**DAY 2: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2017**

**Welcome Address:**

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# DAY 2 WELCOME ADDRESS

Good morning. I am Mandakranta Bose, former director of the Centre for India and South Asia Research at UBC. On behalf of the Centre and UBC, it is my privilege to welcome you all to this third day of the Canada 150 Conference on Migration of Bengalis, which is being held at the University of British Columbia. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam First Nation, upon which this University stands.

This conference, which is on its third and last day, began its inaugural session on the evening of 15 September with a Bharatanatyam performance by Arno Kamalika. She also danced excerpts from Tagore's dance dramas *Chandalika* and *Chitrangada,* to welcome you all and offer you a feast for your eyes, so that you may savour a sample of the riches that the culture of Bengal possesses. The second day was spent at the SFU Harbour Centre campus downtown, where we all met to listen to speakers share their experiences and observations on their lives as immigrants in Canada.

Yesterday we covered a large area, beginning with the keynote lecture by Professor Tania Das Gupta, a Torontonian Bengali who questioned what it means to be a Bengali Canadian. This was followed by a very lively discussion on Bengali identity in the diaspora. The discussions then moved on to migration and settlement, history, demography, religion, and health issues within the Bengali diaspora. We then heard papers dealing with gender, culture, family, and work. The day ended with a discussion of multiculturalism and social justice issues, and some sharing of information about Bengali organizations.

Today's session will open with an ethnographic account of migration, identity, and contributions of Bengalis to Manitoba by today's keynote speaker, Dr. Emdad Haque. We will then be moving on to the issue of Canadian Bengali youth and their social and cultural identity, and the shaping influence of their family life. Finally, more experiences of Bengalis related to settlement and the community services they have found in Greater Vancouver will be discussed. We will end our day with discussions on the political and social impact of multiculturalism on the lives of Bengali Canadians in their adopted country, and finish with roundtable workshops with participants from the Bengali community.

This conference has come to fruition through the vision and unflagging effort of Professor Habiba Zaman of SFU, who is also a contributor to this Centre's research endeavours. I may mention here that many years ago, in 1994, the Centre organized a conference of Canadian Bengalis to discuss Bengali culture. From that small beginning, we have now progressed to this much more comprehensive conference, thanks to Dr. Habiba Zaman's energy and vision, ably supported by Dr. Sanzida Habib. Dr. Zaman has put together this conference by inviting people of Bengali origin from many parts of Canada to share the Bengali diasporic experience in Canada. It is a special event for and by Bengali-speaking Canadians who migrated from their homelands to Canada. This conference has

been made successful by the participants and observers who have come here to voice their joys as well as concerns in the new country they have embraced.

Dr. Zaman's initiative has brought us together to learn about our achievements, earned against the many challenges that an immigrant population is bound to face. By doing this, she has been able to showcase Bengali migrants' achievements and reveal their concerns to Canadians at large. I would like to thank Dr. Zaman for organizing this conference to let us look at our achievements again from many perspectives. I hope this initiative will energize a steady effort to map the lives of Bengalis in Canada. As a Bengali myself, I am proud to be here to welcome you to the last day of this invigorating conference.