

The Sound of One Hand Clapping

by Rebecca Haque

ANY many years ago, when I was an energetic and buoyant and athletic (and an extremely curious) school-girl I was also (somewhat paradoxically) a voracious reader who hunted out old classics and sundry other musty and dusty volumes and tomes from the equally dusty shelves of silent libraries of whichever school I happened to be in at the moment (my father had a transferable job and I was rarely in one school for more than two or three years). Anyway, during one of my foraging trips to the library I came upon a book — sadly, I have forgotten the name, but it might have been one by JD Salinger — which had an epigraph which stuck in my brain and has haunted me all my growing years. The epigraph posed an ancient Zen Buddhist riddle. "We know the sound of two hands clapping, but what

is the sound of one hand clapping?" Intriguing question! Enough even to befuddle the Hegelian synthesizers of today. To make the Kantian dualists go into a spin — but perhaps make the Lockians think and attempt to find a resolution to the puzzle.

In all modesty, I am no philosopher, though one could call me a philosopher-maque. When and why do we use two hands for clapping? We clap to applaud in celebration of some incident or event or performance; sometimes to attract attention to ourselves if we are speaking words of value to a group of inattentive listeners; we even clap in joy at some extraordinary or epiphanic moment even when we are alone; we also clap with our two hands to send a secret signal

to some secret messenger; and of course, we stand up and clap vigorously with our two hands at the arrival of certain noble and illustrious personages whom we respect and admire.

Do we ever clap with one hand, and if we do, then what would it sound like? To me, the sound of one hand clapping is the soft swishing sound of a soft palm rubbed over the surface of pure raw Rajshahi silk. The sound of one hand clapping is the loving hand placed on a child's or lover's cheek in a slow and soothing caress. It is the firm grip of a reliable partner in life who can lead one to safety; it is the music of Orpheus bringing Eurydice back from the underworld to let the sun shine full on her beautiful face.

The sound of one hand clapping is never, repeat never, the sound of a cruel and angry slap; it is never the clap (obviously, I am euphemistically referring to the Shakespearean/sexual meaning of the word "clap"). The sound of one hand clapping may take the form of a kind warning, a red-alert flag in a fleeting moment of danger, but it is never a harsh rebuff or an insolent rebuttal or an unjust refusal.

The sound of one hand clapping is the pious hand of a venerable and adored elder placed on our heads in blessing or benediction. The sound of one hand clapping is love and veneration and joy.

O Great Buddha, is the sound of one hand clapping also the sound of the pink and white lotus and the purple hyacinth blooming in this green waterland of ours?

The Passing Show

Exploited Tokais!

by Alif Zabr

The potential influence the tokais wield and exert is immense, considering the loss of several hundred million Taka for each day of hartal. Perhaps Harkin's legal scribes have been properly briefed on the political influence exerted by the tokais in the developing countries.

I am writing this column on a hartal day. I told my family I was going for a walk as the streets were clear (they know I never go walking, and prefer yoga exercises). I picked up the half-frame camera (small enough to hide in the palm) and got some glorious shots of the tokais in action.

There appears to be little doubt that, if the hartal calls

continue at the frequency decided lately by the Opposition parties, then the growing generation could turn Bangladesh into a sporting nation (we have to wait quite a while for sporting politics). Statistically, the children, the youth and the adult were playing various games in the parks. The tokais had turned the roads into playgrounds (local games) almost every 200 metres.

There was no sign of any political activity during my 25-minute walk. We seem to have taken to political disruptions as the ducks take to the water. The under-age tokais are a great deterrent. For the organisers, the cost of organising a hartal is cheap. For the citizens it is costly (imagine the cost of replacing the windshield of the car).

I interviewed my schoolboy son, who is a victim, along with his team mates, of tokai gang raids in the park opposite. Their nuisance and disruption power is great. The tokai footballs (more than one) land up in several badminton courts and on the cricket pitch every now and then. They copy the styles of Maradona and Baggio and challenge other boys' teams to a game or two. The tokai boys are proud of their talent. They willingly volunteer as substitute fielders when the batmen need runs!

Some NGOs are planning rehabilitation programmes for these bright, smiling but unfortunate children in coordination with the government's development projects. One local video producer is trying to resource a video documentary on the legendary tokais. I wish them good luck!

IN this computer age, one would think choosing a prospective husband — or wife — and then marrying, having children and raising them are as simple as picking apples.

