

TEENS and TWENTIES

Ignorance is a Bliss But Knowledge is . . .

by Quamrul H Ashraf

Have you ever tried drawing a line between your ignorance and your knowledge about our nation's historical past and our cultural heritage? To be more precise, have you ever pondered about how much you really know about your own country? Well, you may have shrugged off the feeling as "useless" patriotism, but the entire idea was nothing but a dormant conscience for me until I stumbled upon a conversation with a group of friends, concerning the awareness about Bangladesh amongst English medium school students.

As our minds unfolded during the course of the conversation, we realised that our own ignorance about Bangladesh history and culture would be reflected in much greater proportions by the entire student body in English-medium schools. The truth sprang up from within — a social problem was at hand and as dutiful citizens we considered it our right to take up the issue, isolate the problem and expose it to the community.

Later that evening, engulfed by reverberating thoughts, I began drawing that line between my knowledge and my ignorance about the nation I identify myself with — my dormant conscience was awakening.

When the group came together a second time, we decided to tackle this problem of "hopeless ignorance" by instigating an interest in Bangladesh amongst English-medium students. An informal survey concerning historical and cultural awareness had been conducted among classmates and peers, while others were approached with the concept we had in mind, which was first received with surprise and disbelief. The responses to the survey had come in and needless to say the results, which were quite pitiful, further confirmed our fears.

In the meantime, however, news of our concept radiated quickly through schools and coaching centres and was greeted enthusiastically but questions arose concerning how exactly we would bring about the necessary awareness. So, we chalked out a list of possible activities and called upon those interested to a general discussion.

The discussion was attended by about thirty students from different schools in Dhaka and although most of the students were not acquainted with one another, their curiosity to learn about our concept was very encouraging. I recall the atmosphere as being in a state of intellectual anarchy with innumerable words pouring forth from minds brimming with innovative ideas.

The attitude we were to attain was epitomized in a simple message coined by a fellow peer: "... while it may be okay not to know about the history and culture of Bangladesh, it is shameful not to want to know." The students were informed of two independent schemes we decided to employ initially. A history compilation programme would be assigned to interested individuals concerning the pro-

duction of essays by carrying out conventional research, visiting historical sites, and interviewing people who have played significant roles in our history and contributed much to our culture.

At the same time a citywide school survey would be conducted to understand the extent of the ignorance and to determine what our next step should be. (Both these projects are currently in full swing).

The feverish anticipation of success surrounding this innovative concept is haunted by a fear that our objective may ultimately collapse. We have already taken the initiative to approach various intellectuals, and welcome any unbiased advice from teachers, parents and anyone else interested. We are also looking for dedicated students who are concerned about the widespread ignorance and are looking for an enthusiastic experience.

One summer evening, while enjoying the passing neon signs in the fading twilight from a rickshaw seat, I began wondering what we really hoped to achieve when we endeavoured to take up this gargantuan task of eradicating ignorance. And in the orange-tinged darkness of overhead sodium lamps, I realised that our task was not a cyclonic thunderstorm but rather an echoing raindrop in a vast, silent ocean.

The Oxford learner's defines "Blissful ignorance" as being unaware of something unpleasant — our concept simply requires us to replace the word "bliss" with "shame".

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
The end is where we start from...
— TS Eliot (The Fourth Quartet)

SO, we've finally reached the last part in our "Journey through space and time" in analysing teens and twentiers of Bangladesh over the last few decades. The Author fell in a dilemma for the fourth and final time. What can be focused this week? Most topics have already been discussed. But then, every could has a silver lining. Hence, we opted in taking extremely brief interviews of some people we all know (arbitrarily chosen and ordered in presentation). The honourable reader who has sat so patiently — for the last month or so — is given the final scope of imagination to make a value judgment from her/his personal perspective in bridging various "time trax".

We asked all interviewees one common question: "Critically assess young people of today and those of yesteryears". We received some interesting replies and thus intend to share our feelings with the reader(s) — because, all said and done, this narrative has been specially woven for readers of this page. All efforts will pay back if they manage to make positive impacts on the perception of today's young people.

History is a fable not agreed upon — Paul Samuelson (Economics)

(It's) time, we have wasted on the way
— CSN (Day light Again)

POET SHAMSUR RAHMAN: Today's young people seem to be more interested in cheap popularity and easy avenues to success. We weren't victims of violence in the way you are. Moreover, there is lack of commitment and ideals among you. Our generation was honest to their commitments and ideals. We've kept our promise by giving you a free country. Now it's your turn to start from where we finished. All said and

Those Were The Days, My Friend!

