

RISING STARS

Interview with Abdullah Al-Muti Sharafuddin

A Celebrated Scientist Speaks of his Days and Deeds

ABDULLAH Al-Muti Sharafuddin, an eminent scientist at home and abroad and an exceedingly popular children's fiction writer — needs hardly an introduction. He was interviewed for the Rising Stars by Trishna.

RS: When you were of the Rising Star age, what made you attracted to science? Did living nature appeal to your sense of wonderment first or the working of the domestic gadgets, starting from clocks to telephones to the radio?

AMS: In my young days, over half a century back, we had little of the domestic gadgets. The telephone was practically nonexistent and very few people had radio (we had none). My father used to teach in various government colleges, and with him we moved from place to place; but every year we spent much time in our village home. During the war years we spent a whole year in the village. Thus, we had a great opportunity to live close to nature. I used to walk through the woods, shared in tilling the land, and took a great fancy for birds and plants and animals. The war and famine and the contrast of life between the cities and the village taught us a good deal about the world around us. We had very little formal science in school but most of the science I learned in those days was from nature.

RS: Who among the great scientists has influenced you most — and ... what do you cherish in his or her attainments as a human being? — Would you please elaborate by way of giving a message to the young readers of the Rising Star?

AMS: I cannot say that I have a single scientist as my idol. There are several whom I greatly admire, such as Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Marie Curie and Einstein — often for different reasons. However, if I have to choose a single person, I would choose Einstein. He im-



presses me, first, by the brilliance of his mind. Every body knows that he originated the famous equation showing the equivalence of mass and energy: E=mc²; but he also made other very important contributions to our knowledge of the universe. Apart from his greatness as a scientist, he was a great champion of humanism and world peace. In those days, in Germany, where the Nazis advocated the supremacy of the Aryan race, or even in America where he took refuge before World War II, it was not easy to hold such views. But Einstein, with other like-minded scientists, took a bold stand against the use of nuclear arms that developed into a world wide Peace Movement. Thus humanity has been spared from a Third World War, which, for many years, seemed very imminent.

RS: How, in your opinion, the inculcation of the scientific attitude into the multitude of our society and a growing study and practice of science can help our nation rise clear of the present state of stagnation and decay?

AMS: A main reason for the backwardness of our nation is



the poor state of education that has left the large pool of human resources underdeveloped. Whatever little education we provide is of poor quality and puts scant attention to the study of science and technology. Even in the teaching of science, not much attention is paid to the development of a scientific attitude, i.e., the spirit of enquiry, and a questioning mind that is at the root of all scientific discoveries and all human progress. Many leading persons in our society erroneously think that national progress can be ensured simply by importing capital, machinery and know how from abroad. In our schools, less than 40 per cent of the pupils can study science for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC). In higher education, the proportion is much lower. A first step may be to make science compulsory up to the SSC. At the non-formal level also, a lot more coverage is needed for science and technology. Take the case of the media. For a long time there has hardly been any programme on the TV in this area. Similarly, only two or three of our national newspapers have special



weekly feature in this field. Such problems as low productivity in agriculture and industry, high population growth, degradation of the environment, poor nutritional and health status of people can hardly be solved without a broad scientific literacy. This can be achieved only through a nation wide movement using all the channels of formal and non-formal education.

RS: The world has recognized you, by way of awarding you the coveted Kalinga Prize, as a leading disseminator of scientific knowledge. ... would you say things are changing for the better as far as social awareness of science — apart from technology is concerned? ... How do you view the challenges and the prospects of the nation in this respect?

AMS: As I have suggested already, things are bad as far as science education and the spread of scientific literacy is concerned. There are historical reasons for this. Long legacy of colonial rule, a deep rooted feudal system, lack of literacy and education, the hold of obscurantism, the nature of our political leadership — all have

their contributions. But there are bright streaks in such dark clouds. The rapid strides of science and technology in the international arena, the dramatic developments in information technology, and the winds of democratization that are sweeping the world, are all in our favour. I feel that the democratic forces in our country, which are growing stronger day by day, will soon see that our very existence will be at stake without science.

RS: Our foundation education of the secondary and intermediate levels have lately been geared to cope with a queer system of assessment — resulting in a wholesale rejection of whatever education stands for. Please give your considered view on this national disaster.

