

Face to Face

An Editor Apart

At a tender age of 12 Mizanur Rahman produced a hand-written journal written and illustrated by himself for his personal consumption. Mizanur turns 68 next month and still edits journals. He now divides his time between his highly acclaimed research journal *Mizanur Raman's Quarterly* and an envirously ambitious ten volume Bengali encyclopedia project. Interviewed by Ziaul Karim

Q: How did it all begin?
A: I had seen as many as six children magazines coming to our reading table in our childhood. My father used to subscribe them for us. I can very well remember *Shishu Bharati*, *Shishu Sathi*, *Pathshala*, *Kishaloy* and *Shukhara* and the articles published in them. 'Why not I myself start a magazine', I used to play with this idea. Gradually all my rough copies were turning into magazines written and consumed by Mizanur Rahman. It was in

1945-46. My elder brother took interest in what I was doing and asked whether he could be part of it. But impatience was growing among us, for the magazine was only traveling between the two brothers. We started to think of its expansion. One day I plucked all my courage and approached our Bengali teacher Krishnayal Bose who himself was a renowned poet. Later I brought out a special issue on him.

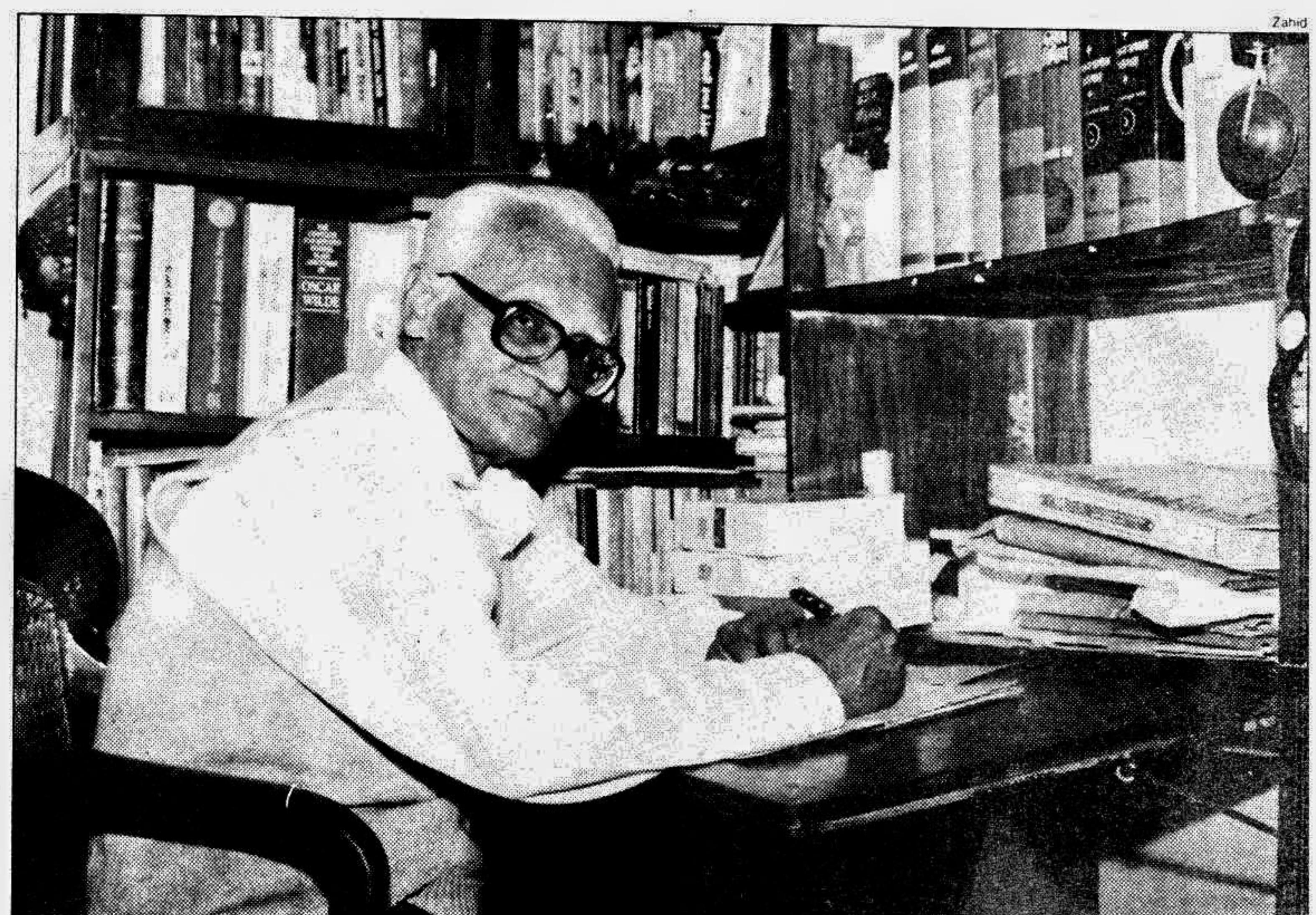
Q: Which was your school then?

