

# Ferial Imam Haque

Freelance Scientist

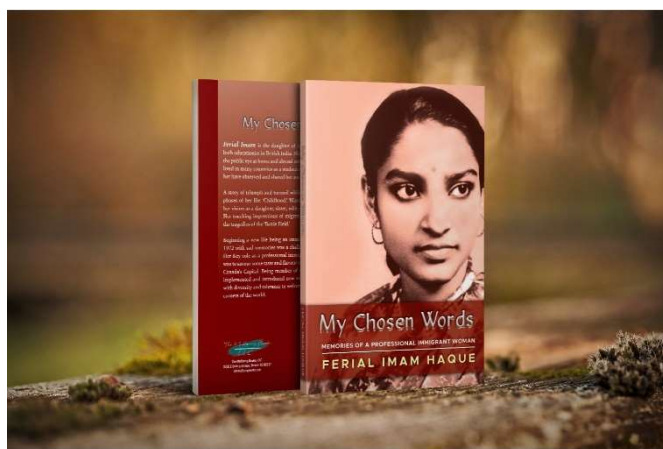
***Ferial has endured many challenges before succeeding in a scientific career including, surviving war and being a migrant woman of colour***



## Why did you decide on a career in science?

It dates back in time to my infancy when my father died of heart disease at age 27 years. He was a bright student in the Department of Physics at the University of Dacca, British India in the mid-1930s. I hardly had any recollection of my father, but the echoes of my relatives' voices narrating how he had suffered pains from heart disease since his childhood stayed with me.

Sadly, as a child I also suffered from Rheumatic Fever and had to have my tonsils operated on. In spite of my health, I was determined to pursue a career in science, and after recovering from my surgery, I decided to diligently study at school. At the High School Final Examination, for academic excellence I won the Governor General's award and scholarship to study B.Sc. Honours degree in the Department of Chemistry, University of Dacca, the only female student in Chemistry.



## What qualifications and experience do you have?

I received my PhD degree from the University of Strathclyde in 1970. My research findings for my PhD project were in organic, organometallic and theoretical Chemistry.

My research focussed on forensic science methods to stop drug trafficking, which had international significance.

## What does your typical day involve?

In my student days in the sixties in Ottawa, I got very little rest/sleep because the baby was most important. A neighbour used to babysit, our baby in her home. So, my responsibility was to attend to baby first to my neighbour then take the Bus to the university. In the sixties and seventy the question of Day-Care did not arise. We young parents lobbied for day-care.

## ChemDiverse Career Profile

### Do you work mostly on your own or as part of team?

I mostly work on my own as a freelancer, under contract with the Universities and Government of Canada in Ottawa. In the past I have worked with large groups of scientists.

### What challenges have you faced to get to where you are now?

After my graduation from the University of Strathclyde I returned to Dacca, East Pakistan. I joined the Department of Chemistry at the University of Dacca, in Dacca as Assistant Professor. Not long after this, in March 1971, the Bangladesh Liberation War began and life for everyone became chaotic and dangerous. East Pakistan was declared as an independent country on December 16, 1971, now called Bangladesh. I, along with my husband and our only daughter, migrated to Ottawa, Canada on July 22, 1972 without any source of income.

Being a war survivor and a migrant woman of colour in the seventies did not help matters as jobs in chemistry were scarce. During the 1970s it was not common to see women in science in any country that I have pursued studies in. So, it was a solitary working life.

### What are you most proud of in your career?

I am proud being able to work with a team of experts in the field solving crime, including research scientists and the professors at the universities in Ottawa, Canada.

A specific part of my research that I am most proud of is my contributions in forensic science to stop international drug trafficking. I am also very proud of my work on fingerprinting methods, one of which has been included in the Manual for Development of Latent Fingerprints by the British Home Office, and is known as the Ferial Haque Method.

### What possibilities are there for your future career?

Since my retirement as a Forensic Scientist in the nineties I am continuing my work as a freelancer in the areas of women and promoting multiculturalism in Ottawa, Canada.

### What do you think are the most important skills for someone in your role to have?

To acquire good habits in the laboratory with a clear concept of the chosen research areas.

