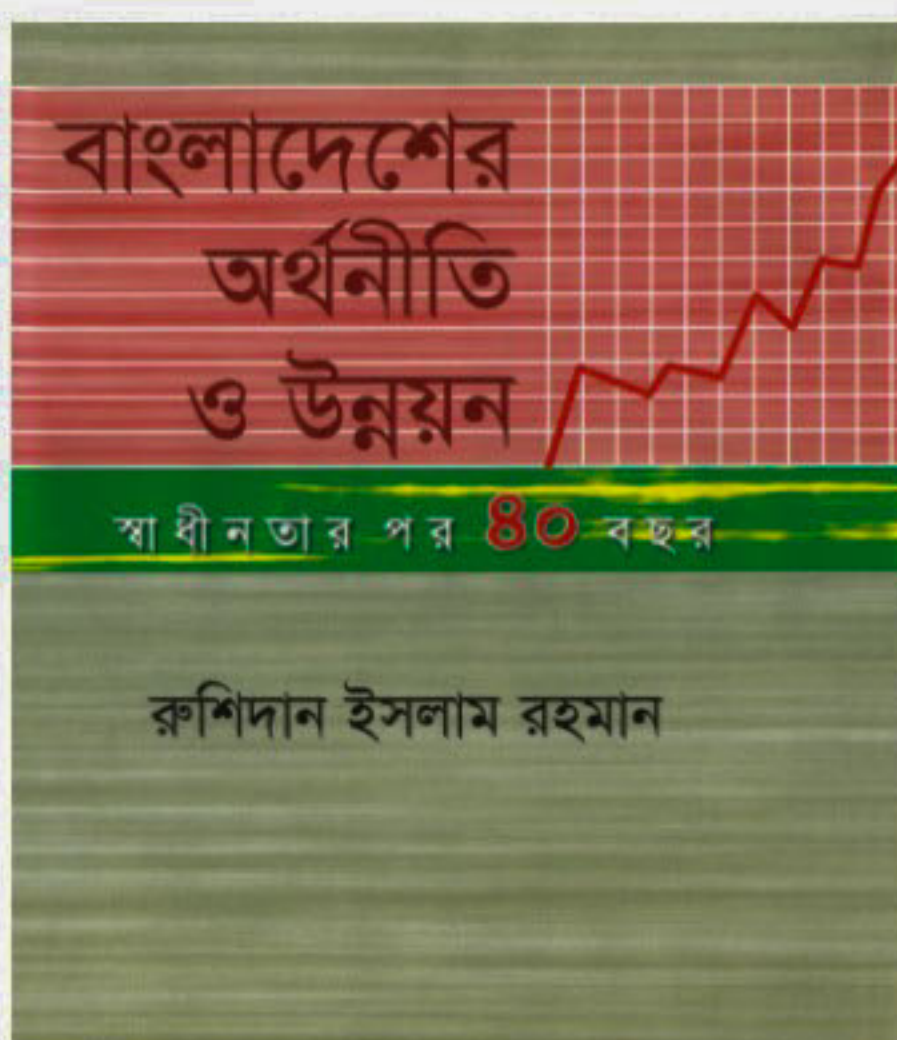


Long-run perspectives on the economy of Bangladesh

Zafar Ahmed studies a forty-year tale

The work is a timely and valuable contribution to the annals of publications on the economy of Bangladesh. Coming exactly forty years after the liberation of Bangladesh, the book meets a long-awaited need for a comprehensive and lucid presentation on how the economy has performed in the longer-run during this period. It is a successor of the seminal and benchmark studies by A.R. Khan (The Economy of Bangladesh, Macmillan, 1972) and A.R. Khan and M. Hossain (The Strategy of Development in Bangladesh, Macmillan in association with OECD Development Centre, 1989) and adds to the efforts of the very few others who have attempted such periodic stock-taking exercises. One comes across more numerous studies, published both in Bangladesh and abroad, of the type which concern themselves with questions of the current challenges and future prospects of the economy of Bangladesh. The stock-taking exercise is the more difficult of the two genres. This publication fully meets and exceeds expectations in terms of its technical analysis, presentation of facts, and interpretation of past trends, while still not skirting issues and questions of the challenges, obstacles and opportunities going forward. The author is to be congratulated for this contribution, and more so for the very readable style in which it is written without compromising on the rigour of the analysis and references to theory, research and empirical findings.