No siree — especially if you live in the Middle East and, as a practising Muslim, you go by the book. Or in many cases, by beliefs, tradition and, to some extent, old wives' tales. Here are some interesting pieces of advice:

Would-be-bridal — Take a small piece of a bride's veil and place it under your pillow if you are pushing 21 and still waiting for a man to march you down the aisle. If you do that, chances are you'd be married within the year. Many spinners who did just that will tell you it's a lot of baloney. So, the next step is to place a picture of your "crush" under your pillow again and sleep on it. Honeymooners will be the first to attest to the efficacy of this method.

Brides — Watch out as you cut that wedding cake. If your husband's hand is placed over yours, he will dominate the marriage, but if your hand is on top, then you will be in the position of power. After the first day of marriage, friends enquire of the bride and groom "Min dabab Al-Bseined?" (Who killed the cat?) If you gave the first order on that day, you will

Asian diary BY ARJUNA

'How tos' from Old Wives

wear the pants in the family, otherwise, your husband will.

Two sisters marrying two brothers are told that one of the two couples will be childless. If this unlucky couple does have children, it is believed that they will be either abnormal or imbeciles. In some Lebanese villages where two brides happen to get married on the same day, the first will under no circumstance be allowed to enter a house where the second is seated as this means no children. The seated bride must return to the door and both brides then enter together.

Expectant mothers — Assuming you have safely jumped these hurdles, you are now expecting your first child. Avoid being severely shocked. If you fail to avoid this, your child will come out cross-eyed. Pregnant women often crave for extraordinary things such as strawberries out of season, tons of pickles, etc. It is dangerous to deny an expectant mother her heart's desire as this will leave a mark on the

child. Superstition thus explains birthmarks in the shape of strawberries, pickles, kidneys, etc.

An expectant mother can't wait to know whether the child will be a boy or a girl. Don't "die" of suspense. All you have to do is take a threaded needle and dangle it above the pregnant woman's wrist. If the needle moves sideways, the child will be a girl; if it moves lengthwise, it's a boy (This method has been proven 100 per cent right).

Another way of predicting the child's sex is to take the mother's name, her mother's name, the names of the mothers of conception and expected birth, then add all the letters. An odd number predicts a boy, an even number, a girl.

To ensure that no harm will come to mother and child, some women bring out a coal-burner, pour incense over it, and ask the expectant mother to circle the stove three times while an incantation is chanted over her.

Mothers — You are now the proud parent of a son or daughter. There are several ways to protect your children. Necklaces with blue beads or blue eyes will ward off the "evil eye." If you feel that some people looked at your child enviously, then spray all your rooms with incense after they have left the house. This will drive away all evil spirits.

A child's growth will be slow if someone steps over his clothes. There is, however, a cure for this. Take the child to a first-born name who will then dip him into the sea and later walk him through black-berry bushes.

If parents have only one child and cannot have more, they need not despair. Take the child and dip him into a well. Then makes sure that he does not eat a sheep's leg or brain until other children have done so.

The first child can then partake of as much sheep as he wants.

Finally, if you want your baby girl to have hairless legs and arms, smear these body parts with the blood of a freshly slaughtered bat immediately after birth. This will ensure future hairlessness.

Old wives' tales certainly have the problem of child birth, and child care all worked out comfortably.

— Depthnews Asia

American Literature

Continued from page 10

In the 1880s and 1890, when Wharton first was flexing her creative muscles, and as unprecedented waves of immigrants poured into the city, representatives of an earlier influx — the so-called nouveaux riches of post-Civil War America — began to make their presence felt, imperiling the centuries-old cultural tradition. In the years that followed the mass immigration, as Wharton wrote about wealth and privilege and high society as an endangered species, the United States was experience-

ing World War I, the Depression and the New Deal.

Wharton experienced a peripatetic career from the 1890s — when it began in earnest — through her death (two novels, *Ghosts* and *The Buccaneers*, were published posthumously). Major and minor works alternated throughout that period. Only four novels — *The House of Mirth*, *Ethan Frome*, *The Custom of the Country* and *The Age of Innocence* — are considered landmark fiction, although the *Buccaneers* has had a resurgence of interest in the past

several years.

Of the short fiction, *Roman Fever*, focusing on two women in an ironic conflict with each other, and *The Other Two*, a comedy of manners centering on a New York aristocrat, are among her more popular and frequently-read tales.

