

TEENS TWENTIES

An Interview with Rokonuzzaman Khan

Dada Bhai, Always an Inspiration

by Siraj-us-Saleheen

FROM my childhood I always had a fascination about the *Kendriya Kanchar Mela* and was more eager to learn about its founder Rokonuzzaman Khan, better known as *Dada Bhai*. The *Kanchar Mela* is one of the pioneering children organization formed mainly by *Dada Bhai* in 1956 and has till now played a leading role. Recently, my dream came true, as I had the opportunity to meet him. Without any former appointment, I visited his Ittefaq office. On entering his room I was confronted with a most pleasant sight. There, in the middle of two or three children was the famous *Dada Bhai* chatting away in a most ordinary position. As he spotted me, without asking who I was, told me to take a seat and to wait a bit. After he had finished with the children, he asked the reason for my coming. After hearing the reason, he was very happy to help me out and gave a spontaneous interview despite his tight schedule. So began on interesting conversation:

(Daily Star) DS: When and where were you born, sir?

(Rokonuzzaman) RZ: Oh no! please don't call me 'sir'; every one else calls me *Dada Bhai*. You may call me by that name too.

DS: Thank you. When and

where were you born, *Dada Bhai*?

RZ: I was born on the 9th April, 1925. My father's home town is in Bheramara thana of Kushtia district. But actually I was brought up in my grandfather's home town, which is Pangsha thana of Faridpur district. My uncle was Yakub Ali Chowdhury. It was under his caring shadow that I grew up.

DS: How did the *Kanchar Mela* originate?

RZ: Oh my! now, let's see... (thinking a while) it actually has a long story! During the British period, a monthly paper named *Ananda Mela* was regularly being published from Calcutta for children. A portion of that paper was called *Mukuler Mohfil*, from which the organization *Mukuler Fauz* originated, which was later known as *Khelaghara*.

After the partition in 1947, these organizations broke up, and as a result no children organizations were left. Realizing the need for such a structural framework, Begum Sufia Kamal, Prof Ajit Kumar Guha, Prof Abdullah Al Muti Sharifuddin and myself took up some positive steps to create an organization for children.

Such being the objective, on the 5th October, 1955, accompanied by fifteen or more

children, we began an informal meeting, with Prof Sharifuddin as the Chairperson, in the garden adjoining the house of Begum Sufia Kamal. The rain had just stopped and the grass still wet. In such a surrounding the 'K K Mela' originated. 'K K Mela' and its members will always be indebted to Begum Sufia Kamal, Prof A A Sharifuddin and not to mention Prof A K Guha.

DS: What are the main objectives of your organization?

RZ: In short, the answer to this question would be to help and guide children to lead a proper life and in the future be a good citizen. Broadly speaking, this organization has five branches, according to its objective. These are: literature, cultural side, arts and crafts side, sports and recreations and social works.

From 1964 to the month of February, 1971, we regularly brought out a monthly paper named *Kachi O Kancha*. We still publish annual papers for children each year and also bring out Wall-Papers with the help of our children members. We even conduct literature contests, song, dance and painting competitions. We frequently arrange painting exhibitions and various cultural functions. We give sports



Members of the Norwegian team performing one of their dance numbers. — Star photo

training to children; whenever there is any international event, such as the SAAF Games or the parade, on the 16th December, our members are eager to perform.

As for social works, our members are always at the frontline when there is a need for extra hands, for example, in cases like cyclone hit areas or even in flood affected areas, one of our main motto is to help the destitute and affected people.

DS: Why do you work with children?

RZ: That is an unusual question to ask, and a very hard one to answer. Because, I never stopped to think why I work with children; must be because I feel more at ease with them. Look at our young kids today. What recreation does a boy of class eight or nine has today? Who shall show him the right way to

live? All these kids do, is sit back and watch satellite TV. There was a time when in cultural programmes the number of participants were so many that we could not accommodate all of them. Today it is a different picture, a very sad but a true one though. I think a child is a rose bud, still new to the world, just bursting with curiosity about their environment. We must guide them so that they can prepare themselves for the brave new world.

DS: What are the achievements of K K Mela?

RZ: Uphill now this organization has come a long way and has achieved a great many things in spite of its economic drawbacks. In 1973, a group of children from K K Mela went to attend a pioneer camping held in GDR (former East Germany). In 1977, another group of children participated in a cultural competition under

one might say "but everything man is doing, man does consciously. He is well aware of the havoc he wreaks. Surely that is not natural?"

There is an answer to that question in evolution. In the current, slightly modified outlook on evolution, theorists say that the evolution of an animal doesn't just affect the animal itself. It affects the animal's entire living environment. For example, if the weather changes the producers or plants will have to adapt, which will affect the primary consumers or plant eaters and then the secondary and tertiary consumers or meat eaters.