As a starting premise, the book sets itself the objective of broadly examining whether the post-independence dire predictions of Bangladesh as a "basket case" or as a "test case for development" have been borne out. Despite numerous setbacks many stemming from the various socio-political realities of the last four decades and many missed opportunities and policy letdowns -- the book finds that much has been accomplished. It notes that the clamour of negative and pessimistic forecasts has been somewhat muted in recent years, and concludes that achieving Middle Income Country status



Bangladesher Arthoniti O Unnayan: Swadhinatar Par Chollish Bachhor
Rushidan Islam Rahman
Shahitya Prokash

within the medium-term is a realistic dream and the country is broadly on track. However, it makes the important observation that accelerating growth, with the fruits of development that are broadly and equitably shared, is the key challenge.

After a context-setting introduction, the book analyzes the major macroeconomic developments in the last four decades. It traces the growth of overall GDP and per capita income during the period and identifies the contributions of the major sectors. Longer-term trends in savings, investments, and prices are analyzed. It has been pointed out that achieving the targeted GDP growth rates of 7-8 percent in the short to medium-term will require gross domestic savings rates much higher than the current rate, or a substantial increase in the efficiency of capital. Increasing both the rate of investment and the return to capital are perhaps the major challenges for policy makers. Moreover, the author highlights two important

changes required for sustaining the growth process: getting rid of confrontational politics, and expansion of quality education among the poor.

The broad macroeconomic analysis is extended in the next several chapters with in-depth examinations of developments in industry, agriculture and the rural non-farm sectors. The performance of the industrial sector is broken down in terms of key phases of dynamism and stagnation and the underlying factors. The industrial subsectors are also discussed with special attention to small and medium enterprises, industrial employment, and the participation of women in the industrial labor force. Obviously a fuller analysis of the dynamism of the Bangladesh ready-made garments industry and its particular problems would be interesting.

The analysis of the agricultural and rural sectors also focuses on issues of land ownership and distribution, agricultural technology and input use. There is a brief but excellent discussion of the role of microcredit and its particular successes and challenges. Perhaps a deeper analysis of the question raised in recent debates about the efficacy of microcredit in reducing poverty could have presented the empirical evidence of credible research in this area to settle the politically charged polemics.

The chapter on poverty and its measurement and recent trends and developments in Bangladesh presents the cutting-edge theoretical discussion and empirical research, and is an excellent contribution of the book. The concluding chapters address the human development dimensions of Bangladesh's development during the last 40 years, including education and the inequities in the subsectors, regional issues, demography and population dynamics, and issues of gender equity, women's employment and empowerment.

The author has undertaken substantial research on various research questions relating to the Bangladesh economy at the BIDS and elsewhere, and the various

chapters benefit immensely from that scholarship and expertise. In fact, the whole book is strengthened considerably by the author's familiarity and first-hand primary and empirical research on most of the issues. While a major strength, there is also a tendency to focus mainly on subjects and issues where the author has expertise and has undertaken research, perhaps at the cost of what might have been other interesting topics that could have been included in the book. However, this is a minor quibble given the wide scope of the book and the breadth and depth of subjects and issues covered. In fact, there is much original and new research and analysis undertaken for the book which might be of considerable use to researchers and students. The author rightly points out the various data and statistical constraints faced in undertaking an overview over such a long time period, and there are areas where continuous time series are not available and often there is reliance on cross-sectional and snap-shot surveys for what is essentially a dynamic view spanning four decades. In addition, to the credit of the author, she has contributed to the Bengali lexicon of economic terms in having to deal with often technical issues.

The book is highly recommended for students, teachers, policy makers, government officials, politicians, academics, media and NGO personnel, business-people, and, in fact, anyone with an interest in the recent economic history of Bangladesh and the current challenges and future trends. As it is in Bengali, and written in a very understandable non-technical language, the study is available to a wide segment of readers. The author may give consideration to publishing an English version of the book, which will no doubt be highly valued by the wider audience who would be interested in the evolution of the Bangladesh economy including international academics, researchers, aid practitioners, diplomats, global NGOs and international civil society.

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Retracing our steps into the past

Harun ur Rashid takes us back to history

Former Bangladesh ambassador Barrister Kazi Ahmed Kamal's book, *A.K. Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy And Bhashani*, is an exceptional addition to the political history of Bangladesh. It is a study of the lives of some of the towering politicians of Bangladesh.

