laila Arjumand's family was traditional and conservative. Nevertheless, as she has narrated in this interview, her father was a man of modern outlook, It was chiefly due to his efforts and encouragement that Laila and her sisters were able to receive modern education. Her schooling started with traditional religious education at home. Later she studied at the Eden Girls' College and subsequently at the Dhaka University from where she obtained her B. A. degree. She took admission into M. A. Course in Philosophy but for various reasons she could not appear at the M. A. examination. In this interview she has recorded her reminiscences of some of the famous teachers of the Dhaka University who had greatly impressed her. Among these teachers she particularly remembered Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Dr. Charupama Bose; Prof. Mohitlal Majumdar, Dr. Biswaranjan Bhaduri and Dr. R. C. Majumdar.

Laila Arjumand Banu had received her training in music since her childhood. In fact, she pursued her music lessons along with her academic studies and eventually established herself as a noted music artist of the country. This was largely possible because of her father's encouragement and support. Although her family did not observe *purdah*, she and other members of the family strictly observed social



decorum so that no one could find fault with them. Laila started her music lessons from Pandit Ramanimohan Bhattacharya. Later for about twenty-two years she received training from the famous maestro Ustad Gul Mohammad Khan: Laila was the first Muslim female artist of Dhaka Radio. She informs us that she had inherited her love for music from her forefathers. Her grandfather was a noted *tappa* singer. In the olden days Dhaka was well-known centre of music and it was mainly patronised by some local Hindu Zamindars who were men of culture. Laila informs us that under the patronage of Ruplai House at Farashganj many leading musicians and singers of the Subcontinent used to visit Dhaka during the Durga Puja festival and give their performances. There was also an influx of professional dancers. Laila remembers to have witnessed in her childhood some of the beautiful dance performances presented by these artists. She also tells us that despite growing communal antagonism in politics social relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Dhaka was on the whole cordial, though rigid caste system was prevalent in Hindu society. Her family had many good Hindu friends. After 1941 there had been many communal riots in Dhaka but after 1946 their number had decreased. Again, In 1950, 1962 and 1964 there had been recurrence of communal riots, but after that there has been no communal disturbance. This according to Laila testifies to the peaceful nature of the Dhaka people.

Laila informs us that in most of the old aristocratic families of Dhaka Urdu was spoken. These families were known as *khoshbash*. The lower classes of Muslims of Dhaka were known as *kutti*. They spoke a peculiar kind of mixed language. In this interview Laila Arjumand Banu has described from her personal memory the social customs,

marriage rituals, dress and manners as well as food and amusements of the old Dhaka aristocracy of the bygone days which are now extinct.

Since 1948 Laila Arjumand Banu has visited a number of countries as a member of cultural delegation. Her musical performances were greatly appreciated abroad. In her personal life Laila Arjumand Banu is married to Mr. Shamsul Huda Chowdhury, former Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament.

## 59. Mahmuda Khatun

Mother of National Professor Muhammad Shams-ul Huq. She was born in a village in Gomilla district and belonged to a traditional family related to Nawab Faizunnesa. In this interview she has narrated how she had managed to educate herself with the encouragement of her maternal uncle while living in strict seclusion (*Purdah*). Though she had lost her husband at an early age she had been able to give her children sound education and training. In this interview she has given a picture of Muslim society of her time. This interview was taken when she was nearly 100 year old.

**Journalist. Author of *Mooldhara Ekattur*, an analytical study of politics, diplomacy and intrigue during Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. Mr. Hasan was closely associated with Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister of Bangladesh Government in exile during 1971.**

**In this interview Mr. Hasan has analyzed the situation prevailing before 1971, the events during 1971, the background and nature of Indian Government's involvement, the internal differences within the Awami League Leadership, the US policy towards Bangladesh movement and the working of the Mujibnagar Government. He has also commented on the post-independence scenario particularly relating to political and economic developments.**

## 61. M. A. Khan

Well-known dentist of Dhaka. Born in December 1922 in a traditional family of old Dhaka. His father Khan Sahib Dr. Moizuddin Khan was Superintendent of Dhaka Mitford Hospital and was a respected leader of the Muslim community of this region. Mr. Khan had his early education in St. Francis School, Dhaka and Dhaka Collegiate School from where he passed the Matriculation examination in 1940. He then went to Calcutta and took his B.A. Degree from St. Xaviers College Calcutta. After graduation he got himself admitted into Calcutta Dental College and obtained his degree in Dentistry. Subsequently he went to Britain and took training and diploma in Dental Surgery from the University of St Andrews. On return to Dhaka he started his practice and soon established himself as a leading dentist.

In this interview Dr. Khan has given his reminiscences of the social changes that he has witnessed in his time particularly in Dhaka and the political events that led to 1971 Liberation war and also his own experience during those traumatic days. He has also given his personal impression of some political leaders like A. K. Fazlul Huq, Abul Hashim and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

## 62 Mansur Habibullah

A prominent leader of the Communist Party (Marxist) and former Law Minister of West Bengal Government (India). This interview was taken when he had come to Dhaka on a private visit. Belonging to a traditional Muslim family of Burdwan (West Bengal) Mr. Habibullah had joined the Communist movement in his early youth and had worked in several districts of West and East Bengal during the British and Pakistani period. In this interview he has narrated the nature of the peasant movements in north Bengal in early fifties.

