

A Bangladeshi Volunteer Who Has Made Gasan his Second Home

by S.Y. Bakht

There are a few Bangladeshi volunteers in the UN system working in developing countries to promote community-based projects. Some of them have achieved remarkable success in their field of work in foreign countries, like Dulal Chandra Ghosh at Gasan in the Philippines.

Dedicated efforts towards community-based projects to generate income do produce results.

In Bangladesh, many volunteers, both from home and abroad, on a number of occasions have demonstrated that income-generating projects at the community level can be profitable.

There are a few Bangladeshi volunteers in the UN system working in developing countries to promote community-based projects. And some of them have achieved remarkable success in their field of work in foreign countries.

Dulal Chandra Ghosh, 29, is one such volunteer whose projects have succeeded remarkably in generating income for the participants in a small town in the Philippines.

His work as a Field Worker in the town of Gasan towards promoting self-reliance at the community level has been termed "excellent" by his superiors at the United Nations Volunteer Programme on Domestic Development Services (UNV/DDS).

A graduate of veterinary medicine from the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Dulal achieved outstanding success in his target projects of broiler and piggy production.

In addition, his involvement in other development projects and his personal interaction with the community helped him to build an excellent rapport with the local people, so much so that he proudly claimed Gasan to be his "second home".

Born in 1961 in Madhya Lakshimpur, Comilla, Dulal had his work cut out when he reached the town of Gasan, in the province of Marinduque — an island 250 km south of Manila — in October 1989.

He set out by acquainting himself with his supervisor, the Municipal Mayor, and with the people of the community



Dulal Chandra Ghosh feeding chickens raised in his broiler project at Gasan, Philippines.

of 28,000. Plans for his target projects were approved by the Mayor as well as the Provincial Governor.

The broiler production project was fully implemented by February 1990 and within the first 45 days of operation the three selected recipients of project aid, involving a total of 16 individuals, gained an income of about US dollars 100 each, he pointed out.

Out of the total budget of US dollar 4,395.62 approved

by the municipal authorities, he noted that only US dollar 1428.57 was used in the first phase of the project and even the municipality received US dollar 76 as its share of the profits.

Soon after the implementation of the initial phase and as the profitability of the project was proven beyond doubt, Dulal said that the Gasan project was duplicated in all other municipalities in the province. "To my knowledge, there was

no other similar project in the whole island before my project was initiated," he added.

The project was expanded to include a total of six recipients with 28 beneficiaries. And after the first full year of operation the total sales stood at US dollar 10,097.51 with an income of US dollar 3,195.36 for the recipients during Feb '90 and April '91.

Although the success of his projects were outstanding by any standards, Dulal was not ready to sit on his laurels. The next logical step, he opined, was to encourage the participants to become self-reliant.

He urged the recipients to form a cooperative so that as early as possible they would be exposed to working together for the betterment of the project. Likewise, they won't have to rely upon the support of municipal grants for a lifetime because as long the project remains stable and the participants are familiar with the pros and cons, gradually they need to stand alone after the departure of the volunteer," Dulal explained.

The piggy project, on the other hand, was on-going in all parts of the town and the province, thus all it needed was a little "constructive probing" to get it off the ground, he said.

"Beneficiaries of the project are so fortunate that they don't have to spend a single centavo to obtain a piglet," he said, adding "they only need to see the group formed under the project in order to meet their requirements."

The other income-generating livelihood projects he is involved in are vegetable production, community gardening and intensive food production which includes corn, peanut and sweet potato. As part of the Trickle-Up-Programme (TUP), he was also instrumental in implementing the bamboo and vine crafts projects in Gasan.



Extracting banana seeds with two co-workers.

And, of course, his services are very much needed on all occasions where animals require treatment, he said. As an additional duty, "Since my arrival, I was requested by the Municipality of Gasan to inspect all animals at the market before slaughtering," he pointed out.

Dulal's activities do not end with the work for his projects, neither is his activities limited to the projects. He also involved himself extensively in various social activities in the community.

He was invited as a guest speaker at the United Nations Day celebrations for two consecutive years at the Gasan Central School and the Antipolo Elementary School.

"My knowledge of the Tagalog language did a lot to make my speeches so lively on those occasions," he said.

He also helped to locally celebrate International Volunteers Day, frequently participates in development seminars and organized tree planting drives, free medical services and food grain distribution to the public, particularly to the typhoon victims.

After discovering a "hidden talent" in music, he used it to further cement his ties with the local people. He entertained the community by singing a hit Tagalog song during the festivities of the Gasan Town Fiesta in May '91.

