

Women and Cancer: Five Steps to Reducing the Risk

On 12 April 1980, a 21-year old man named Terry Fox began a courageous run across Canada. Two years before, Terry lost his right leg to bone cancer and wanted to raise money for cancer research. Half way across the world's second biggest country, after running 5,565 kilometres on an artificial leg, Terry was forced to stop. The cancer had come back and spread to his lungs. Terry died in 1981. But his dream continues. The Terry Fox Run for Cancer Research is now an annual fund raising event in 44 countries. This article is the first in a two-part series on cancer to mark the second Terry Fox Run in Bangladesh. The run will be held in Dhaka, Khulna, Kishoreganj, Comilla, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Bogra on Friday, 3 November. Article by Peggy Herring

SINCE Terry's "Marathon of Hope" began sixteen years ago, as many as 24 lakhs of people in Bangladesh have died from various forms of cancer. That's equivalent to the entire population of Chittagong. It is even more sobering when you consider the social and economic effects on the families and communities who have lost loved ones and, in most cases, an income-earning member of the family. The good news is that according to the Bangladesh Cancer Society, half of the cancer cases in the country can be prevented.

Women comprise a sizable proportion of the cancer patients in country. The most common cancer affecting women in Bangladesh is cervical cancer - 24 per cent of cases, according to the Bangladesh Cancer Society. Breast cancer is the second most common, comprising 17 per cent. Cancer of the oral cavity is third, representing 13 per cent of cases.

While researchers have yet to find a cure for these cancers, there have been considerable advances made in understanding the causes of cancer. Clinical, pathological and epidemiological studies show that the exis-

tence of certain environmental, dietary and hereditary factors are common among cancer patients. These are known as risk factors.

Women in Bangladesh can make a number of changes in their lifestyle which may contribute to decreasing their risk of developing cancer. The changes are:

1. Don't smoke or chew tobacco: About one-third of cancers in Bangladesh are caused by smoking or chewing tobacco. Women who don't use these products are less likely to develop cancer of the oral cavity. Research has also been shown that using tobacco is linked directly or indirectly to cancers of the lung, esophagus, pancreas, kidney and bladder. It makes no difference whether you smoke imported or locally made cigarettes, or "biri", or whether you use a "hukka" pipe for smoking. All types of smoking are injurious to the health. Similarly, chewing raw tobacco leaf, "jarda" or "kimam" with betel leaf, betel nut and lime, or chewing "khaini" are linked to many oral cancers. If you already smoke or chew tobacco, you should quit. If you don't smoke or chew tobacco, don't start. You should also be aware of the hazards of second-hand smoke. If you

are spending a lot of time in the company of a smoker, your risk of developing lung cancer from breathing their smoke is considerable. Try to stay away from second hand smoke by leaving the room or spending less time with smokers.

2. Limit the number of children you have: Research has demonstrated that cervical cancer, the most common among women in Bangladesh, may be linked with lacerations of the cervix caused by repeated childbirth. Women should practice family planning methods and limit the number of children they have. In Bangladesh, the World Health Organization says the ideal number of children for a couple is two. Having more than two children increases the risks associated with childbirth and pregnancy. The Bangladesh Cancer Society recommends married women have a cytology test of the cervical smear every three years.

3. Eat a low-fat, high-fibre diet: Research has clearly demonstrated links between the type of food a person eats and their chances of developing cancer. Foods high in fats, such as those fried in butter, oil and ghee, are linked with breast, colon and

uterine cancers. Heavily salted and excessively spicy foods, such as those containing red chilis, have been found to be associated with stomach cancer. High fibre foods, such as grains and fresh fruits and vegetables, reduce the risk of developing cancers. Foods rich in vitamins ACE zinc and selenium, such as leafy green vegetables and yellow-coloured fruits and vegetables, such as carrots, papayas and mangoes reduce the risk of development some types of cancers.

4. Breastfeed your children: Besides providing the best food possible to your baby, breastfeeding is healthy for women as well. Research demonstrates that women who breastfeed their children are less likely to develop breast cancer. Breastfeeding also protects the mother against pregnancy if her baby breastfeeds frequently, day and night. If the baby is not regularly given other food and drink and if the mother's periods have not returned.