For Teens & Twenty-ers of Today and Yesteryears — The End

by Asrarul Islam Chowdhury Ronnie

done, I'm still hopeful that a gifted portion among you will come forward and be architects of my dream society of "humanism". The time zone of that society is exclusively yours for the taking. No matter how hard I try, I won't be able to travel with you to share the vision of glory!

I don't believe in magic But I do believe in you — Don McLean (Don McLean)

JEWEL AICH: Even all my illusion can't keep myself young forever, no matter how hard I try! Age will take its toll one day. Nevertheless — off course, today's young people are better than our generation was. They are more agile, inquisitive, creative, but above all, more intelligent than we were. Evolution has always generated better quality. Let's do hope, today's young people make a reality of the dreams, we failed to realise.

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars — but in ourselves — Shakespeare (Julius Caesar)

DR ATIUR RAHMAN: Today's young people are more global than we were. However, class segregation is becoming intense and various classes have become less communicable. We were violent, yes, but our violence was to see our motherland free from foreign domination. Today's violence has become brutal and lacks ideals. Nevertheless, there are many gifted and enterprising youngsters today. Unfortunately, due to poor leadership and political instability, they have failed to surface and contribute to development. But then, every cloud has a silver lining and I'm confident that one day the sun will shine on all of you.

You may say I'm a dreamer But I'm not the only one! — John Lennon (Imagine)

AKKU CHOWDHURY: We were a product to the sixties and strongly influenced by the crux of Western music in John Lennon, The Beatles,

portion of us may represent "light" mentality. Still, the stronger part will hopefully take care of the weaker one. Above all, the time itself is probably coming closer to help us in linking missing ties and find out the exact way.

SHOMI KAISER: When we were young, our environment was confined to our neighbourhood. We used to play "tillo express", "gollachhut" and other games. Today's teenagers seem to be interested in videos and partying — things we couldn't dream of. Another thing, Today's life is much faster, and parents simply can't give time to their children, no matter how much they want to. Maybe that's the way it's meant to be. But then, it wasn't when we were growing up.

BIPASHA HAYAT: I was a teenager even a few years ago. Nevertheless, I guess, technological innovations are changing everybody. Behaviour patterns have changed, both for the good and for the worse. However, one thing I've noticed is, tenderness of the mind and soul is gradually diminishing among young people nowadays. This may probably encompass the entire national one day, because today's young people are tomorrow's spokesmen.

ASHRAF KAISAR: Today's young people are definitely better than we were. They are more creative and always striving for better things in life. Technology has pronounced significant effects on their perception and if this technology is wisely applied, then today's young people will bring for Bangladesh a brighter tomorrow.

TROPA MAJUMDAR: The media revolution has connected today's people to global phenomena more than it did us. The choice of being either enlightened or enigmatic has thus become easier. The family plays an instrumental role in which of the two roads today's young people will choose. Conservatism among parents and their children has declined — thus helping children to become enlightened. But then, communication gap between

these two generations is enough to swallow a youngster out of this Universe by a black hole!

MAQSOOD (FEEDBACK): I tend to think of age as basically two paths — a number and a state of mind. "I've always tried to be open-minded and never intentionally discriminated anybody's progressive thinking solely because I landed on "Planet Earth" earlier than others. However, the greatest hurt in my adolescence has been this type of discrimination. I guess, a sensible person doesn't distinguish age if he or she finds a perception to be magnificently woven by the threads of art and wisdom!

We've got to release, Bangladesh — The Concert for Bangladesh

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The baby-boom generation of World War II was at the forefront of most progressive movements of the sixties and early seventies — in our case, the flower blossomed in 1971 through our independence war. Lucky for us, we're the baby-boom generation of that glorious year. Let's hope we will shoulder responsibilities and help guide Bangladesh into the next millennium. Because — all said and done — irrespective of "this-ism, that-ism" I guess we share one common platform — we do love our people, do we not? Our parents dreamt of a poverty-free society. We shall dream better — freedom of mankind. So come forward. History shall be ours for the making, taking, sharing and then, for the giving!

Give Peace A Chance! — John Lennon

There's no age barrier to creative thinking. The young are those who are creative. They do not belong to just the today and the yesteryears. They are the fortunate children who travel through all time zones — the past, the present and the future! Finally, Peace is the most creative creation of mankind. So come, let's "GIVE PACE A CHANCE"! This is the end — from where we should start.

WAR Crime Files, a documentary film, produced by Twenty-Two TV, on three Bangladeshi war criminals presently residing in London, have been shown in Channel 4's private channel of BBC. Based on factual evidence and eyewitnesses, this sixty-minutes film has highlighted the anger among the Bengali people towards those anti-liberation elements known as 'Razakaars', Al Badr and Al Shams, who brutally murdered and raped the whole nation.