AMS: Throughout the world, educators are concerned with improving the quality of education. To that end, efforts are being made to improve teaching methods and evaluation techniques. One approach is to make examinations more objective, i.e., able to correctly differentiate variations in achievement levels, unfortunately, a very narrow and myopic view of these testing and evaluation tools are being taken in our country. Most of the tests that are being used are ill prepared and go little beyond simple memory. The higher mental abilities such as understanding, application, analysis and synthesis, interests, attitudes and values, skills of problem solving, etc. are hardly tested. This shows a very perfunctory attitude towards educational standards and gross commercialization of education. Unless we put more stress on better teaching, no amount of tinkering with examinations can solve our educational problems.

RS: You have always been one with a high degree of social commitment. What can be the main features of a government science policy that would prove friendly to social development?

AMS: A country like Bang-

ladesh has to make up its backwardness in economic development of many decades within a relatively short span of time. This can be done only by giving high priority to human development efforts — especially through science and technology. This would involve a fourfold effort: (1) improving the teaching of science and technology for all children; (2) enlarging the coverage and improving the quality of higher education and research in science, and emphasis on research in scientific institutions on areas that are of direct relevance to the welfare of the people; (3) developing a strong industrial base by adapting technologies from abroad and commercializing technologies developed within the country; and (4) promoting scientific and technological literacy among the broad masses of people so that a culture of innovation and application of scientific principles in everyday life and production processes is developed.

RS: Please tell something to our young readers about life and science and society — as you have found and realized them in your life.

Ans: Life and science teach us many things. Take just one simple fact. Of the myriads of animals roaming over the earth, man is the only one that has tremendous potential for development. In fact, scientists say that so far man has been able to use only a small fraction of its intellectual abilities. This means that if we try we can accomplish a tremendous lot in our life. The sad part is that we in Bangladesh have lagged behind in using the intellectual tools that can give us the power to achieve great deeds. There is no reason our young people should not achieve as much or even more than what people in other countries can accomplish in their life time.

RS: Thank you for your time.

Corn Flakes, Butter, Bread & Rolls Royce

by Shuvra

ALL of us are quite familiar with the name Rolls Royce. Yes, it is the most fabulous car in the world. The word 'ROYAL' can easily be associated with this automobile. Royal it is in appearance, price and tradition. To start the story of Rolls Royce we have to go back to the year 1904. That year two English gentlemen named Charles Stewart Rolls & Henry Royce decided to market the best car in the world. Their dream did materialise and the next is history.

Rolls Royce became the most popular, well known, aristocratic car. It first appeared in the market in 1906. The first buyer was E Singer. The name will seem rather familiar as this Singer was the owner of the world famous Singer sewing machine company. The first to

One day just before going to the market to buy some daily commodities his bank called and informed him that he has become a millionaire. In his shopping list he added the name 'Rolls Royce' and afterwards the list looked like this "Razor Blade, Corn flakes, Butter, Bread, Rolls Royce". Authority has spent a huge sum behind the advertisement of Rolls Royce. Hitherto the most expensive advertisement photograph was taken for Rolls Royce in 1975. The sign which represents this magnificent automobile is a flying fairy along with the famous (RR) monogram.

By the way there are two Rolls Royce of the 20's and 30's are owned by two businessmen in Bangladesh. One is a 20 H? of 1924 owned by A M Bhal. This car once belonged to the



ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER GHOST — 1900

buy the Rolls among the princely persons was Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. He bought two 'Silver Ghost' and ordered another. But before he could ride in the new Rolls he was overthrown in the Bolshevik revolution. The other two are still in display in the museum of Moscow. Even VI Lenin the famous leader of the Russian revolution had a passion for Rolls Royce.

Buying a Rolls was a matter of status among the Indian Maharajahs. The Rolls buying mania which started in the late '20s lasted for another 40 years. Nizam of Hyderabad had gold made curtains in his Rolls. Maharajahs of Patial spent a fortune behind his Rolls. His car was beautifully decorated with priceless emeralds. Famous diamond businessman Auto Openheim's Rolls was called 'Black Diamond'. This car had a secret compartment. The position of this compartment was known only to the Engineer and the owner. In this compartment Auto used to take millions and millions of dollars worth of diamonds to the market. Famous Singer John Lennon had a Rolls with the facilities of a bed. The Shah of Iran had all the models of Rolls Royce from Silver Ghost to Silver Shadow. Actor Michael Caine bought a Rolls before he even learned to drive properly.