5. Take responsibility for your health: No one knows your body better than you. Examine your breasts once a month for changes in the size

and shape and the presence of lumps. Watch for changes in your skin, such as new moles, or cuts and skin irritations that will not heal. Take good care of your dental health by brushing your teeth regularly and monitoring carefully any sores or eruptions in the mouth or nose that do not heal. If you see any of these signs, don't wait. Go see your doctor immediately. In most cases, a simple diagnostic test can quickly determine the presence of cancer. Early detection leads to a better chance of cure.

There are many other risk factors, such as the family's medical history and environmental pollution. But these factors are generally not as important as the five steps just mentioned. Cancer can be beaten, especially if a woman takes positive steps to change her lifestyle and take control of her own health. Stop smoking, eat healthier foods, carefully plan the birth of your children and pay close attention to changes in your body. These are all positive, proactive steps a woman can take to protect herself from cancer and to lead a healthier life.

Next week: Smoking and Cancer

Giganotosaurus Carotini — the Biggest Carnivore of All Time

IT came from Argentina land of gauchos and vast cattle ranches. The biggest carnivore of all time.

Giganotosaurus Carolinii would have dwarfed even the Tyrannosaurus Rex and its teeth, as long as a man's forearm, were meant for shredding even bigger plant-eaters that thundered through the Cretaceous forests.

Dinosaurs are in fashion again and scientists are rushing to dig up their remains using new, sophisticated technology. Recent discoveries include fossils of a whole raft of enormous animals that would have towered over Brontosaurus.

Known as Titanosaurs, they strolled across the Americas between 150 million and 100 million years ago.

They include Seismosaurus, a monstrous vegetarian whose huge skeleton is as earth-shaking as its name.

Unearthed in New Mexico starting in the 1980s, it had the long neck and tail of a Brontosaurus (now re-named Apatosaurus) but was twice as long and much, much heavier.

All its bones have not yet been found, but vertebrae indicate it was between 39 and 52 metres (128 and 170 feet) long. It may have weighed 100 tonnes as much as a herd of elephants.

Then came argentinosaurs huinculensis — not quite as big but still impressive at about 100 feet (30 metres) long.

Finally the biggest meat-eater ever — Giganotosaurus, which, at 12.5 metres (40 feet) long, was not big

enough to prey on argentinosaurs but probably scavenged dead ones.

Such gargantuan creatures are exciting in themselves, but scientists are finding even more thrilling things about them. They did not lumber about, their tails dragging the ground, but moved swiftly and gracefully.

Most probably were warm-blooded in some way — meaning they did not chomp the occasional meal and then lie about for days digesting it, but kept constantly on the move.

They may even have been intelligent — with indications that they had keen colour, vision and sense of smell.

Angela Milner, chief Dinosaur expert at London's Natural History Museum says the new giants are being found because more people are looking for them.

Each discovery prompts a flurry of expeditions. It's a self-generating, new renaissance, she said.

Milner, who herself hunts Dinosaur fossils in the Sahara and Antarctica, said new technology meant scientists could look deeper under the earth and investigate new regions. There are still areas in the world which are completely unexplored.

Early fossil-hunters never thought such huge creatures could exist, believing they would collapse under their own weight. For example it was thought Brontosaurus had to wallow in swamps because their huge bulk could not be supported outside water.

Now scientists agree that the tree-grazing Brachiosaurus

depicted in the film "Jurassic Park" are closer to the mark.

R McNeill Alexander, a zoologist specialising in biomechanics at Leeds University in northern England, has examined the fossil bones and compared them to living creatures. He estimates dinosaurs could have weighed up to 80 tonnes.

"Now 80 tonnes is absolutely enormous compared to anything we have on land today," he said. "The biggest elephants are about six tonnes."

Brontosaurus probably weighed 35 tonnes, Alexander said. "If you do calculations on their back legs you get pretty much the same things as you get for an Indian elephant," he said.

"So a Brontosaurus could have been about as athletic as elephants are."

The other limitation is metabolism. If dinosaurs were reptiles, their size poses no problems. But monstrous mammals generate matching amounts of body heat.

