

# TEEN'S and TWENTIES

## Reading: Key for A Creative Mind

by Nazma Yeasmeen Haque



**Gone are those days when reading was taken as only or prime source of entertainment. Youngsters of today by keeping themselves occupied with too many distracting stimuli in their immediate environment tend to learn little of many things that do not often converge into systematic kind of knowledge with end result being acquisition of peripheral knowledge and minimum retention.**

Of late, there has been a growing concern among educationists that reading, an infrastructure of education has severely been affected due to an onslaught of cable TV, video and even computers, a trend that has been noticeable particularly among the youngsters.

Such a concern has assumed all the more significance by its finding that gradual decline in interest in reading among youngsters has been brought about jointly by school, home and the community. While one may or may not have that much immediate control over one's community, it is appalling that home and school that are supposed to promote, can have an adverse effect on learning behaviour of their youngsters.

Out of this felt need of restoring reading to its pivotal position, the year 1989 was declared as 'The Year of the Young Reader' in USA. In a developed and disciplined country like Singapore, community based clubs or centres are being set up for reading facilities of all and in particular for being used by the students to carry on with their school assignments in a quiet and uninterrupted environment; in India, fear has been manifested by the school teachers that "the book reading child is slowly becoming a rare sight"; closing down the children's section at the British Council Library in Dhaka in the recent past is ominous enough that less and less youngsters are borrowing books for reading.

These examples are significant enough to establish almost empirically that an erosion of learning needs and their concomitant skills in the life of a youngster has already taken place.

In schools in the developed countries, it is relatively easier to find out reading age of a child by administering a standardized reading test and other tests of reading comprehension that supply an index as to his reading ability and reading deficiency, nevertheless, in our context, not-so-structured instruments are reliable enough to diagnose such cases showing gradual loss of interest in reading among youngsters.

Other researches abroad have revealed that it is not only in reading school text books but also literary materials and any other materials that we come across daily, a decline in reading "has" been rather pronounced. It can, therefore, be safely inferred that reading not only as a necessity but also as a

hobby has lost its glory that was there in the yesteryears.

Gone are those days when reading was taken as only or prime source of entertainment. Youngsters of today by keeping themselves occupied with too many distracting stimuli in their immediate environment tend to learn little of many things that do not often converge into systematic kind of knowledge with end result being acquisition of peripheral knowledge and minimum retention.

Bits of data including music emanating from cable TV alone fill in the brain of a youngster to a large extent clouding its consciousness for reading activity which not surprisingly may appear to them as counter-culture for deriving pleasure.

As an intellectual exercise, reading has therefore been pushed to the back seat, a situation that has sadly enough been exacerbated by parental attitude and home environment.

Till his pre-adolescent period, a youngster in his family is primarily conditioned by the way his parents spend their leisure, and the extent to what reading occupies its position in his home environment.

A home environment that is characterized by noise blaring from electronic media either for most of the time or at a certain time that ought to be reserved for studying by the school going children is undoubtedly the most unfavourable atmosphere to concentrate in an intellectual activity.

It is quite a common sight nowadays to find children doing their school work sitting in front of the TV. Interference of such temptations can have a far-reaching effect on the functioning of both normal and complex activities in a youngster's brain.

Not entering into a sterile debate between how much one should read for obtaining good

marks or grades and for acquiring knowledge, one can safely state that the kind of teaching procedures we mostly adopt in our schools also tend to put an early limit to reading. Two things accrue from such a practice which often remain unnoticed to the teachers, one, youngsters search for an easy way out by reading less and spending least time on it; the other, a habit of desultory reading is developed by attempting to cover up bits and pieces of knowledge that need to be learnt within a given time. Reading less and less generates a vicious circle: counter-balances other tools of learning such as understanding, inquisitiveness, writing and retention as far as school education vis-a-vis general intellectual development of a learner is concerned.

The following measures may be suggested for schools to implement with a view to reinstate reading at the heart of learning:

(a) a kind of flexible timetable can be used at least up to the first five years of formal schooling whereby less compartmentalization of subject lessons will normally allow longer duration giving a leeway to put reading to more use in the classroom.

(b) a homework must not necessarily and mostly mean a written assignment that has all the possibilities of getting done assisted, whereas a reading assignment for homework followed by classwork will not only be learnt mostly independently but also vary the nature of the task making it vibrant for the youngster. When tested orally in the class prior to a written work, a child being able to participate successfully develops self-confidence that is psychologically fulfilling to him and helpful to others not so well prepared.