### 63 Manzur Morshed Talukdar

Born in Tangail, Mymensingh. After obtaining his MBBS degree from Dhaka Medical College he migrated to the United Kingdom and is now settled in London and working as a General Physician. Dr. Talukdar is also involved in journalism and is the editor of a Bengali weekly *Jagan* and also an English weekly *The Asian Herald* published from London.

In this interview Dr. Talukdar has described the problems of the Asian immigrants in U.K., particularly the Bengali community and claimed that through his journals he had been projecting their plight. He has also commented on the role of the Bengali residents in U. K. during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war. He has also given his impression of Maulana Bhashani, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other political leaders.

## 64 Mirza Nurul Huda

Born in 1918 in village Jangalia in Tangail district in an educated middle class family. His father was a school teacher. He had been allthrough a talented scholar. Obtained B. A. Honours and M. A. degrees (both First Class) in Economics from Dhaka University winning the prestigious Kalinarayan scholarship. In 1942 he joined Rajshahi Government College as a Lecturer in Economics. He then took the Bengal Civil Service Examination and having qualified was appointed Deputy Magistrate. Shortly after he was selected for a state scholarship and left for the USA for higher studies. After obtaining Ph. D. degree in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University he returned home and after continuing for sometime in Government service he resigned and joined the Dhaka University as Reader in Economics. He served as a Proctor for sometime and was appointed Provost of Fazlul Huq Hall. Later he went to Britain to do post-doctoral work at the London school of Economics.

In 1957 Dr. Huda was appointed a member of the Provincial Planning Board. Around this time he and some of his junior colleagues in the Economics Department of Dhaka University had formulated the theory that for the peculiar state of Pakistan whose two regions were separated by more than thousand miles of Indian territory there should be two separate economic systems to ensure harmonious development of the two regions. This aroused vehement opposition in Pakistani ruling circle which was dominated by non-Bengalis from West Pakistan. In fact, since 1948 relations between the two regions of Pakistan had begun to deteriorate especially due to controversy over the state language issue. In 1958 the army led by General Ayub Khan had seized power and Martial Law was imposed throughout



the country. Although a government with some prominent civilians from both regions of Pakistan was installed, real power lay in the hands of the army and the bureaucracy. In 1962 Dr. Huda was appointed a member of the Pakistan Planning Commission. In 1965 he joined the East Pakistan Cabinet as a Finance Minister and held this position for quite a number of years. In March 1969 in the wake of mass uprising against military rule Dr. Huda was appointed Governor of East Pakistan. He was entrusted with the task of holding provincial election, but within two days of his taking oath as Governor another military coup occurred which resulted in the fall of the Ayub regime. General Yahya Khan became the new military dictator. Dr. Huda then returned to his old position as Professor of Economics at the Dhaka University.

In this interview Dr. Huda has narrated in detail the main events of his life and career and has commented on the basis of his personal observation the role of military generals, bureaucrats and political leaders in the politics of Pakistan. During the army crackdown of 26 March 1971 Professor Huda and members of his family were subjected to humiliating treatment by the Pakistani soldiers.

In this interview, he has also recounted the post-1971 developments in Bangladesh which he has witnessed. He has commented on the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975 and subsequent events. Between November 1975 and March 1982 Dr. Huda served as adviser to President Sayem and Minister in President Ziaur Rahman's Cabinet. When Justice Sattar was elected President after the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman, Dr. Huda was appointed Vice-President. After the overthrow of President Ziaur Rahman, Dr. Huda was appointed Vice-President. After the overthrow of President Sattar's government by General Ershad in March 1982 Dr. Huda went into retirement.

## 65. Monindra Krishna Das

Born in 1922 at Chittagong. Was a disciple of the famous revolutionary leader Surya Sen (*Master Da*) who led the anti-British Chittagong Armoury Raid in 1930. In this interview Mr. Das has recalled the main events relating to the anti-imperialist terrorist and revolutionary movement in Chittagong during the late twenties and early thirties of the present century. He has especially mentioned the activities of the two revolutionary secret societies the *Anushilan* and the *Jugantar* in the Chittagong region and the role of their principal leaders. He has given valuable information relating to the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930. He has also narrated the activities of some socio-cultural institutions of Chittagong like the Arya Sangeet Samiti and the Prabartak Sangha, and has also recollected the visits to Chittagong of such great persons like Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Mahatma Gandhi. A great deal of information relating to social and political life of Chittagong can be obtained from this interview.

## 66 Monorama Basu

Born at Barisal. Well-known social worker and revolutionary leader. Popularly known as *Mashima* (aunté) she was actively involved in the anti-British freedom movement and also movement for women's emancipation. Had dedicated her whole life to the cause of the underprivileged sections of the people.

