

| MUSINGS |

CULTIVATING THE BOOKWORM

M H HAIDER
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



There are many ways of encouragement. Take your little one to a library and, of course, the annual Boi Mela which is currently running. The book fair has a particular section dedicated to children, and a few of the characters come out of the books, in the form of dummies and stickers. Nowadays, video games, social media and a million other things can easily lure

children away from books. But if you carve this habit in your children very early in life, it is likely that the practice may last a lifetime. But your job doesn't end when your child becomes older. Faraz Hyaat, for example, used to buy his then teenage daughter superhero collectibles, seeing that she was into superhero comic books. Afterwards, when she eventually grew out

of the world of comics, her father used to buy two copies of the same book, one for him and one for the daughter. "We used to read the same book together, so that we can later discuss the plot twists and characters and so on," he says. "This has kept my daughter more engaged and enthusiastic about reading." Whatever works; the key is to bring out the bookworm in your children. ■

There's no point in elaborating how the habit of reading helps in a person's emotional, cognitive and creative development: the myriad of benefits are known to us all. Nevertheless, a lot of people do not entertain the practice of reading and are completely unaware of the magical world of books.

As a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure that your children grow up to be avid readers. And there are many ways of ensuring this.

A common but very effective advice is to read to your child. But how do you actually go about doing so?

First of all, appropriate environment and atmosphere is necessary. Tamanna Hossain, mother of a four year old, reads to her daughter in a makeshift tent located in the corner of her child's bedroom. "The tent, made of bed sheet, is her haven, with all her toys and everything magical and all things she holds dear," Tamanna says. "So, every evening we snuggle up in her cosy tent to have a reading session there."

Tamanna also understands the power of showmanship and animation. "My child has very low attention span," she says. "So, just reading in a monotonous voice is of little help". Instead, she acts out the dialogues in different voices, makes those silly noises whenever necessary and uses a lot of gestures and facial expressions. A little showmanship can go to long way in keeping your child hooked to the book.

Books rich in illustrations can be argued to be the best choices, as the visual element make books much more attractive for children.

It is also important to make the reading ritual very interactive. Small children will of course ask a lot of questions, which you will have to answer patiently and enthusiastically. Additionally, you should also ask questions to your audience. Who is your favourite character? What do you think will happen to him/her in the end?

Let the child do some of the reading, too. Urge them to read aloud to an audience. This will further develop their reading ability. And follow it up with praises, so that the reader will feel more encouraged.

