

# Sarat Kamal Samaddar (1918–2006)

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## ASHISH KUMAR BOL

Ashish Kumar Bol is the executive secretary of South Bangladesh Mission.

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Sarat Kamal Samaddar was a renowned person, both in the Adventist and non-Adventist circles in the country of Bangladesh. He was among the Adventist pioneers in the country of Bangladesh and was an author of several books.

## Early Life

Sarat Kamal Samaddar was born December 10, 1918, to parents Bisseswar Samaddar and Billobashini in the village of Juluhar, district of Pirojpur, Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup> He was born into a Christian family who belonged to the Baptist Church. Sarat was converted to Adventism when he attended an Adventist school, the Kellogg Mookerjee Memorial Seminary (KMMS) at Gopalganj. Because of his influence, his parents and siblings became Seventh-day Adventists as well. Additional family members and other people of his village also became Adventists. Eventually they had a house church built in their village.

Sarat was the eldest of four children. His eldest sister died at the age of 30. His youngest sister, Bindubashini, planned to attend Kellogg Mookerjee Memorial Seminary (KMMS), but at that time a proposal for marriage came to his sister's family from the groom's family. Sarat's parents gave his sister to be married at an early age. His brother, Santosh, remained at home to take care of the property and stayed there until his death.<sup>2</sup>

## Education and Marriage

Poresh Nath Pandey, one of the early Adventist pioneers in India, came to the East Bengal Mission (now in Bangladesh) to recruit students for the newly established boarding school at Gopalganj (East Bengal). Passing through Juluhar in his boat, Pandey saw Sarat Kamal Samaddar swimming in a canal with his siblings and friends. Mooring the boat, Pandey asked Sarat's mother if she would send her eldest son to the mission school, and she replied "Yes." That began Sarat's involvement in the fledgling Adventist movement of East Bengal. He studied in the SDA school at Gopalganj.<sup>3</sup> The Kellogg-Mookerjee Memorial School started at Gopalganj in 1920. In 1939 the school was transferred to Jalirpar.<sup>4</sup>

Without even finishing high school, Sarat Samaddar began work for the Adventists in 1943 at Jalpaiguri in West Bengal (India) where he stayed until 1947.<sup>5</sup> On April 12, 1945, Sarat Samaddar married Sarna Lata Halder, the

16-year-old daughter of Bashanto Halder, who was one of the third group of Adventist pioneers of Buruabari.<sup>6</sup> They were blessed with three sons and two daughters, and all of them studied at Kellogg-Mookerjee Memorial Seminary (KMMS) and at other Adventist institutions. Their daughters studied nursing at Karachi Hospital in Pakistan and took further studies in Australia. Their oldest son worked at the Bangkok Adventist Hospital as lab technician, the second son studied medicine in the Philippines, and the youngest son studied medicine at the Government Medical College and Hospital in Bangladesh and lived in various places in Australia and the United States.

Shelley, the eldest daughter, earned her R.N. degree from Karachi Seventh-day Adventist Hospital School of Nursing in Pakistan. She retired as the supervisor of the nursing services of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, in Melbourne, Australia.<sup>7</sup>

George, the second child, obtained a degree in medical technology from the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand. He worked as a nurse in the ICU of a hospital in southern Texas, U.S.A., before retiring.<sup>8</sup>

Charles David, earned a bachelor's degree in the late 1970s from Philippine Union College in Baesa, and went on to earn an MD degree from Far Eastern University School of Medicine. After post-graduate training, he worked for 20 years in various hospital emergency departments in northwestern Ohio in the U.S.A. In 2016, after ten years as an emergency department physician at a Kaiser Hospital in southern California, he retired and has been sharing his faith with Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist intellectuals in the U.S.A. and the Orient, presenting the gospel through Lifestyle Medicine.<sup>9</sup>

Sherry also earned her nursing degree from the Adventist hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. For years she worked as an air ambulance nurse in Australia before retiring in Bavaria, Southern Germany.<sup>10</sup>

Alfred, the youngest son, received a MBBS degree from the medical college in Barisal, Bangladesh. He did his post-graduate training in New Zealand and works as a physician in Melbourne, Australia.<sup>11</sup>

## Ministry

In 1943, before finishing high school, Sarat began evangelistic work for the Adventist Church in Chakoa Kheti, Jalpaiguri, in the extreme northeast of West Bengal (India).<sup>12</sup> From 1948 to 1949 he served as a literature evangelist in Bangladesh and East Pakistan. From 1950 until 1957 he worked as an evangelist in East Pakistan (Bangladesh section). From 1958 until 1961 he served as a teacher at KMMS.<sup>13</sup> The following year he was called to serve as a circuit leader in Gopalganj and he was also ordained to the ministry.<sup>14</sup> From 1963 until 1965 he served as an evangelist at Gobindopur, Garo area, in North Bangladesh Mission. In 1966 he was appointed secretary of the Adventist mission work in Dhaka section, Bangladesh. The following year he was an evangelist in Akhonpara (Garo Area-NBM). He attended the 1970 General Conference Session in New Jersey, U.S.A.<sup>15</sup> He was appointed as executive secretary of Pakistan Section in 1970, but he was not able to continue to serve in that

position due to the civil war that broke out between East and West Pakistan which resulted in East Pakistan becoming Bangladesh on March 26, 1971. Since Sarat could not resume his position as executive secretary of Pakistan, he worked as an evangelist in the Gopalganj, Khulna, area from 1972 until 1974. In 1972 he was appointed temperance director of Bangladesh Union Mission.<sup>16</sup> From 1975 to 1976, he was a departmental director of Bangladesh Section. From 1977 until 1983 he served as Bangladesh Financial Association secretary at Bangladesh Section/Union. While he was secretary of Bangladesh Financial Association (BFA) between 1977-1983, he organized all the Bangladesh SDA church's land deeds and related documents, a contribution that has proved valuable to the Adventist work in Bangladesh. In 1984 he retired from active denominational service.<sup>17</sup>