The House of Mirth is the story of the decline of a young woman in aristocratic society even as she develops a sense of personal responsibility and dedication to humanity. *Ethan Frome* — a departure for Wharton — is a tragedy about unrequited love and physical disability, set against the harsh landscape of rural New England. *The Custom of the*

Country casts a critical eye on a crafty and ambitious young woman, equally on the society that spawned her.

Certainly *The Age of Innocence* is the Wharton piece most identifiable with the author in the late 1990s, a century after the setting of the book. Written in France and published in 1920, it was a caustic comment on the tribal customs of the world Wharton knew well from her childhood in the late 19th century.

It is that Wharton who exists today as a formidable example of the richness and diversity of American literature.

— USIS Feature

Services for People with Disabilities

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porting the school from its inception in 1977.

Assistance for the Blind Children (ABC): ABC's function has been to distribute braille kits to blind children studying in school. ABC has also helped the treatment of blind children through BNSB centres as well as Islamic Eye Hospital at Dhaka. ABC has built hostels for blind children who attend the government scheme of integrated special classes in regular schools. It also arranges games, sports and cultural activities for the blind. ABC has a well equipped Resource Centre for the blind in Joydevpur (45 km from Dhaka city).

Bangladesh Drishti Foundation (BDF): Established in February, 1989, BDF is a welfare and development organization concerned to promote and safeguard the interests of visually handicapped in Bangladesh. BDF runs its own education and rehabilitation projects in Bhola district and is continuing this process in Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Madaripur, Comilla and Rajbari districts (from 1992) covering all thanas of the districts.

The rehabilitation project operates in three thanas of Bhola district and supports around 200 people every year. Most of these people are unskilled and jobless; many are beggars. Fieldworkers identify those needing help and make an assessment of their needs with the aim of helping visually handicapped people to become contributing member of their families and communities. Fieldworkers give six weeks of individual training in the clients' own home. Training includes orientation and mobility, daily living skills, personal grooming, home management, manual dexterity etc. Alongside training, the project also gives credit support so that visually handicapped people can set up work on their own and become financially independent. Loans are taken to set up small scale businesses, such as handicrafts and animal or poultry rearing, shops and so on. BDF has started new work in education for visually handicapped children in its operational areas. Children below the age of 10 years will be educated alongside sighted children in local schools.

Educational and Training Facilities for the Deaf Children The children with hearing and/or speech defects are in many ways more disadvantaged than the blind children. In a society where charity is a virtue a blind person can at least take to begging, but a deaf and dumb person who is normal to outward view is often taken to be fraud. Also because blindness is obvious and seems to be more of an affliction, much more has been done for the blind than for the deaf.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES Schools for Deaf Children: The Social Welfare Department

runs seven schools for the deaf children situated in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Chandpur, Faridpur and Sylhet. The schools have capacity to admit 700 children and provide residential facilities for a total of 180 children. The others attend school from their homes. These schools provide education up to primary level and instruction in

trained Bangladeshi technicians to do all works at the "Hearing Centre" which has all modern equipment for this purpose. (Dept. of Soc. Ser., 1990).

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION PROGRAMMES

There are four non-government schools for the deaf children managed by voluntary

Germany. Functions of this modern centre is early detection of hearing impairment in children, training of manpower, training of teachers for the deaf, guidance for parents of the deaf children, making of ear moulds and repairing and maintenance of hearing aid. The centre is equipped with all the sophisticated modern equipment and instrument re-



painting and other suitable vocational crafts.

Training and Rehabilitation of the Adult Deaf The four schools for the blind and deaf situated in four Divisional Headquarters are housed in a complex of building within the same premises with separate arrangements for the two groups of disabled children. In the same complex are vocational training centers for the deaf, as for the blind. Together these centres are called "Training and Rehabilitation Centers for the Physically Handicapped". The vocational section in the four composite centers are integrated into a single unit, each managed by a Work Manager. Skill training courses are conducted by trade instructors of this unit.

