



DR. ANGELA GOMES
SOCIAL WORK

DR. ANGELA GOMES is a social worker and Founder Executive Director of *Banchte Shekha* (Learn How To Survive), a leading NGO working since 1976 with the long-term objective of improving the socio-economic condition of women and children in Bangladesh.

Born in Dhaka on July 16, 1952, Angela Gomes was raised in a small village near Dhaka. Resisting an early marriage, she became a teacher at Sacred Heart School in Jessore and was drawn to Catholic charity work in the city slums. In the early days, Angela Gomes would borrow a bicycle and pedal alone through the countryside in Jessore. There she met a number of women who, abandoned and abused by their husbands, were suffering in silence. She would talk to the women in the villages, listening to their problems and offering what little help she could. Angry at this interference in their traditional ways, the men would sometimes hurl rocks at her as she passed. But nothing could stop her. She tried to communicate her vision of a respectful life for village women where they would be appreciated for their contributions, where they could earn their own living and take care of themselves and their children, and where they would not be victims of violence and oppression. She studied the Quran carefully and conducted herself in a manner that gradually earned her the support of the villagers as well as the open-minded Muslim clerics.

At first she started working with only a small group of women. Later, in 1976, she established *Banchte Shekha* which got its registration in 1981. *Banchte Shekha* has been providing its services through 18 offices of 44 upazilas of 18 Districts of 4 Divisions. It directly serves more than 10,00,000 women all over the country and indirectly benefits more than 50,00,000 people through

its programmes. The organisation teaches rural women a vast range of income-generating skills, including handicrafts, raising crops, poultry and livestock, fish farming, beekeeping and silk making. The majority of field positions of *Banchte Shekha* are still held by experienced women members.

In 1987, she began to train a team of paralegals in Muslim law and relevant legal procedures. As a result, in many villages today, cases involving domestic violence, dowry abuses, child support, and other gender-related conflicts are deliberated in public by arbitration panels convened and trained by *Banchte Shekha's* paralegals, instead of by traditional all-male mediation councils. Through its gender awareness training and legal innovations, it is enabling women and men alike to carve out a new era of gender equality.

Angela Gomes has received many prestigious awards in recognition of her contribution. She was honoured with the "Best Social Worker" award by Bangladesh National Council for Social Worker in 1988, "Best Female Workers for Social Development" award by fortnightly magazine *Anannaya* in 1997, "Kirtimati Nari – Best Social Worker" by Square group in 2008, etc.

She received "Begum Rokeya Padak" in 1999. The same year she also received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in the Community Leadership category, in recognition of her contribution in 'helping rural Bangladeshi women assert their rights to better livelihoods and to gender equality, under the law and in everyday life. In 2014, she received an Honorary Doctorate Degree (Honoris Causa) from International KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

Angela Gomes has written several books on social issues which include *Learning through Works for Adults, Living with Rights, Easy Living of Children, How I Reached*, etc.



PROF. ANISUZZAMAN
LITERATURE

PROFESSOR ANISUZZAMAN, an eminent writer and educationist, was born on February 18, 1937 in Calcutta. He grew up in a family that nurtured writing. His father Dr. ATM Moazzem was a homeopathy practitioner who loved writing in his free time. His grandfather Sheikh Abdur Rahim, a journalist and writer, wrote a biography on Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Anisuzzaman turned to writing at an early age. His first piece of writing - a story -- was published in *Nowbahar*, a literary magazine, in 1950. After completing his HSC from Jagannath College, he enrolled in the Bangla department of Dhaka University. He had a distinguished academic career at the University of Dhaka from where he obtained his BA (with honours in Bangla in 1956), MA (1957) and PhD (1962) degrees.

Dr Anisuzzaman has also studied and taught at a number of renowned international universities. He was a Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Chicago (1964-65) and a Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellow at the University of London (1974-75). In his long illustrious career, he has served as a professor of the Bangla Department in both Universities of Dhaka (1959-69, 1985-2003, 2005-08) and Chittagong (1969-85). At present, he is a Professor Emeritus at the University of Dhaka.

His writings on our national identity and educational, religious, historical and social reconstruction are considered a treasure trove by the country's academics. His books such as *Muslim Manash O Bangla Sahitya, Swaruper Sandhane, Purono Bangla Gadya, Bangali Nari: Sahitye O Samaje, Kal Nirabadhi*, and *Ihajagatikata O Anyanya* are considered seminal works by academics working on Bangla literature and language.

Prof. Anisuzzaman actively participated in all the progressive

movements the country has witnessed. He made a notable contribution to the Language Movement in 1952. He also participated in the mass uprising in 1969 and actively took part in the War of Liberation in 1971. He was a member of the Planning Commission to the Government of Bangladesh during the Liberation War and a member of the National Education Commission set up by the government after Liberation. He was bestowed with the noble responsibility of drafting the Constitution of Bangladesh in Bangla in 1972. He also served as Chairman of the Trustee Board of the Nazrul Institute and is currently the President of the Bangla Academy.

Besides taking part in different movements, he has consistently raised his voice whenever our language, culture and national identity have been at stake. During 1967 when the information ministry wanted to limit broadcasting Tagore songs on radio and television, he and Munier Chowdhury, along with 17 other intellectuals, collected signatures for a petition and published it in several newspapers.

Prof. Anisuzzaman has received many awards in recognition of his contributions. He has been awarded with Nilkanta Sarkar Gold Medal from the University of Dhaka, Dawood Prize for literature from the Pakistan Writers' Guild, Bangla Academy award for research, and the Ekushe Padak, bestowed by the state for his contribution to education. He has also received Ananda Puraskar from the Ananda Group of Publications, Kolkata, an honorary D. Lit. by the Rabindra-Bharati University, Kolkata, Sarojini Basu Medal by the University of Calcutta, Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar Gold Plaque and Rabindranath Tagore Birth Centenary plaque from the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. He was awarded the prestigious Padma Bhushan by the Indian Govt.