In this interview given at the age of 90 Monorama Basu has recalled the glorious struggle of the womenfolk for removal of all kinds of disabilities and has called upon all sections of people to wage a united movement for the establishment of a just and equitable social order.

## 67. M. R. Siddiqui

Born in 1926 at Chittagong. Son-in-law of well-known industrialist Mr. A. K. Khan. In 1965 he became involved in politics and joined the Awami League. In this interview Mr. Siddiqui has narrated the story of his life particularly his involvement in 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war. He served as Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States. Mr. Siddiqui has described the political development of Bangladesh since independence and has given his personal impression of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Khondokar Mushtaque Ahmed, Tajuddin Ahmed, Ziaur Rahman and Fazlul Qader Chowdhury.

## 68 Muhammad Mansooruddin

Famous folklore specialist and educationist. Served for many years as Professor of Bengali in Government Colleges. His collection of folk songs published under the title *Haramoni* in several volumes won the acclaim of Rabindranath Tagore. In this interview Professor Mansooruddin has depicted the social picture of his time.

## 69 Muhammad Nasiruddin

In this interview Muhammad Nasiruddin the centenarian journalist has recounted the story of his long and remarkable career, his varied experience during different phases of his life, his close association with poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, A. K. Fazlul Huq and many other leading personalities. He has narrated in detail the problems he had to face in bringing out the illustrated Bengali journal *Saogat* in 1918, the opposition that he to encounter from the orthodox section of the community, the encouragement and cooperation he had received from some eminent people like the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, Barrister Abdul Rasul and others, the support and patronage he himself was able to give to young poets and writers who later became famous. He has always stood for liberal thought and social progress particularly emancipation of women. In fact, Mr. Nasiruddin's life represents a living document of the Bengali Muslim literary renaissance of the present century. In this interview he told the fascinating story of his life in his inimitable language.

## 70 Muhammad Shams-ul Huq

National Professor Muhammad Shams-ul Huq was born in 1911 in Comilla district. A widely respected academic personality Professor Huq has held important educational, administrative and political positions such as college Principal, Director of Public Instruction, University Vice-Chancellor (of Rajshahi and Dhaka), The last important position he held was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh Government. He is the Founder-President of the Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD) and has also served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bangladesh National Museum and Chairman of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies. He is the author of a number of books on Education published at home and abroad including one on Primary Education published by UNESCO. For his service to the cause of education he was made a National Professor by the Government and is now associated with Dhaka University.

In this interview Professor Shams-ul Huq has narrated the social and political changes that he has witnessed during his lifetime and has given his assessment of such leaders as A. K. Fazlul Huq, Syed Nausher Ali, H. S. Suhrawardy, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and General Ziaur Rahman. He has also Commented on the unreasonable and unsympathetic attitude of the non-Bengali ruling circle of erstwhile Pakistan towards the hopes and aspirations of the Bengalis which eventually led to the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. Finally, he has recorded his experience while serving as Foreign Minister of Bangladesh between 1977 and 1982 during which time the plan to establish the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was conceived. Professor Huq also gives his reminiscences of Indian Prime Ministers Mr. Morarji Desai and Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

## 71 Muhammad Talebar Ali

Born in 1922 in Shantipur in Nadia district of West Bengal. A senior drama artist who has contributed much to the development of dramatic art in Bangladesh. At his initiative a dramatic club was established at Rajshahi. In this interview Mr. Ali has narrated the story of the theatre movement in the country and has explained how theatre could be used as medium for promoting social progress. He has also given his reminiscences of some of the well-known drama personalities of his time.



## 72 Muhammad Tofazzal Hossain

Born in 1914 in village Dania in Berhampur district, West Bengal. Was drawn to dramatic Performance in his early youth while a student in Berhampur College. After 1947 Partition he migrated to Rajshahi and established himself as a popular stage artist and drama producer. In this interview he has described the social environment in which he had embarked on his stage career and the opposition he had to face from orthodox section of society.

### 73. Mukhlesur Rahman

Born in 1921 in a wealthy landlord family in a village in Rangpur district. Since his early youth he had shown interest in social and cultural activities and welfare of the peasantry. He had witnessed the peasant uprising known as Tebhaga movement in North Bengal. He has narrated how he and his younger brother Masihur Rahman (Jadu Mea) became acquainted with Maulana Bhashani and came under his influence. He has also recollected other important events such as the movement of the students against Ayub's military regime and other democratic movements. He has also given his personal assessment of Maulana Bhashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He has also furnished some interesting information on poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, the formation of coalition ministry of A. K. Fazlul Huq in 1941-43, the political developments after the creation of Pakistan, the nature of exploitation of the then East Pakistan by West Pakistani business interest in collaboration of Pakistan Central Government dominated by non-Bengalis.

In this interview Mr. Rahman has given his recollections of 1952 language movement and has assessed the role of Premier Nurul Amin. He has also commented on Maulana Bhashani's politics, his visit to Europe, his political dialogue with General Iskander Mirza. He has also given his views on the formation of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) by General Ziaur Rahman, his brother Jadu Mea's relation with Ziaur Rahman and the mystery surrounding the death of Jadu Mea.