Moharajah of Dinajpur. The other car owned by a businessman of Chittagong is a Phantom I of the 30's. The highest number of Rolls is owned by a company in Scotland. Rolls Royce represents the sophisticated taste of the English.

Then in 1984 an innovation was made to the lock system of the Rolls Royce Silver Spirit. This lock system was used by the Pharaohs of Egypt 4,000 years ago. With some alterations this has become the lock of the Silver Spirit. In the history of Rolls Royce the biggest car was bought by the Sultan of Brunei. The car is 20 ft & 6 inches in length. This car has 6 seats air conditioner, colour TV, cassette recorder with graphic equaliser, two way communication system etc. Rolls Royce has speciality of course. All the engines are carefully hand made.

The appeal of Rolls Royce will never fade away. As long there are people with taste and money the demand of this particular car will keep on going up. Oh! by the way one Rolls Royce costs approximately \$1,00,000. Well, if you have any intention of owning a Rolls Royce then better start collecting money. Who knows one day may be you will gather the required amount to buy the most exclusive car in the world.

STAR PROFILE

Name — Robert Plant (Vocalist of Led Zepellin)
Age- 45 yrs
Marital status — married



Did you know that:
In 1976, a car accident left Plant seriously injured, for which Led Zepellin had to cancel its elaborate tours. In the same year Led Zepellin recorded 'The Presence' album with Plant signing on wheel chairs.
But misfortune struck again for Robert Plant. His daughter died from a disease in the following year, for which Led Zepellin had to suspend its programme for a year. Finally, in the early 80's Led Zepellin had to disband following the death of their drummer 'Bonjo' Bonham who was known as Rock and Roll's premier drummer.

MYSTERY

by Shahed Latif

I was walking alone in the dark road and was lost somewhere trying to solve the unnatural death of a police commissioner who had come to this small village to spend his last days in office before retirement. My first thought was why would somebody want to kill a person who was about to retire. I knew Mr. Ferdous Khan very well and I knew that even though he was a police commissioner it is quite natural to have enemies but he as far as I knew had no enemy who would want to kill him. I work for the CID and I have been given this job to find out the real cause behind the killing. For some reason this had created havoc in the upper

wondered. But Neela, the youngest of the five children was different from the others and it seemed she was eager to talk about her father but she was afraid of her mother so she can't say anything. Whenever she wanted to talk her mother would change the topic or her elder sister would take her away to another room. Suddenly I looked at my watch and saw that it was four o'clock in the morning. So I started back to the rest-house.
I am already involved in it and now I just cannot back off I replied. Very well it is your headache I just gave you my opinion.
While I was returning back I

mystery will never be solved. But I still want to help. Meet me at the bus station tomorrow.
I hope you get this letter in time.
Neela.
At 6:30 am the bus stopped. I was waiting for Neela who was supposed to come to help me solve the mystery behind her father's death. She smiled at me as she stepped out of the bus but she was a bit nervous and preoccupied about something. So I asked her how her journey had been and she just nodded her head. During the whole journey she kept quiet and seemed to be lost in her own thoughts. To break the silence I asked why her mother had not come. 'Why doesn't she want to



Life after Death

by Shagar

ONE when I was on a visit to Dhaka, the great member of parliament Ahmad Ilias of Komolganj invited me to a luncheon at the Sangsad Bhaban with distinguished editors and writers as well as prominent businessmen.
In the sumptuous dining room, the conversation ranged over many world affairs, Ilias said, "Shagar, I am old man, and one of these days I'm going to die." The room became silent. I want to know is there an after life?
I couldn't be sure whether he was pulling my leg or not, then I sensed that the question was indeed serious and weighed on his mind.
Ilias, "I said, "I believe in the promises of Quran. But there is also the evidence of intelligence and common sense."
Then I told the others, a parable about a prenatal baby tucked beneath his mother's loving heart. "Suppose," I said, "Someone come to this unborn baby and said, "you cannot stay here long, in a few months time you will be born, or as you may think of it, die out of your present state."
"The baby might stubbornly say, "I don't want to leave here, I'm warm, loved and happy. I don't want to be what you call born, or what I call die, out of this place."
"But he is born. He does die out of his present life. And what does he find? He feels beneath him strong, loving arms. He looks up at a beautiful face, tender with love. The face of his mother. He is welcomed, cared for, and says, "How foolish I was. This is a wonderful place to which I have come."
"Then he goes on to enjoy