Employment Rehabilitation Centre The Vocational Training Centre and Sheltered Workshop, situated in Tongi for the blind also has similar programmes for the deaf in the same complex. This project is known as "Employment Rehabilitation Centre for the Physically Handicapped" catering for the blind and the deaf. About 200 deaf children and adults are given training in this centre in various trades such as sewing, knitting, carpentry, painting, duck farming etc. In addition to this there is a "Hearing Centre" catering for various types of services to hearing impaired individuals such as measuring the hearing, diagnosing the type of hearing loss, making moulds for hearing aids and repairing of aids. Audiologists and speech therapists from Sweden have

agencies located at Brahmanbaria, Dhaka, Bogra and Mymensingh. These schools have hostels for the boys, but the girls have to attend school as day-scholars.

Bangladesh National Federation for the Deaf It has set up a school at Bijoynagar, Dhaka. There are 140 students in the school, of whom 60 are girls. Vocational training in various trades such as tailoring, knitting, carpentry, painting etc. is a part of their programme.

Hi-Gare It is a school for the hearing impaired children started in 1982 by the "Society for Education and Care of Hearing Impaired Children". There are 21 trained teachers and five audiologists on the staff. All children are advised to use hearing aid. The aim and objective of the school is to give scientifically speech and language training to children and elevate them to a standard so that they can attend the normal schooling. There are three more schools of Hi-Gare in different cities of Bangladesh where such speech training is given. Counselling of parents is an essential part of the school programme.

Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children (SAHIC) SAHIC is a voluntary non-governmental organization established in February 1987 for prevention, early detection and care of the hearing impaired children in Bangladesh. SAHIC's main programme is the National Centre for Hearing & Speech at Mohakhali, Dhaka. This centre has been established by SAHIC in collaboration with Andren Hille of

quired for these purposes.

Facilities for the Orthopaedically Disabled There are only three institutions that cater to the needs of the crippled children and adults, all of them are situated in Dhaka. One institution is run by the government, while three others are run by voluntary agencies.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

Rehabilitation Institute and Hospital for the Disabled (RIHD) RIHD was started in Dhaka by Professor R.J. Gurst, a visiting orthopaedic surgeon on private capacity in June 1972 to treat the freedom fighters injured during the Liberation War. This institute has been taken over by the government in 1973. Services rendered in RIHD are: Orthopaedic treatment including orthopaedic surgery, physiotherapy and occupational therapy and production of artificial limbs (brace, walker, crutch, surgical shoe, cervical collar, traction, back brace, lumber corset, wheel chair etc.).

NON-GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

Crippled children Centre Bangladesh Council for Child Welfare, a voluntary agency runs the "Crippled Children Centre". It has a 50 bed hospital known as Feroza Bari Crippled Children Hospital named after its founder. There are four trained physiotherapists, one trained from India. The Outdoor provides physiotherapeutic treatment to crippled children. This year 4500 children have attended



the outdoor centre and obtained physiotherapy treatment.

The Residential Crippled Children Centre It is run by the Women's Voluntary Organization (WVO). This centre provides residential facilities to poor rural children from outside Dhaka who are under treatment at RIHD: 20 to 25 children can be accommodated at a time as boarders. Food, lodging, treatment and all physical aids necessary are provided free of cost.

Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) It is also a non-government organization established in 1983. The aims of CRP is social, physical, mental and economic rehabilitation of individuals with spinal injury, paraplegia, tetraplegia and non-traumatic paralysis. So far more than 500 cases have been rehabilitated. A team of qualified doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, nurses and other personnel are required to carry out the treatment and rehabilitation work efficiently. There is a small pathology laboratory at the centre to support the medical side. The metal workshop attached to the centre provides training to the paralyzed as well as a production unit for making wheel chairs, folding commode, tricycle, prototype etc. Occupational Therapy Department of CRP trains the paralyzed in a variety of handicrafts including toys such as building bricks, jigsaw puzzles, doll houses and puppets

These crafts are often exported to foreign countries if orders received. The wood workshop produces furniture for the centre. Outing, functions and sports are also regular features of the centre. Following the selection by the "National Games for the Disabled Association" of Bangladesh a group of young CRP students attended the First World Youth Sports for the Disabled in Nottingham, UK in 1986.

Educational and Training Facilities for the Mentally Retarded There are no government programme for the mentally retarded who have remained most neglected and uncared for in this country till recently. There are two voluntary organizations who run training programme for the retarded children and adult.