Mr. Rahman has also recollected his meeting with H. S. Suhrawardy in the forties, the victory of the Muslim League in 1946 elections, Shah Azizur Rahman's political activities, Jadu Mea's relationship with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Has also given his impression of Fazlur Rahman and Fatima Jinnah.

## Mukul Sen

Born in 1908 in village Goita in Barisal district. Had his education in different schools in Barisal and graduated from Brajomohan College, Barisal. Took part in social reform and literary movement sponsored by the Brahma community of Barisal. In his early youth he was inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and resolved to dedicate his life to the cause of suffering humanity. He was also inspired by patriotic feeling and after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 he joined the secret revolutionary society known as *Jugantar*.

In this interview Mr. Mukul Sen has narrated the principal events of his life and has commented on the political and social changes that had taken place during his time. He has also given his recollections of such personalities as Soumendranath Tagore, Mukunda Das, Sarojini Naidu, Subhas Chandra Bose and has also commented on the *Swadeshi* and Communist movements, Direct Action Day (1946) and the Language movement of 1952. He has also given his reminiscences of his prison days in Alipore central jail and in the Andaman Islands.

## 75 Nirad C. Chowdhury

Famous Bengali writer who has won international fame for his English writings. Now settled at Oxford. His ancestral home was in Kishoreganj in former Mymensingh district. In this interview taken at his Oxford house Mr. Chowdhury has given a fascinating analysis of the many facets of Bengali life and culture, Hindu Muslim relations, decay of old values. According to him the short-sighted and negative attitude of the Bengali Hindus with regard to the aspirations and feelings of the Bengali Muslims led to the Partition of 1947. He has commented on the failure of the United Sovereign Bengal Scheme formulated by Sarat Bose and Suhrawardy. He has also made interesting observations on Bengali music and music personalities.

## **76 Pamela Mountbatten**

**This interview was taken in London in 1987 at the residence of Lady Pamela, youngest daughter of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy of India. Lady Pamela came to India with her parent in early 1947. In this interview she has narrated her experience in India and has given her impression of some of the leading personalities of the time such as Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah.**

Born in Chittagong in 1918 in a Buddhist family. Educated in Chittagong, Calcutta and London. Was Professor of Pali language in Chittagong Government College, Later became Principal of the same College. In this interview Professor Barua has narrated his traumatic experience during the 1971 Liberation war. He has also given his recollections of life and society in Chittagong during his time. Professor Barua is a leader of the Chittagong Buddhist community.

Teacher, literary personage. Born in 1907 at village Mahiganj in Rangpur. Has been for many years associated with Rangpur Sahitya Parisad. In this interview he has narrated the various activities of the Rangpur Sahitya parisad and its contribution to cultural development in north Bengal. He has also given his reminiscences of the anti-British revolutionary movement in Rangpur with which he was associated and also the peasant uprising of the forties known as the Tebhaga Movement. He has also commented on the social changes that have taken place during the last sixty years.

Born in 1912 in a lower middle class family in Patiya, Chittagong. After passing his matriculation in 1931 he was arrested for political activities and spent many years in jail from where he appeared at the I.A., B.A., and M.A. examinations. He had started his political career as an anti-imperialist revolutionary; later he joined the Awami League and became a prominent leader of that party. He served as a Professor of Bengali in a college for several years.

In this interview Mr. Dey has narrated the story of his involvement in the political movements of his time, his experience in jail, Hindu-Muslim relations, the language movement of 1952, the elections of 1954, the uprising of 1969 and the Liberation war of 1971 in which he had actively participated. He has also given his personal impression of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, General M.A.G. Osmany, Major Jalil and Kader Siddiqui.



Famous artist of Bangladesh. In this interview he has narrated the story of his chequered life particularly his reminiscences of the principal events since 1940s such as the trends in the art movement since 1947, the language movement of 1952 and the awakening of a new Bengali national consciousness. He has also described his experiences during the Liberation war of 1971 and his own involvement in it. He has also given his personal impression of some of his contemporaries.

Was an active worker of the All-India Muslim Students League during the pre-1947 Partition of India. After 1947 he migrated to Pakistan and was for sometime involved in politics. He was personally acquainted with some important political leaders like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and has in this interview narrated his recollections of these leaders and also the principal events of his time.

## 82. Rashiduzzaman:

Elder brother of Asaduzzaman, the student leader who was killed during the great uprising of 1969 against the military regime of General Ayub Khan. In this interview Mr. Rashiduzzaman who is an engineer by profession has narrated the circumstances which led to the death of Asad and has commented on the political situation which prevailed at that time.

