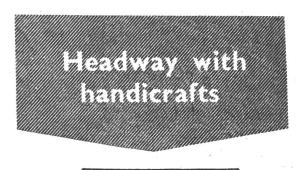
Amidst numerous stories of the struggle of our people, one that has remained consistently untold is that of our women. Deprived of social attention because tradition makes their public appearance a taboo. Handicapped by illiteracy because custom has it that their place is within the confines of homes. Constrained by a lack of opportunity because practice has it that 'men are better contenders for every job that society can provide. And yet in spite of the deprivation, the handicap and the constraints Bangladeshi women wage a valiant struggle for the economic betterment of the family which has remained unsung. This struggle is as spectacular in its courage, as determined in its progress and as imaginative in its variety as any other waged by men.

It is this untold story, brilliant in its scope, beautiful in its human appeal and brave in its content which attracted the sensitivity of a young American photo-journalist, Julia Brennan.



FAYZA HAQ

Julia a teenage student from Columbia University, New York has brought out an in-York has brought out an interesting and unusual photo journal on "Handicrafts of Bangladesh". Like all Europeans and Americans Julia Brennan understands that Bangladesh has been the centre of floods, war, drought and devastating inflation and that the people of Bangladesh have had to toil to keep body and soul alive. Julia collected the material for the book in January and February 1976. The book is then a fascinating study of the different aspects of handicrafts, which provides material for those interested in "aid through trade" and in "aid through trade": and for those who would like to know more about Bangladesh as a developing country.

Julia received help from the

Jute Works (the Women's Handicrafts Marketing Organisation) which gave her a description of the relevant production centres. The young author also got her self a Bangladeshi guide who helped her with questions and trans-lations. He also helped her lations. He also helped her plan her project. In her book Julia shows the day by day work of the cottage industry programme. She has explained how handicraft is the new hope for thousands of women in the villages and refugee

camps. Julia has shown how handicrafts of Bangladesh are a traditional skill. The place mats and the "sikas" that mats and the "sikas that beautify the European and American home come from a background of proverty, ig-norance, sickness and overpopulation, as the author reports clearly, with her photograph's documentation and journalistic commentation. She has written how jute is knotted and woven from skeins of raw white jute. She has also carefull delineated how beautiful paskets are made from cane that is finely split and coiled into is finely split and coiled into a design. Thus it has been shown how these crafts are a part of the daily life and how, encouraged and develop. how, encouraged and developed through the method of the cooperatives, they can serve as means of economic indepen.

In course of her writing the author has explained in detail the pattern of work in the cooperatives and the Jute Works.

It has been told how the



Julia Brennan

Jute Works company is self-supporting and is untike any commercial exporter who will abandon one village for ano. ther in search of lower price. It has been explained how the goal is not to make a proht or to commercially sell Bangladeshi handicrafts but to provide a market for the han-dicrafts of the proverty stri-cken woman, who are often cell cken woman, who are widows into the bargain.

The author has studied and presented her subject with tramendous patience, care and understanding, which is remarkable in one so young. In promoting the handicrafts julia as made a detailed study of as made a detailed study of the socio-economic position of the women and the difficulties as well as promises of the nandiwok industry in a trou-ble strewn place. In course of the book, the author explains how the Bangladeshi woman's whole day is devoted to her tamily and that she has no means of having a separate job or income. It is also shown now not a all women secure family to relay one.

There are many widows and unmarriageable girls who need both money and occupation. And that is where the handicraft programme comes in, it is pointedout. It is told how out of the idea of craft pro-grammes developed the wo-



Making jutebags.

men's handicraft cooperatives. It is stressed that Bngla-deshi women are totally un-self-fish and unaware of their cooperatives. confirmed situation but how the handicrafts co.operatives are slowly making them re-alise their future opportunico.operatives g them re.

The book describes how the Jute Works is the cumulation of the cooperatives and how there is careful quality control and arrenath, colour and Works is the culmination length of the jute threads.
There are, moreover, the women's training centres which teach the women how to make other articles besides "sikas" shoulder the women as table mats, shoulder is at other articles besides such as table mats, shoulder bags and belts. This is at places like Jagaroni, in Dacca, a distance from the village from where women come with their needle, scissors and own jute, as the author narrates. Julia goes into the depth of the centres and even gives the background story of the two extraordinary women, deaf mutes, Dolly and Patricia who run the Jagaroni centre. This gives a sense of immediacy, and with the help of the nugives a sense of immediacy, and with the help of the nu-merous photographs, the reader can easily imagin himself looking around the places on

looking around the places on his own.
Writing about the special handleraft centre for widows in Bogra, Julia reports how the Bogra women have earned a name for themselves by working at the hessein bags, with jute and hessein of their own. Apart from writing about place mats and runners the author also explains, along side, how the schooling of the widows children is carried out at the centre.

widows chiddren is called out at the centre.

Julia has also dealt with the prayer mats of the Noakhali women. The makers of the mats have still to be organised

cooperatives. Studying the people and their potentiality, the writer feels that the makers of the "botnis" ould be organised and liberated by teaching them to work and communicate among themselves. In this Studying cooperatives among v the and communicate among themselves. In this way the women would have an extra income and so gain the respect of the men folk, it is sgain elaborated.

Whether talking about mats or belts, "sikkas" cane baskets a waver mats or even cro-

or prayer mats or even cro-chet table cloth, Julia has stu-died the people and their needs with enormous sympathy and understanding. She has emphasised repeatedly, and ex-plained through her photo do. cumentation how the vin Bangladesh have their in handicraft to conm handicraft to contribute something to the progress and beauty of the world outside. Insested of being pitied and merely given aid for survival, these women should be helped to survive on their own ment by progression on their own their by progression. contribute merit by popularising and patronising the handicrafts of jule, cane and crochet, Julia explains clearly and emphati-

explains clearly and emphatically.

Consisting of 30 pages of heary photographic illustration, the book is a tremendous chievement in furthering the europe of the silent and suffering women folk of Bangladth. They have been shown as shy and retreating, with their talent for handicraft pointer out as one escape out of their talent for handicraft pointed out as one escape out of the mortifying situation of being dependents or destitutes. Sale and export of the handicraft have been shown as their one big break. It is astombing how a 17-year-old could do such a through job of searching out, analysing and reporting with sincerity and sympathy.

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Specimens of cane mat