"I did some calculations on the heat balance of a Brachiosaurus — that's a 50-tonne job," Alexander said.

"I reckon that if it had the sort of metabolic rate that you would expect on a mammal that size... its body temperature was going to rise so high that it would be very nicely cooked."

With an animal that size even if you put in a reptilian-type metabolism, you get an animal that is considerably warmer than the environment in effect it would be warm-blooded, even though it had reptile-type metabolism.

But dinosaur bones do not look exactly like modern reptiles and in some ways resemble those of modern mammals. To explain this, Milner has devised another theory — that dinosaurs had a third type of metabolism known as mass homeothermy.

"When they were young and small and growing they would have had a very high metabolic rate, very similar to birds and mammals," she said.

"But they really seem to have had a unique mechanism that no living animal has — they were literally able to turn the thermostat down when they were large."

Experts should learn more as they piece together the Titanosaurs. Paleontologist Rodolfo Coria, who identified both Argentinosaurs and Giganotosaurus, is working with little more than parts of a skull, jawbones, a shoulder girdle vertebrae and bits of hind limb.

But those were the important parts — enough to point to head size, length and how it moved.

More ones, if found, can give better indications of how much the animal weighed and, scientists hope, will be well-enough preserved to yield up DNA, the genetic blueprint that could give priceless clues about the creatures that died out mysteriously 65 million years ago. — Reuter

A History of Music

Continued from page 9
rious music, but his work is completely lost to the whole Bengali people except for a handful of direct disciples.

It was as if in confirmation of this affliction — this national amnesia — there never was any attempt made to anthologise the music of the Bengali over at least the area of time traceable by diligent searchers. Neither in Bangladesh, a state founded to be the homeland of the Bengali people, nor in West

it would be premature to pose such questions before one or two other attempts are made on the same line. We should know what a tragedy it is to be forced to span the music in nine centuries — from the 9th century to the 18th — in one single cassette of 40 minutes' duration, leaving time for the lecture.

Dr Karunamaya Goswami, a prolific writer on music, has done a very good job of a sketchy coverage of a 1200-

sectarian standpoint. Dr Goswami's has been a wonderfully objective resume.

Academics apart, how do the cassettes sound? Is the fare musically excitable — as it should be? How about the production and the performances? Stripped of the history part would the box give the buyer his money's value? The base material — the pre-recorded cassette — is the best available in the market. But both recording and transfer-printing leaves much room for improvement. My visitors who have shown keen interest in the album, have unflinchingly enquired about the language used on the box and in the two accompanying pamphlets, which was English. The explanation was easy — this was an export-oriented production. The album in Bengali version and for the domestic market would follow soon. The production was perhaps not wholly up to export standard.

Sujeya Shyam, the arranger, has done the best possible job of a hasty production. Had this talented man got enough time to do his own researches into the many diverging and at times lost song forms, things surely would have improved in this area.

The album's crowning glory belongs to the performances. Debates can rage over the right representative character of the selection of songs — but these 95 are indeed representative enough, whatever others as deserving

the leading musical group of the nation, has been an abiding source of strength to Dr Goswami, as is evidenced from the fact that no less than 30 of the whole range of songs have come from them, in both solo and chorus. They together with the other chorus group Abhuday have not been credited. This should be hopefully rectified in the domestic version as well as the second edition of the export version of the album.

A stamp of inexperience is discernible in some important aspect of the album. The box is hardly a box, it wouldn't bear much handling. And only on it — and nowhere else — is printed the cassette particulars. The cassette wrapper inside the cover, the only surface giving the name of the artistes as well as the serial number and subject matter of that individual cassette, is printed on a specially thin paper weak enough not to last long. If the cassette is liberally used.

I make all such small and ticklish points because I firmly believe here is something supremely preservable. So all the legends should, on top being given on the box and the wrapper, be printed on the cassette itself. For the same reason I should request Dr Goswami to be fairer to the performers, the chorus included and add one more pamphlet devoted to them and their antecedents. This would undoubtedly add value to the album.

