



PROF. ABDULLAH ABU SAYEED

EDUCATION

PROF. A.M. HARUN-AR-RASHID

PHYSICS

PROF. ABDULLAH ABU SAYEED is a renowned writer, television presenter and activist. Born in Kolkata in 1939, Sayeed is the son of a well-known playwright. He attended Dhaka University in East Pakistan after Partition. As a youth, Sayeed devoted his time to writing poetry and prose and led a literary movement in the 1960s as editor of the magazine *Kanthashar* (The Voice). He then opted for television and hosted a number of popular shows. He also taught literature at Dhaka College for around three decades.

Through his *Bishwo Shahitto Kendro*, or World Literature Centre, Sayeed attempts to keep alive the rich Bengali literary tradition through books which are slowly being replaced by other forms of media in the modern era. Sayeed's dedication to reignite the passion for reading books among the youth and increase access to literature led him to found the World Literature Centre in 1978. What started with 25 university students reading and discussing great works of literature in an Enrichment Programme eventually grew to include high school students and other readers under Sayeed's stewardship. Each group in Sayeed's programme goes through a 22-week reading course each year, completing more than 100 books over seven years. Readers meet in "reading circles" whereby they discuss Bengali and non-Bengali literary and non-literary works.

With the assistance of the Ministry of Education, Sayeed's Enrichment and Development of Reading Habit Programme spread throughout Dhaka and eventually throughout Bangladesh. Today, this activism has spread to 11,500 schools in all 64 districts and the programme has hundreds of thousands of graduates. Over the course of time, Sayeed has successfully developed the centre itself as a library and a publishing house. A library with 1, 75,000 books and a thriving

publishing house provide financial support for the centre's numerous activities.

In response to the lack of public libraries in Bangladesh, Sayeed launched a countrywide mobile library programme in 1998. With the help of funds from the Norwegian government, its mobile libraries today make stops at 1900 locations in 58 cities throughout the country. To date, approximately 160,000 readers have become members of the mobile library programme which delivers 3, 74,000 books to its readers.

He has received numerous awards throughout his lifetime, including the National Television Award (1977), Ekushey Padak (2005) and Bangla Academy Award (2011). In 2004, he was honoured with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts in recognition of his work. The versatile writer has written and edited more than 50 books, and his body of work is ever-growing.

As an activist, Sayeed also devotes his time to attend to environmental issues. Today, Sayeed's centre offers programmes in the arts and possesses a film and music library. Sayeed manages it all with more than 300 staff members and more than 12,000 volunteers that include many of his former students. He aspires to build an extensive network of libraries, bookmobiles, and reading circles across Bangladesh; of publishing 750 of the world's classics in Bangla; and of putting up a new twelve-story cultural complex in Dhaka. But, most importantly, Sayeed dreams of cultivating an enlightened new generation of Bangladeshi citizens whose values and understanding of other cultures are enriched by reading. He wishes to see his country's future leaders emerging from such a group one day.

PROF. A.M. HARUN-AR-RASHID is a distinguished physicist and science writer. He was born on May 1, 1933 in a remote village in Barisal district where his father, Late professor Moksud Ali, A.D.P.I, was the first person to have received postgraduate education in science. Prof. Rashid, who never stood second in any examination in his life, obtained B.Sc. (Hons.) degree in Physics from the University of Dhaka in 1953 standing First in the First Class and M.Sc. degree in Physics in 1954 again standing First in the First Class. For his outstanding academic achievements, he received prizes and honours throughout his academic career, including the Raja Kalinarayan Scholarship awarded by the University to the most outstanding graduate every year.

Prof. Rashid obtained the Ph.D. degree in Theoretical Physics from the University of Glasgow in 1960 working under Professor R.G. Moorehouse and Professor B.H. Bransden. He participated in the first Scottish Summer School on "Dispersion relations" in Edinburgh in 1960 as well as in the first ever Summer Seminar on Theoretical Physics held at Trieste in 1962 organised by Professor Abdus Salam. Prior to 1962, Professor Rashid's interest was in photoproduction theory of vectormesons in which experimental work had not yet started; with Professor MJ Moravcsik, he was able to formulate the first consistent phenomenological theory of spin-1 meson photoproduction including its multiple structures. But soon, under the strong influence of Professor Salam, he started working on group theoretic symmetry schemes.

The Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 posed for him a serious setback; for a long time, he was rootless as he resigned from his job at the University of Islamabad where he was then a Professor of Physics. However, it took

him some time to settle down in his country in the University of Dhaka and there, during the three years of 1974 to 1977, he produced with his students some outstanding work in solid state Physics.

Prof. Rashid has published about 150 scientific papers, books and other publications.

He received the Ekushey Padak for Education in 1991, Independence Day Award in 1999, and the best Science Writer Award by the Government of Bangladesh in 2005. He was a Visiting Professor at top universities of the world including the University of California in Los Angeles in 1991 and University of Texas at Austin in 1975. He was Visiting Scientist at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London; and the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste.

He was appointed Bose Professor, University of Dhaka in 1993. He was Fellow, Bangladesh Academy of Sciences; Member, the American Physical Society, Vice President, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh; and Fellow, Third World Academy of Sciences.

Prof. Rashid has devoted his life to the pursuit and promotion of science. He believes that science is the cumulative achievement of all that is best in man. Knowledge creation and knowledge deployment are fundamental to a knowledge-based society, he says. He has made several important recommendations for improving the quality of higher education in Bangladesh.