

Sharmin (Reepi) Ahmad

Sharmin (Reepi) Ahmad is the founder and president of the **One Light Institute**, a US-based non-profit organization promoting peace and enlightenment through multidimensional education and experiential learning.

Sharmin emigrated to the United States in 1984. She earned a Master of Arts degree in 1990 in Women's Studies from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. with a focus on Early Childhood Education. She won a George Washington University fellowship and was the first recipient of **Women's Studies Scholar Award**.

She has been involved with children's education for nearly 3 decades and consulted various prestigious institutes and organizations on women's empowerment, peace education, human rights and interfaith bridgebuilding. she helped found several organizations for the empowerment of women and children. Currently she is leading a project to develop a peace education curriculum and teacher's guide for the grassroots and marginalized communities in Bangladesh.

In 2003 she published her first book "**The Rainbow in a Heart**" to convey the importance of a woman's powerful role in shaping a nonviolent society through knowledge and love. In this bilingual (English-Bangla) fictional story a child searches for her perfect mother who will be her teacher and guide, before she is even born. The story has been used in various schools and institutions both in the U.S.A and Bangladesh.

The Rainbow in a Heart had been approved for The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPC) of Maryland (ranked among the nation's top public schools) for its English Language Arts curriculum up to the middle school level. Placed in the "highly recommended category", the MCPC media specialist described the book as "very unique" and as a "good asset" to an elementary and middle school collection.

She has co-produced a **peace dance drama** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKtHS93w-3Y&t=1153s>) based on the aforementioned book to promote female empowerment, universal motherhood and peacebuilding among children, parents, educators and those who strive for peace at home and the world. This highly acclaimed dance drama has been performed on stage at the prestigious F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre in Maryland, U.S.A and at the National Theatre in Bangladesh.

On the international and political front, Sharmin published a historical memoir **Tajuddin Ahmad: Neta o Pita** (*Tajuddin Ahmad: Leader and Father, 2014*), a national best seller in Bangladesh and among the Bangladeshi community living abroad. It depicts the life and work of her father, the First Prime Minister of Bangladesh and who led the war of liberation of his country to victory in 1971.

In her book (2012) **Daughter of Bangladesh Liberation Witnesses Tahrir Emancipation**, Sharmin provides a first hand account of the Arab Spring in Egypt and adroitly weaves a true tale of redemption, heroism, peace and justice.

Among her notable research and writings she contributed a chapter "**The Rising Phoenix and Weaving Peace**" on Bangladesh war 1971 and the ordeals of violated women in "A Force such as the World has Never Known: Women Creating Change" (Inanna Publications, Canada, November 2013).

In 2011 she established **Tajuddin Ahmad Memorial Trust Fund** at Dhaka University to inspire and financially support students in higher education. In 2013, she established another trust fund in her father's name to promote research on Bangladesh Liberation at The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

She organized and led numerous workshops on human rights and interfaith bridgebuilding, appeared on television and radio talk shows, and lectured at various prestigious institutions in the US and abroad. She participated in and been a representative to many international conferences, including the **Fourth World Conference of Women** held in Beijing, China (1995), and the First International Non-Governmental Organizations Conference in Tehran, Iran (1995). In 2002 she participated at the **United Nations conferences on the status of women (CSW)** and was a part of the NGO Caucus Committee which drafted a published statement against violence promoted by the mass media and against the proliferation of both nuclear arms and small arms. She also served on the steering committee of two US-based organizations: **Women in Development and Samhati** to help destitute women and children.

She was a consultant for the **US Department of Health**, working at the grassroots level in order to raise awareness against female genital mutilation in the United States. She worked at Rohingya refugee camps in Balukhali, Kotupalang and Muchuni of Bangladesh to provide aid and educational materials. She also helped with raising funds to build much needed sanitary facilities in the camps. She worked on Syrian and Bosnian refugee issues through charity and education.

She has been featured in **The Washington Post**, and her editorial letters and articles have been published in various newspapers including **The Wall Street Journal**. Her life and interview are included in the **Voices of American Muslims: Twenty -three Profiles** by noted author Linda Brandy Cateura (2005).

In 2021 Sharmin received the US **President's Volunteer Service Award** (Gold) "in recognition and appreciation for her commitment to strengthen our nation and communities through volunteer service." Sharmin was twice invited to the **White House** by President Bill Clinton and First lady Hilary Clinton in recognition of her activism on peacebuilding and women empowerment. In 1996 she also received a **Woman of Distinction Award** for her "outstanding contributions in the field of international goodwill and understanding" from Soroptimist International of the Americas Club, Washington DC. Among other numerous awards, she was the recipient of **Women Empowerment Award** (2019) from **Agami Education Foundation-USA** for her "outstanding contribution to education through humanitarian support".

Sharmin continues to travel around the world promoting peace education, human rights, goodwill and understanding among various faiths and cultures.