On the subject of reading, Francis Bacon writes: "Some books are to be tasted, some others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested." In my view, the book under review falls into the last category.

It is a fascinating book because it contains so many interesting and amusing incidents of their lives which are stranger than fiction. Reading it engages one's attention from start to finish.

Though the title of the book speaks of only three eminent politicians, the writer discusses also the lives of Khwaja Nazimuddin and Mohammed Ali Bogra. All five of them left their indelible footprints on politics in Bangladesh.

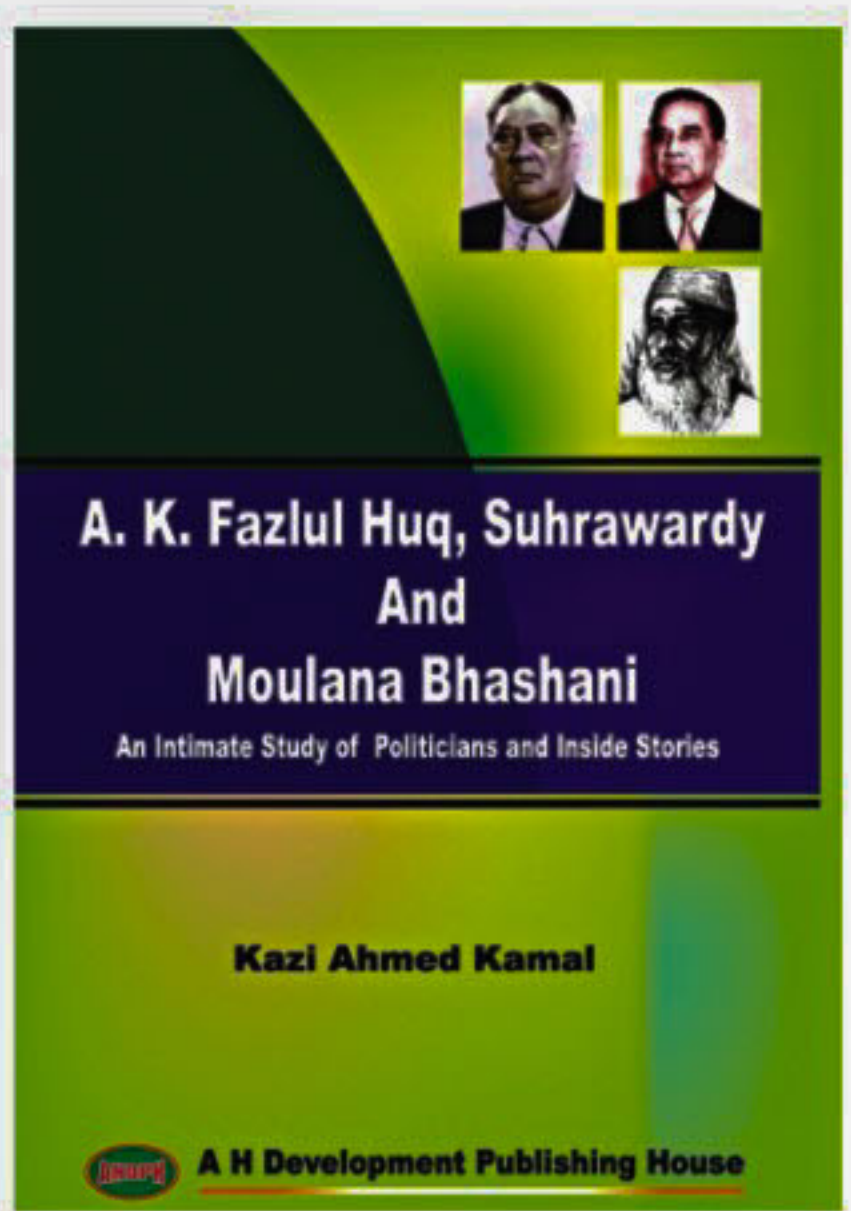
Although written in 1970 before the birth of Bangladesh, the writer provides illuminating facets of their lives which are relevant even today as they had influenced the course of political history in Bangladesh. He provides for the first time an insider's view of many little known aspects of their lives to fill in many gaps in facts and interpretation of historical events.

