



A Nostalgic Recapitulation

The 1995 Science Fair of Dhanmondi Tutorial

by Romel Shahrukh Mostafa

A whiff of stink broke in, but for a moment only. I feel back into my ruminations, my body reclining on the grassy causeway of the tranquil lake of Dhanmondi. The cud was the just concluded 1995 Science Fair of Dhanmondi Tutorial. I had done the ruminating exactly at the same place once before, almost three years to the day, and that too had been about the Science Fair of the same school. There was a difference, though.

In the former case, I was a student of class nine, having just won the first prize for the project, 'The Sensitive Alarm System', and in the latter case, I was the student counsellor, having helped my students carry through their projects.

It had all begun with an over-ardent college student trying to impress a group of school children with an air of affected superiority. But soon the counselling proved more challenging than I had thought. The responsibility that went with the job demanded of me a non-

sense approach. I became increasingly involved in the welfare of the individual student, sincerely trying to help him solve his personal problems, such as his difficulty in coping with the syllabus, his inability to get on well with his peers, and so on. My sense of purpose got the better of my initial amateurism.

And then the unexpected happened. I had agreed to offer on a voluntary basis my services during my spare time, and I had done so with no pretence to being a prodigy. So, when the Principal announced in the staff meeting that I was to be the organizer of the School Science Fair, my immediate reaction was that of utter incredulity.

After all, part-time student counselling was one thing, organising the Science Fair was another. All the same, I could not refuse the assignment, since it was against the grain to hedge in the face of a challenge. Moreover, I could not be a

let-down to a Principal who had so much trust in me. That night I took whole three hours to work out a viable plan for making the fair a real success. Top on the list of my priorities were the participation of the maximum students and the creation of innovative projects with special emphasis on issues of current interest. There was always the temptation for me to do something different.

Hence, the plan included certain novel ideas like completing the projects within the school premises, using the material only to be provided by the school, and working out only those projects that were in no way related to the school curriculum.

The undertaking was a go-it-alone business all together, since none from among the teachers was forthcoming. I did not consider it befitting, either, to lean on borrowed ideas, despite my relative inexperience for the job. So I went ahead with my plans, bracing myself for any embar-

assing situations. I began by rallying about two hundred students, who soon took to the novelty of my plan, and felt extremely comfortable with me alone at the helm. What was bothering me, though, was the time constraint, since I was given only five working days to arrange for the whole fair. The

tions were loose, the concentration of acids and alkali was not in proportion and object-distance and image-distance were miscalculated resulting in the misplacement of lenses. We all worked relentlessly, and thanks to the tenacity of the students, the science fair could go ahead exactly on schedule.

On the day of the fair, there was not much for me to



An ingenious display. — Star photo

only option for me, therefore, was to work extra hours together with the students, who were ready to stay on after school.

Things seemed to go well until the day before the fair was due to be held. The students had finished their projects, and now it was my turn to check them out. The lay-out in each case was no doubt ingenious, but on demonstration most projects were found faulty. Shrieks of despair came from the students. For a moment, all their effort turned out to have been put in vain.

But I could not let that happen. Understandably, the students failed to get along with the new concepts of their projects. And in the last analysis, the responsibility for the failure fell squarely on me. I spared no time to set things right, first by identifying the factors that led to the failure. This time my first year A-Level studies came in very handy.

The errors became obvious: P-N junctions were reverse-biased while they were supposed to be forward-biased, electric circuit connec-

do except moving around and exchanging a few secret smiles with the students, who looked at me after avidly demonstrating their work to the visitors. It was not the kind of fair one was accustomed to — projects worked out in collaboration with technicians, circuits brought from market, charts designed by persons of unknown identity, and all this.

Not surprisingly therefore, some eyebrows were raised at the apparent crudity of some of the work. But then it was the participants themselves in the 1995 Dhanmondi Science Fair who best realized being original sometimes meant being crude.

The daylight was gone and the fair was a few hours behind me. All I needed now was some peaceful moments of an unruffled mind. Somewhere in the lake, there was a splash. Perhaps it was a fish that frolicked mocking at me. As I rose to my feet looking for solitude, the Principal's words kept ringing in my ears... 'Romel, you've proved worst your self.'