War Crime Files, a successful effort of two people, Geeta Sehgal and David Bergman, has drawn gratitude and appreciation from people from all walks of life. D Bergman came to Bangladesh last August and started collecting information and pictures. He also took interviews of many people. Those who appeared in the screen were noted journalist Enayeturrahman Khan, eminent politician Dr Kamal Hossain, Lord Archer, the vice-chairman of the department of war crimes in the parliament of Britain, Meghna Guha Thakurta a teacher of Dhaka University and daughter of a martyred teacher, journalist Atiqur Rahman, former BBC correspondent Ataus Samad, Professor Anisuzzaman and wives of different martyred intellectuals of 1971.

I was very fortunate to watch this film in the TSC Auditorium organized by Mukti-joddha Command Council. War Crime Files is not just a documentary film but also an evidence of the liberation war. The production of this documentary has reminded us of The forgotten inhuman sufferings caused by the collaborators. What pains us most is that two people of a foreign country have accomplished what we couldn't do for the last twenty-years.

Why couldn't we prosecute the 'Razakaars'? The answers are rather confusing. Just after the liberation war was over, our beloved father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Those Intimate, Anonymous Friends!

by Ferdous Hossain

LOVE, trust, frankness — are the ingredients needed for a true friendship. This relation is so intense, so distinct, so delicate, so immense that it is quite impossible to depict in words. Everyone has friends, but how many of them do understand the meaning of this prevalent noun?

He is a person whom you can confide in. He is always there to purify the 'dence' within you. You can feel his tender presence when you are frustrated. He is there to hug you tightly and congratulate you on your 'any success. He can cheer you up when you are down cast. He is right beside you, lending you a helping hand in your destination. Are you dubious whether you have a friend like him? Have you ever been so faithful to anyone? Can you find all the qualities in any friend of yours — the qualities he is bestowed with? If you really do, then consider yourself as one of the most fortunate people. You don't know what the Almighty Allah has conferred you with.

I often consider myself to be a misfit. My birth in this earth was in a wrong timing; my family was going through depression. I don't have enough smart wits with which I can show-off academically, neither am I an Adonis for which I can be proud of. Till the time I met him I thought the 'Man' up there was being very unjustified. I was never happy with my past; I always had this haunting presentiment that my future had very few bright lights to shine on my life. Little did I know then that 'He' would give me the greatest gift on this earth anyone can ever imagine of. Yes, I found true friendship — the thing which I share with someone.

Friends I have, many. I very well know that a few of them are extremely found of me. There is not a single occasion or a mere get-together where

they'd go without me. If I ever need any kind of help, they wouldn't even let my words of distress touch the ground. I remember one of my relatives. You tell me what she didn't do my emotional comfort. Advice, lectures, strength and above all company for my desolate soul. This is one of the reasons for why I'll remember her all throughout my life. These five people (she, being one of them) mean a lot to me. I don't mean to sound dramatic but facts must be considered and given priority. If it were not for them, I wouldn't have been here where I am today. But still I strongly believe that you have only one best friend in this inescapable life.

And to be frank, I always thought that he would be the last person on this earth whom I am going to be friends with!

There is so much to say about him. Mere adjectives are not enough. From the day I started liking him, I wanted to pulsate the vibes between us in a warm manner. Now, it has reached its Zenith — a stage which cannot be described. Sometimes, I wonder whether I really deserve his friendship. If you ever ask anyone to name my qualities, the first thing he or she will say is about my self-centred attitude. But this person thinks that I have never, or rather, I will never present any selfish acts when he is around. These kinds of virtues of his stun me. I find myself in an enigma, then I know so much about this guy, practically the ins and outs of his life, but still, he seems so mysterious to understand. If in a case, where I know that my conscious mind is heading towards the 100% positive path and when I make a comment on something pertaining to him, he'll have the smirk on his face and say in an aghast tone, "Still, you didn't understand me?" Then there are the traumatic times where we will have oral fights over trivial matters (which can be solved easily but none of us tries them to) and then stop speaking to each other for sometime (much like kids in schools after fighting over a toy or something). Then again, he will have the smirk on his face, this time indicating something serious and he will go, you will never understand me.

