

Brazil, Argentina depart, World Cup ends.



Science with Rabindranath

Biswa Parichay is a book on science written for children. The poet said that he wrote it just to show the way of discussing science in an entertaining and understandable manner for all.

ALAMGIR KHAN

Why should *Biswa Parichay* (our universe) by Rabindranath Tagore, written so long ago in 1937, be a matter of discussion today? This is because the scientific-minded Tagore comes up less in our discussion than the God-loving poet. This type of discussions has given rise to many interpretations and misinterpretations about the great mind of the poet.

There is another less discussed side of the poet, who has contributed to not only our literature but also to our nation-building efforts. Putting him only within books deprives us of the vision for going ahead in the modern world.

Rabindranath, with some of his contemporaries -- though towering above them all -- showed us the way forward. Just reading his popular poems and listening to his songs pulls down him to a narrow place in our national life.

What is the significance of *Biswa Parichay*? It makes us realise that the nation cannot develop without learning and practising science. Practising science does not mean only using electric fan, mobile phone, television, laptop, etc., or becoming a doctor or an engineer.

Beyond these, it is necessary to study, think about, debate over, assimilate in life and contribute to the development of science. *Biswa Parichay* is a book on science written for children. The poet said that he wrote it just to show the way of discussing science in an entertaining and understandable manner for all. Many critics call it the best book on science in Bangla literature.

In it, the poet has discussed physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, all in a manner of telling a story combining science with life in society. This is the one characteristic that has made this unique among all Bangla books on science.

When our intellectuals are struggling to find Bangla terms for scientific words and are at wit's end, there is a good example in this book which shows that there is no barrier to discussing the most complex scientific ideas in the Bangla language.

This book is not only a scientific explanation of the world, but also a linguistic explanation of it. After discussing the growth and development of the universe, Tagore said, almost in passing: "Eijonnoi amader bhashay ei bishshoke bole JaGaT. Orthat er shongga hochchhe e cholchhe, cholatei er utpotti, cholai er shobhab" (So in our language this universe is called jagat. The definition of it is it is going on, it grows out of movement, and its nature is to keep moving).

I learnt from the writings of Kalim Khan, a linguist in West Bengal, India, that in the Bangla word *ja-ga-t*, *ja* = origin, *ga* = development and *t* = revolutionary change. (*Paroma Bhashar Shongket* by Kalim Khan, published by Papyrus, Dhaka.)

