



## Mr. Ali M Azhar

Place of Residence: **London**  
Sector: **Law (Barrister)**

**B**orn in Sirajganj, Bangladesh, Mr Azhar completed his MA at Dhaka University in 1958. During his student life, Mr Azhar was deeply involved in student politics. He became the General Secretary of the entire East Pakistan students' League and suffered imprisonment on a number of occasions. He was called to the bar by the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn in 1962, and since then he has been a huge success within the field of law.

Currently, he is the Head of Chambers at 9 Kings Bench Walk in Temple, London. However, it has been a long and hard journey to get to the elevated status that he now enjoys.

Mr Azhar began practising law alongside his brother, the late Ali M Abbas, in 1962. At the time, Asian barristers were few and far between, although the two brothers quickly imposed their expertise onto the legal sector. Both brothers conducted several cases either together or opposed to each other, which have set milestones in the British legal system and are reported in the English legal books and studied by all stu-

dents of law. Many laws were passed by the British Parliament as a follow-up of the outcome of these cases.

In the years since, Mr Azhar has become a specialist in many of the various legal areas such as criminal law, family law, claims for damages and also human rights.

Mr Azhar is a deeply religious man, and it is this which initially helped to lead him to his chosen profession. This stems from his belief that the foundations of society are based on laws, and since the Qur'an is Allah's book of laws, then as Muslims, we should follow the Qur'an in order to produce a stable and productive society. Mr Azhar led the prosecution of the infamous writer Salman Rusdie in the British Supreme Court on the ground that the writer had vilified Islam and made scurrilous attacks on the beloved Prophet of Islam in his profane book "Satanic Verses". On behalf of millions of Muslims across the world, Mr Azhar took the case to the British High Court, then to the Court of Appeal and then to the highest Court of the land, the House of Lords. Mr Azhar spoke over 11 hours advocating

that the writer had committed the serious criminal offence of blasphemy and had to be punished accordingly.

Away from his work, Mr Azhar is a proud family man. He married his wife, Mrs Farhat Azhar, in 1970, and they have two daughters – Shabeena Mahmuda and Rubeena Mahmuda. Both Shabeena and Rubeena are also barristers, and they both are tenants of their father's chambers. In fact, a career in law almost seems to be a prerequisite if you are within the extended family of Mr Azhar; Shabeena Mahmuda's husband is also a barrister, as is Mr Azhar's nephew Hafizur Rahman.

Clearly Mr Azhar can be seen as a pioneer for British Bangladeshis as, along with his brother, Mr Azhar's initial strides into the arena of law have allowed many other members of the community to follow in their footsteps. For this, the community must be extremely grateful as through his determination and hard work, he has become a wonderful representative and ambassador for British Bangladeshis.