Society for the Care and Education of Mentally Retarded (children Bangladesh) (SCEMRCB) which is basically a parents' organization, runs 11 special education classes for the retarded integrated with regular schools in Dhaka city. A total of 120 children ranging in age from five to 15 years and IQ ranging from 40 to 70 years are enrolled in these classes. "Bangladesh Institute for the Mentally Retarded" (BIMR) was set up as a joint project of SCEMRCB and Norwegian Association for Mentally Retarded in 1982. The mentally retarded who are above 16 years of age are admitted into the Vocational Training Course. After two years' or more training the students can be transferred to

the sheltered workshop. Vocational Training is provided in the following areas: Home-craft, gardening, poultry, carpentry, handicraft and weaving.

A small group of severely mentally retarded children with an IQ ranging from 20 to 35 are also admitted who get training in basic skills of behavioural development. SCEMRCB has at present 21 branches all over Bangladesh. A total of 960 students are enrolled in special classes including the branches. Recently SCEMRCB has expanded its programme by starting "National Institute for the Mentally Retarded" (NIMR) in Dhaka city in a two storied building, construction of which has been financed by the Government.

Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation (BPF) for the Developmentally Disabled started its first project "Kalyani", a school for the mentally retarded, in May 1984. Children are admitted in "Kalyani" through the "Shishu Bikash Clinic" where they are diagnosed by a psychologist and a paediatrician through psychological and medical assessment. A total of 93 children ranging in age from eight months to 20 years have been admitted. The training includes: Infant stimulation, programme for the severely and mildly handicapped, pre-vocational and vocational training for the adult retarded. Pre-vocational and vocational training are provided in cooking, sewing, handicraft and weaving. Music, swimming and gymnastics are also part of the training programme.

"Distance Training Package" is another unique programme of BPF where the 'outreach' children coming from far away places are referred and their parents are trained through a pictorial guide called package. After assessment and training, appropriate package according to the level of child's handicap is given to the parents, who are asked to revisit after progress is made so that a new package and further training could be continued.

Teachers training programme and research is an important area of BPF. Teachers Training courses (long and short) are run by professionals who volunteer to give their time as resource persons. Recently the one year teachers training course of BPF is in the process of being affiliated with IER of Dhaka University. From 1987 to 1990 BPF in collaboration with Psychology Department of Dhaka University and Columbia University, New York conducted a nationwide Epidemiological Study on Childhood Disability on 10,000 children of Bangladesh to determine the prevalence of blindness, deafness, mental retardation, motor disability and seizure among children aged between 2 and 9 years.

Government Sponsored National Centre for Special Education With the support of Norwegian Association for the Blind, Deaf and Mentally Retarded, Bangladesh Government has built a "National Centre for Special Education" to

provide facilities for the deaf, blind and the mentally retarded and to train teachers required to teach these children. The building for the complex situated in Mirpur, Dhaka has been completed recently. The Government also has a plan to start a braille press to facilitate the education of the blind.

Shishu Bikash Kendro (Child Development Centre) in Dhaka Shishu (Children's) Hospital This centre has an outpatient clinic where children with all kinds of disabilities and impairments are screened and diagnosed. Treatment or rehabilitation is provided wherever necessary. The centre has paediatrician, neurologist, psychologist and physiotherapist who are well qualified and trained to deal with disabled children's problems.

Special Education Department, Institute of Education & Research (IER), University of Dhaka This department has been opened in IER Dhaka University in March, 1993. It offers a regular programme of studies in Special Education at the post-graduate level for students intending to work as teachers for special children.

The deaf, blind and mentally handicapped, this programme enjoys the distinction of being the first course of its kind in Bangladesh. A successful completion of a one-year and a two-year programme of studies would entitle the student respectively to Diploma in Special Education and M.Ed in Special Education degree. The Department of Special Education is within the Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka, enjoying the facilities of separate rooms for the staff, a conference room and several smaller rooms to be utilized later as resource centres. In addition, all the facilities of IER are also available.

Conclusion

The services and facilities that are existing for the different categories of disabled persons in Bangladesh are very meagre in relation to the needs and demands of the disabled population. Most of the services that are existing are based in the urban areas. As a result, the majority of the disabled persons living in the rural areas are deprived of these services. Lastly, there is no legislation to protect the rights of the disabled for equal opportunity in all respects — health, education, employment and so forth.

Therefore, we have a long way to go for developing a comprehensive service system ranging from maternal and child health services as measure of prevention of disability to education, training, pre-vocational counselling, placement on the job, follow up services and family assistance for the rehabilitation of the disabled.

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