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PIONEERS

The Literary Movement In Bangladesh

—Syed Abul Bashar Mohammad Saifullah And Syed Jaker Hossain

part-time librarian Dhaka Uni. A pioneer is one who goes before to prepare the way for others. He works hard

Province of Bengal, received what was probably the worst treatment from the Britishers. Very few educational institutions were developed here, and there was no means of self-education. No library worth the name, public or government had grown in this part. During the later part of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th centuries we find only a few private or personal libraries in the then East Bengal such as Purba Banga Brahma Samaj Library, Baldah Garden Library, some subscription libraries in a few towns and library sections in what were designated the Muslim Institutes in certain district headquarters. As there were no well organised libraries here, no library movement in any sense of the term started in this part of the subcontinent. It was in the autumn of 1954 when seven librarians of Dhaka City put their heads together in a small cottage of the Plasssey Barracks and discussed the library problems of the country and resolved to launch a library movement in close cooperation with the Librarian of Dhaka University Library and other noted librarians who were interested in the advancement of the profession of librarianship. The following librarians were present in that meeting: Messrs (1) A. R. Mirdah, (2) A. E. M. Sham-sul Hoque, (3) Rakib Hossain, (4) Siddique Ahmad Chowdhury, (5) Jamil Khan, (6) Khondaker Abdur Rob and (7) Mofazzal Committee worked hard for starting a library movement in this country. This association of the librarians was joined by Mr. Ahmad Hussain who on return from USA, had taken charge of organising the then East Pakistan Central Public Library, Dhaka later on Office on Special Duty for development of libraries, Education Directorate, Government of the then East Pakistan and still later, on retirement from government service was the Director Islamic Academy Dhaka. Also on return from abroad Mr. Muhammad Siddiq Khan, then appointed Librarian Dhaka University Library joined the association. They two had since been in the vanguard of the Library Movement in the then Pakistan, particularly in the then East Pakistan and later Bangladesh until the death of Mr. Siddiq Khan on 13th August 1978. They received the active cooperation of Mrs. Nargis Jaffar and Messrs Rakib Hossain (deceased), A. M. Motahar Ali Khan, A. R. Mirdah (deceased) and others.

The then East Pakistan Library Association had the following broad aims and objectives:-

1. To advance the cause of library movement and promote the establishment of a comprehensive library service throughout the then Pakistan.
2. To promote better administration of libraries by offering technical assistance and advice.

Abdur Rob and (7) Tafazzal Hossain. Their efforts led to the formation of the East Pakistan Library Association in 1955 A.D. An ad-hoc committee was formed with Dr. Nafis Ahmed, Professor and Head of the to library authorities.

3. To promote and encourage the study and research in Library Science.
4. To promote the improvement of the position and also qualifications of library workers

the relationship of the Royal Historical Society of London. He was a linguist too and besides Bengali, his mother tongue, he had a thorough knowledge of English, spoken and written, and spoke and wrote Burmese, Urdu and Tamil. He received a thorough in-service training in some of the major British University Libraries and in the India Office Library, London. From its inception, he was associated with the library movement in the then East Pakistan and with institutions,

run may help many would-be librarians and inspire them to work for the cause and for the advancement of their professional career.

SIDDIQ KHAN

Muhammad Siddiq Khan was born on the 21st March, 1910 in Rangoon, the metropolitan city of Burma. He was the worthy son of Late Maulvi Muhammad Israil Khan, one of the earliest Bengali Muslim law graduates

organisation and operation of all the three training courses viz. the certificate course in Library Science under the auspices of the then East Pakistan Library Association (EPLA), the Diploma and the M.A. Degree courses of the Dhaka University. Besides being the teacher of 95% of the then East Pakistani Librarians in these courses, he also arranged, as the Honorary Secretary for one two-year (See Page 61).

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many) Indo-Pacific Exchange News Bulletin (Japan) etc. To mention only a few non-professional journals, he contributed to Islamic Culture, D

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d the bibles.

Earlier, Mr. Khan found himself in different important positions with work of diverse nature which brought out in bold relief his versatile character and rare qualities. He lectured in the Department of History and Political Science of the University College of Rangoon for a decade and then, after the exodus in the face of Japanese occupation of Burma, he assumed the duties of the Officer-in-Charge of Post-Raid Information Service, Civil Defence, (Home Defence) for

ent of the then Bengal and was posted at Calcutta. He served as Liaison Officer, Director of Industries, Government of Bengal from 1944-46 and at the Assistant General Secretary of the Indian Red Cross Society Bengal Provincial Branch). He was the General Secretary of the then East Pakistan Red Cross Society, Dhaka, in 1947-48 and the Manager of the then East Pakistan Trading Corporation, Mymensingh, in 1948-50. He assumed the headship of Devendra College, Manikganj in 1950. For some time he chanced to serve as the Secretary of the then Pakistan Refugees Rehabilitation Finance Corporation, Dhaka 1951-1952. Destiny then placed him as the Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor of the

ice-Chancellor (Dr. W. A. Jenkins), University of Dhaka, in the year 1953 and was selected as the Librarian designate in 1954 when he went to England for training in librarianship for two years. On return in 1956 he took over charge of the library of the Dhaka University. When the Department of Library Science was instituted experimentally and that through his efforts

of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Rangoon Gazette, Burma Municipal Gazette, Muhammadi Bulbul, Dilruba, Swadesh Bangla Academy Patrika, Sahitya Patrika, Teacher's World etc. His Illuminating took reviews established his reputation as a voracious and searching reader.

He attended as one of the two national delegates the Seminar organised by UNESCO on the International Exchange of publications in the Indo-Pacific area, and the Inaugural Conference of the Asian Library Federation held at Tokyo, November 1952. He worked as a lecturer in Islamic Studies for about seven years in the Hoogly Islamic Intermediate College, and thereafter for three years he was posted as lecturer in Arabic in the then Dhaka Intermediate College. During this period he happened to work with great credit simultaneously as the Assistant Secretary of two high-powered Committees, both headed by Moulana Md. Akram Khan, viz East Bengal Educational Reconstruction Committee and the East Bengal Language Committee. During the years 1949 to 1954 he was entrusted with the duties of the Secretary

1957. He was elected Vice-President of the Asian Federation of Library Associations for 1958-60. In the UNESCO Regional Seminar on Library Development in South East Asia held at New Delhi in 1960 he served as a UNESCO expert and leader of the group on University Libraries.

AHMAD HOSSAIN

in a Muslim family of Chittagong on July 2, 1909. It is a remarkable feature of his academic career that he was never placed in the second division or class. He had his Secondary, Intermediate courses under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka, his Graduate and Post-Graduate education in the same institution.