



PROF. JAMILUR REZA CHOUDHURY

CIVIL ENGINEERING

PROF. JAMILUR REZA CHOUDHURY is a foremost civil engineer, professor, researcher, and education advocate of this country. He was a former Adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, and is the current Vice Chancellor of University of Asia Pacific.

Prof. Choudhury was born in Sylhet, Bangladesh and had his early education in Dhaka (St. Gregory's School and Dhaka College). He obtained the B.Sc. (Engg.), Civil, degree in 1963 (First Class First with Honours) from University of Engineering & Technology, Dhaka, M.Sc. Engineering Degree (Advanced Structural Engineering) and Ph. D. degree from University of Southampton in 1968.

Dr. Choudhury joined the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) as a Lecturer in Civil Engineering in 1963 and was appointed a Professor of Civil Engineering in 1976. He was Head of the Dept. of Civil Engineering (1978-79, 81-83), Dean of the Faculty (1983-85) and Director, Computer Centre (1982-1992). In March, 2001, he joined BRAC University as its first Vice Chancellor and relinquished the position on completion of 9 years of his tenure.

He was awarded a Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship in 1974 and spent a year at the University of Surrey, UK, as a Visiting Associate Professor. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Engineering (Honoris Causa) degree by Manchester University on 20th October, 2010.

Prof. Choudhury has authored about 70 papers in international journals and conference proceedings related to inter alia tall buildings, low-cost housing, earthquake resistant design, cyclones and storm surges, retrofitting of structures, IT Applications and Policy.

Prof. Choudhury has acted as consultant to a large number of

national and international agencies. He was a Member of Panel of Experts (advising the Government, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and OECF, Japan) for the Bangabandhu (Jamuna) Bridge; he is now heading the International Panel of Experts for Padma Bridge. He was the Team Leader for the Multipurpose Cyclone Shelter Programme and prepared the Master Plan for Cyclone Shelters in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers (Bangladesh) and was its President in 1992-93. He is a Fellow of Institution of Civil Engineers (U.K.) and is a Chartered Engineer, UK. He is a Fellow and former Vice President of the Bangladesh Computer Society. He was elected a Fellow of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences in 1999. He is the founder President of Bangladesh Earthquake Society. He is the Chairman of the Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education (BAETE), Bangladesh.

He was appointed Adviser (Minister) in the Non-Party Caretaker Government in April, 1996 and was in charge of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Ministry of Water Resources.

He was Convener, Committee on Export of Software and Data Processing Services (1997), Convener, Committee for Formulation of IT Policy for Bangladesh (1999 and 2008), Convener, ICT in Higher Education Group formed by Ministry of Education (2005). He was a member of the IT Task Force headed by the Prime Minister (2001-09). In January, 2007, he was the Convener, Committee for Preparing Voter List with Photographs.

He has received numerous awards during his illustrious career.



JHARNA DHARA CHOWDHURY

SOCIAL WORK

JHARNA DHARA CHOWDHURY is an eminent social activist and secretary of the Gandhi Ashram Trust in Jayag, Noakhali, Bangladesh. Born on October 15, 1938 at Lakshmipur, she has devoted her whole life to promoting peace, communal harmony and social justice, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent creed.

When she was eight, communal riots broke out between Muslims and Hindus, which forced her and her family to flee to Assam in India. Her house was burnt to ashes and many of her relatives were killed. Though she came back to her village after the violence subsided, the communal riot left a deep scar in her mind. The brutality of the riots shocked Mahatma Gandhi, too, who rushed to the region and went barefoot around villages for about four months preaching the ideals of communal harmony and non-violence until the clashes finally came to an end. Jharna was moved by Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi's principles of non-violence, self-reliance and community work, and decided to follow in his footsteps.

Jharna Dhara Chowdhury never met Mahatma Gandhi, but her life is a saga of incessant experiments with the values that the Mahatma stood for and of assiduously following his philosophy. In line with Gandhian belief that basic education is crucial to lifting people out of poverty, she and her sister started a school at the age of 17 for under-privileged children. Although they did not have prior experience or proper qualifications to run a school, their initiative was met with an overwhelming response. As they had no money to run the school, they would fast twice a week to save some money to buy books and other items for the children. But the school had to be closed down within a few years, after which Jharna Dhara became a full-time social worker. She has lived



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and worked in Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla and many other parts of the country. Like many Gandhian followers, she stayed single to focus fully on her work.

In 1990, Jharna took over the responsibility of running the Gandhi Ashram Trust in Jayag, Noakhali. Today, it is working directly with 25,000 poor families, both Muslims and Hindus. It has become a centre for various activities, including training programmes for rural women to boost their income, free education for poor children and schemes for poverty alleviation. She, along with her group of dedicated workers, continues to carry on the legacy of humanism and service in the Ashram. The Ashram works steadfastly to maintain peace and harmony between different communities. Jharna Dhara Chowdhury also travels frequently around villages in the Noakhali region, working to improve the lives of Dalits, who are at the bottom of the centuries-old Hindu caste system.

In recognition of her work, Jharna Dhara Chowdhury has received the prestigious Padma Shri award (2013), Begum Rokeya Padak (2013), Gandhi Seva Puraskar (2010), Ekushey Padak (2015) and Jamnalal Bajaj Award (1998).