

acted in college plays. "But it was all within the walls of the school and college," she recalls. She did her Bachelors in ethics, philosophy and history from Lady Brabourne College in Kolkata.

It was her father's inspiration and encouragement that brought her into journalism and later her husband, renowned journalist Rokunnuzzaman Dadabhai, who gave her support to pursue her passion for journalism.

Begum was received very well. There was hardly any magazine, if any, exclusively for women. Begum readily filled that much needed vacuum. Women from all over the country wrote volumes of letters where they not only gave feedback on the various writings published in the magazine, but also wrote about their own ideas and expressed opinions on all sorts of issues. In Begum, Nurjahan offered a unique platform where women could write about women's rights, how women are discriminated, a woman's status in the family and society, their social status, female education etc. Begum developed as the mouthpiece of the women of this part of the world and played a crucial part in advancing women's liberation. It also deserves credit for nursing young women writers. For more than half a century, Jahanara through "Begum" has relentlessly fought to bring Bangali, especially Bangali Muslim women, out from behind the closed walls of their homes and into the wider, changing society of which they are part.

It was not easy to run a women's magazine where only women could write. "There were not many women writers around and hardly any women photographers. But we still managed to bring out an issue every week," Nurjahan reminisces.

Though women are not exactly aplenty in journalism yet, they have certainly started to embark upon this demanding job of a journalist. As for work environment, it is still difficult for women to be in journalism, Nurjahan believes. "Safe transport problems and lack of security are the main problems facing women journalists today," she says. "In the old days, my friends and I used to go watch the 9 o'clock show at the movies, which would end at midnight (albeit with her father)," she recalls. "It can hardly be thought of in our country today."

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Nurjahan Begum did many things at a time when it was much less easy than it is today, and what many women would not have the courage or determination to do even today.

The goal of Begum as a publication and of Nurjahan Begum has always been to take women forward, by informing and involving them in the society they dwell in and contribute to. "There will always be problems we will have to face," says Nurjahan Begum. "There will always be religious conflict, social bindings and people trying to hold us back. We can lie low for a while, but ultimately, we have to move forward," she says. "It's the only way to go."