To sing in front of big crowd was really a combination of tense and excitement, but that did not stop me from entertaining the people of Gasan," he said, adding, "the response of the crowd was a heart touching one and even now I continue to receive a lot of praises for the performance."

The community of Gasan has a very cooperative-minded people, making it easier to establish community-based projects in the area, Dulal remarked. "They just lack a person who can lead, begin or initiate a project that will propagate in the community," he added.

The existing projects in Gasan will surely keep on growing as far as the stability aspect is concerned, he said adding "My assurance lies on the cooperation and great performance of the recipients as well as the beneficiaries from my various programmes and projects."

Death of Comedian Provokes a Cultural Row

The pre-dawn abduction of a coffin containing the body of New Zealand's most popular entertainer, Billy T James, and the absence of his wife from the funeral, has provoked a national cultural row. by David Robie



BILLY T. JAMES
The character always comes out on top

THE death of New Zealand's most popular entertainer, Billy T James, a Maori, is causing the country's biggest cultural controversy for years — including allegations of body snatching.

Billy T's three-day tangi (funeral) drew sensational headlines over a cultural rift between the Maori and Pakeha (white) communities.

Three thousand mourners were present as Billy was taken in a hearse — the same white Cadillac used for the funeral of Elvis Presley in 1977 — to be buried next to his mother on a sacred Taupiri mountain.

But the ritual of burial was marred by clashes of tradition. At about 3 am on the morning following the entertainer's death, elders of the Tainui tribe entered the James house and, against the wishes of Billy's wife Lynne, a Pakeha, took Billy's casket in the name of tribal protocol.

Lynne James, bitterly upset by this event, refused to attend the marae (Maori meeting place) for the remainder of the mourning ritual.

Public opinion erupted. Newspapers and civic leaders protested the "cruel" treatment of Lynne James and what they described as callous disregard of the entertainer's dying wishes. Billy T had wanted his funeral to be held in Auckland, not at the Turangawaewae Marae near Hamilton. He also wanted a

woman to officiate at the service and for his body to remain at home until the funeral and burial on Taupiri, a mountain usually reserved for Maori chiefs.

Tribal elders claimed that Billy T was a taonga (treasure) and thus belonged to the people and must be shared.

But Dame Whina Cooper, one of the most respected of the Maori land rights campaigners of the Seventies, publicly declared her support for Lynne James and described removal of the coffin as insensitive.

Billy T James was New Zealand's 14th heart transplant recipient, and the father of the 17-year-old heart donor (who died in a road accident) broke his silence to condemn the Tainui elders for removing the body. "It is horrendous," he said. "Billy was put in the back of a van and away they went, like a parcel being delivered by a rural contractor down a country lane."

Some critics believe that the dispute has damaged race relations at a time when Maori and Pakeha are debating political and cultural partnership under New Zealand's founding document, the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi.

Billy T — real name William James Taitoko — died aged 42 after a history of heart trouble. An accomplished singer and musician, Billy T created a number of comic characters who poked fun at both Maori and Pakeha on his own televi-

sion series. In 1984 he was named Entertainer of the Year and in the 1989 New Year's Honours List was awarded an MBE. According to one critic, Billy T was a "natural comic, a native clown," an entertainer with "a captivating disrespect for his origins and an endearing gift for self-mockery."

But his humour sometimes got up people's noses, and he was accused of making racist jokes. His Maori characters — he never learned to speak fluent Maori — were seen by his detractors as demeaning stereotypes.

"I've been called racist," he once said, "but I don't think I am. If they listen to what I do, the character always comes out on top."

Professor Timoti Karetu, dean of Maori Studies at Waikato University, said Billy T's funeral had underlined the differences between the cultures. While there may be a wish in the case of many Pakeha funerals to avoid conflict and avoid participation, the opposite was so in Tangihanga (Maori funerals) — especially for celebrities or high-ranking people.

There have been cases of bodies being sneaked away at night from one marae to another. But in most cases the argument has been restricted to passionate debate on a marae and usually resulted in compromise.

The Maori people comprise about 10 per cent of New Zealand's 3.4 million population, and the socio-economic statistics picture them as a deprived, alienated minority.

The cultural debate to which Billy T's funeral fell victim is part of a wider, far-reaching debate over honouring the Treaty of Waitangi. And in that debate, a celebrated new author has attacked what he describes as "stale old Maori apologist nonsense" over the social and cultural plight of many Maori.