Being original sometimes means being crude. — Star photo

'Just Friends?' Refuses Further Bickering

by Gulnaz Alam

JUST Friends? started off with the simple concept that friendship between males and females is not particularly approved of in Bangladeshi society followed by an explanation on why it is viewed with such suspicion.

As the weeks passed by, more and more readers have put forward their opinions. This is a healthy sign because lively debates help enlighten and broaden the minds of disillusioned readers. And this particular debate has revealed that many teenagers in our society have misconceptions about free mixing and do not fully comprehend the English language.

The latter deficiency has led to baseless accusations such as my caging up my children and snooping among their personal things. I did not say in any of my articles that I believe in such extreme measures.

I only attempted to explain from a neutral point of view why adults feel it necessary to support and implement such practices. Nor did I say that they were right in doing so.

Anyone who has been following this free-mixing debate and is able to read in between the lines would have instantly figured out that both Mr Choudhury and Mr Selim

are determined to take a partisan stand (the latter was more subtle than the former).

I welcome controversy as long as there are specific grounds for argument. Those who have responded to my articles had little foundation to support their side of the dispute.

As neither of the two young men know me, they made irrelevant (personal) accusations. Most of my friends (if not all) are different from me as cheese and chalk. One of the few things that we all do have in common is that we are mature, young citizens willing to listen to and respect a controverted arguments and admit when we are wrong.

If anyone else wishes to express his/her views with regard to the free mixing issue during the forthcoming weekends, I would strongly advise him/her to have some substance in the article. Please do not argue back just for the sake of it or just to retaliate against guardians and the system. In future I refuse to respond to any more baseless and perfidious accusations. This is not because I cannot reply, but because such rubbish does not deserve the dignity of an answer.

From the heart of an eccentric man

by Trishna

HE was a man of astonishing creativity and profound suffering. He was isolated, in forlorn and financially dependent on his brother, Theo. During the last 18 months of his life, he was played by a neurological disorder that led to the famous incident when he cut off part of his ear with a razor.

The brilliant Dutch artist was eccentric, lonely and it is his unique vision compassion and dazzling creativity — not madness — that are reflected in Van Gogh's paintings.

In his last years as an artist, Van Gogh worked intensely to develop his use of colour and texture into a unique profound language of emotion. The swirling, turbulent style that he developed has often been linked, wrongly, to his bouts of mental illness. He has been portrayed as a mad genius whose insanity was flung on the canvas in wild fits of inspiration. But that notion though widely believed, is a myth. The neurological disease had nothing to do with the fiery intelligence, compassion and creativity that burst forth in his paintings.

It is true that Van Gogh was a disturbing presence in polite society. He was intense, stubborn and had a spiritual side to his character. During his twenties an interest in the religious life led him to become a lay missionary, working among the poor coal miners of southern Belgium. He lived in a shack, sleeping on the floor. He nursed victims of disease and mine accidents. This chapter of his life ended when his supervisors, who rebuked him for 'excessive zeal', dismissed him from his missionary work.

He emerged from the experience shaken but convinced that his life was to be an intellectual and artistic quest. As he wrote to Theo, "If I don't go on seeking any longer, then I am lost." He recalled his passion for art and felt 'homesick for the land of pictures'.

In the remaining ten years of his life, Van Gogh devoted himself to painting. "What am I in that eyes of most



An intense artist who found no peace in living

people? A nobody, an eccentric and disagreeable man," he wrote. "I want to show by my work what there is, in the heart of such an eccentric man, of such a nobody."

He worked unnecessarily, often producing a painting a day. He also wrote hundreds of letters, to Theo and others, filled with vivid descriptions of the landscapes and people around him and with analysis of his work in progress.

Sadly, only one of his paintings was sold during his life — The Red Vineyard, for a mere \$80. When his neurological attacks began, they terrified him. At their most acute, they made work impossible and brought on a bizarre, self-destructive behaviour that resulted in his being placed in an asylum.

Van Gogh's illness was never completely diagnosed during his lifetime, but it has been analysed by a number of specialists. One of the theories proposed today is that Van Gogh did not suffer from insanity but was the victim of

a type of temporal lobe epilepsy. Electrical discharges within the centres of emotion in the brain can produce bizarre and violent behaviour, followed by amnesia.