A: Mitra Institution. This institution was the most famous school in the erstwhile undivided Bengal and affiliated with the Calcutta University.

Q: What happened when you approached Mr. Bose the poet and teacher?

A: I expressed my desire to circulate my hand-written magazine among the students of my class. He welcomed my initiative but pointed out the spelling errors and told me to be more careful about grammar. So

that was the first time my editorial effort reached the readers other than our two brothers. The copy used to travel from one student to the other and we continued it until 1947 when the partition took place. And it brought us to Dhaka. But partition couldn't take the wind from our sail. We were producing our magazine and going to different schools meeting the headmasters there and explained what was our intention. The headmasters called for the class monitors and asked



Natural Habitat: Mizanur Rahman at his editing desk

Zahid



them to distribute our intellectual property among the students. We used to collect them back after a month or so.

Q: But when do you decide to go for a printed magazine?

A: Well, we were thinking about it, but it involves good cash which we did not have. When I was in class nine, we planned to go in print, we started to raise fund, first from home and from the reader members we had. The amount accumulated was too meagre for a printed magazine. From my Mukul Faiz connection I knew Habibullah Bahar who was then health minister and met him. He told me that I should spend my time in studies and the idea of magazine could even have negative impact on my exam results. But then he gave us 5 takas and his sister Shamshun Nahar Mahmud also gave us 5 takas. We then approached editor of the Ob-

server Hamidul Haq Chowdhury. He looked at the list of the subscription and gave us the same amount. After that we went

"Why not I myself start a magazine", I used to play with this idea. Gradually all my rough copies were turning into magazines written and consumed by Mizanur Rahman. It was in 1945-46. My elder brother took interest in what I was doing and asked whether he could be part of it.

to Dr Shahidullah. He also remained to the same amount. With the subscription amount our magazine get printed but that was not

enough for binding the printed copies. We were a large family and my brothers agreed to give their hand in helping me out. We went

together. 'Let's go to the binder again': That phase was also overcome. Now comes the question of marketing the production. Dhaka then had only three book stalls run by non-Bengalis: One at Sadarghat, another at Dhaka Medical College, and the 3rd one at Chawkbazar. I remember of bubbling with excitement and began to run with the copies for the stalls. So this is how it all started.

Q: How many issues you could manage to publish?

A: About 14 to 15. By the time I have taken my matriculation.

Q: So what you decided to do passing high school?

A: I enrolled myself at Jagannath College. But magazine has gone into my blood. This time we thought of a literary-cum-entertainment magazine. By the time block print has been introduced. That gave us the opportunity to think for a more professional magazine.

To be continued

When I was a Teenager . . .

IN CONVERSATION WITH SYED ABULLAH KHALID

SYED Abdullah Khalid, the sculptor of Aparajeyo Bangla fame, grew up in the village with a childhood that can only be seen in storybooks. As a child his hobbies included flying kites, swimming in ponds, catching fishes in winter when the water was shallow, playing football (with fruits when there were no balls around), prancing about and doing all the things that are expected from a village boy full of life and enjoyment. Indeed, it was a very happy childhood.