Alan Duff, author of *Once Were Warriors*, a novel about the ugliness of urban Maori life and poverty, which has been judged New Zealand's fiction book of the year, believes that Maori must take some responsibility for the social and cultural plight they face.

"It's always the Pakeha's fault. Never the Maori's fault," wrote Duff. "Nope, we Maori are faultless, blameless, misunderstood, mistreated, European-abused innocents. We are the once-noble warrior breed who were doing just fine — never mind that the reality was we were constantly at war with each other — until the Whiteman arrived and ruined us. Soiled us. Destroyed us. Rubbish."

Pakeha liberals and Maori activists accuse Duff of having a "colonised mind." But his novel is still a best-seller. Billy T would have been making jokes about it by now.

—GEMINI NEWS

David Robie is a New Zealand journalist specialising in Pacific and development issues. He has worked on newspapers in Australia, Africa and France and is a former editor of *Insight* magazine in New Zealand.

Watch Out for Mr X!

by Rahat Fahmida

Many kind of office, you are liable to run up against difficult people. If you are really unlucky, you could come across someone with whom — to quote the fashionable jargon — you have a "personality clash" in your first weeks of a job.

You might have been taken on to fill the post he or she hoped to be promoted to. Or there could be someone on the staff who has built up a reputation for being difficult to deal with.

"Watch out for Mr. Rehman; he'll make life hard for you if he can," or "Ms Ahmed has a low boiling point and she thinks the world of herself. As she thinks that the whole office is her personal property, it is rather you don't cross her or you'll have an argument every time you say something which does not tally with her opinion."

Naturally you should take these warnings to heart when you join a new office, but not prepare for a battle before you need to do so: Mr Rehman and Ms Ahmed may have been given plenty of excuses for their aggressive attitudes by previous colleagues. They may be the kind of people who look to office life for a power base because they have no freedom outside work, such as heavy financial commitments that mean they are in a permanent anxiety state. By all means keep your head beneath the parapet but stay friendly and

busy. It is quite hard to be unpleasant to someone who does not appear to notice barbed remarks because he or she is too preoccupied to hear them.

Quite often, the difficult people of office life get that way because colleagues treat them so cautiously. A newcomer may well be able to break the pattern by a courteous, but confident approach.

At the other end of the personality spectrum are those people who fear and detest argument to the extent that they will do anything rather than give a definite opinion or supply information they may have to justify later.

They, too, are potentially difficult colleagues. They hesitate, dither and delay. Work gets held up because they will not make decisions on their own initiative. They are always waiting for someone else's authority to do anything; like changing their lunch time or swapping an assignment. It can be maddening for a decisive person to be teamed with such an uncertain colleague because much patience is needed to arrive at a good working relationship.

In a situation where you do not think someone is trying to be difficult but the effect is just the same — be tactful. Try to begin by saying something nice. Or sometimes a joke helps.

What about the difficult boss? There are many reasons why an executive can be present as a "difficult person". He or she may have a delightful personality with a complete inability to refuse to help people. This means that impossible quantities of work pile up.

In this situation, the first task must be to persuade the boss to priorities — pick out things to be dealt with at first (though this may be a Herculean task). The "softly-softly" approach is more likely to get results than forcing your efficient methods on an unwilling executive who will defend his or her territory and methods of working, however inefficient, when feeling threatened. Indecision is another exasperating trait in someone who has authority.

Having considered difficult colleagues and difficult bosses, it is perhaps a good moment to consider whether you too could possibly be regarded as a difficult person! Perhaps in a few years time, with the benefit of hindsight, you may feel that in your early months at work, fresh or nearly so from college and full of bright new ideas that your colleagues had never thought of, you must have been very exasperating.

If, by the way people are treating you in the office, you suspect that you appear to be a difficult person, listen carefully to what they say to you and consider how they treat you.

Are you difficult because you are incompetent or careless? Those are problems one can rectify. Are you over-eager to please? You should remember that not every office is a chatty, easy-going place.

People outside the organisation can be difficult, too. They can write aggressive or threatening letters, be unhelpful or sarcastic on the telephone, even turn up to make a scene in the office. The full force of their anger is often directed towards the first person they meet, and that is not necessarily the person who really deserves it.

When you are faced with an aggressive person, you naturally defend yourself. A positive reaction of this kind, though, is just what bullying types enjoy. Certainly you are not likely to think clearly about the best way to deal with their complaint if you let yourself get agitated. In dealing with any type of difficult person, the first and golden rule is — Don't lose your temper!