The new edited book with an attractive cover runs into 182 pages and has five chapters, each chapter devoted to one politician. Each chapter, again, is filled with hitherto un-divulged aspects of their lives.

The book provides intimate glimpses of the personal and political lives of five great political figures and records in vivid detail their strengths and weaknesses, their passions and contradictions and the impact of their personalities on politics in Bangladesh.

Their lives are strewn with important political events, such as the Lahore Resolution of 1940, the birth of the Awami League in 1949, the founding of a political platform of the United Front in East Pakistan in 1954 under the banner of the 21-point manifesto and the setting up of the National Awami Party in 1957.

The book reveals the inside stories of 'love and hate' relationships among the



A.K. Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy and Bhashani
Barrister Kazi Kamal
A.H. Development Publishing House

leaders who dominated the political field in the territory now known as Bangladesh.

Barrister Kamal's analysis in sharp and crisp language has brought out beautifully their personalities as well as political beliefs and is seen as a major contribution to the political history of Bangladesh.

This book is informative, insightful, thought-provoking and yet enjoyable. It describes the unique style of each of the politicians in a manner for the readers to reflect on and relate to the present.

On Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Huq, he writes about his unique hospitality for others, thus: "One day two men had come to stay in Fazlul Huq's house. In the drawing room Fazlul Huq shared his quilt with the two men. In the morning Mrs. Fazlul Huq found Fazlul Huq lying on the floor and the two men comfortably snoring on the bed under the quilt. It was too much for Mrs. Talat Begum, a lady of no-nonsense personality."

On Suhrawardy's daring conduct as chief minister of undivided Bengal in dealing with Calcutta communal riots in 1946 where the Muslims constituted only 24% of the population in Calcutta, the author records: "Suhrawardy having lost

the confidence of police decided to sit in the police control room at Lalbazar, to take the phone and direct the operations himself. He prowled in the streets of Calcutta alone in a jeep unarmed and unprotected to save Muslims from the riot."

On Bhashani's tactics behind his captivating speeches before the crowd, he writes: "It is told (sic) that while proceeding to the venue of the meeting, he usually used to go by boat and on the way collect information of the price of different items of necessary things of life. During the speech he rattled off the prices of essential items in impressive details...and would compare to those of in British days. In comparing such prices, he would use more of his commonsense and imagination rather than genuine price indices."

Barrister Kamal's analysis is seen as a major contribution to the debate which attempts to fill many gaps in facts and interpretation of political events in Bangladesh. It is a "must read" book and should be on everyone's bookshelf. The book will be particularly useful to those who are interested in knowing of the lives of the stalwart politicians who played a significant role in politics and had an impact on people in Bangladesh.

The book will be valuable resource for researchers who wish to deal with the political history of undivided Bengal and thereafter. Extracts from this book have been quoted widely by many authors inside and outside the country as reference materials.

The book was out of print for a long time and the AHDPH decided to publish it owing to its vast canvas and unlimited scope for an interpretation of the lives of five politicians to illustrate the past, present and future state of politics in Bangladesh.

Barrister Kamal passed away in April 1987 in London and could not complete his work, "*Rise and fall of Ayub Khan*". He wrote a book titled "*Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Politics in Pakistan*". He was a fellow student of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib in Calcutta and was Bangladesh's ambassador to East Germany (1972-74).

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID IS FORMER BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR TO THE UN IN GENEVA.

RE-READINGS

Hercule Poirot: Christie's super sleuth

Afsana Tazreen travels down nostalgia country

My first encounter with Hercule Poirot was on the Orient Express. I read *Murder on the Orient Express* with rapt attention and fell in love with the dapper Belgian detective with an egg-shaped head, a waxed moustache and a passion for neatness. I found his demand for order (i.e., books arranged on a shelf according to height) and love for symmetry, quite endearing. However, my first introduction to Agatha Christie, at the age of fifteen, was not a Hercule Poirot book. Rather, it was my brother's tattered copy of *A Pocket full of Rye*, starring Miss Marple, another famous creation by Agatha Christie. Having grown out of Enid Blyton's *Malory Towers* series and *The Five Find-Outers and Dog*, I was



Peter Ustinov as Hercule Poirot

looking for something more intricate. *A Pocket full of Rye* gave me just that and since then there has been no turning back. I hunted down every Agatha Christie book I could find on the dusty shelves at my school's library and devoured them in large mouthfuls.

