

TASHER DESH

A BIRTH THAT TOOK PLACE UNDER THE SUNNYDALE HOUSE OF CARDS

By Tahiat e Mahboob

A *Rajputra* who is tired of getting everything without having to ask for it; a *Rajputra* who is tired of the stereotypical royal life; a *Sawdagar Putra* who tries to make his friend the *Rajputra* understand but in vain that's how Tagore's famous play *Tasher Desh* starts. A youthful prince wants to see the world outside the palace and with the permission of his mother, the *Rajmata*, he sets out to sea with his friend, just to do that. But in middle of nowhere, his ship sinks and he and his friend carried by the mighty waves find themselves in *Tasher Desh*, the land of cards. Coming across *Chhaka* and *Panja* they get to know about the rigid rules set there by the *pundits* of the land and understand that the people there are moulded and controlled by the rulers of the land. The prince becomes the talk of the land because with him he has brought a rare gift: freedom. From the beginning he and his friend notice certain holes in this rigid system and very soon they make the *Tash* people realize that one can never progress when bounded by rigid rules. Very soon the *Tash* understand that the prince is their outlet from all this rigidity. They convince their rulers and thus with the help of the prince they take a step towards freedom and a normal life.

Was it going to be possible to make this play into a reality? Was it going to be possible to make the audience understand the message Tagore wanted to convey to everyone? Yes, it was. We the Synnydaliens made *Tasher Desh* a reality, a success.

Staged at the National Museum on 28th and 29th April, 2000, from the beginning which started with the famous song *Khoru Bayo* to the end where children from the first to the ninth grade danced and sung to the tune of *Badh Bhenge Dao* the play was applauded, appreciated and encouraged. And why not? When *Tasher Desh* started it was just an idea introduced by our dear Vice-Principal Zeenat Miss. It was a blur, a haze and most were skeptic about it. It was like a foetus of an unborn child and no one knew what it would grow into. Sunnnydale until now had never staged a function outside school. Would this play be good enough to be staged outside school? None of us knew. We only knew that we had to memorize our lines, our lyrics and our dance steps for a play. But from the beginning of February we started to see through those blurs, that haze. A vision was emerging and our hopes were getting high. We began to think about staging it outside the school. At first we were unwilling to do so, not because we didn't want to do it but because we were scared that it would not work out as we had envisioned it. But then we were encouraged, and we started to put our heart into *Tasher Desh*.

Our school hours stretched from 8:00 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon because of rehearsals after school from 2 pm. Yes we were tired, but we were never daunted by it. We helped each other overcome our tiredness, our frustrations and our problems because now we had it in our minds to make this play

a success. Amidst laughter, smiles, scolding from our teachers and the summer heat we started improving our dance steps, music beats and our act. Each performer was like a card, building a house of cards under which a birth would take place: the birth of *Tasher Desh*. Starting from the little children of the first grade to us the ninth graders, we all worked our souls out for this play. But it wasn't just our hard work that made *Tasher Desh* an immense success. It was also because of our encouraging teachers and numerous other people for which it was a success. And for this reason we would like to thank them: thank you Pantha Bhaiya and Jewel Bhaiya for directing our enthusiastic cast and making them believe that they had it inside them to make this play a reality and convince the audience. Thank you Tahmina Miss (Jhumi Apu) for putting courage into our little dancers so that they could dance their hearts out and also for convincing the audience about the appearance of the *Tash* with your ingenious costume designs and make up. And last but not the least, thank you Kanchan Miss for coming at the right time and making us, the singers, believe that we had what it took to make this play as musical as possible. But above all thank you Tazeen Miss for becoming our closest friend during these three months and encouraging us all the time and talking to our parents and all of us individually whenever our hopes were down. I know that we didn't let you down.

It's Life

By I Scream

"... Janalae dariye, oi akashtakey dakho TV dekhona..." - Anjan Dutta

I'd love to do that! To be precise, I tried my best. But know what? When I opened my front window, I couldn't see a silver-blue sky!

A huge building was in between the view and the viewer. Then I moved to the other side of my room. This time there was this horrible looking "under-construction" building. The loud and proud melodious vocals of the busy masons kinda forced me to

leave the place at once. Finally I went to the balcony to get some fresh (!) air and view.

