

Sahitya Sourav

(Literary Fragrance)

[A Collection of letters written to Professor Helaluddin Ahmed by some distinguished Persons of Bangladesh and foreign countries]

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Dr. Shaukat Ali Siddiqi,

Dear Prof. Helaluddin Ahmed,

Recently a letter on 'Educational Rehabilitation' written by you has appeared in the daily Pakistan Observer, Dacca, (Dated 8.12.1970). This letter seems to have a great relevance for the readers of the quarterly "Pakistan Educational Review" published by this Bureau.

May I, therefore, request you to please send me a copy of your letter with any modification if you like for publication in the 'Readers Corner' of the forthcoming issue of the Pakistan Educational Review.

An early reply would be highly appreciated.

Thanks.

Yours truly,

Shaukat Ali Siddiqi,

19.12.1970.

Principal Riazuddin Ahmed,

My dear Mama Helal Mea,

It's very kind of you to include life sketch of my humble career in your book to be published. Thank you very much for publication of another book. I highly appreciate your literary aptitude. Our Banshgari Public Library has been included in the Haor Development Board. It will now be in a pucca building. It was started by me when I was in class VI. Donated land for the Banshgari Primary School (Govt.) of which I am the founder. With dua to Bau Ma and brothers and sisters.

Affectionately yours,

Riazuddin Ahmed

22.4.1979.

Mr.R.N.Bose,

Dear Sir,

I send herewith a cheque of State Bank of India (Dacca) No.BC-689826 dated 16.4.1980 for TK.100/00 as payment of honorarium for your article which was published in our monthly magazine 'Bharat Bichitra'(June'79 issue).

You are requested to acknowledge stamped receipt of the cheque in duplicate in the enclosed form.

Yours Faithfully

R. N. Bose

22.4.1980

Prof. Md. Khurshedul Islam,

My dear Prof. Helal,

Received your letter sent through a teacher of our college. Please find herewith my poem "Lolitake Kemon kore Bhuli" for your periodical. It is the second part of a lengthy poem of the same title included in the manuscript of my next poetical work (Belles Letters)"Tomar Num Champa Holy Bhale Hoto" likely to be published by February next.

Wish you godspeed in your literary efforts. Best wishes to your dear and near ones.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely Yours,

Md. Khurshedul Islam

04.11.1984

Olivia P.L. Hilton,

Dear Friend,

Enclosed please find a book we recently published which is a compilation of papers on "U.S. Society and Culture" from the 1991 seminar you participated in at the American Cultural Center in Dhaka. Two copies of the book are enclosed, one for your personal library and the second for your departmental library.

I hope you enjoy the book!

Sincerely Yours,

Olivia P.L. Hilton

04.10.1992

Dr. William Radice,

Dear Professor Ahmed,

Thank you very much for your letter of 10th January, and for your article.

I would certainly be most interested and honoured if you wrote something about my work. As you will see from the enclosed C.V. I've written & published rather too much now for it to be possible to send it all to you at once. But so that you can make a start, I'm posting in a separate packet from my poetry books-Eight Sections, Strivings, Luring Skies and Before and After. The Retreat (1994) you can get easily from University Press Ltd.in Dhaka and Selected Poems 1970-1981(Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1987) just reproduces poems from my other books- so you don't really need it.

My current book of poems, Gifts will take another two years to complete. I have a feeling it will be published in North America and/or India or Bangladesh. It will be long time, I fear, before i make my name as a poet in my own country.



Babu Ahmed (Photo Journalist) took lots of photos of me when I was in Bangladesh last April. His address is:

C/O, VISION
3rd Floor, 345, Segun Bagicha
Dhaka - 1000.
Tele: 861087 after 10.P.M.

He is a very helpful man, and I'm sure will be happy to supply you with a photograph.

If you do write an article, perhaps you could send it to me first so that I can check it for accuracy. Prof. Moniruzzaman's warm-hearted piece gave a rather confused account of my family history.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

William Radice

02.02.1996

Dr. William Radice

Dear Prof. Ahmed,

Many thanks for your letter of 10th April. I'm sorry the books didn't arrive - I'm sure I posted them. I'm sending another set by registered mail this time also a recent snapshot of myself. I've also written to Babu Ahmed asking him to send you one of the photos he took.