### **83 Renukana Barua**

**Born in 1936 in a Buddhist family in Chittagong. Obtained MBBS degree from Dhaka Medical College and has been serving as a Medical Officer in Bangladesh Railway in Chittagong. She is also a leader of the Buddhist community of Chittagong. In this interview Dr. Barua has narrated her horrifying experience in 1971 when her husband Mr. Supati Ranjan Barua who was a senior railway official was taken away by Pakistani soldiers and brutally killed. She then left Chittagong and joined the Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters) in the frontier region of Chittagong and rendered medical assistance to injured freedom fighters.**

## **84 Safar Ali.**

Born in Bengali year 1302 in village Kocherchar in Narsinghdi district in a peasant family. He entered police service in 1920. In this interview he has narrated the social and educational progress that he had witnessed during his lifetime. He has also commented on the anti-British political movement, particularly the activities of the revolutionary terrorists in the Dhaka region. He has also recalled his own role in halting communal riots in Dhaka.

Born in Sarishabari village in former Mymensingh district. During British days he was involved in revolutionary political activities and suffered imprisonment many times. After release from jail in 1938 he joined the Indian National Congress. He had appeared successfully at the I. A., B. A. and M. A. Examinations from inside the jail. He had served as Professor of History at a College in Calcutta for Several years. He is now actively involved in promoting communal harmony in India.

In this interview Professor Roy has given his reminiscences of the Noncooperation Movement of 1930, Hindu-Muslim riots, particularly the Great Calcutta Killing of 1946, the Partition of India in 1947, the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 and the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. He has also commented on the rise of religious fundamentalism and the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Mosque dispute in India. He is the author of a number of books which include a well-researched work on the contribution of Indian Muslims to India's Freedom movement. He is the Secretary of Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Society based in Calcutta.

Born in 1917 at Rajshahi. Political worker, journalist and cultural personality. Joined the Communist Party in 1935. In this interview he has given a variety of information particularly relating to Gandhi and the 1942 Quit India movement, Peasant uprising in North Bengal, social reform movement and cultural activities at Rajshahi. He has also given his reminiscences of the famous musician of the Subcontinent Ustad Alauddin Khan.

## 87 Sayedur Rahman

Born in 1909 in village Nabinagar in former Comilla district. He was brought up in a family which was somewhat liberal and comparatively free from religious bigotry. His father had got him admitted into an English school instead of sending him to a *Madrasah*. During the Khilafat movement he had come in contact with some Khilafatist religious leaders and under their influence he was drawn to religion and had started observing religious rites with great zeal. But while studying Philosophy at the Dhaka University he became acquainted with European rationalist thought and was greatly impressed by the critical writings of European scholars on Islamic Philosophy. This made him sceptic about traditional religious faith. In course of time he became a free-thinker and a rationalist losing faith in all conventional religions. After obtaining a first class M.A. degree in Philosophy from the Dhaka University Mr. Sayedur Rahman became a lecturer in Philosophy in a government College. Later he became a Professor of Philosophy and subsequently served as Principal of Jagannath College for many years. After retirement from Government service he worked for some years as a Supernumerary Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Dhaka University.

In this interview Professor Sayedur Rahman has narrated the story of his life and has expressed his radical views on religion and society. His philosophy was based on rationalism and humanism. Although such views were not popular and seemed somewhat heretical in a predominant Muslim society, Professor Rahman could get along pretty well primarily due to his remarkable sense of humour. In fact, his profound knowledge and wisdom, his remarkable understanding of human nature and his fascinating mode of conversation made him one of the most attractive personalities of his time.



## **88 Sirajur Rahman**

Director, Bengali Programme, BBC London. His ancestral home was in Noakhali. His father was a teacher in Calcutta Madrasah where Mr. Rahman had his early education. Before joining BBC he was a working journalist in Dhaka. In this interview Mr. Sirajur Rahman has claimed that the news of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and other countries were covered by BBC objectively and without any bias. His personal interviews with the top-ranking political leaders of South Asian countries contain important source materials for contemporary history. As a special correspondent of the BBC Mr. Sirajur Rahman had interviewed such personalities like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Maulana Bhashani, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and many others. According to him the BBC gave very good coverage of 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war.

Eminent educationist. Born in 1909 in village Bhanga, Kuthibari in former Faridpur district. In this interview Mr. Ali has narrated the changes that he has witnessed in society and politics of Bangladesh. He has given his reminiscences of his experiences as a teacher and also of the political movements of the twenties, particularly, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements. Besides, he has given his personal impression of some of his contemporaries such as Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Begum Fazilatunnesa Zoha.

Born in 1911 in an aristocratic and traditional Muslim family of Barisal. Although her family language was Urdu, she learned Bengali at an early age with her own efforts somewhat secretly and developed an inclination toward writing poetry. Disregarding the restrictions of her conservative family she discarded the *purdah* and started to pursue a literary career. Her poems were published in various literary journals and she was soon recognized as a poetess of considerable talent.

In this interview Begum Sufia Kamal acknowledges her indebtedness to Muhammad Nasiruddin who had helped her in many ways in building up her literary career. She also gives a fascinating account of her meetings with the great poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. In this interview Begum Sufia Kamal describes the miserable plight of the Bengali Muslim women in her time and tells how she was involved in the movement for the emancipation of women.