## Later Life

In 1987 Sarat and his wife migrated to Australia where three of their children had settled. After several years in Australia, Sarat Samaddar returned to Bangladesh in 1996 to be with relatives and friends and to print books which he had written both while he was in service and in retirement. Also, he wanted to be part of the work of Jesus Christ in preaching and teaching the word of God in Bangladesh.<sup>18</sup>

Before he left for Australia, he sold all their property, so when he returned to Bangladesh he stayed with his nephew, Dilip Samaddar, who was working in the Bangladesh Union Publishing office. For several years he stayed there and printed some of the books he had written, including: *The Bible Made Easy*, *Introducing the Apostles of Jesus of Nazareth*, *The Bible and the Quran*, *The Bible and Hinduism*, and other books.<sup>19</sup>

Samaddar had a very good relationship with high-level government people and with some educational institutions. He fostered a close relationship with Anis-U-Zaman, a Muslim man who was chairman of the department of philosophy of Dhaka University. Because of Sarat's influence, Anis-U-Zaman travelled to Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, early in 1990 to study Adventism and Ellen G. White's writings for three months, accompanied by Sarat Samaddar.<sup>20</sup> On one occasion he told Charles David, the son of Sarat Samaddar who had settled in the U.S.A., that if he converted to Adventism, the church would gain one convert, but through him (Sarat Samaddar), the church could work all over Bangladesh. He adopted Sarat's book, *The Bible and the Quran*, as one of the textbooks for the University of Dhaka's philosophy department in Bangladesh.<sup>21</sup>

In 1998 Pastor Samaddar resided at Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (BASC), at Gowalbathan, Kaliakoir, Gazipur, Bangladesh, after his nephew and his wife left Bangladesh for the United States. While he was at Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (BASC), in addition to writing and printing books, he was the advisor for two college presidents, Dr. Winston Dennis and later Dr. Clement Martin of BASC.<sup>22</sup> Pastor Samaddar taught three college subjects in the religion department, cared for BASC land, and assisted when the Bangladesh Union Mission needed help.

Pastor Samaddar built a small prayer house beside his little cottage at BASC and students used to go there for private prayer. He also decorated the inside of his house with Bible texts for students to memorize, and he created a small pond with red lilies and fish in it. He enjoyed having the students visit him and shared with them mashed potatoes with mustard oil and dry chilli, and he loved to eat sweet yogurt. He had a soft heart for anyone in difficulty, and he sacrificed financially to help many families, friends, and students. His life truly radiated service to others.

Pastor Samaddar was shocked and saddened when his wife died on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1999, at her residence in Australia before he could see her again. She was cremated and her ashes remain in Australia.<sup>23</sup>

Several years later, during a trip to officiate at a wedding, he contracted a communicable disease. While in the hospital, complications set in from which he never recovered. At about this time, the government had planned to bestow an honor on him because of his contributions to his country, but it never happened.<sup>24</sup> Finally, at the age of 88, he succumbed to Urosepsis in December 2006 at a Dhaka hospital and rested in Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> According to his wish, he was laid to rest at his home village, Juluhar, along with his humble parents and brother in unmarked family graves awaiting the return of his Saviour whom he believed and loved.<sup>26</sup>

## Contribution

As a BFA departmental secretary between the years of 1977 and 1983, he made a priceless contribution by compiling all of the church's valuable legal deeds and collecting all the related documents. He contributed also by solving problems at the government level. There is no way to measure the effect of all the books he wrote which are in the homes of Adventists and other Christians. As an evangelist, he brought many souls to God's kingdom. Until the very end, Sarat Kamal Samaddar remained a man of principle, a faithful upholder of the law of God, and a mighty witness to many Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian souls with whom he came in contact.

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### NOTES

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2. Phone interviews with Simson Biswas, nephew, Dhaka/Gopalganj, June 6, 8, 27, 2020.
3. Information from Charles David, son of Sarat, through Messenger, June 6, 27, 2020.
4. *History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bangladesh: 110 Years, 1906-2016* (Motijheel, Dhaka, Seventh-day Adventist Press and Publishing House, 2016), 31.
5. Personal Service Record of Sarat Kamal Samaddar.
6. Information from Charles David.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
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15. Robert G. Manners, president of Bangladesh Union Mission in his Introduction to the book by Sarat Samaddar, *True Jesus of Nazareth* on April 1, 1993.
16. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1973-1974, 252.
17. Ibid.
18. Information from Charles David, son of Sarat, through Messenger, June 6, 27, 2020.
19. Phone interview with Solivio Biswas, nephew and district pastor of West Bangladesh Mission, June 8, 2020.
20. Information from Charles David, son of Sarat, through Messenger, June 6, 27, 2020.

21. Ibid.
  22. Interview with Solivio Biswas, nephew, Dhaka/Gopalganj, June 6, 8, 27, 2020.
  23. Phone interview with Simson Biswas, nephew of Sarat Kamal Samaddar, June 6, 8, 27, 2020.
  24. Information from Charles David, son of Sarat, through Messenger, June 6, 27, 2020.
  25. Ibid.
  26. Phone interview with Simson Biswas, nephew of Sarat Kamal Samaddar, June 6, 8, 27, 2020.
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