This sounds like a very elementary piece of advice. Alas, it usually proves quite hard to follow. It is extraordinarily difficult to sit quietly whilst someone rants and raves in front of your desk. It is also upsetting to open a nasty letter of complaint when you have been sorting the rest of the post quite unsuspectingly. Even if you put it at the bottom of the pile, you know it is lurking there to wreck your day.

As for people who feel that they can be as rude as they like on the telephone, what a temptation it is to put the phone down and cut them off in mid-rant!

It never hurts to try and save someone's pride. Whether you are dealing with an aggressive client, an awkward colleague, an incompetent junior or a perfectly maddening boss, always begin by making allowances. You never know; the sullen man on the other side of the desk may have had a bereavement, be worried to death about the falling sales of his product or under pressure from his bank to pay off a loan. It is always better to jaw-jaw than war war as Winston Churchill advocated.

VIDEO SCENE

Kaiser Parvez Ali

The top videos in circulation this week are:

Hindi -----

1. Saudagar ---- * Dilip Kumar, Raj Kumar, Jackie Shroff, Deepti Naval.
2. Indrajeet ---- * Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Prada, Kumar Gurav, Neelam.
3. Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin ---- * Aamir Khan, Puja Bhatt, Anupam Kher.
4. Swarak Yahan Narak Yahan ---- * Mithun, Shilpa.



1. Shaumitra, Manta Shankar, Ranjit Mallik.
2. Path O Prashad ---- * Shaumitra, Shandya Roy, Utpal Dutt.
3. Shriram Prith Raj ---- * Mohua Roy, Utpal Dutt.
4. Bhanu Pelo Lottery ---- * Bhanu Banarjee.
5. Ghano Shatru ---- * Shaumitra, Manta Shankar, Deepankar Dey.

English -----

1. Run ---- * Patrick Demsey, Kelly Preston.
 2. Mortal Thoughts ---- * Bruce Willis, John Pankow.
 3. Childs Play ---- * Children's film.
 4. Longest Drive ---- * Kurt Russell, Tim Matheson.
 5. Sleeping With The Enemy ---- * Julia Roberts.
- Source — Amity Video, Uttara.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,
How can I know if my husband is having an affair? I know he is but I have no proof. His behaviour has become strange lately, he is moody irritable and stays out late. He gets upset when I ask him where he has been. Please tell me what I should do. I am going crazy.

Anonymous Dhaka.

Dear Anonymous,
There could be many reasons for your husband's behaviour and it does not necessarily mean he is having an affair. What is more important is to take a look into your marriage. Are you satisfied with the kind of relationship you have with him? Approach this problem with an open mind and then try to find the reason for his strange behaviour. If your husband is really having an affair you will soon find out through the grapevine.

Dear Mita,
In our society men get blamed for everything. You have advised many women with unfaithful husbands. What about unfaithful wives? There are as many women who have extra-marital affairs but we don't talk about them. Husbands keep this a secret but wives tell the whole world about it. What do you have to say to that?

Shahjahan, Cantonment, Dhaka.

Dear Shahjahan,
You are not correct in saying that society blames men for everything. In fact, the opposite is true. Women share their anger and frustrations with other women out of a sense of helplessness and for support. Men are usually secretive because of the image they have to keep up of not needing help. It is not fair to generalize about such issues but I really cannot agree with you that as many women as men have extra-marital affair as women have so much more to lose.

Dear Mita,
My mother-in-law is very nice but is always praising her son (my husband). In her eyes he can do no wrong. She never

misses a chance to tell me how lucky I am to get a husband like him. What can I do to stop her as this is very annoying.

Shipra Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Dear Shipra,
Please don't get too upset about this most common fault with mother-in-laws. This is cultural. Sons are the preferred sex and the apple of their eyes. If it does not disrupt your day to day life then try to accept it with a sense of humour.

Dear Mita,
My sister-in-law is the only sister among 6 brothers. She is very spoilt and everybody pampers her. I really don't have the patience to put up with her silly behaviour. My husband wants me to pamper her as well and gets upset if I don't. She is 21 years old and should be more mature and independent. The whole family is going to ruin her life this way but they don't realize it. How can I make them understand.

Sheela, Maghbar.

Dear Sheela,
If your sister-in-law has been spoilt and pampered for the last 21 years then what you say or do now will not make much of a difference. It is natural for an only sister of 6 brothers to be somewhat spoilt. As for ruining her life, I doubt this will happen. If you are really keen to help her then try to be her friend, talk to her about independence, maturity etc. Making this an issue with your husband does not help the situation at all.

Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toynebe Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.