



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Seeing With the Heart

APURBA JAHANGIR

Tanzila Akhter, a student of class 8, wants to be a politician when she grows up, but also has a major interest in poetry. "I dream that one day my poems will be published in the Bangla book that we are reading in school right now", smiles the young enthusiast. Though one would think she is like any other girl, but unfortunately Tanzila is visually impaired. She has gone through a lot of struggles in the society while growing up. "The situations I faced in the early days of my life were horrible until Assistance for Blind Children (ABC) came along. Now I feel

safe and secure and their constant grooming really helps us to lead a normal life". She is currently a resident at the blind children's hostel by ABC and studying at Salna Nasiruddin Uchya Biddyalay, Gazipur.

ABC was mainly an initiative of the Rotary Club, Bangladesh, back in 1985. At first, it started as consultancy camp and training centre. "Visually impaired children go through a lot in their lives. Whenever I used to travel to villages or other districts, I saw how tough it was for them to adjust in the society. So that's when I thought of doing something for them," says Habibullah Khan, president of

ABC and former district governor of Rotary International in Bangladesh. After their huge response for the training centre, in 1994 they opened up the hostel suited for blind children. And in 1996 they started the ABC Eye Hospital, located in Gazipur and eye clinic in Bagura. The hospital and clinic only provides to the poor and the children who have eyesight problems. They get around 250 to 300 patients every day and the hostel provides over 350 students all over the country.

The children who live in the hostels are very optimistic and spirited, considering their physical disability. ABC also provides them with brail books which they make so

that they can easily access their school work. The training they get from the groomers also helps them with building up their lives. Tanima Rahman, a former resident of the ABC hostel, now works at an internet providing company. "I come from a very rural area of this country. And it's because of ABC that I am standing on my own two feet now," says Tamanna.

All in all, Assistance for Blind Children created such an environment for these children that they feel no insecurity whatsoever. Their primary goal is to ease the lives of as many visually impaired individuals as possible. And so far, they have managed to do a tremendous job.

With a touch of magic

ANIKA HOSSAIN

With the wedding season at our doorstep, many a panicked bride is wondering whom she should throw herself at the mercy of, to get that perfect, glowing look on her special day. Many are wondering if the parlour she has chosen will turn her into an unrecognisable Caucasian version of herself. To come to their rescue, a unique, talented make-up artist is waiting at her own home with quiet, comfortable surroundings and friendly words to calm their nerves.

Lopa Rahman, known for her magic touch that brings out the best in every bride's features, is not just a beautician, she is also a fashion designer, a painter and an interior decorator-- facts very few people know about her. "

I went to Dhaka University to study Economics, but because of the session jams and inconsistencies, I left after two years," says Lopa, while describing the variety of subjects she has taken interest in. "After that, I went to London to study fashion designing and merchandising at American College in London."

She eventually completed her BA degree at North South University, studying Marketing. "Before I started at NSU, I used to practice my designing and used to have sales for clothes, I had some exhibitions," she says. "I also did pattern cutting and bedspreads which people hadn't done here before. I started exporting abroad to a niche market, and also supplied my work to places like the Sonargaon Hotel."

During this time, she also took up an interest in interior décor. "I would do things for family and friends and finally my father-in-law got me into Berger to do a course for a year," she says. "I love doing renovations, especially on a low budget. I'm now working on a 7 floor house, two duplexes and a few uplifts," says Lopa.

Her passion for making people beautiful however was there from a young age, "My

mother is very beautiful and when she would dress up and do her make-up and I would watch her in awe," says Lopa. "I would draw brides from the age of 6 or 7 and put emphasis on the eyes," she recalls. "I have no institutional training, but from a young age I would experiment on my friends and cousins with my mother's make-up. So that's where my interest came from." When more and more people saw her work, which she did free of cost at the time, her family and friends urged her to take it up professionally.

What makes Lopa an attraction for many brides is that she uses the best products and gives each bride individual time and attention.

"I buy all the make-up I use from abroad," she says. "I think to be a successful make-up artist one must be able to study a person's face and personality. Every face is so different there is no way to group them together."

The atmosphere at her place is also very relaxed unlike a typical parlour environment. "I love my work so much I give my 100 percent attention to each bride," she explains. "I listen to the bride because it's her special day so I want her to feel comfortable with me and believe in me and take her opinions into

consideration. I also give advice about skin care when asked and lighting at the venue which is very important." As for appointments which usually need to be done at least a year in advance, Lopa is more flexible. "I ask people to book me at least a few months in advance, but if I am free I take on appointments at a very short notice."

Lopa believes that each bride is uniquely beautiful. "As soon as I put the veil/ghumta on a girl, people's expectations of her change-- she becomes for that night, a bride. A soft smile and a calm, pleasant demeanor makes the bride all the more beautiful," she believes.

To contact Lopa Rahman you can email her at: lopa2000@hotmail.com



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MENDING WALLS

ELITA KARIM

On November 25, while seminars, write ups and small activation programmes were organised in parts of the country to observe the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, a group of young change makers in Dhaka decided to bring more colour to the whole idea, literally.

Radio Shadhin 92.4 fm, initiated a campaign to raise awareness leading up to the International Day of Elimination of Violence against Women and as part of the campaign, attractive faces of young women were painted on three walls in three busy locations of Dhaka, Bangladesh (Progoti Sharani, Arambag and Banani 11) in three days. "It took us some time to look for walls where we would be able to do the artwork and then break parts of them," says Quaratul Ayin Shohel, a senior art director at Asiatic. "After we found three, we began to work on them.

Each wall took up a whole day." The project is said to be his brainchild.

Talented artists were brought in to paint the faces on empty walls and after having painted them, parts of the walls were broken to imitate wounds with a message written beside the

portraits: You Can Mend This Wall, But Not Her Wound. People reacted to the scene of beautiful lively faces being battered immediately after being painted with absolute horror.

Images and videos of this event took various social media platforms by storm, as they were shared with the hashtag #RiseUpForWomen.

As a part of the campaign, Radio Shadhin broadcasted shows that allowed women to call in live and share their stories with listeners and a legal counselor, giving them the opportunity to raise their voices and be heard. Radio Shadhin is also allowing people to volunteer their walls to have similar portraits painted on them.

