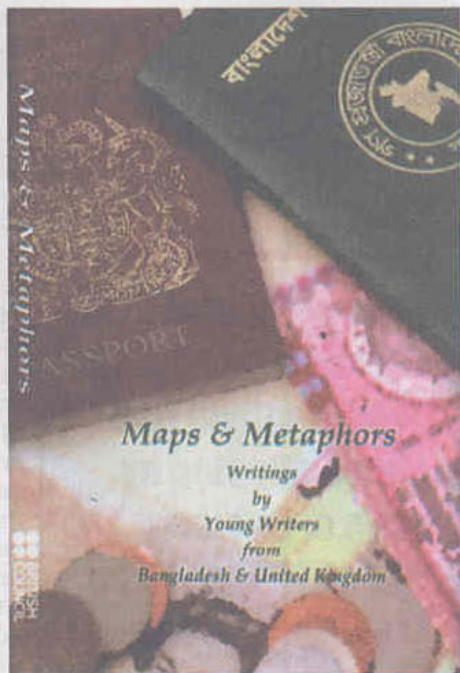


# Fusing Cultures with Words

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IT was Bono, heartthrob and world famous musician from the band U2, who said that, "this is a time for bold measures. This is the country, and you are the generation."

Even today, it's hard to find young people who would take these bold steps and involve themselves in creative and constructive activities. Then again, it's hard to find proper activities in the country today, for these young people, which would play an indirect role in developing their young minds and personalities. This is probably one of the biggest reasons as to why Brine Pickles, a literary group hailing from the British Council on Fuller Road, attracts a number of young writers, expressing their inner thoughts and ideas on paper.

'Maps & Metaphors: Writings by Young Writers from Bangladesh & United Kingdom,' a compilation of these young expressions, was launched on June 24 at the British Council. The aim behind establishing this book is to set up a strong platform for the creative writers from Bangladesh and the United Kingdom. The idea was to promote cultural heritage, identity, beliefs and understanding cultural differences and similarities between the two nations. According to Dr. June Rollins, director of British Council, part of the idea was also to promote contemporary British writing in Bangladesh, as well as encourage promising young English language writers in this country to present their work to a wider audience in Bangladesh and UK.

The group in Bangladesh was formed in January 2004 and decided to call themselves Brine Pickles. The young members here are engaged in all forms of writings, namely, fiction, plays, poetry and even songs, reflecting on the

many elements of life itself, for instance, identity, race, religion, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, language, diversity, faith and many more. Both the British and the Bangladeshi groups of young writers came together and went through several workshops under the guidance of Dinesh Allirajah in December 2005. The combination of the writers' group and individual works resulted in 'performance literature' involving live music and

special lighting as well.

Several guests and professors had attended the book launching ceremony, including Professor Kabir Chowdhury as the Chief Guest and Professor Kaiser Haq as the Special Guest. Professor Chowdhury shared his memories with the young writers and the audience present at the ceremony about his younger days as a writer. He reminisced over the long gone moment when he himself had flown all over Europe to share his culture, heritage and identity with the writers there.

"A book launching ceremony is a happy moment and should be celebrated," exclaimed Professor Haq and decided to touch upon the various elements of English Literature instead of talking about the book itself. His lively talk emphasised on the South Asian texture of the language that greatly encouraged the awestruck young writers. The audience broke into laughter when he apologetically ended by saying, "I am afraid I had begun to lecture," something that comes so naturally to this famous professor and writer.

The writings in the book reflected upon a fusion of cultures, both western and traditional and the young writers clearly worked hard in coming up with something different and un-conventional. "They did a great job," said Professor Haq. "However, I think they can work harder on style, generation of ideas and the ways of expressing them through written words."

Workshops of such kinds organised by the British Council help out a lot of young people craving to write. However, many more of such workshops and seminars on creative writing should be organised to get a wider range of writers in the country involved. ■