Urmi Rahman's address is :
61, Lymington Avenue,
Wood Green,
London N226JE

I don't know the address of Prof. J. S. Turner. Was he a Professor at Oxford? If so, try writing to the University office, Wellington Square, Oxford, for information.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

William Radice

28.04.1996

Dr. William Radice,

Dear Prof. Ahmed,

I was delighted to receive your letter of 17th February of fine article in The Independent. Oh dear, I did draft a Bengali letter to you in December, but never got round to correcting it and writing it out. As proof of my good intention, I enclose the draft now: Some of it may be correct/legible. On the back is an interesting e-mail message from a Norwegian friend who knows Bengali well and is currently in Bardwan.

As I refer to my Leiden lecture in my letter I'm enclosing a copy of that too.

I ought to make time-busy though I am, to write letters in Bengali. I shall try to do better next time I write to you.

All good wishes.

Yours sincere

William Radice

06.03.1997



Dear Professor Ahmed,

I hope you've received my reply to your letter of 17th February. It occurs to me that you might like to take part in the '200 Years' project- so I'm enclosing Questionnaire 4.

Hoping you will be able to return it.

Yours ever

William Radice

12.03.1997.

Professor Husniara Huq,

Dear Prof. Ahmed,

Thank you for your kind letter in which you pay us so many compliments mainly undeserved as we could have done far more than this and thanks for your interest.

I have to apologize for the delay in replying. Throughout the winter just over, I was a fairly regular visitor to Comilla on account of the Comilla University initiated by Dr. Shamsul Haque. The next phase of my work there will begin some months later. I will try to send you a couple of the two books on my Father brought out jointly by my eldest sister and myself through some one going to Comilla. The books have been reviewed but some time back. Therefore further review notice would be helpful.

Your account of William Radice is very interesting and informative. I had no idea that his mother Betty Radice was editor of the translation department of Penguin and that the family has a three-generation association with the subcontinent.

I apologize again for the delay and hope that this has not interfered with your plan to visit the Book Fair in Dhaka.

With best regards

Yours sincerely

Husniara Huq

15.03.1997.

Professor Husniara Huq

Dear Prof. Helaluddin,

Thank you for the trouble you have taken to send me a copy of Bideshi Monishider Rabindracharcha. The international image of the poet comes through clearly in this collection.

Samar Babu was here yesterday. I have given him another copy of my Father's biography. I understand you have a copy, which he gave you earlier. Please keep this as a gift from me.

Please feel free to review it.

My Comilla visits will begin again later on as first year students are admitted to UNIC when I hope to contact you.

Many thanks once again.

Yours sincerely

Husniara Huq

05.04.1997.

Dr. William Radice

Dear Prof. Ahmed,

Many thanks for your letter of 25 April with the completed Questionnaire & other enclosures. I'm truly grateful for your suggestions and I shall certainly consider the poems you sent by Shafique Alam Mehdi. The selection of poems by minor or living poets will be the hardest part of the project and I realize from the responses already received - I shall have to exercise more of my own judgement. I don't think I shall be able to do so until I come to Bangladesh & West Bengal next January -April. I've got too much other work before then.

I'm hoping to spend at least a month at Chittagong University and I do hope we shall meet at last then.

No, my thesis on Michael hasn't been published. I never felt that it was complete enough to publish. Eventually in about 4 or 5 years time perhaps I shall publish a book on Michael.

Meanwhile I'm sending you, in a separate Packet, two articles on Michael that I hope will interest you.

All good wishes.

Yours sincerely

William Radice

22.05.1997.

Shafique Alam Mehdi

Respected Helal Bhai,

I've just received your nice letter. In the meantime my chair like 'Musical One' has changed. Hopefully it would be better than previous one. I am sure you'd like it. My present office & house are located just nearby Adamjee Cantonment College. I wrote a letter about a month back. I am really confused whether you got it or not. Please let me know about it. Again I am sending English version of my poem 'Ekjon kritodash O Ekti Gadhar Kahini' along with this letter.

We are OK by the mercy of Almighty Allah. Hope this will find you all in the best of mind & health.

With best regards.

Yours
Mehdi

Cantt.Exec.Officer
Dhaka Cantt.
08.06.1997.

William Radice

Dear Professor Ahmed,

I was very pleased and touched to receive your letter of 15th September with its kind words of encouragement about my work and heartfelt comments on the deaths of Princess Diana & Mother Teresa. I think we were all amazed at how much we felt Princess Diana's death, especially. We don't always appreciate what we have until we lose it. I was in Mallorca (Spain) during the funeral, so I watched it on Spanish television. I was there to receive on behalf of his widow, an honorary degree conferred posthumously on my dear friend Guan Mascaro, translator of the Gita. Upanishads & Dhommopada for Penguin. I managed to give a speech in Spanish, opening up another new linguistic & cultural world. I may have told you that I'm coming to Bangladesh on sabbatical leave next January and February. I'll be based at the University of Chittagong. Professor Moniruzzaman will be able to put you in contact with me. I very much look forward to meeting you at last, and to visiting Comilla perhaps. I hope my selection of poems for the Anthology will be finalized during my stay. In mid February I shall go to Pashchim Bangla where I hope to finish my translation of Rabindranath's epigrams & aphorisms and write the introduction in



Rabindra Bhabona, Shantiniketan. Yes, I must one day do some serious work on Nazrul.