(c) using silent reading in the class on a portion not yet taught with the purpose of exercising comprehension skill;

(d) subjects/lessons that lend to storytelling may be presented in such a way that when a heightened level of interest will be approaching, it can be suspended and pupils told to complete the sequence by reading it. Motivated by curiosity, they will naturally be led to do further reading.

(e) class tests, examinations often must consist of improved type multiple-choice questions and short-answer descriptive questions that will call for extensive and thorough reading as their pre-requisites.

(f) open-book tests should be used consisting of a few questions for which the answers will be relatively longer. Such questions should be set in a not-so-familiar way entailing reading between the lines. Here the target will be to see how a youngster is being able to apply himself by exercising his thinking and reasoning ability.

The values of audio-visual media notwithstanding, it must be admitted that these have almost completed a full circle by outweighing reading in the life of a youngster. In order to set things straight, reading will need a major thrust both in inculcating and sustaining an interest among the youngsters. Reading habits once started early in life tend to persist more or less throughout one's life once nurtured with interest. A feeling of creative interaction that is there in reading, therefore, needs to be aroused among the youngsters in order to curb influences that run counter to school learning.

## A Flight of Fancy

by Rubaiyat Khan



There was a quaint looking candy shop almost deserted block — where I had lived once as a child of four. It was a place, a little distance off from where the town was.

Although our little village was enveloped with serene natural beauty with many coniferous trees in the woods nearby and a myriad of little animals, such as the squirrel; my four year old mind marveled only, at the existence of such a heaven as the candy shop, where my mother used to take me once a week to treat me on any one of the sweets I desired.

The difficult part was the choosing! There were so many varieties and kinds, that my throat ached with regret if I had already chosen one type. "Perhaps I should have taken the liquorice sticks, or better still, the pink sugar — coated candy bars!" The storekeeper, Mr Green, was most understandable, for he would pause as if in gesture, of whether I had changed my mind in the last minute.

Then the moment of indecision would pass and the chosen sweet would be put in a brown paper bag and handed down to me from the counter. What caught my attention, though, at first was that my mother gave him something after which he handed me my candy. Later on, I developed the idea of trading one thing for another. That was when an idea struck my little mind with much force.

If I persisted and so, one day, I drew up all my courage and ran all the way down as fast as my little round legs would carry me and ended up outside my destination.

One of my hands were clutching the prized and precious possession with which I went in and chose all the desired sweets; every two of each kind!

As I did so, Mr Green watched me with some surprise and then eyeing me suspiciously, asked whether I had enough money to pay for all the things I was buying! I answered innocently, "Oh, I have lots of them!" Then when he had packed and handed me my treasure, I held out my tiny hand, clutching fast, and opened it to reveal a dozen cherry seeds!

He stared for just a second, then sighed I stared back, my eyes very wide — "Isn't it enough?" I asked. He sighed and said that it was a bit too much and that I had some change coming!

Later on, when I grew up and remembered, I realised how beautifully Mr Green had tackled the situation, how wonderfully he had preserved my innocence. I felt the true wisdom behind his actions, as I pictured the little boy holding on possessively to his prize and walking happily out of the candy shop and into the street — back home

## A Bond Between the Old and the Young

by ASM Nurunnabi

A real-life story sometimes reads like a fairy tale. My small grand-son finds great interest in a fairy tale which speaks of a giant who used to live in a palace alone. The palace had all the richness of comforts and conveniences. Within the palace compound, there was a big garden in which flowers of many varieties blossomed. The garden also attracted many kinds of birds, morning and evening. Their mellifluous chirpings and the wealth of beautiful flowers in the garden filled the heart of the giant with joy.

The giant used to pass his nights hunting for food. With the coming of dawn, he retired to his palace where he rested and slept. The giant was happy with his peaceful life. This was, however, rudely disturbed sometime later when some little children of the neighbourhood who never saw the real occupant of the palace, used to gather in the palace garden to engage in many kinds of games. While thus engaged in their games, the children lost count of time laughing and shouting. They had no idea that within the palace the giant was sleeping after his usual nocturnal expeditions. The unbounded merry-making of the playing children in the garden disturbed the sleep of the giant and he felt very annoyed.