The affliction caused by Van Gogh's mental instability. Though he painted intensely until the end, he felt a growing despair and finally at the age of 37, took his own life.

Some say that one of Van Gogh's last paintings, crows over the wheatfield, shows sign of his impending suicide. However, as he wrote to his brother, these "vast fields of wheat under troubled skies" express sadness and extreme loneliness, but they also are a tribute to "the health and fortifying power I see in the country." It is this, combination of suffering and hope expressed in a unique language of colour, texture and intense beauty that Vincent Jan Gogh bequeathed to the world.

Source: ABC's of the Human Mind

Did you know?!

Million of Things Tall:
The smallest unit of measurement is called the attometre. It is only used in the microcosm of micro calculations and is so small that you could never see anything one attometre long. The average human thumb is 7,000,000,000,000,000 (that is seven thousand trillion) attometres long. Isn't that one awful lot of numbers!

News Travels Fast:
If a rumor was started at midnight and repeated within two seconds by everyone who knew about it to two people and those two people told two people and those two people told another two people... everyone on earth would know about it by 7-30 in the morning.

A Fishy Story:
If a man or woman wants to get a one pound of weight by eating fish, more than one thousand pounds of other living things must die first. The person would have to eat ten pounds of fish, which in turn would have to consume one hundred pounds of small fish creatures, which would in turn have eaten more than one thousand pound of plankton.

Suicidal:
A New York winter decided to end his life by throwing himself off the Empire State Building. He took the lift up to the 86th floor, found a convenient window and jumped. A gust of wind caught him as he fell and blew him into the studios of NBC Television on the 83rd floor. There was a live show going out, so the interviewer decided to ask the would-be or could be dead man a few questions. He admitted that he'd changed his mind as soon as he'd jumped.

Lipstuck:
A French driver returned to his car one day and found that the lock had frozen. Being a non-smoker he had neither matches nor lighter to defrost it, so he went down on his knees and breathed on it hoping that his warm breath would do the trick. It didn't. Instead he became stuck to the lock for twenty minutes.

Climbing Crabs:
The coconut crab, a kind of a hermit crab, climbs trees and picks coconut.

Hopped With My Wallet:
An Australian farmer found a kangaroo caught in the wire fence around his property. The poor beast was shivering with fear as the kind hearted farmer took off his waistcoat and slipped it into the animal-impulsively fitting its paws through the armholes.

He set to work freeing the 'roo, which took about three hours. As soon as it was free, the animal hopped away, still wearing the farmer's waistcoat. He wasn't too upset as it was an old working coat anyway. But three hours later, while searching for his wallet, he remembered that it had been in the waistcoat pocket.

So, if you guys ever go to Australia and see a kangaroo hopping around wearing a waistcoat, try and catch it — it could be well worth your while.

Unlucky Two:
In Redruth, Cornwall in 1906, two cars crashed into each other. Nothing unusual in that you may say — but they were the only two cars in the town at the time.

The US President In The British Army:
George Washington served for nearly six years in the British Army and rose to the rank of colonel. It was during these years that he became a skilled leader of men, a talent he used to full effect when he led the American Army against the British during the War of Independence.

A Painful Experience:
John Dillinger, the notorious prohibition gangster, decided to change his fingerprints as a way of evading prosecution. He dipped his fingers into a bowl of acid and went through weeks of agony while his burnt fingers healed. He was more than slightly distressed to find that his new fingerprints were exactly the same as the original ones.

Brief Notes

by Rabeth Khan

Boxing

BOXING as a sport was introduced in Bangladesh by Mr M A Aziz, a veteran boxer and organizer. With a limited number of boxers named Saifur Rahman, M A Maten and others during 1948-49 in Quaid-E-Azam Physical Training Institute, he started.

After Bangladesh became independent, Bangladesh Amateur Boxing Federation was formed in 1973 and first National Boxing Championships was held in December, 1973 in Dhaka.

The first time Bangladesh participated on foreign soil was in 1977, when the national team participated in the 3rd King's Cup International Boxing Tournament held in Bangkok in 1977. In that tournament, Bangladesh obtained one bronze medal in heavy-weight class.

Bangladesh Amateur Boxing Federation was affiliated to International Amateur Boxing Association and Federation of Asian Amateur Boxing in 1977.

Total Participation in International Tournaments — 20 tournaments till now.