Hercule Poirot, the most celebrated detective since Sherlock Holmes, was created in 1916 (when Agatha Christie penned the first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*). The Belgian detective appeared in 33 novels and 65 short stories and is the only fictitious character to be honoured with a front page obituary of *The New York Times*. Recently, I stumbled over a copy of *Hercule Poirot: The Complete Short Stories*, in the bookworms' paradise, Nilkhet. Gripped by a wave of nostalgia, I

pounced upon it. Since then it has found a comfortable place on my bedside table and satiates my urge to read a few pages until the sandman arrives.

As I read the stories I found myself remembering the queer habits of the egoistic detective. Poirot despised dusty, unclean houses and favoured the indoors (especially central heating in the merciless English winter). His long-suffering friend Captain Hastings frequently received gibes from the detective for casting the newspaper on the floor instead of folding it symmetrically. He ridiculed methods as examining footprints, collecting cigarette ash, searching for clues with a magnifying glass, or taking fingerprints. According to him, any crime could be solved with simply placing the puzzle pieces correctly. Poirot was an armchair detective-- he had to simply "sit still in an armchair and use the little grey cells".

Of course, Poirot's moustache is as famous as his "little grey cells". He took a lot of pride in his luxuriant moustache and was always meticulously dressed down to his patent leather shoes.

"My little friend, neat as ever, his egg-shaped head tilted on one side, was delicately applying a new pomade to his moustache. A certain harmless vanity was a characteristic which fell into line with his general love of order and method," observed Hastings in *The Affair at the Victory Ball*.

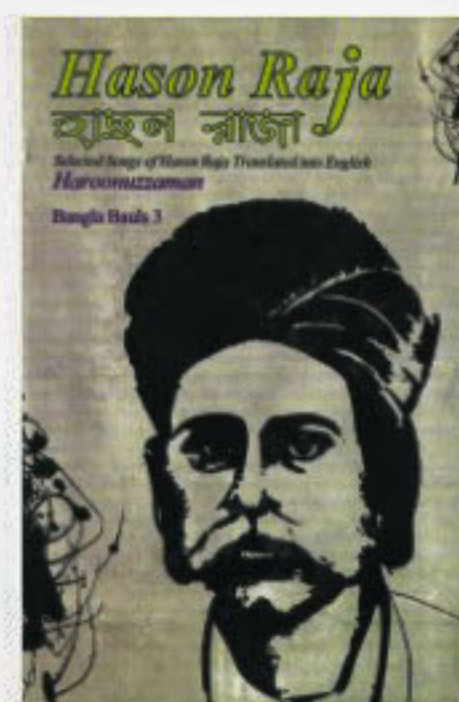
Hercule Poirot: The Complete Short Stories has 51 short stories presented in chronological order in a single volume - plus a bonus story not seen for more than 70 years. Arranged in their original publication order, these short stories provide a feast for hardened Agatha Christie addicts. It also includes Poirot and the Regatta Mystery, an early version of an Agatha Christie story not published since 1936.

The size of the stories does not mean there is any lack of detail. Each story has a novel plot that comes with a twist in the end. In true Christie style, there are numerous details that appear to be insignificant, but all is pieced together in a grand revelation by Poirot in the end.

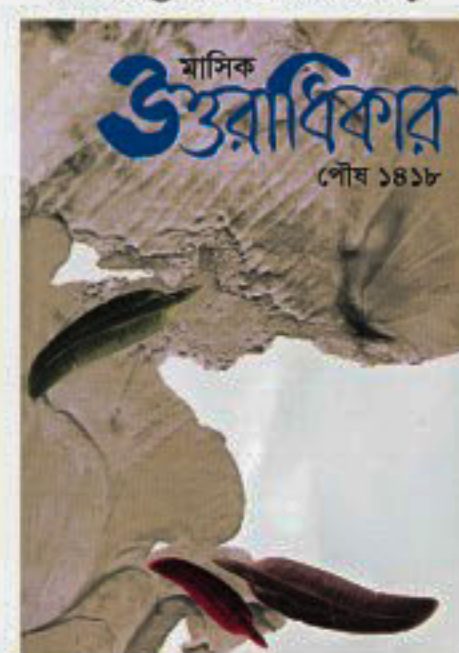
AFSANA TAZREEN IS SUB-EDITOR, THE DAILY STAR