One day, the giant could no longer bear the disturbance caused by the children. He came out of the palace in anger. Seeing the angry face of the giant, the children got frightened and fled instantly. Afterwards the children avoided the palace garden. Their games also stopped.

Days passed and the giant had his peace. But nature had its ways of wrecking vengeance. When the children ceased playing in the giant's garden, no flowers blossomed and no song sang in the garden. Soon the garden became a barren wasteland.

This terribly distressed the giant who came to feel that the playful children was a source of joy to him. He accordingly felt repentant. In this frame of mind, the giant one day found that a small child who had none to warn him of the giant, came into the garden by mistake. Instead of being angry, the giant felt extremely happy seeing the little child. He took him up in his arms and caressed him tenderly.

The other children of the locality watched the scene from outside the garden wall. They all came to realise that the angry mood of the giant had disappeared. Emboldened by the changed attitude of the giant, they came back into the garden and again began their daily routine of playing. The giant also felt happy.

an enchanting look; all through the night, the Sheuli flowers, with their white petals and short orange-coloured stamens fell to the ground, making it look like white flakes of snow on a green carpet. The flowers that dropped from the tree were a source of great jubilation to the small boys and girls of the neighbourhood. They would assemble very early in the morning under the Sheuli tree and begin collection of the beautiful flowers.

In this work of collection, the old owner of the Sheuli tree enthusiastically co-operated. Being very old, it was not possible for him to climb the tree and give it a sharp shake-up so that flowers from the branches

could readily fall to the ground for collection by the children. But the old man was not to be daunted, he would go up on the low horizontal wall adjacent to the Sheuli tree and give a hard push to the branches. The effort was enough to produce a bounty of flowers on the ground, much to the delight of the collecting children. Then followed the ritual of making small garlands of Sheuli flowers with cotton thread.

This story was not from a page of fiction. It had a real life import, much akin to the spirit of the fairy tale in which the giant representing the old man participated in the world of joy and merriment that the small children built up around them.



## Wheels into Motion, After a Century's Gestation

by Shuvra

SWOOSH! All eyes turn to see as the red Ferrari pass by — its speed, colour — absolutely dynamic.

Wheels have given mankind one word which rules the modern world — speed. Wheel, the most phenomenal invention of mankind has taken different form in different centuries. In this evolutionary process wheels have taken the final form in automobile.

Love it or hate it, it is impossible to ignore the motor car. Since Gottlieb Daimler replaced horse power with horsepower, the car has stuttered, roared and purred its way into almost every life. In less than a century, the motor car has changed the world; it has broadened horizons and shrunk continents. From inventor's dream through rich man's toy, to providing mobility for the masses, the car has reshaped society.

Man's search for some form of motive power to replace the horse goes back over 300 years; clockwork wind power and elaborate clock work gearing were all tried before the power of steam became tractable enough to be used to drive a vehicle. Not that it was initially too successful: the oldest surviving self-propelled vehicle, Cugnot's 1770 fardier, owes its preservation to the fact that: on its trial runs it ran amok and knocked down a wall, put into store, it survived the French Revolution, was acquired by the conservatoire des Arts et Metiers in Paris in 1799, and has been a major exhibit there ever since.

Then between 1820 and 1840, came a golden age of steam; with skilled engineers devising and operating, steam carriages of advanced and ingenious design; men like Gurney, Hancock and Macerone all produced designs which were practicable and capable of achieving quite lengthy journeys and operation with relatively high degree of reliability. Walter Hancock, a better mechanic than businessman, operated his steam coaches on regular scheduled services in London in the 1830s, but was rooked by his associates, and eventually called it a day.

Twelve years of experiment had brought him little more than unpaid debts and the hostility of those with vested interests, who, fearing that the steam carriage would prove a threat to the thousands whose livelihood depended on the horse, promoted swinging tolls on the turnpike roads; an 183 Parliamentary Commission, though largely favourable to the

steam carriage, failed to prevent such injustices. The final blow to the builders of steam carriages came with the advent of the railway age. Railway engines, running on smooth, level rails, had none of the problems experienced by steam carriages running on uneven, badly maintained roads. This new form of locomotion soon eclipsed the steam, carriage, even though legislation restricting the speed and operation of steam carriages was not enacted until 1863, when it was decreed that all road locomotives should have a man with a red flag walking ahead.

It was the advent of the bicy-

cle in the 1860s which revived touring by road.