Best performance: — A twelve-member boxing team went to India in 1994 to participate in P L Roy Centenary Invitational Boxing Tournament. The team made the country proud by winning nine gold and nine silver in different weights. This is the best performance by Bangladesh in any tournament.

Total Medals Obtained in International Competitions

Gold	Silver	Bronze
12	22	34

Golden Moment — A historic event took place in 1978. That moment will always be remembered as long as boxing is played in this country. The legendary World Boxing Champion, Muhammad Ali the Great inaugurated the Muhammad Ali Boxing Stadium in Dhaka. He has been one of the greatest sportsmen to visit Bangladesh.

Volley Ball

THE game of volleyball is still in its primary days in our country. Though the first game of volleyball was held in our country in 1972, the status of this sport didn't change much. It is still in pure amateur state. It was played in some schools and there hasn't been any change in the standard. We are far behind our neighbours India and Pakistan.

The first time, the national volleyball team played in an international tournament was in 1973 in New Delhi in All India Rural Games. And the first foreign volleyball team to play in Bangladesh was Tashkent Dynamo from Russia in 1974. Another Russian team to play in Dhaka was Kyrgyzis in 1977.

As it is not possible for any country to concentrate on

every sport, volleyball has to wait for its turn in order to be popular and efficient. But at least, we should train our national team in such a way so that whenever they play foreign teams, they are defeated in a honourable manner and not make a pathetic sight.

Hockey

HOCKEY has been one of the most popular sports in the subcontinent. India and Pakistan had been for so long the powers of world hockey but Bangladesh for some reasons couldn't go up to such heights.

The overall standing of hockey in this country is average; but if a more planned policy is taken, we can at least have the chance to take the third position.

Our domestic league for the past years have been very competitive despite the absence of the artificial hockey field known as astro turf. The renowned players like Shahbaz Ahmed and Qamar Ibrahim had made their presence felt here in Dhaka. The local players learnt a lot from them.

A good news for our hockey team is that, work is going on in the National Hockey Stadium to install the astro-turf. And by practicing on this surface, our players will have the required techniques in their arsenal to combat the much stronger

teams.

Glancing back to the history of hockey in Bangladesh, we will see that, the first time a Bangladeshi team played on foreign soil was in Delhi in 1972. The Bangladeshi team in the name of Dhaka Eleven participated in the Nehru Cup Hockey. On the other hand, Sri Lanka was the first foreign team to play in Bangladesh. They played two tests, won one and drew one.

Total Participations in International Tournaments National Team (Senior) — 11 National Team (Junior) — 4

Best Performances: National Team (Senior) — The best performance of the senior national team was in 1985, when they secured the 6th position out of twelve teams in the 2nd Asia Cup held in Dhaka.

National Team (Junior) — Their best performance was in 1988, when they secured the fourth position out of ten teams in the 4th Junior World Cup Qualifying tournament in Delhi.

Spring

by Farzeen Saleh

Down the valleys and around the hills Flowers grow everywhere and fill Little patches of bright green grass which shines in the sunlight just like brass. High in the sky the birds fly. Behind the clouds just passing by The sun shines brightly everywhere Spreading its heat here and there The trees and plants are filled with fruit. Picked by farmers wearing coloured boots. Such colour, brightness and beauty brings The beautiful season which is spring

Quiz Club

Here are this week's ten quizzes for you to crack! Send the answers by Wednesday 18th October, and win away the Quiz Club Prize!

1. Which country led the Operation Restore Hope?
2. In which year the Vietnam war ended formally?
3. Who were the Vikings?
4. Who is the writer of the book, The Mayor of Casterbridge?
5. What is the capital of Mauritania?
6. What is Interpol?
7. How many years did it take to build the Taj Mahal?
8. Where are the thyroid glands are situated?
9. What is an electroscop?
10. What is the GNP per capita of Bangladesh?

- Answers : (06.10.95)**
1. Nelson De Mille
 2. Nelson Mandela and De Clark
 3. President Richard Nixon
 4. Nebuchadnezzar II
 5. French
 6. Atoms of different atomic weight, but chemically the same substance
 7. Cathode Ray Oscilloscope
 8. 2400 km (1500ml)
 9. Tunisia
 10. 12th October
- Compiled by Sajid