

#TRIBUTE

Remembering Mrs Niloufer Manzur

For those of us associated with Sunbeams School—students, staff and teachers—18th August is a day to celebrate the birthday of a beloved gem that was our founder principal, beloved Mrs Niloufer Manzur. Over the years, we would forever think of her and our school's creation fondly on that day.



up and learn from. Puzzles that would help them learn numbers and objects to help them with counting, number blocks and Montessori materials such as a Pink Tower, Brown Stairs – all gave the children activities that made learning something they could look forward to eagerly and joyfully. They did artwork and music and dance lessons in this room too.

A true patriot, Niloufer Apa felt children should be made to know their motherland well. Apa made sure that we had many books and activities for that purpose. There were thus fairs where children would make beautiful objects and “sell” them! Pitha, tehari and other food items like rashogollah, muri chanachur and fuchka were available at a low price on days commemorating local festivals. She encouraged children to stage Bengali plays by Rabindranath and Nazrul.

We all got an unforgettable lesson in patriotism from Niloufer Apa when some years ago miscreants broke a Shahid Minar statue in Naryanganj. When she came to our Dhanmondi school soon after, she asked all students to gather in the spot where we had our assembly. She hoisted the flag then, and spoke to students about the importance of honouring the Bangladeshi flag. She explained to them how we got our flag at the cost of the deaths of millions of people and because of the sacrifice and bravery of thousands of freedom fighters.

I wish I could tell her, how we missed celebrating her birthday this August, and how we treasure our memories of her, and what she taught us all, and hope to follow her example as it will inspire all Sunbeamers forever.

By Nazma Alam
Photo: Star Archive



Niloufer Apa, however, passed away on 26th May and so this year her birthday was another reminder of wealth that we as a community had lost to Corona virus so unexpectedly. All we did from May onwards was keep missing her inspirational presence; and her approaching birthday only accentuated our sadness and mingled with the other sad days of the month full of sorrow for all Bangladeshis.

Professionally as well as personally, it was always the finest of times for us whenever Mrs. Manzur was with us. She was a perfectionist in every way and got the best out of us, but even when she did not approve of the work we were

doing, she would guide us patiently. She appreciated quality work and innovative ideas at all times. Since Sunbeams opened its doors, she appeared to have envisioned developing a school that would be one of the best of its kind in Dhaka and she would make us perform accordingly.

I had been working in the school for a few decades when one day Mrs. Manzur told me that she wanted me to set up a Language Center for our Nursery and Playgroup students. Such a center she believed would help little children to have free access to things related to language acquisition. And so I set up the Language Centre— with a reading corner full of story books that the children could pick

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