A-H-A! There it was... the substitute for TV. I mean I was fortunate enough this time to see at least a small piece of the soothing sky. But soon I realized that it's

not even the right place to be. The super-suppressed apartments and buildings are as united as a hive. So I could hear a few of the sharp words of the auntie next door or floor, and the fifty fifty replies from the "bua".

Perhaps the girl from the gray building had brought the latest hindi album and so was trying her best to share the music with all her neighbors as usual. The terrible screams for ice-cream of a tiny kid also happened to shake my poor eardrums.

Yet these all seemed perfectly okay and I was enjoying it, in fact, until to my great alarm I noticed this young guy on a nearby roof. He was watching me like a DB police, as if I was the weirdo from outer space who's hoping to see her lost UFO up in the sky... and he was trying to investigate the case in order to save the world!

Now, what can I do? My parents won't let me go out alone to take a break or breath in the polluted air (I do believe that without having a car at 24 hours service this city isn't safe enough for a

young girl at all!). How long can I talk with my friends over the phone? When my computer breaks down, and worse, the audio player gets stuck (with my favorite

tape inside), I don't even have a pesky little sis or brother to giggle or fight with.

Anything left? Sure... the TV! Yeah getting back to business finally. But you know, whenever I go to watch TV, my mom shoots such a spooked and startled look that it reminds me of all my forthcoming exams. I can still sit there ignoring all her spicy speeches but then MTV, BTV and MomTV get mixed up and my head along with heart starts aching.

Well that's life and leisure. Definitely not sooo miserable everyday but more or less the same. The audio player may get fixed automatically, the computer too will recover soon, and hopefully next time Mom won't notice me watching TV while she's busy with some other stuff, and fortunately our cable operators will show some new released movies then. Then there are friends, relatives, birthdays, parties, special occasions... sprinkles of laughter and fun... etc etc etc.

Quite a lot of means for passing my free time, right? Who needs to see the sky anyway? Here in Dhaka there's no sky outside our windows; it's inside our books, TVs and monitors. There are even different versions of "Windows" to choose from! We are blessed indeed!

Making the Best of Ourselves

By Mahreen Hassan (Mou)

We usually have a wrong concept that the most famous persons in this world are owners of "extraordinary brains". Of course they are intelligent but the similarity is that we all have the same brain. The difference is that some use it in the wrong way while the others make the most use of it.

Our brain is amazing. It has the ability to do many things, which our most advanced technologies have failed to do. For example, the brain can think on its own which computers cannot do. The brain can imagine pictures, which the camera cannot develop.

Our brain is one of the mysteries of the world. It is not yet discovered how the brain works. Even the mathematicians who have constructed models for computers and the universe itself, still can't come up with a formula for the operations that go on regularly inside each of our heads everyday!

Sir Charles Sherrington, the grandfather of neurophysiology said, "The human brain is an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern, always a meaningful pattern, though never an abiding one, a shifting harmony of sub-patterns. It is as if the Milky Way entered upon some cosmic dance." Professor Petr Kouzmich Anokhin of Moscow University in one public statement said, "No human yet exists who can use all the potential of his brain. This is why we don't accept any pessimistic estimates of the limits of the human brain. It is unlimited!" It was the results of his 60 years investigation into the nature of our brain cells.

So, if we just think that we have a similar brain like that of Albert Einstein, then everyone can be a genius too. It should be remembered that these people actually didn't have anything special. It is just that we have to get our talents from inside us and husband them properly. We all have plenty of talent inside us which we haven't discovered as yet. To do what we want to do we need some very important tools: a target, determination, procedure, discipline, and confidence. If we have these (I am sure you do) then no one can stop us from being a good student as well as a good person.

Bad habits

FROM PAGE 1

Here's an example; every morning my mother has to give life threats to me to get me to make my bed. Cleanliness is a good thing. But I don't quite understand the purpose of making the bed every morning knowing that I will be "un-making" it at night. But of course, if you have to launch a 'search and rescue' operation every morning to find the necessary books for school from the archeological site (the pile of books) on your table, then I don't quite blame the parents for being mad. I guess being unruly is a part of growing up. I can't bring myself to agree to put my shoes in a line against the wall after I take them off. Neither can I picture any of my friends' rooms without any clothes on their beds. I am not denying the usefulness of being organized. But I will ask the parents to not to worry too much about this bad habit. As your children grow older, they will learn how to be organized by themselves, because you so earnestly taught him how to.