BOOK choice

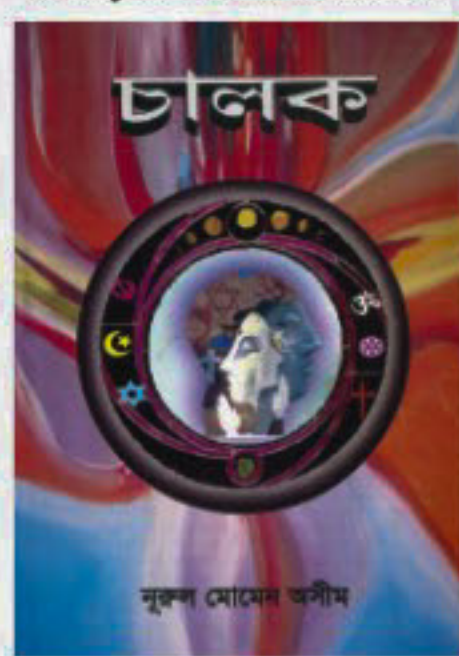
Hason Raja
Haroonuzzaman
Adorn Books



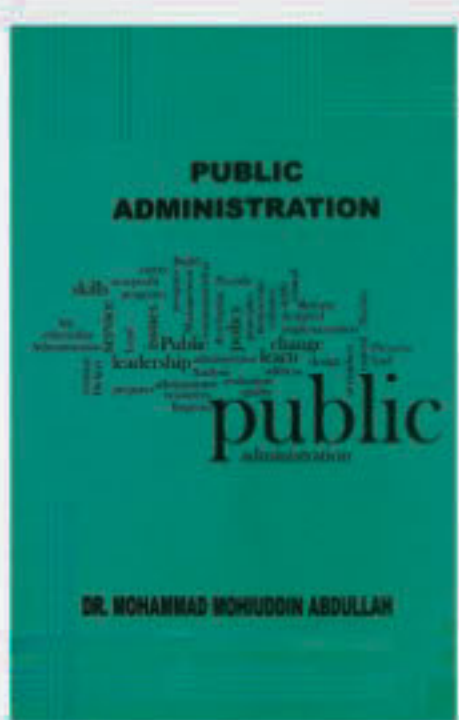
Maashik Uttoradhikar
Poush 1418
Bangla Academy



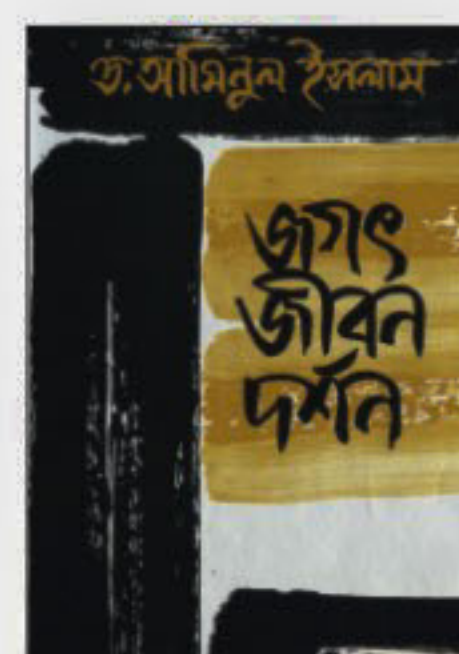
Chalok
Nurul Momen Ashim
Aleya Prokashoni



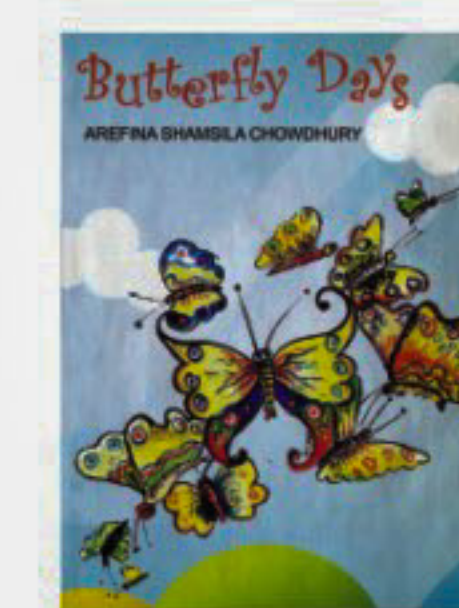
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