the delights of childhood. He grows into youth with its excitement and romance. The years pass, with the strength of manhood, the achievement of middle age; the joy and wonder of life. Then he becomes an old man. Someone says, "you are going to die, or, as we call it, be born out of this place into another."
"And he might remonstrate: "But I don't want to die. I love this world—the dawn and sunset, the moon, the starlight. I like the warmth of the fire on my face when cold weather comes, and to hear the crunch of dry leaves when winter comes. I don't want to leave this world. I don't want to die."
Is God, the creator, suddenly going to change his nature? Can we not assume that he will once again feel loving arms beneath him, and once again look up into a strong, beautiful face, more lovely even than that first face he saw so long ago?
"Won't he soon be exclaiming, "Why, this is wonderful! Here I want to remain forever?"
"Does this not make sense?" I concluded, a deep silence hung over the table: several of the company appeared to be moved.
Ilias sighed. "It does indeed make sense," he said. "I will never forget that parable. It has helped me answer a question that has haunted me for years. "Suddenly his mood changes. "Do you think I will like it over there?"
"Of course, for it will be exciting."
"What will I do there? he asked with a grin.
"Perhaps do politics again!" A laugh went around the luncheon table.

Bet You Didn't Know:

— that when a bee stings, it releases an alarm scent that attracts other bees nearby to join in the attack.
— that moths and butterflies have taste sensors on their feet which are sensitive to water, salt or sugar. (I think I'll try eating those horrible vegetables with my feet. They might taste better.)
— that our brains are dying from the very day we are born. Everyday hundreds of neurons die and are never replaced.
— that although human babies are born without teeth, Julius Ceasar, Napoleon Bonaparte and King Richard III of England are reputed to have had a single tooth at birth.
— that electrical activity in the brain is great enough to power a 10 watt light bulb. (Next time there's a power failure, try 'using your head.)
— that the blue what's low-frequency calls are the loudest sounds made by any living creature.
— that when life evolved on Earth 3500 million years ago, there was no Oxygen in the air. The oxygen now present is the product of photosynthesis by plants which have lived since then. Destroy all the forests in the world and life, as we know it, shall cease to exist.

Compiled by Adeeb JOKES

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Alex.
Alex who?
Alexplain later, just open the door.

Customer: Is that meat in the window dear?
Butcher: It's not deer, it's lamb.



levels and there were many people who were trying to stop this case. But in spite of so much pressure the case has started. When I arrived I sensed that I was not welcomed by the local authority who did not want to talk about it. Now nearly seven months have gone by and I still do not have a single clue which can help me. When I contacted the family members of the deceased they asked me to leave the matter alone because it would never be solved and would only prolong their hardship. There was something about Mrs. Khan that seemed strange to me. Somebody had killed her husband yet she did not seem at all bothered! Was she avoiding me or was she not interested to know who her husband's murderer was? Everytime I went to that house none of the family members would divulge any information. Who want not would to see the killer of their father brought to justice, I

saw my servant running towards me. When he saw me he said "sir are you OK? Has anything happened to you? Why did you not inform us where you were going? All I said was that I wanted to be alone. He said there was a letter for me from this Neela. I was surprised and asked if anyone had opened it, he said no. It read like this:
Mr Shahed,
I just can't stay here anymore. My own brothers and sisters along with my mother are always trying to stop me from telling the truth. But I want to tell the truth because I want the people to know who was behind this murder. Days before my father had been murdered he said to me that his death would not be a natural one. This came true. So I decided that I would be coming to Sonapur to help you & myself. I don't know. I don't know why this murder seems to have a long chain. May be this death

know who killed her husband?" I asked.
"I don't know, don't ask me any questions", she said. After we reached the rest-house Neela changed her dress and took her bath. At 8:30 she came down for breakfast. I was waiting for her and I was trying to figure out a letter which had I found at the gate saying "don't go any further, you will get yourself killed if you try to cross your limits."
As I saw Neela coming I kept the letter away and asked her how she was feeling? I told her to take some rest and that we could talk in the evening. She said nothing but just nodded her head. When I left for the DC office I told the guards to keep a watch carefully on the house to see that no one enters and no one gets out until I return. At the DC office I had a long chat with the DC who was my college friend. I showed him the letter that I had received.
To be continued