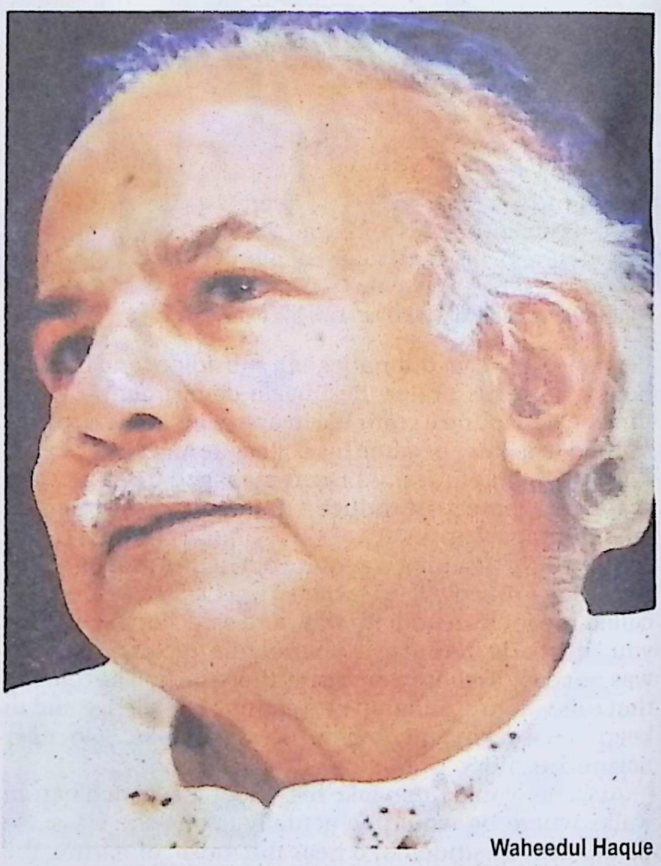
The Traveller Who Never Stopped Walking

"The travellers walking down the dark path, devoid of music..."
-- Waheedul Haque



Waheedul Haque

HANA SHAMS AHMED

He was anything but an ordinary man. He taught Architecture at BUET and Jawaharlal Nehru University, was a highly respected journalist, and yet the only academic qualifications he had was a BA (pass course). He was a lifelong left activist who abandoned mainstream political participation after taking part in an election after the war of independence. He was one of the greatest Rabindra Sangeet connoisseurs, and dedicated his life to rejuvenate Rabindranath's masterpieces, but he had no professional training in music. But if you were to randomly come across him, it would probably be in a public bus going to some remote village. Waheedul Haque died a year ago on January 27, 2007 and the movement he began in the sixties by publicly reciting Tagore at a time when it was banned by Ayub Khan, has in many ways shaped the cultural and political face of present-day Bangladesh.

Waheedul was a journalist by profession. He served in major newspapers for 55 years. Both he and his younger brother Rezaul Haque had to start working right after completing their matriculation to supplement the family income. For more than a year Waheedul worked in The Morning News which was the largest circulated newspaper of the time and afterwards joined The Daily Observer. Waheedul worked at The Daily Star as the joint editor for a long time, as well as The People and the New Nation. But it was the decidedly secular outlook that the five siblings were brought up in that shaped the ideals of this man. Their father Mazharul Haque always explained to his children that when a child is born he does not have a religious identity. He never forced his children to read any religious books or read their prayers but the house was full of books Bangla and English and the Haque children were always encouraged to read as far and wide as was possible. Mazharul taught his children that no child is born with a religion, he is born as a human being and that is his real identity. During a time when there was