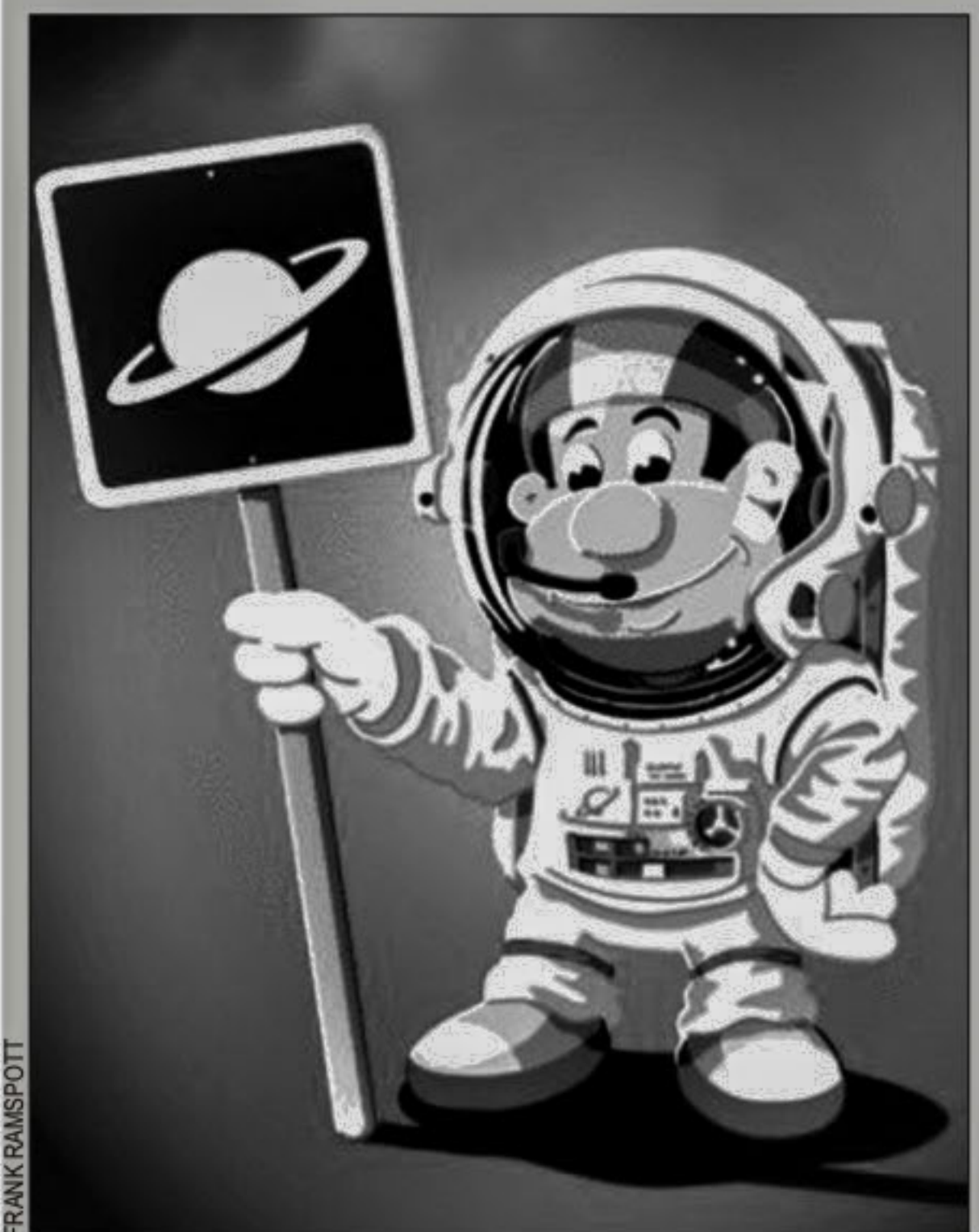
Since Tagore wrote this book many scientific ideas and information have changed. Except those few things, the book is as new as if it was written yesterday. It is known that more school students in our country prefer humanities and commerce to science. This is because presentation of science, the most interesting subject of all, is very insipid in our classrooms and so students fail to enjoy the reading of it.

Those who study medical science and engineering do so not so much either for their interest in science or for working for humanity as for the money these professions will fetch -- yet there are not many doctors and engineers in our country. Again, a scientific outlook is necessary for every one, irrespective of what group s/he studies in; it is imperative for the development of the nation as well.

There are five chapters in this book. Notes can be given at the end of each chapter, showing the changes in modern scientific ideas. Each chapter can be studied in different grades. This article is written as an appeal to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to make *Biswa Parichay* compulsory reading for all from Class IV to VIII.

It will help learners achieve a scientific outlook, understand that all branches of knowledge are unified at a deeper level of understanding, remove some harmful misunderstandings about Tagore from our social life, and ultimately learn to have joy in earning knowledge about our *JaGaT*.

Alamgir Khan is Research Associate, Non-formal Primary Education Sub-sector Study -20.



It's time to make science look fun.

World Cup: The craze is over

The month-long wait and expectations of the diehard supporters of these teams, millions in Bangladesh, ended in a fiasco. With due regard to the emotions of the fans of both the teams, one must say that the teams that sent Brazil and Argentina home did so in their very own right.

KAZI S.M. KHASRUL ALAM QUDDUSI

THE craze is over, so is the fever. Brazil has crashed out. So has Argentina. Needless to say, World Cup, 2010 is over for the Bangladeshis. With Brazil and Argentina back home, the final is now poised to be an all-European affair. Admittedly, though good teams have advanced to the semi-finals, the World Cup must have become rather lacklustre and heavy-going for many in the subcontinent, especially in Bangladesh.