The biggest fight we have had till now, lasted for over six days. There are times in everyone's lives when a simple intuition about something happens to be true. Its as if you know exactly what's going to

happen the next minute but you can't do anything about it. Like it happened with us just before we had this fight. We have major differences, over many things but we sort them out ourselves. Strange are the ways of destiny and we have very well experienced that. Mind me, my instinct works very promptly. During this big fight, I dreamt that this guy was in a lonely island, dressed in a bermuda — shorts, playing a dulcimer with one hand and piercing himself with nails with the other. Above all the temperature there was 45°C, this tongue (only naturally) hanging out for external metabolic comfort and his feet doing rhythmic dance. Talk about being vindictive! when I woke up, I burst my lungs out laughing. These kind of injudicious thoughts often cross my mind when I get angry at someone — an attitude which is a natal one.

The time which I spend with him are undoubtedly the best in my life. There is not a single thing on earth which I would hesitate to do for him. That day, we were talking about the morality of people. He said that he wouldn't be here to mourn at my death. When asked where he'd be, he replied, with contended smile, that he was going to die before I do, as he would never have the courage to face the harsh reality of my death. People say that finding real friendship is the rarest discovery on earth. I can proudly say that I have found the treasure which is priceless to me. It a time comes in this most world when people stop feeling for each other. I know there will be someone who will care for me exactly the same way he does now — because we share a 'just' friendship, we share a rare, flexible, undying one, inter-fused with love, trust and frankness.

I, myself, take friendship very seriously. Sometimes when I ask, 'who is a real friend?' to myself, my mind cannot answer me. And this person, aged 42, describes his ever-lasting friendship in such a sophisticated and suave manner. When I was thinking of writing a report on friends, I asked many people to illustrate their bonds of friendly relationship. I was really taken back to hear their stories. Personally speaking, I found Mr Asheque Rahman's one to be very touching and close to reality.

Ultimately, I had to write about his views — about his intimate, anonymous friend.

Time in Frame

'Time in Frame' is for those interested in photography. Send us your best photograph with a caption (if required) and a small technical detail of the shot taken. Show the others what you see through the lens. Your coloured or black and white photographs could be on campus, politics, every day Dhaka, of course beauty and anything different that your creative mind captures which others hardly notice. Every week the best entry would be published in this new column — introduced just for you. Send us your work in time for the next issue.



Mischivous and happy that is how the childhood days should be. Photo — AKM Mohsin

Justice May be Blind, But It Can See in the Dark

by Rabeth Khan

has any relations with them. Moreover the Jamaat is enjoying every moment and carrying on their evil deeds as none can touch them because of their beneficial position.

It is very clear that Lutful Rahman Abu Sayeed and Chowdhury Moinuddins big names of Al-Badr have a possibility of being prosecuted only because they are living in Britain as citizens. The British Law states that any person living as a citizen and proved to be a war criminal of any country he would be prosecuted. The police agency, the Scotland Yard of England will probably start their investigation in this matter very shortly. But what will happen to thousands of other 'razakaars' who are living comfortably in the heart of Bangladesh? Nothing, until the top political leaders and bureaucrats change their shameful attitude and repent for what mistake they have made. The souls of our brothers and fathers brutally killed and the souls of our mothers and sisters raped will not rest in peace until every member of Al Badr, Al Shams and 'razakaars' are punished.

Quoting from a film, justice may be blind, but it can see in the dark and hope, it happens. If we don't put our acts together fast, we will be the next victims. So let us bring back the spirit of the liberation yet again for another war. A war, we will have to win. And thanks to War Crime Files for relieving our forgotten past.

We have to create more War Crime Files not in screen but in reality also and not just of three but of all the collaborators living in our country and abroad.

granted general amnesty to all those who shot people in cold-blooded, raped the womenfolk indiscriminately and destroyed the country. This was perhaps one of the most miscalculated decisions taken by the late leader. Then another popular president, late Ziaur Rahman, one of the pioneers of our independence made the same mistake in further allowing those 'butchers' to work in form of a party — Jamaat-e-Islami. After his tragic demise, came the autocratic rule of H M Ershad who didn't care about anything other than his own interests. So that means, three leaders came to power, three different parties came to power but none of them did anything to bring those collaborators to justice.

For the last few years the anti-razakaar spirit rose in form of a party, Nirmul Committee which is affiliated with the biggest opposition party, the Awami League. Many people questioned, "What is the use of screaming now for justice and not twenty-four years back?" The simple answer to this is; better late than never. There is no justification in making the same mistake our previous generation did. These ruthless collaborators, these fundamentalist groups simply house most of the 'razakaars', and they are big obstruction to the development of the society as well as the country. But though they are the enemy of this country, they are free because of political immunity that is shelter from main political parties. The current government which came into power forming a coalition with the most hated Jamaat-e-Islami party, should be ashamed. And shame to all those who