Beautiful late autumn weather here today. Tomorrow I must take up fallen leaves. Our elder daughter Helen is now a student of Oxford, and the house feels very quiet without the sound of her harp. Both our daughters are talented musicians. Katherine our younger daughter plays the clarinet & bassoon.

Yes, I've received your books. Will try to look at them before I come to Bangladesh. Nobobarshe Dekha Hobe Inshallah.

Yours ever

William Radice

17.10.1997.

Dr. William Radice

Dear Professor Ahmed,

Just to let you know that I have arrived in Bangladesh! I'll be based here in Chittagong till 12th February, though I plan to go to Dhaka for Eid (from about 24th January to 3rd February). I do hope I shall have an opportunity to meet you. If you ring the University (682031-40) and ask for the Atithi Bhaban you'll find me in the early mornings or evenings.

I'm working hard on the anthology project and hope to finish the selection during my stay in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Your answers to the last Questionnaire have been extremely helpful.

With best wishes to You and Your family.

Yours sincerely

William Radice

09.1.1998.

William Radice

Dear Professor Ahmed,

I was very pleased to receive your letter today. I should indeed be most pleased and honored to come to Comilla and I shall look forward to meeting you then and other citizens of the town.

I plan to leave Dhaka on the 3rd February (my birthday!) by the 8.20 morning train. I took this train on 6th January and I noticed that it stopped in Comilla. Could I stay in Comilla that night? I will gladly pay for a hotel room if necessary. If the Reception you have in mind could be held during the day on 4th February, I could perhaps get back to Chittagong that evening. But if that is not possible, I could stay a second night in Comilla and return to Chittagong on the morning of 5th February (my wife's birthday!).

Please let me know what would suit you best by writing to me C/O Dr. Kaiser Haq 32, Lake Circus, Kala Bagan, Dhaka

Or you can ring me there at 811633. If I am out you can ring Kaiser's father Mr. Azharul Haq who lives on the ground floor of the same house - Tele: 9117543. Dr. Kaiser Haq and his wife are away in America, they are lending me their flat.

Hoping to hear from you again soon.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

William Radice

21.01.1998.

Dr. William Radice,

Dear Professor Ahmed,

I thought it better to write to you from Dhaka rather than Chittagong, because of the Hartal last Tuesday, but now with a lot to do on my last day in Bangladesh I find I do not have time for more than a short letter. But I must thank you and your family and all your friends and colleagues in Comilla for receiving me so kindly and so royally. Among the many rich experiences I have had during my six weeks in your country my visit to Comilla will remain one of the most remarkable. Comilla seems to me a town, which could lead the way in terms of social harmony and municipal welfare in Bangladesh. There may still be a lot to improve, but the potential is there, I've no doubt of that.

I was particularly touched to receive photographs of the 'Alakto Shahitto Porishod' meeting before I left. Please thank the photographer, whose name I foolishly failed to note. Could you very kindly pas on the enclosed letter to Mr. & Mrs. Titash Chowdhury? I don't have their address.

With love to your family and all best wishes.

Yours sincerely

William Radice

13.02.1998.

William Radice

Dear Helaluddin,

Many thanks for your letter to my Calcutta address. I hope by now you've received via the British Council my letter and photos. It was delightful to have my wife and daughter Katharine with me for the last two weeks in Delhi, Agra, Calcutta and Shantiniketan. We've returned with some shared experience.

I think very fondly of my visit to Comilla. Elizabeth has got an important new job - Headmistress of a very good girl's school in North London - from January 1998. Thanks and love to you all.

William Radice

Riding Mill

24.04.1998.

Mr. M. Ruhul Amin,

Respected Sir,

First my Salam to you all. Now its my Pleasure to inform you that I've collected your 5(Five) books from Tajmahal Library, Chandpur and kept with good care at my rented house.

Now we are not in touch with ref. books, College University students are guided by different political parties & they are working in the interest of their parties leaving main objects. Due to these unrest is prevailing almost everywhere.

We do not read good books, do not purchase books & even step in any public library to enhance our knowledge. Now we want money & want to become rich very quickly.