I take great pleasure to repeat that this is a ground-

BOOKS

20 years of ADAB

Sharief Khan

THE July-December 1994 issue of development journal *Grassroots*, published recently celebrates 20 years of Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh (ADAB). This 272-page issue of *Grassroots* puts, on the record, the brief history of ADAB and its affiliated bodies before the public.

Some 67 articles have been included in this beautifully made-up journal, characterised by a neat look. These articles will give readers an insiders view of how ADAB grew to its present shape, as well as, how the focus of the activities of different NGOs shifted from simple development activities in the country's war ravaged economy in the seventies to poverty alleviation, establishment of effective democratic process at the grassroots, human rights and women's empowerment, education, health and family planning in the eighties.

Over the years, ADAB has developed and adopted a code of ethics to establish the NGO sector as dynamic, vibrant, effective and accountable. Since the late eighties, the *Grassroots* points out, ADAB has started liaising with the media, dif-

ferent socio-cultural groups, academics, researchers and opinion leaders.

The different types of features in this journal include ADAB and environmental management, NGO leaders on development initiatives, NEMAP: its importance and the role of ADAB, some remi-



niscence by Father RW Timm, Sonia Amin and Jahangir Hassan, 49 years of UN and global initiatives of the NGOs, financial self-reliance and PVDOs, and a series of articles on the history and development of ADAB.

The journal also contains a number of interviews, which include interviews with international NGOs, editors of different dailies, government officials. Members of the Parliament, economists and socio-cultural activists.

In addition, the journal has a special slant on development in different districts. It has got separate articles on Barisal, Bogra, Chittagong, Comilla, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet and Manikganj.

Among other features, there is subject-wise focus on environment, health and nutrition and communication. It has touched on activities of some NGOs like Proshika, RDRS and Caritas, in addition to ADAB's standpoint at the Beijing Conference which concluded earlier this month.

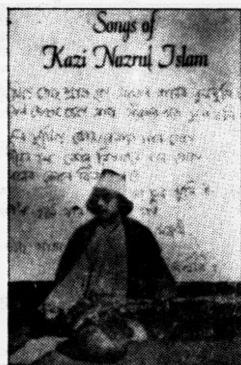
This lucidly written ADAB Quarterly left no stone unturned in picking development oriented subjects. For both NGO activists and readers interested in development literature, this journal will remain as an important reference publication. Read it and keep it. This July-December issue of *Grassroots* will be a handy reference book for a long time to come.



Bengal and Assam, the next highest concentration of Bengalis after Bangladesh or in Britain or the America where the Bengali culture has made inroads not yet discernible. On the box of cassettes I told the reader about at the outset is writ in large cursive letters — Bengali music. How strange, not a box of chocolates but a case of Bengali music! Never heard of such a thing. Ever. On my naughty days at my office desk, I have found not one failing to be intrigued by the thing.

That is the first charm of this album of ten cassettes purporting to be a history in sound of Bengali music, although microscopically. This is very much a path-breaker. One that is sure to set off a chain of attempts to encapsulate Bengali music diachronically. The glory of being the first in the field belongs to Dr Karunamaya Goswami's album. And for a first, a 95-song attempt is simply heroic. Considering that the business of recorded audio cassettes is not replete with such academic — and not entertainment and sale oriented — enterprises, this heroism attains quite a height and breaks a new ground here too. Add to the songs the pithy lectures that come prologuing the songs on each cassette, and you can be sure you are making a lifetime's bargain.

Only after the ecstasy of encountering this pioneering magic box has passed, it will be in order to ask if 95 songs can span the entire history of Bengali music? Or for that matter it is wise to call what is in fact a compendious collection of Bengali songs, an album of Bengali music, arranged historically. Perhaps



year long history of musical hyper-activity by an ancient people. One would be ungrudging about offering him enthusiastic accolades if one knows about the pathetic situation of the availability of aural material. The challenge was specially daunting because the production was done in Dhaka — which has been cut off from the mainstream of the musical development of the Bengali people — due to political delusions imposed by the medieval bigotry of Pakistan. The lost links had hardly been re-established when Dr Goswami embarked upon this project. Whatever he has been able to salvage of music other than now extant in Bangladesh, everything prior to 1952 that is, has been possible due to the good work of Chhayanant and of music carrying on with that good work. Dr Goswami was lucky to get such a group handy. Unfortunately they haven't been mentioned anywhere in the cassettes or in the accompanying literature. But this omission should underscore rather than detract from Dr. Goswami's achievement.