Fossils found were supposedly dated to be from a couple of million years after their supposed extinction. Could they have evolved? Was it an ice age? But they died suddenly and mysteriously of which only the mammals survived. And now we have mammals headed by man. We have now set the underlying pattern.

It seems that everytime a lifeform gets a foothold, Nature wipes it out somehow or the other. If one were to examine biological history more thoroughly one would find a stunning number of extinctions on a lesser scale wiping out entire regional flora and fauna.

Now it is the mammals' turn. Nature is using man as an instrument of destruction. Even if man wipes out everything Nature will start all over again. This time with insects and in time eliminate them. Or maybe Nature will produce synthetic polymer eating bacteria. Or maybe metal based life as Isaac Asimov once suggested, or even plants which can think. Maybe life not based on enzymes. Maybe crystalline life as presented in Michael Crichton's 'The Andromeda Strain'. The possibilities are endless.

Next in line were the dinosaurs, ranging in size and shape from chicken sized lizards to the great seismosaurus — a dinosaur 140 feet in length. Dinosaurs first came around in the Triassic age when another wave of extinctions took place wiping out a majority of the dinosaurs and their main competitors, the mammals.

This extinction, probably

caused by a meteor impact, started the Golden Age of dinosaurs with the Jurassic Era. Small dinosaurs, carnivores the size of pigeons and miniaturized brontosaurus survived the calamity and took over, quickly evolving and diversifying to such exotic creatures as iguanodons, sauropods and biped carnivores, and

ironic that while oxygen means life to one type of living creature, it meant death to another. Even nowadays it is fatal to many types of current bacteria. Of the old kind, there are a few small surviving colonies off the coast of Australia. But the fact remains, the dominance was hampered

by Nameer Rahman

continued to do so the following Cretaceous era.

The final extinction came at the end of the Cretaceous era 65 million years ago, but controversy shrouds the matter. What killed them and how? Some paleontologists say the extinction was gradual, others say it was sudden. Only a minority believe that a meteor caused the extinction. Could they have died of some disease?

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I Still Am

by Kazi Khaled Arafat

"There's hope for him yet — he was conscious for a second today."

"Thanks for letting me know; Mr Cure-em-all, I didn't know I was — Then I guess that I still am

Drifting in Eternity
In Limbo, between Heaven and Hell;
Hovering between Life and Death —
Victim of an accident — a fatal one
But not fatal enough — no, not yet,
Not able to live or die;
Flying in an elemental vacuum;
Kept alive by a respirator.

Pull the plug!

Blood and plasma flowing in;
They've cut me up more than the truck —
I'm a week-old mummy!

Let me die!

Twisted by emotions — but incapable of expressing them
Darkness imprisoning me — my brain is about to explode!
5-4-3-2-1-0 ! It didn't
I want to talk; but my brain is weak,
So goddamn weak-but is it a brain or some computer?

Let me go, you fools!

I don't wanna live as a vegetable or "exist" as I am.
Good news — chart on the screen going down
Green mountains disappearing
"I'm very sorry, but"
Sorrow. Tears. Hysteria. Funerals. Condolence meetings.
The grave.

Ahh they're letting me go.
Thanks doc. God luck for your next case.

Looking Beyond the Ivy League

by Nadim Hossain

APPLYING to US colleges is a nerve-racking experience. Without the luxury of visiting the States, how will you make the right decision? Barron's college rankings and college brochures are helpful but leave more detailed questions unanswered. For those suffering from college anxiety, Loren Pope's book *Looking Beyond the Ivy League* is heaven-sent. It is particularly useful in its discussion on specialisation at the undergraduate level and on the job market of the future.

DS: What about the branches outside Dhaka Metropolitan Area?

RZ: You would be amazed to know that throughout the whole country, we have more than 200 branches, most of which are situated in villages and unions. Their organizational works are as same as ours. But the sad news is that, we can not help them financially which could boost their morale. But we always keep in touch with these branches and they maintain a regular link with us. Everyday we receive letters from them. You will be delighted to know that the Bangladeshi living in London have decided to establish a branch of K K Mela there.

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college should train you for nothing and prepare you for everything. A college should teach one how to think rather than what to think. Pope asserts that a college should "liberate", causing enlightening changes in values, attitudes and thinking that will help throughout life.

In the context of performing in the workplace, a survey of employers has offered proof that employers are looking for the ability to think, solve problems and for an open, creative personality, rather than a business major, good grades and a prestigious college. They can usually assess a prospective employee's character through an interview. An overall understanding of people, politics and society are very important to marketing, according to one long time marketing manager. These are developed more via a liberal education rather than a narrow one. At the end of the book there is a story of a man

who hired a foreign language major who knew nothing about the business of running a scrap-metal business. This employee turned the business into the most efficient scrap-metal firm in the Midwest, by virtue of his intelligence, imagination and logic. The man in the story warns that the trend of specialising education will be successful only in a liberal education rather than a narrow one. At the end of the book there is a story of a man

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