I once again request you to open a coaching center at a suitable place at Comilla with your well wishers & spread your knowledge. This will help some of us in English. We should write correct English & speak like an Englishman when we speak in English.

Please do not forget to visit my home when you are there. I am fine here. May Allah bless us all Regards.

Yours faithfully

M. Ruhul Amin

04.05.1998.

Lubna Kabir,

Dear Professor Ahmed,

Thank you for your letter of 16th May 1998 to Mr. Tom Cowin. I am sorry to say you that we have not received any photographs for you from William Radice. I checked with my Dhaka colleagues and as well with Chittagong colleagues.

If we receive any, we will let you know by mail.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Lubna Kabir

Dr. William Radice

Dear Helaluddin,

I have your two letters 3rd and 30th May on my desk and fear that this brief notes will be a very inadequate reply. But I'm preoccupied with finishing my new Tagore book ('Particles', 'jottings', 'Sparkles') and various other things.

I am indeed honored that you plan to devote an issue of Bisphoran to me & my work. But please don't press Sukanta & Kaiser for articles. They are both very busy people, and Kaiser's wife Dipa is very ill, he shouldn't be bothered at this time.

I can't find a recent photo of all four of us, but I enclose one of me, Elizabeth & Katherine (our younger daughter, 17 on 21 May) taken at HAUZ KHAS in Delhi at the end of March, 1998. This has relevance as it was taken during my recent visit to Bangladesh & India (they joined me for the last two weeks in Delhi, Agra, Calcutta & Shantiniketon).

I've ordered a copy of Teach Yourself Bangali for you and will post it to you from London on Friday.



I've also ordered fresh copies of the photos that failed to arrive some of you & your family and some of 'Alakto Parishod' & Titash & his family (please give those to him). I'll send them by registered post next week.

I did keep some newspapers when Diana died but not a report of the funeral. So I do not have a copy of Earl Spencer's speech. I'm sure the British Council Library in Dhaka or Chittagong would have one. Ketaki Kushari Dyson is a freelance writer, her husband is a Computer Consultant. They live in Kidlington, near Oxford. I'll send you a photo of Helen (who'll be 19 on 16 August) with the copy of TYB from London. Love to you all.

Hope I've covered everything.

William

23.06.1998

Dr. William Radice,

Dear Helaluddin,

Here at last is a photo of my daughter Helen, now aged 19, taken in July in New York. Many thanks for your note of 10th July and latest very generous article.

I do hope the dreadful floods in Bangladesh have not hit Comilla too badly.

Love to you all.

William Radice

04.09.1998

Dr. William Radice

Dear Helaluddin,

Many apologies for being slow to thank you for your letter of 4th April. I find that I also have on my desk your letter of 6th January as well as the chipping enclosed with April letter. I have also received a copy of Ovimot and some books from Mr. Palash. They are in my office of SOAS and I'll write to him on Wednesday or Thursday from there.

At present I'm in Northumberland and I've been here most of the time this year so as not to desert our younger daughter who is finishing off her schooling. My wife has taken up a Headship in London, so we've been in a complicated transitional phase separated for most of the time. I can only stay two nights a week in London. This has been rather exhausting & confusing which is why I've fallen behind with correspondence. On the other hand my daughter is delightful



company and I've used my time here to do as much writing as possible. I'm nearing the end of a big new book of poems and my fortnightly letter from England, for the Statesman in Calcutta also keep me busy. I enclose a spare copy I happen to have of one of the columns quite a light hearted one.

I might try to interest a paper in Bangladesh in co-publishing the columns The Daily Star has been suggested to me.

Altogether my literary career seems to be leaping forward suddenly, and I think I shall soon start writing for newspapers here and or in America as well as in your part of the world. I'm also doing more radio broadcasting. So it's looking more likely that I shall eventually leave academic life to concentrate fully on writing though not for a few more years, as I've recently agreed to be Head of Department of SOAS for 3 years.

All this, you can imagine, keeps me ferociously busy. So, I haven't yet been able to ring your friends in the U.K. Did you get my circular letter about the 200 years of Bengali Poetry project, which is at present shelved though hot abandoned.

I was of course deeply touched & honoured by your article and by the suggestion you have made to the Prime Minister. I feel I need to do a lot more work finish the Anthology and other projects before I shall really be worthy of such an honour, but thanks very much for the thought.

I hope to come to India & Bangladesh again in September 2000. All best wishes to you & your family and to Titash & family and other friends in Comilla.

William Radice

17.05.1999.