This is a 10-thousand-world-pamphlet, 'Bengali Music: An Introduction' inside the box. This is possibly the first time that in English such a synoptic view of one music has been published. If the cassettes have been forced to skip centuries and leave big holes in its documentation, Dr Goswami has tried to squeeze all necessary information, occasionally punctuated by insight observations, into the introduction. In a nation and at a time where and when everything is looked at and presented from an extremely narrow



may have been kept out. And most of these have been well rendered. The leaders of each genre have performed up to their fame's worth. But Goswami has scored here most unexpectedly. And most courageously. He has invited a host of young and almost unknown singers to do some very difficult songs. And all of them, from Suman Choudhury and Nilpotat Sadhya to Laisa Ahmed, Nasima Shaheen and Sharmin Sathi — have come out brilliantly. Special mention must be made of a duet done by Mita Huq and Kalpana Anam of you guess what. The *Dashavastrotam* of the great Jaydev, as per the rendition of the unsurpassable M L Subbolakshmi.

Victims of some unavoidable hurry have been the chorus groups. Anandadhvani,



breaking work of an almost heroic proportion. And I do hope this to provide valuable groundwork for other similar attempts to base on and improve. Was it not Haraprasad who said the Bengalis were a nation of forgotten identity? Well, we not only forgotten our music, we have also forgotten our music, we have also forgotten all memory of ever having such a body heavenly constructions. We do not have at the moment any national music whatsoever. Any refrain couched in the Bengali language is not necessarily Bengali music. And, in the absence of a truly living national music the whole of our nation is being impregnated by cheap Hindi film tunes giving off unintelligible words. Dr Goswami's album initiates a heroic counter to all this.

Laila Sharmeen

So, my confession to the connoisseurs of art is that I am not well. Wars, ethnic cleansing, discrimination of various forms have robbed my peace.

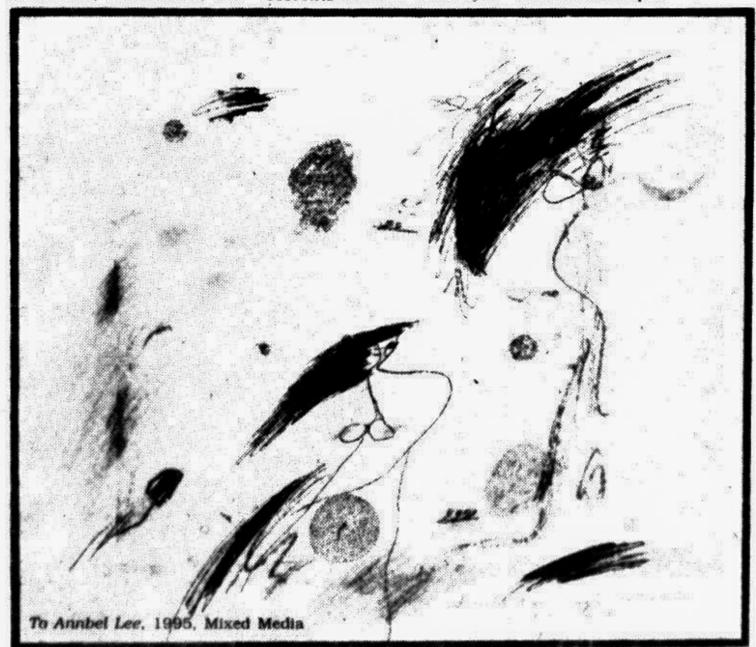
But still I am an optimist. The moon, the flowers, the

firely, the pink colour and the white space of my works have made me a dreamer. That is why even the whores of Tanbazaar appear to me as lovelier as daffodils.

And as because Madame Sososiris is a false soothsayer

her access is prohibited to my dream world. And that is why Tiresias comes to me with the dream of a Utopia.

The humankind of the planet would one day definitely step on the land dream, the Utopia.



To Annabel Lee, 1995, Mixed Media