## **91 Suniti Bijoy Hazari**

**Practicing Advocate at Chittagong. His ancestors came from Gorakhpur, India in early nineteenth century. Mr. Hazari is a leading citizen of Chittagong. He had been at one time associated with revolutionary terrorist movement of Surya Sen but later became a follower of M.N. Roy's radical humanism. In this interview Mr. Hazari has given his reminiscences of the principal events of his life.**

National Professor, noted poet, essayist and literary critic. Formerly Head of the Department of Bengali at Karachi University, Director of Bangla Academy, Professor of Bengali at Chittagong University, Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar and Rajshahi Universities, Adviser in charge of Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh, Chairman, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh. Mr. Ahsan was born in 1922 in a traditional Muslim family. He mentions that among his ancestors was the sufi saint of Mirpur, Hazrat Shah Ali Baghdadi. His father and grandfather were also greatly influenced by sufi spiritual thought. Although they observed the religious rites strictly, they were not religious fanatics and were tolerant towards those who adhered to other faiths. Their spiritual outlook according to Mr. Ahsan was liberal and humanist. It was perhaps for this reason that they had many Hindu friends. According to Mr. Ali Ahsan his own mental world was largely shaped by this inheritance.

In this interview Mr. Ahsan has recalled the events of his early life spent in his village home. His school education began in Dhaka city. He passed his Matriculation examination in 1937 from Armanitola High School and Intermediate from Dhaka College. He took his B.A. Honours and M.A. degrees in English literature from the Dhaka University. Mr. Ali Ahsan has described in detail the trends in the social and cultural movements in Dhaka which he had witnessed in his early youth. In those days, according to him conflict was brewing between the extreme conservative and the radical sections of the Muslim community. In between them stood those who held somewhat moderate views. Mr. Ali Ahsan has thrown light

on the nature of opposition which was faced by Kazi Abdul Wadud and his radical associates belonging to the *Shikha* group from the conservative elements of Dhaka whose leader was the Nawab of Dhaka. Mr. Ahsan has candidly narrated how this conflict had an impact on him and influenced his own ideas. On the one hand, he was drawn to the spiritualism of the sufi thought which he seemed to have derived from family inheritance; on the otherhand, he felt inclined towards modern secular humanist philosophy which he had imbibed from his study of modern literature and also due to the influence of some of his humanist friends like Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta (later Professor of English at Dhaka University killed by Pakistan army in March 1971). Mr. Ahsan has also given much information on the social and cultural life of Dhaka particularly Hindu-Muslim riots which occurred in the forties.

### 93 Syed Didarul Huq

Dr. Didarul Huq, a medical practitioner of Chittagong is the grandson of the head of a Muslim religious sect, the *peer* of *Maisbhandar*. In this interview Dr. Huq has described the history of Maisbhandar sect and the legend associated with its spiritual leader. We are also informed of the missionary and social welfare activities and also the ways and rituals of this devotional sect which claims to belong to the *sufi* order.

## 94 Syed Mannan Baksh

Retired senior Police official. After obtaining his M.A. degree in History from Calcutta University he served for some time as a Lecturer in History at the Islamia College, Calcutta. After competing in the Bengal Civil Service Examination he was appointed as a Deputy Magistrate. After the creation of Pakistan Mr. Mannan Baksh having qualified in the Pakistan Superior Service Examination joined the Pakistan Police Service. He was posted as Deputy Inspector General of Police, Dhaka range, during 1970-1972.

In this interview he has narrated his experiences during the elections of 1970 and the subsequent momentous events leading to Pakistani military crack-down and genocide of 1971. Mr. Mannan Baksh has also given his personal impression of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, General Yahya Khan, General Tikka Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and provincial Governor Dr. Malek.



## 95 Syed Mansur Jilany

In this interview Syed Mansur Jilany has narrated the eventful story of the life and activities of his illustrious father Syed Nawsher Ali who was a leading figure in Bengal politics during 1937-47. Mr. Jilany has described the political thought and career of his father and has explained how he was successively involved with the *Krisak Proja Party*, the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India. Mr. Jilany informs us that his father was a member of the Fazlul Huq Ministry in 1937 but later owing to disagreement with Huq he had to leave the Cabinet. Subsequently he was elected Speaker of the Bengal Legislative Assembly. Nawsher Ali had been a foremost leader of the *Krisak Proja Party* and had built up a strong peasant movement in Jessore, Narail and Magura. He believed in secular nationalism and was opposed to the Pakistan movement. He also differed with the Congress leadership for agreeing to the Partition of India. In 1940s he had joined the Indian National Army of Subhas Bose. During this time he also came in contact with the Communist Party of India and with its support was elected a member of the Indian Rajya Sabha. Syed Nawsher Ali died in Dhaka in 1971.

