**Mrs. Kulsum Ullah**



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Interviewed by: Jamil Iqbal

Mrs. Ullah was the founding member and organiser of Bangladesh Women’s Association in Britain. She was associated in raising fund and relief for the War of Liberation. On one occasion she organised a gathering of 150 women for a mass demonstration.

**Q: Do you feel that the Independence War is part of your history?**
KU: I am a hard working woman. I could have gone any where, at any time for this (Independence War) movement. I was searching in my mind, that how can I be involved in this Sangram [*movement*]. In the mean time I came to know from one, that today (some day in 1971) the first demonstration is going to be staged (in London), that is when I joined the movement. We went there, to join the movement, we went to the demonstration, and there were a lot people.

And after that we started working for the Independence War, we collected money, sending cloths (to Bangladesh) and arranged gatherings in different places, we went to all the towns, and then we were all introduced to each other, and then we formed a women association, our president was Mrs Gous, members were Sufia Rahman, Ferdousi Rahman. I can’t tell you the exact date right now but I have it written, it was just two or three days after the war started, we formed the association. After that we used to meet up, we had no fixed meeting place, so we used to meet at different places. And Mr Gous Khan, after hearing all these and the association, he provided us with a place in his restaurant. And we used his restaurant as our gathering place.

**Q: Were you a general member or committee member of the Women Association?**
KU: I was the organiser of the Women Association that is why I had to move from place to place. I had to go to many people. We arranged a demonstration with the women participation only, at that time we brought women from East London, at that time there were few (Bengali) women here and they were also unwilling to come out of their houses. That is why we had to collect people, going door to door. The husbands were concerned with their security and demanded their full security, and told us to bring them back home. It was our responsibility to drop them off safely. The campaigns were usually arranged in Sundays and almost regularly. The whole nine months I was busy keeping aside my kids and family, whenever I was called to a demonstration or to go to somewhere for fundraising by film show, I was always there with some other participants. Most of the programme was arranged for women. The largest women gathering was achieved in the biggest demonstration, it was a huge demonstration, I alone took 150 women at least, and the number was quite a lot. People from all over UK participated in all the rallies; they came from Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Bristol, all parts of England. Say for example when we gathered at Hyde Park for the long march, people from the whole of Great Britain joined the rally. They came on busses.

**Q: How was your feeling about the Pakistanis, at that time?**
KU: We couldn’t tolerate the Pakistanis at that time; I was a regular customer of a Pakistani shop, and on the other side of the road there was a Bengali shop, at that time there was only three to four shops there, one day I went there and stood on the road and demanded that people did not buy anything from the Pakistani shop, every one laughed at me, I can remember this very clearly, I told that the Pakistanis are killing all the people in our country. After that, some of the passersby said, what have I done? If they (Pakistanis) get me (alone) on the way. I told them that they can’t do anything here (in UK), whatever they are doing in Bangladesh.

**Q: Are you proud about the new Homeland born after 1971?**
KU: Yes I was very much proud of my Bangladesh; I called (phoned) more than 100 people that day when victory was achieved, I called all my friends, relatives, members of the women association and many other people. I can remember clearly that I called some one hundred and few more of them. And told them all that Bangladesh is independent now.

Nowadays I can’t do a lot for my country but I still feel very much for my homeland. I was a member of the Girls Guide in my student life, when Fatima Jinnah [*Sister of Mr. MA Zinnah*] came to Sylhet, I was the first girl, I received her shaking her hands from the aircraft. She landed near Akhalia, Sylhet. All the girls ran to the plane, a man helped them holding their hands, but I protested and said I will do it on my own. All my teachers praised me afterwards, and told the other girls, what I did was right, and advised them to follow this.