The month-long wait and expectations of the diehard supporters of these teams, millions in Bangladesh, ended in a fiasco. With due regard to the emotions of the fans of both the teams, one must say that the teams that sent Brazil and Argentina home did so in their very own right.

Whoever watched those matches must admit that the Latin American superstars have been totally outplayed by the European

powerhouses. In fact, prowess and emotion lost to power and calculation when it mattered most.

While Brazil lost by a narrow margin, its players' loss of temper did go against the image of the world number one. However, Argentina must have played better than the score line against them says. Though Germany outsmarted them in every department, the four-goal difference must have been too much to bear for its millions of supporters around the world, especially in Bangladesh. Though Argentine supporters would yearn to forget it sooner rather than later, the day totally belonged to Germany, to say the least.

I personally have noticed one thing in this year's world cup, and that is the lack of self-possession of the Latin powerhouses in the face of attacks by the strong opponents. Brazil sailed rather easily before meeting the Netherlands in the quarterfinal, in

which they became clueless at times and faltered. Meanwhile, Argentina became rather helpless in the match against Germany after romping home in the first and second round matches by demolishing the opponents.

Though I am not an expert on football techniques, it was quite evident that the Latin footballers looked rather jaded and wayward, especially after going goals down. Though a good number of Latin players steal the show in European leagues quite regularly, most of them looked toothless in the crucial moments of their world cup encounters against strong opponents. Relative lack of speed also featured flagrantly in the man-to-man encounters.

To many, this year's World Cup has been one of upsets. Maybe, maybe not. Former world champions France and Italy failed to even make it to the second round. However, this World Cup was marked by some terrible mistakes by the referees, which only calls for use of technology in the football matches.

While stopping play often in a football match to avail the assistance of technology is quite problematic, FIFA must come up with a suitable answer to the frailties and limitations of referees and their assistants.

This World Cup has been especially disappointing for the Asians as well. Both

South Korea and Japan could not extend their journey despite igniting Asia's hopes. South Korea had to lose to the calculated football of Uruguay and go home without making it to the quarterfinal, while Japan lost to Paraguay in the heart-breaking tie-breakers and were denied a golden opportunity to move into the quarterfinal for the first time in their history.

Anyway, the World Cup will again come back for the millions of Brazil and Argentina fans in four years time. Hopefully, Brazil and Argentina will come back strong then. I, however, firmly believe that next World Cup will come back for the Bangladeshis with lots of joy and fun, with the exception that our territory will not be so brazenly overshadowed by the flags of other countries next time around.

There are a lot of ways and means to show fondness for one's team. Surely, hoisting another country's flag is the most bizarre thing. One must not forget the fact that a flag is not just a piece of cloth. Our pride and dignity are embodied in our flag, for which our forefathers had to fight a war. None of us, thus, have any right to let some other country's flag fly over ours for the sake of showing support.

Kazi S.M. Khasrul Alam Quddusi is Chair, Dept. of Public Administration, University of Chittagong.

Heading in the right direction

Besides promoting skill-based education, the policy must encourage children to learn and nurture social and cultural values, integrity, tolerance and respect and love for others, and to be responsible persons.

MD. ANWARUL KABIR

THE education system we follow is a legacy of the British colonial system. The British Raj introduced its education system in the subcontinent for its own interest -- not for the interest of the native Indians. For the British regime, the major driving force for introducing a newly formulated education system in India was to establish its hegemony and extend its rule.

Lord Macaulay, the founder of the British colonial education system, while framing the colonial education policy, proposed: "In India, English is the language of the spoken by the ruling class. Those the Indians by high class, who are in the government, also speak it. We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood, but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellects."

A similar view was expressed by Sir Trevelyan, a major policymaker: "There is only one way to turn the thoughts of the Indian nation in other direction. And that is to create Western thoughts among them [by introducing our education system]."