## 96 Tajul Hossain

Born in 1920 in a village near Comilla. Had his medical education in Calcutta and Dhaka from where he took his MBBS degree. After serving for several years in the then East Pakistan Medical Service he went to the United States and took his M. S. (Master of Surgery) degree from New York. Later he moved to Britain and worked in several hospitals in London and Sheffield. He also obtained his FRCS from Edinburgh. During his student days in Calcutta he had been involved in politics and became a follower of the well-known revolutionary leader M. N. Roy and embraced his philosophy of radical humanism. He, however, for several years worked with the progressive section of the Muslim League with the hope of winning over the forward-looking elements among the Bengali Muslim youth to his line of thought and succeeded in gaining some recruits.

In this interview Dr. T. Hossain has narrated the principal events of his chequered career and has described how he became involved in the Liberation War of 1971. After independence of Bangladesh Dr. Hossain held the post of Secretary, Ministry of Health. He has made some incisive comments on the role of the Awami League leaders during and after the war of 1971.

## 97 TapanKumar RayChaudhuri

One of the leading historians of India. Reader in South Asian History at St. Antony's College, Oxford. His ancestral home was in Barisal in Bangladesh.

In this interview Dr. RayChaudhuri has recollected the sweet memories of his childhood days spent in his village home in Jhalkathi, Barisal. He had witnessed the decadance of the old landed aristocracy. His grand-father, father and he himself were actively involved in the anti-British freedom movement and had suffered imprisonment. He received his education at the Calcutta Scottish Church College, Presidency College, and Calcutta and Oxford Universities.

In this interview taken at oxford Dr. RayChaudhuri has given his personal reminiscences of Hindu-Muslim relations and has analyzed the causes of inter-communal tension and conflict which led to the 1947 Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. He has also recollected his family's close association with the great Bengali leader A. K. Fazlul Huq, and has also narrated his happy relationship with some Hindu and Muslim teachers and literary figures. Dr. RayChoudhuri has also commented on the contributions of Jadu Nath Sarkar, A. B. M. Habibullah, Muhibbul Hasan and Irfan Habib to Indian historiography. Dr. Tapan Kumar RayChoudhuri is the author of several books which include *Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir : An Introductory Study in Social History; Europe Reconsidered*. He is also the joint editor of *The Cambridge Economic History of India*.

## 98 Umratul Fazal

Born in 1921 in Hat Hazari, Chittagong. She is a well-known literary figure and social worker of Chittagong. Married to the famous educationist and literary personage Abul Fazal. In this interview she has narrated in her inimitable language the literary and cultural environment of her own family and also that of her illustrious husband. She fondly tells how under the influence of her dear husband she herself was transformed into a literary figure. She also gives a fascinating account of her childhood and the romantic surrounding in which she was brought up. She has also narrated her experience during the Second World war and the social and cultural development that has taken place since then and has commented on the position of women in the Chittagong region.

She has also given an account of her activities in protecting women from social oppression. She has also given her reminiscences of the 1971 Liberation war and the subsequent events.

Born in Sydney, Australia. His grandfather was Archbishop of Sydney. His father was a Minister of the Church of England. After having his early education in Australia he came to England. Went to Trinity College, Cambridge, from where he graduated with Law and Mathematics. Entered Indian Civil Service in 1933 at the age of twenty-two. Was allocated to Bengal and his first posting was at Rajshahi as assistant Magistrate. Bengal was then in the grip of anti-British terrorist movement. Mr. Smith vividly remembers a tragic scene that he had to witness – the execution of two revolutionary young men who were sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out inside Rajshahi jail after midnight and Mr. Smith and another fellow English civilian Mr. Kitchin were officially asked to witness it. The terrorists bravely went to the gallows shouting *Bande Mataram*, the battle cry of the Bengali nationalists of those days. Mr. Smith was able to learn good Bengali and could speak it with ease. He recalls the experience of living in a mofassil town like Rajshahi. He got along pretty well with his fellow officers both English and Indian. Social life in Rajshahi centred round Boalia Club. One of its prominent non-European members was the Raja of Dighapatiya. Mr. Smith remembers the very useful training he had acquired in settlement work in the rural areas living in tents. His subsequent postings were in several sub-divisions of Eastern Bengal. He particularly recalls the couple of years he spent at Madaripur as Sub-divisional officer. His great friend at Madaripur was the local Sub-divisional Police Officer Mr. A. K. M. Hafizuddin a member of the Indian Police service. Mr. Smith has written a book on his Madaripur experience which he has dedicated to Mr. Hafizuddin. According to Mr. Smith life was peaceful at

Madaripur, Hindu-Muslim relations were not bad. He remembers some of the prominent local people like Badsha Mia, a Zamindar of Duttapara.

