

MOHAMMAD GHOLAM RASUL

(B. 1921- D. 1997)

As one of his former students at Carmichael College (Rangpur, North Bengal) and at the Department of Islamic History and Culture in Rajshahi University, I found Dr Mohammad Gholam Rasul to be a dedicated academic.

Professor Mohammad Gholam Rasul (also spelled as Rasool) was one of my favourite teachers, by far the most prolific writer on Islamic history and culture, and a translator of academic books from English into Bengali books (such as *Muslim Conduct of State* by Muhammad Hamidullah (of Hyderabad and Paris), *Muhammad at Mecca* by W. M. Watt and *The Social Structure of Islam* by Reuben Levy, Professor of Persian at Christ's College, Cambridge). Of these three translated books, two have already been published and the third, *Muhammad at Mecca*, will soon be published in the Bengali. His fourth translated book, *Letters of Nur Qutb al-Alam*, was from the Persian language into English, which is yet to be published. Rasul was also a broadcaster of talks in English from Radio Pakistan Dhaka and Rajshahi. From Rajshahi Radio station, he not only delivered talks on cultural and literary topics but also sang songs of Nazrul Islam (Nazrul Sangit). At a later date, he was often invited to take part in live discussions on national issues which were broadcast by Bangladesh Television (BTV). His many distinctions and achievements distinguished him from his colleagues at Rajshahi University.

Ghulam Rasul also had a serious interest in the philosophy of history. He published two books on historiography: *The Origin and Development of Muslim Historiography* (Lahore, 1967) and *Muslim Itihas Charcha* (Muslim Historiography) in Bengali, which was published by Rajshahi University in 1994. He was the first author of East Pakistan to publish in Bengali a study of the philosophy and poetry of Muhammad Iqbal. The book entitled *Iqbal Parichiti* was published in 1953 by the poet Gholam Mostafa. His second book entitled 'The Genius of Iqbal' (*Iqbal Pratibha*) in Bengali was published by Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka in 1980. He wrote two books on early Muslim thinkers, namely Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Jalaluddin Rumi entitled *Ghazali Parichiti* (Introduction to al-Ghazali: His Life and Thought, 1980), and *Vishwa Marami Chintadharay Rumi* (1977). Judging by his trend of thought, it is not surprising that Gholam Rasul chose Chishti-Nizami Sufi Order of Bengal and its socio-religious contribution as the topic of his Ph.D. thesis at Calcutta University. This was published by Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, India in 1990. As a scholar who was conscious of his various achievements, Gholam Rasul had time to write his memoirs titled *Smiriti-Katha: Shekal -*

o-Ekal (Memoirs: Then and Now) which will be published in the near future. I had an opportunity to read this fascinating work.

Ghulam Rasul had creative urge to write essays in countless journals since his student days at Calcutta University during World War II and he never stopped writing during the rest of his life. His publications appeared first in the daily *Dainik Azad* of Calcutta edited by Mawlana Muhammad Akram Khan in 1942. Since then he wrote and published more than one hundred essays in Bengali and English in periodicals like *Sawgat*, *Mah-e-Naw*, *Nawbahar*, *Muhammadi*, *Dainik Azad*, *Sundaram*, *Rahbar (Rangpur)*, *Nazrul Academy Patrika*, *Itihas Parishad Patrika*, *Islamic Academy Patrika*, *Prithibi (monthly)*, *Varendra Research Museum Journal*, *Sahittiki*, *Morning News (Dacca)*, *Pakistan Observer*, *Bangladesh Observer*, *Islamic Thought (Aligarh Muslim University Journal)*, *Islamic Literature (Lahore)*, *Islamic Review (London)*, *The Muslim World Book Review*, etc. Among his most notable essays on Sufism include “*Sufi Saints of Rajshahi*,” in *The District of Rajshahi: Its Past and Present* (edited by S.A. Akanda), Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, 1983. His most erudite essay on the subject was “*The Sufi Concept of God and the Universe*”, which appeared in the *Journal of Varendra Research Museum* (editor Dr Mukhlesur Rahman), volume 5, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh, 1977-79.

Mohammad Ghulam Rasul was born at Calcutta in West Bengal and died at Rajshahi in East Bengal. He was born in his maternal grandparents’ house at Didar Bakhsh Lane, Calcutta, on 9 March 1921. His father, Mohammad Ghulam Akbar, M.A. was a teacher at Rangoon University College in Burma. His early education began at Salar Edward High School in Murshidabad and completed his M.A. in Islamic History and Culture at Calcutta University in 1944. He was awarded Ph.D. Degree in Islamic Studies by Calcutta University in 1982, shortly before his retirement from Rajshahi University.

By dint of an indomitable spirit and academic perseverance, Professor Mohammad Ghulam Rasul achieved distinction in academia. Although age required that he retire, he was persuaded to continue teaching at Rajshahi University part-time and retired in 1992. During the rest of his life he continued to lecture, write and deliver talks. His many books include *History of Islam* (Dacca, 1967), *Islam and the Modern World* (c.1964) in English and a dozen other books in Bengali. His Bengali writings on Islamic history are *Islamer Itihas* (History of Islam), Dhaka, 1964 and reprinted in 1993; *Maddhaprachcher Itihas* (History of the Middle East), 1964 and reprinted 1993; *Pak-Bharat Upmahadeshe Musalmander Itihas* (History of the Muslims in the Indian Sub-continent), 1963 and reprinted in 1979. After an academic career lasting five decades, Mohammad Ghulam Rasul died on 27 May 1997. He is survived by his widow, five sons and four daughters. In February 2010, a volume of love poems written by him was published under the title of *Premer Bhubane Atripta Ami*.

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