In 1857, Trevelyan told the British Parliament: "After such an education, a political revolution in this country will be unlikely and we will be able to rule over our Empire for long. By increasing education and by giving jobs to more and more Indians, the British rule can be made permanent." So, the major objective of the colonial education system was to

create a privileged class who would collaborate with the British regime.

The dangerous implication of the British colonial education system is, perhaps, the orientation of education towards jobs. The concept of "lekha pora kore jey, gari ghora chore shey" (those who study, ride carts and horses.) had been instilled into the psyche of the common people after the introduction of the colonial education policy in undivided India.

The colonial education policy encourages us just to mimic the Western education system without assessing our own context. For this reason, we just import education/technology from the developed world but fail to assimilate these in our socioeconomic needs. For the same reason, we neglect much of our indigenous knowledge, which could have been used for our development in different fields.

After the collapse of British Raj, as we became a colony of Pakistan, we had little opportunity to march towards a pro-people education system. However, after independence, Bangabandhu rightly realised the emptiness of the prevailing derailed education system originating from the British colonial one.

Emphasising the importance of people-oriented education, he formed an education commission in 1974, which was headed by Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda, eminent scholar, scientist and educationist. Eventually, Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda chalked out a scientific and pro-people education policy. Unfortunately, it never got

implemented after the tragic demise of Bangabandhu. Subsequent governments took little interest in it.

Afterwards, though at least five education commissions/committees were formed and policies were produced, apart from National Education Policy 2000, albeit partially, no other policy was enforced. However, after the change in government in 2001, National Education Policy 2000 was abandoned too. It may be noted here that National Education Policy 2000 was formulated during the last tenure of Sheikh Hasina by a committee headed by Professor Shamsul Hoque.

Education Policy 2009 was framed by a committee headed by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury. This committee assessed both Kudrat-e-Khuda's and Shamsul Hoque's reports and, considering the present complex socio-economic and global set-up, it has attempted to produce a report that is more people-oriented and scientific.

The methodology followed for framing this policy was, no doubt, scientific and transparent. To formulate this policy, the committee met with representatives of around 56 relevant organisations. It also considered the opinions of many individuals who came forward. Moreover, people from different tiers of the six divisions participated in view-exchange meetings and their positive opinions are incorporated in the policy. This, in turn, has shaped the policy into a pro-people one.

The committee gave more emphasis on defining the objectives of education, so it successfully captured the real essence of education. The policy points out that the major objective of education is to make people creative, freethinking, ethical, respectful of all religions, free from all dogmas, tolerant of others' views, non-communal, patriotic and skilled.

Most of the 24 objectives drawn in the policy are pragmatic. In one of the objectives it has emphasised the instilling of moral values in the psyche of the students. Besides, it has also stressed minimising of the gulf between different streams (e.g. general education, madrasa education, English medium education) of education. This is really a paradigm shift from the colonial perception of the objectivity of education.

To improve the education sector in Bangladesh, implementation of a holistic education policy is a must. Every student needs to be developed emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually. The education policy must acknowledge and emphasise the spiritual, intellectual, social, physical and psychological needs of young children, which will foster the balanced growth of each child.

Besides promoting skill-based education, the policy must encourage children to learn and nurture social and cultural values, integrity, tolerance and respect and love for others, and to be responsible persons. Hopefully, the Education Policy 2009, if properly implemented, will instill the aforesaid values in the psyches of the young students and will effectively change the present state of the education sector in the country.

To fulfil the objectives stated in the policy, successful implementation is a must. However, that largely depends on different stakeholders and the government's initiatives. Introduction of a permanent Education Commission, as suggested by this policy, is a must to implement this policy in line with the people's aspiration.

As the education policy of any country should not be static, amendment of the policy is a must. The proposed commission will do that to meet the demand of the time.

Md. Anwarul Kabir is a university academic at AIUB. E-mail: kabiranwar@yahoo.com.