"I was a rather naughty boy and our neighbors often complained because I stole mangoes and guavas from their trees. What they did not realize was that my friends and I stole fruits from our trees as well and ate them at night! Here I did not discriminate," he recalled.

Being among his six sisters and three brothers, he did not have to go far for entertainment. However, it was outside that his heart went astray.

"My father did not like me going out and mingling with other boys of my age because of his dogmatic views about us being of a higher caliber. That I could not relate to and so paid a deaf ear to his words! I went out to play with whomever I wanted to. My father could not say anything because he never knew! He also did not know that I went to watch movies with a cousin of mine quite often. My father was very strict and we never dared to go in front of him, least of all disagree with him in any matter."

Hardly the kind of father one could open up to. "Of course not. Standing in front of him was bad enough. We had to put on clean clothes and hats and he would make us sit for our prayers. It was worse when it was winter and we had to wake up before dawn, walk up to the pond, wash up with the ice cold water and then say our prayers. We never understood this and he did not feel the need to make us understand. What

By Navine Murshid

resulted was a gap, never to be filled up again. My mother was religious too, but she never imposed these things on us. She was a very cool-headed, charming person besides being a good mother."

On his way to the little

village school, shops on the

street that made different things

mesmerized this storybook-like

character. "While going to

school, I came across shops

where they made combs out of

bulls' horns. They first beat

them into flat plates and then

designed them. The way gold

jewelleries were made attracted

me too. The way they blew a

fishing rod-like pipe and

designed on molten gold made

me want to create things as

well. The expression of this

desire came in the form of little

sand creatures, which I made as

part of my school curriculum.

Therefore, it did not come as a surprise to all concerned when I finally joined the Art College to study fine arts. It was as if I was destined to be there. Under the supervision of Rashid Chowdhury, I went in to give my best."

It is with fondness that this artist remembers his school days in Nawabpur. "Nawabpur High School gave me a lot. However, I can not forget the

conflicts between the Urdu speaking group and the Bangla speaking group. Throwing stones at one another was a

rather common phenomenon and it goes without saying that we despised the other. This was in 1963. The malignity with which we looked at one another started long before 1971. One