William Radice

Dear Helaluddin,

Many thanks for your letter of 22nd December enclosed in letter from Russell Ahmed.

I'm sure he is sincere but as I've tried to explain I don't see what I can do! SOAS can't invite him to research a book on Shakespeare, and I don't have contacts with institutions that could perhaps invite him. Nor do I know him well enough to recommend him, even if I knew who to recommend him to!

He'll just have to try writing to the Shakespeare Birth Place Trust etc. himself.

I really can't answer anymore of his letters!

Love to you all.

William

Riding Mill

08.01.2000

Dr. William Radice

Hope you received my uncle's short history of the Radice family, hosted to you recently. My father's name is Italo De Lisle Radice. He was born in 1911 and despite a stroke 2 years ago is in reasonable health. He married about 4 years ago. My stepmother (Ms. Marrie Guise) is about 10 years his junior.

With all Good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

William

(Dateless)

Dr. William Radice,
C/O Dr. Kaiser Huq

Dear Helaluddin,

Your young friends kindly brought me the issue of Boipotro and your good wishes. I'm very sorry I wasn't able to make contact with you during this very brief visit. I gave a lecture at the British Council on Tuesday; then I went to Rangpur for a Sahitya Utsab- I've just come back. Early tomorrow I'm returning to Kolkata.

I do hope you and your family are all well.
Shuvechchashaha.

William
Dhaka
31.03.2001

Dr. William Radice,

Dear Helaluddin,

It was very kind of your young friends to find me at Dr. Kaiser Huq's flat and present me with a copy of Boipotro, your article and photo bring back vivid and happy memories of my visit to Comilla.

I'm sorry there wasn't time during my brief stay in Bangladesh to visit Comilla again and see you and other friends. Next time perhaps.

When your friends came I had been taking rap and at first-rather irritably - I thought they wanted to interview me. Please give them my apologies for that misunderstanding.

All best wishes to you and your family.

Yours ever

William

06.05.2001.

Dr. William Radice,

Dear Helaluddin,

Many thanks for your letter of 14 August, you must think me a very neglectful friend and correspondent! I can only plead extreme pressure of work. I've completed two years as Head of two departments here (South Asia & South East Asia) and will probably do two more. I'm also immensely busy with my writing. I've got four books coming out this year see enclosed bio-data. The book on Myths and Legends of India was a particular challenge as the publisher gave me only a year to write it.

I'm glad at least that you got the note I wrote when your friends visited me at Kaiser Haq's flat. I enclose a copy of the account of my lecture tour I wrote for my regular column in the Statesman.

I've received the Voice of the East and the West and will try to write to the author soon. As for Ahammed Kabir's book I'll look for it in the pile of books sent to me, but really I receive too many these days to acknowledge them all.

I'm sending under separate cover a copy of Particles, Jottings, Sparks. Your description of the flowers of Autumn is very evocative. Let's hope we can meet next time I come to Bangladesh.

With all best wishes to you and your family.

Yours ever

William

05.09.2001

WRITERS

1.Dr.Shaukat Ali Siddiqi : He was a member, Editorial Board and Specialist (A.V.Aids) Central Bureau of Education, Islamabad, Pakistan.

2.Principal Riazuddin Ahmed : He was the founder Principal of Nasirabad College and founder of Banshgari Public Library at his village home at Banshgari under Bhairab P.S. and a member of Academic Council, Dhaka University.

3.Mr. R.N. Bose : He was Second Secretary(Information), High Commission of India, Dhaka.

4.Mrs. Olivia P.L.Hilton : She was Director, American Cultural Centre, Dhaka.

5.Professor. Md. Khurshedul Islam : He was a Professor of English at Chandpur Govt. College. He is a reputed poet, essayist and a literary critic.

6.Dr. William Radice : He is an eminent British poet, essayist, translator, researcher and educationist. He obtained his D.Phil. degree for his thesis on Michael Madhusudan Datta.

7.Professor Husniara Huq : She was an Associate Professor of English at Dhaka University. Daughter of a politician and writer Sir Azizul Haq, she has compiled a biography of her distinguished father in collaboration with her eldest sister.



8.Mr. Shafiq Alam Mehdi : He is a very good poet. His four books of poems have been published. He was A.D.C of Tangail.

9.Mr. Ruhul Amin : He was a student of Chandpur College. He is a graduate. A lover of English Language, he used to write letters to me in English. He has been holding a responsible post in a Oil Company at Chittagong.

10.Miss Lubna Kabir : She is P.A. to the Director, British Council, Dhaka.

E-mail: marupalash@yahoo.com

The End