Any wise person will agree that bad habits are better avoided, and should not be adopted under any circumstance. But I also think that bad habits are characteristics of an individual. Human beings are not perfect, and if one has no bad habits then he must either be an angel or an animal. This is why I believe that if one's bad habit is not harmful then it should not be given up, as it adds a little spice to our lives.

Editor's Note: Not mentioning your name when submitting articles to a newspaper or a magazine is, unfortunately, a bad habit that is not quite so harmless. Author, please identify yourself!

Nothing to Brag About

By Ruhina Alam

Finally the war has ended. Two years of hard work, tension, and curiosity are all over. Now it's up to the education board to give us our results without any controversy. Oh, no! Here's another tension. The Results! You must be wondering about what I'm talking about! If you haven't got it by now, let me spell it out for you. It's the SSC Examination, the horrifying thing that every Bangla medium student has to face. But it's not our terrible situation that I'm going to talk about. It's a much more important subject - the difference between a Bangla medium (BM) student and an English medium (EM) student.

I feel bad when some people brag about themselves or their children only because they were/are in EM schools. It seems that they feel they are superior to us. They think that they know more than we do and that they are the best! But I am not ready to accept this comparison. How can you make a comparison between two persons from two different educational systems? I am not going to demand that we are the better ones or make any comparison. I am just going to state some points to show how wrong they are.

> For us (BM students), the preparation for the SSC examination begins from class IX. In the years of class IX and X, we have to attend school regularly. If one's attendance is less than 85%, she/he is not allowed to sit for the pre-test or test examination. But the EM students don't have to attend the school regularly after passing class VIII. They are allowed to leave the school in order to prepare themselves for the "O" level examination. This is one of the most important differences between the two mediums.

> We (BM students) have to study eleven subjects in order to pass the SSC Examination. On the other hand, one can pass the "O" level examination by taking only five subjects. Now, you cannot suggest that five subjects are equal to eleven subjects, can you?

> For the HSC examination, we have to study six subjects. But one can pass the "A" level examination by taking only two subjects. Here arises the same question. Are two subjects equal to six subjects?

> A Bangla medium student has two years for the preparation of SSC Examination and two years for HSC Examination. A BM student has to sit for 11 subjects at the same time. If for some reason she/he has to drop that year she/he will be considered as an irregular student. In the future, that student will face problems in every step of life. On the other hand an EM student can appear in the GCE Examination (O/A Level) in parts. She/he can even drop a year without being considered irregular.

> In both the SSC and HSC examination, a total mark of 750 or more means a star mark and 80 or more marks in each subject means a letter mark. This system of marking always remains the same whether the question is tough or easy. But both in the "O" Level and "A" level examination, there are grades, such as A B C D etc. to make the students understand their results. But the weirdest (don't mind!) thing is that there is no fixed number for a particular grade. Sometimes "A" grade means 80 marks, sometimes "A" grade means 90 marks and sometimes "A" grade even means 58 marks. If you don't believe me, I can give you an example. One of my friends got "A" grade in four subjects in the "O" level examination. But in one of those four subjects, he got 58 marks. Now you have to agree with me that there is a big difference between the marking systems of the two mediums.

> We (BM students) study everything in Bangla while the EM students study everything in English. There isn't too much difference in the syllabus though. I agree that the EM students can speak English better than the BM students but then, the BM students can speak Bangla better than the EM students. Speaking English well isn't something to brag about, is it?

With all these differences, how can you say who is better? This question is asked to those students of English medium who often proclaim that they are superior. This is certainly not true because they get some advantages over the BM students. Here I go again! I'm sorry. You must have been thinking: "what's wrong with this girl?" OK, I'm going to tell you what advantages I'm talking about.

First of all, the EM students get some advantages in the higher education. In the admission tests of BUET or the medical colleges, "A" grade is considered as 80 marks. But in many occasions, "A" grade holders get less than that. So it's obvious that sometimes in the admission test the marks of "A" grade holders are put on a higher pedestal than they deserve to be. This is a very useful advantage.

Another advantage, however, includes The Daily Star. The Daily Star has given prizes to the students with high grades in the "O" level or "A" level examination, but hasn't given prizes to the students who have secured places in the merit list of SSC or HSC examination. So the EM students brag because they got The Daily Star award. If so, then I agree with them. They have a right to brag. If not, they should think again carefully and then answer this question-

Is it right to brag only because you're in an EM school/college?

PS: Is it very difficult for The Daily Star to give the students who secured places in the merit list of the SSC or HSC examination some awards?