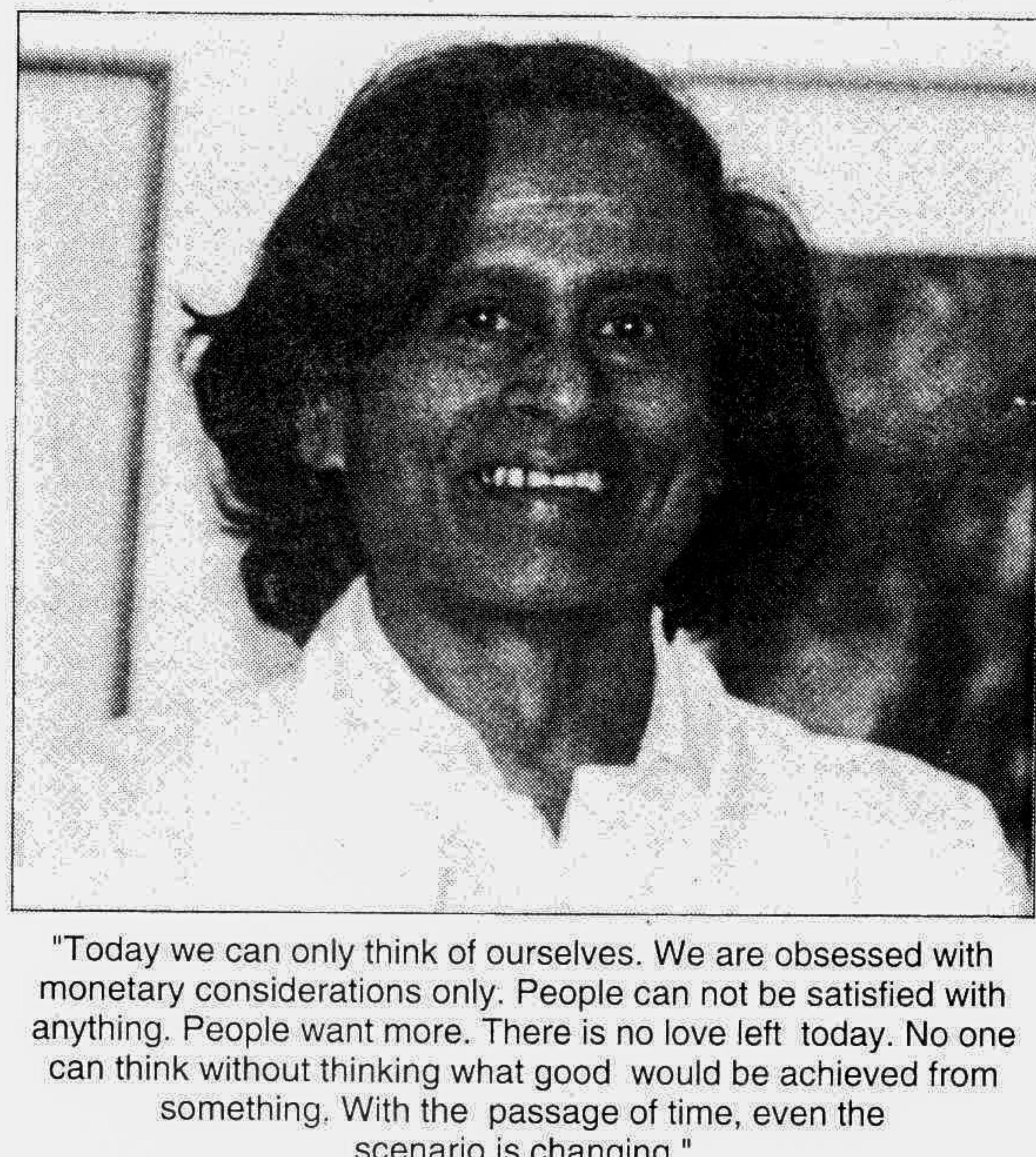
good thing about the clash with the West Pakistanis was that it brought us, the Bengalees closer. That was the time when we united under the

Bangladeshi banner with love for our common identity."

What about today? "Today we can only think of ourselves. We are obsessed with monetary considerations only. People can not be satisfied with anything. People want more. There is no love left today. No one can think without thinking what good would be achieved from something. With the passage of time, even the scenario is changing. The few lakes and ponds we had are being filled up to build multi-story buildings. Pollution, traffic, congestion are all on the rise. There is no such thing called leisure. People are always busy with mobile phones ringing all the time, although the economy is not progressing. No one has time for anyone else. No one has time to chat or 'adda'. People are so engrossed with themselves, their lives, that they hardly realize that tomorrow will be worse than today at this pace," said Khalid while talking to the Daily Star.

What would he be if he were not an artist? "I would be a simple villager. I would live close to the nature, close to my soil. Money is not worth running after. Today, the society seems suicidal. I am afraid to think what the future holds for us. Yet, one has to be hopeful. If one is to live, survive and go on, one always has to hope for the best and believe that one day we will be in a better position," he ended on a rather sad note.

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"Soul Search"

Imdadul Haq Milan

Novelist



"What we need most is honest and educated people to take us into the next millennium. At present the lack of this rare breed of people in our society worries me most."

to start all over again from zero, what would you want to be?

A: To be Imdadul Haq Milan again except the Milan who produced a lot of trash.

Q: What worries you most as we are standing at the threshold of the 21st century?

A: What we need most is honest and educated people to take us into the next millennium. At present the lack of this rare

breed of people in our society worries me most.

Q: If you have to sum up the philosophy of your life in three sentences, what will that be?

A: To love people and have faith in them is what my life has been throughout and this is the philosophy I want to carry to my grave.

Interviewed by Ziaul Karim