Mr. Smith was subsequently posted in Calcutta as Deputy Secretary in the Home and Political Department. During his time in service the important events were the elections of 1937 and the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy, the outbreak of the Second World War, the Muslim League demand for Pakistan, the August Movement of the Indian National Congress, The Bengal Famine of 1943, the Great Calcutta Killing of 1946 and the British withdrawal from India and Partition of 1947. Mr. Smith has vivid memory of these historic events. He has made interesting and incisive comments on some of the leading political figures on the time like, A. K. Fazlul Huq, Khwaja Nazimuddin, H.S. Suhrawardy and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar-men who mattered in Bengal politics of those days. He has also commented on Gandhi and Jinnah. He thinks that Congress had made a great blunder in withdrawing from office on the war issue. Mr. Smith strongly holds the view that the British did not deliberately follow the policy of 'divide and rule' and that they could not be held responsible for the division of India. On the contrary he maintains that it was the greatest achievement of the British that they were able to bring about the political unity of India. This they were anxious to preserve till the last moment. After the British had decided to withdraw, Mr. Samaurez Smith went on early retirement from ICS and returned to England to join the Church of England Service. This interview was taken at his Church House office at Westminster Abbey, London, on 29 September 1987.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For an interesting account of his experience as a young English Civil servant posted in Madaripur, Bangladesh, see W. H. Samaurez Smith, *A Young Man's Country: Letters of a Sub-divisional officer of the Indian Civil Service 1936-1937* London, Michael Russel, 1977.

## **100 Zobeda Khatun Chowdhury**

**Born in 1901 in Sylhet. Was educated in Dhaka. She was perhaps the first Bengali Muslim woman political worker who became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and an active member of the Indian National Congress. Later she joined the Muslim League. In this interview she has narrated the varied experience of her life as a political activist and as a social worker and has depicted the miserable plight of the women in her time.**



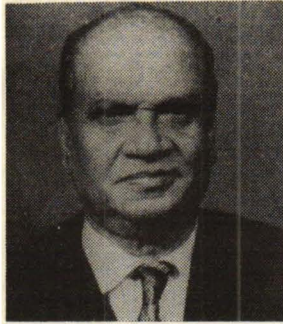




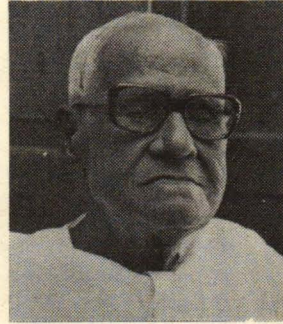
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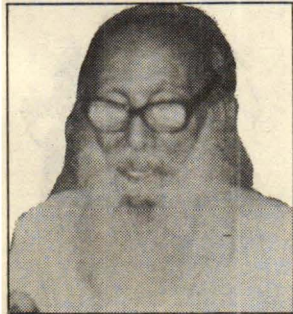
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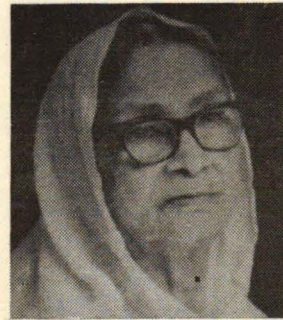
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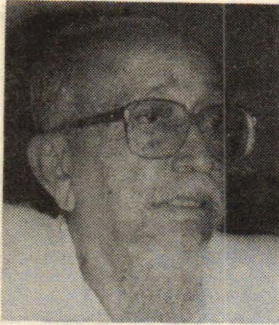
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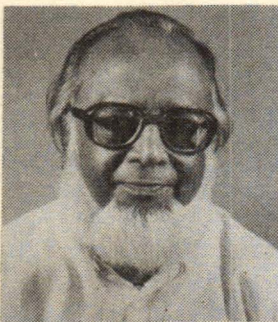
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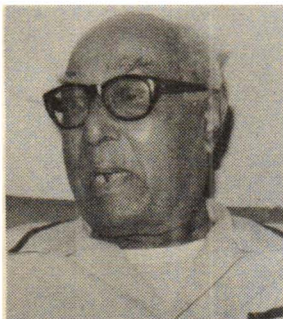


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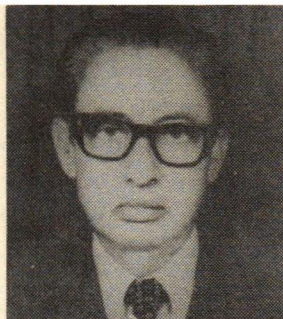


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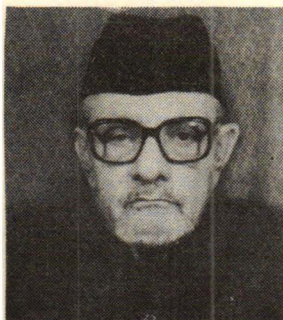




Ataur Rahman Khan



Abu Jafar Shamsuddin



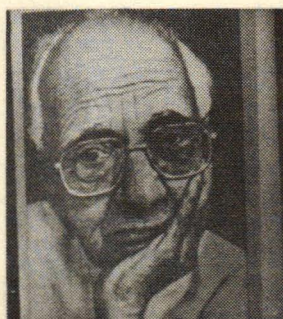
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Abdul Ahad



A.K. Khan



Nirad C. Chowdhury



Jahanara Imam



Basanti Guhathakurta



Laila Arjumand Banu



Pamela Mountbatten



W. H. Samaurez Smith



Akhtaruzzaman