The internal combustion engine appeared early in the history of the motor vehicle, but took over three quarters of a century to be perfected to the level where it could be used in a vehicle capable of running on the roads. The 1805 powered cart of the Swiss Isaac de Rivaz was no more than an elaborate toy, only capable of crawling from one side of a room to another, and the 1863 car built in Paris by J-J. Etienne Lenoir took three hours to cover six miles. It was not until the mid-1880s that the first successful petrol cars appeared developed

independently by two German engineers, Gottlieb Daimler and Karl Benz.

Of the two vehicles, that of Benz was incontestably superior, for it was designed as an entity, using the new technology of the cycle industry, while Daimler's carriage was no more than an adapted horse vehicle. Benz went into limited production of his three wheeled carriages (described in his catalogue as an agreeable vehicle, as well as a mountain-climbing apparatus) in 1888; Daimler was more interested in selling his engines as a universal power source.

The crucial event in the

story of the motor car was the 1889 Paris World Exhibition for it was there that the French engineers Panhard and Levasor saw the Daimler Steel-wheeler car powered by the Daimler vee-twin engine.

It was in France, too, that Benz enjoyed his first limited success, for his Paris agent, Emile Roger, managed to sell one or two Benz cars in Paris (and, coincidentally, garaged his first Benz in Panhard and Levasor's workshop). But it was not until his first four-wheeler, the 1893 Victoria, that Benz began series production.

Peugeot were already established as motor manufacturers by that date, for in 1891 they had actually sold 5 cars, boosting production to a dizzy 29 the following year.

In America, the motor car was evolving along different lines from Europe and in January, February 1891, the New World's first petrol vehicle, a friction driven three wheeler built by John W Lambert of Ohio City, made its first tentative runs. In 1895, America's first motor manufacturing company was founded by the Duryea Brothers, Charles and Frank (whose prototype dated from 1893); the following year they exported a couple of vehicles to Britain. However, anti-motoring prejudice in that country was running high and there was little encouragement from motor vehicles, either home grown or imported (though the company promotions of the so-called 'father of the British motor industry', H J Lawson succeeded in parting a good many credulous investors from a large amount of cash.

Demand for motor cars was growing steadily during the latter part of the 1890s, and by now the Benz had become the world's most popular car, with the 2000th production vehicle being delivered in 1899. Motoring was still the sport of a few rich eccentrics, however, and many people had never seen a car.

It was to remedy this defect that in 1900, the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland held its famous 1000 miles Trial, which took in most of the major cities of England and Scotland. A total of 65 cars, many English Daimler and MGC models built by Lawson's empire, set out from Hyde Park corner, London, in April, the major part of this entry finished the run without major mishap, proving that the motor car had at last become a reliable — or relatively so — touring vehicle after a century's gestation.

## Carrying the Torch of Islam

by Nusrat Rahman

FAMOUS people are liked and admired by all. This category might include actors, actresses, singers and so on. I too would like to be famous, but in a slightly different way.

I'd like to preach Islam. I want to be famous for carrying the flame of truth, honesty, sincerity and all that Islam teaches us. I want to spread its rich knowledge to all those ignorant people who have been in darkness for so long. Everything about Islam is clear. There are no doubts, no controversial topics.

Islam makes a man and his creator come closer. Allah is like a Guardian to every human being, seeing his actions, and if His slave is faced with a problem then he can turn to Allah's Book and find the right solu-

tion to it. A Muslim when in distress talks to God, cries out for his help, shows how much he loves Him. Islam teaches a man to be regular in his daily prayers, to fear the sustainer of all man kind but always to love him truly.

I want to preach even to the thousands of Muslims out there to be regular in ones daily rituals. A person does not become a Muslim just because one is born one but because he accepts Islam totally with His heart and soul. Prayer is the key to heaven. I want everyone to believe in after-life and its consequences. People should know that the life we are now leading is just an examination and the

result will be given after our death. God is conducting this examination and we are his examinees. Some people are so obsessed with this world that they forget about the after-life. There is no use repelling later because them it would be too late.

I want people to believe in honesty not just because it is the best policy, but it is way to show God that you obey His rules, have trust in Him and love Him. Sincerity, brotherhood, love, generosity, unselfishness are just a few of the teachings of Islam. I want people not just to live but live in the essence of Islam and die in the essence of it. And I hope Allah will help me achieve my goal. So that I am successful in carrying the torch of Islam everywhere I go.