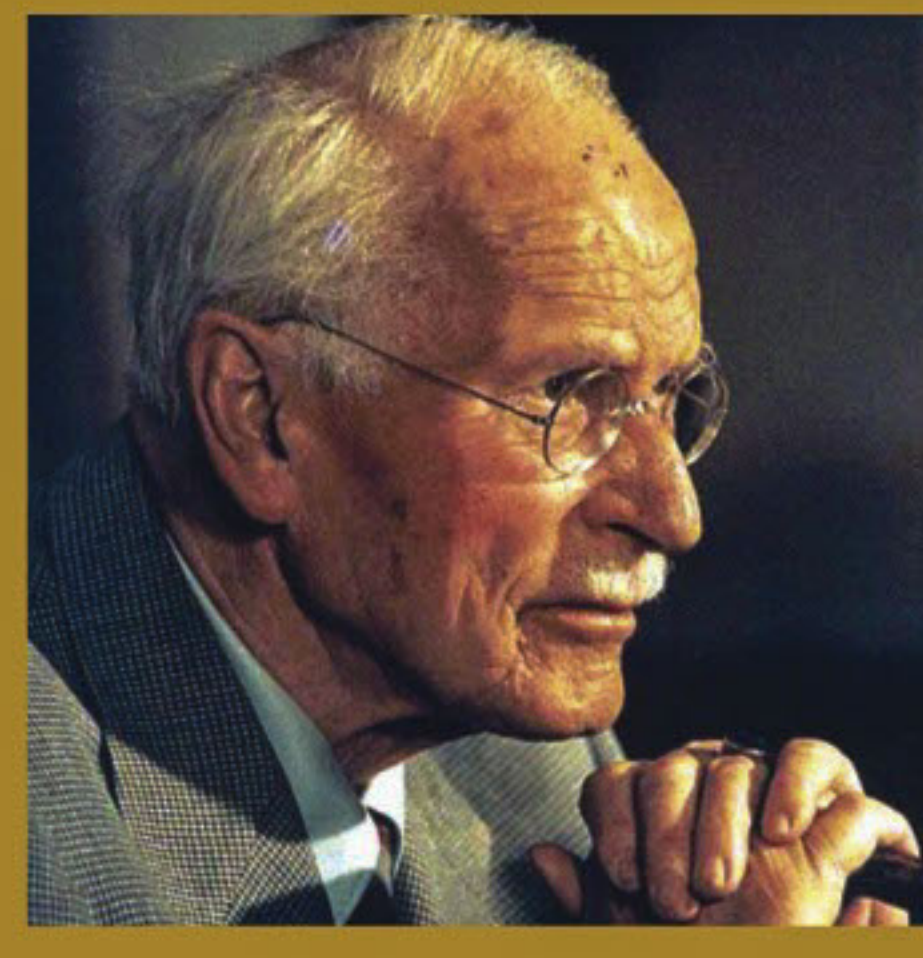
PEARLS OF WISDOM



"YOU MAY ENCOUNTER MANY DEFEATS BUT YOU MUST NOT BE DEFEATED."
MAYA ANGELOU
American author, poet and civil rights activist



"ABOVE ALL, BE THE HEROINE OF YOUR LIFE, NOT THE VICTIM."
NORA EPHRON
American journalist and novelist



"I AM NOT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, I AM WHAT I CHOOSE TO BECOME."
CARL GUSTAV JUNG
Swiss Psychotherapist and psychiatrist

HERITAGE

A MONUMENT OF SOULS

NILIMA JAHAN
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



A monument to be reminisced and honoured for lifetime, a monument built as a tribute to the souls who fought for our language, a monument that shapes a part of our history, the Shaheed Minar was set up in memory of the language martyrs of 1952, killed by the Pakistan Police force's open fire. This cherished monument is located near at Dhaka Medical College in Dhaka, Bangladesh, adjacent to the Mathematics Department of Dhaka University.

The history of Shaheed Minar is of our valiant move to establish our mother language—Bangla. On February 21, 1952 (8th Falgun, 1359 in the Bengali calendar), the students of University of Dhaka and many other schools and colleges, and political activists brought out a demonstration violating section 144 demanding Bangla as the state language. Being unable to suppress the students, police fired upon the demonstration which resulted in the death of Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, Abdul Jabbar, Abul Barkat, Shafiqur Rahman, among others.

On the night of 21st February, a memorial was erected at the place where the students were killed. Though there is a controversy between the date February 21 and 23, according to the spontaneous

participants of the language movement, they planned to build a monument on 22 February night, started implementing it from 23 February afternoon and ended at dawn on 24 February by the students of

Dhaka Medical College in collaboration with others. (Source: *Amar Ekushey Sangkhya*, 20 February, 2005, *Dainik Dinkal*).

Popular painter, print maker, writer, Professor of Department of Oriental Art and Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, Dr Abdus Satter mentions in his book "*Bangladesher Shilpo O Shilpo*" that, according to the famous writer Alauddin Al-Azad, the monument was built in accordance with the writings of Badrul Alam and Sayeed Haider. But on 26 February, it was demolished by the police of the then government. Though from 1952 to 1955, the Shaheed Minar was made to celebrate the 21st February, the reactionary government continued to destroy them every year.

After that, through many complications, in 1957, the responsibility of constructing a permanent monument was handed over to the former chief engineer of the government Abdul Jabbar and Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin. Sculptors Hamidur Rahman and Novera Ahmed started designing and implementing the Shaheed Minar. But in the following year, when Martial Law promulgated, the construction was stopped completing the bases, platform and some of the columns.

Since only Hamidur Rahman is recognised as the architect of the Shaheed Minar, the historic contribution of Novera Ahmed has been covered up, and that eventually created a controversy about the actual designer of the monument. But like other prominent persons, according to Dr. Shamsuzzaman Khan, Director General of Bangla Academy, "Hamidur Rahman and Novera Ahmed worked together for the Shaheed Minar and I hope, Novera Ahmed will get proper recognition by our government for her outstanding and much needed contribution".

In 1962, under the order of Azam Khan, the then lieutenant General of East Pakistan, a 14 member committee was formed headed by Dr Mahmud Hasan, Vice-Chancellor of University of Dhaka, to complete the construction with some extensive changes. However, by 1963 it was completed and inaugurated by Hasina Begum, mother of language martyr Abul Barkat.

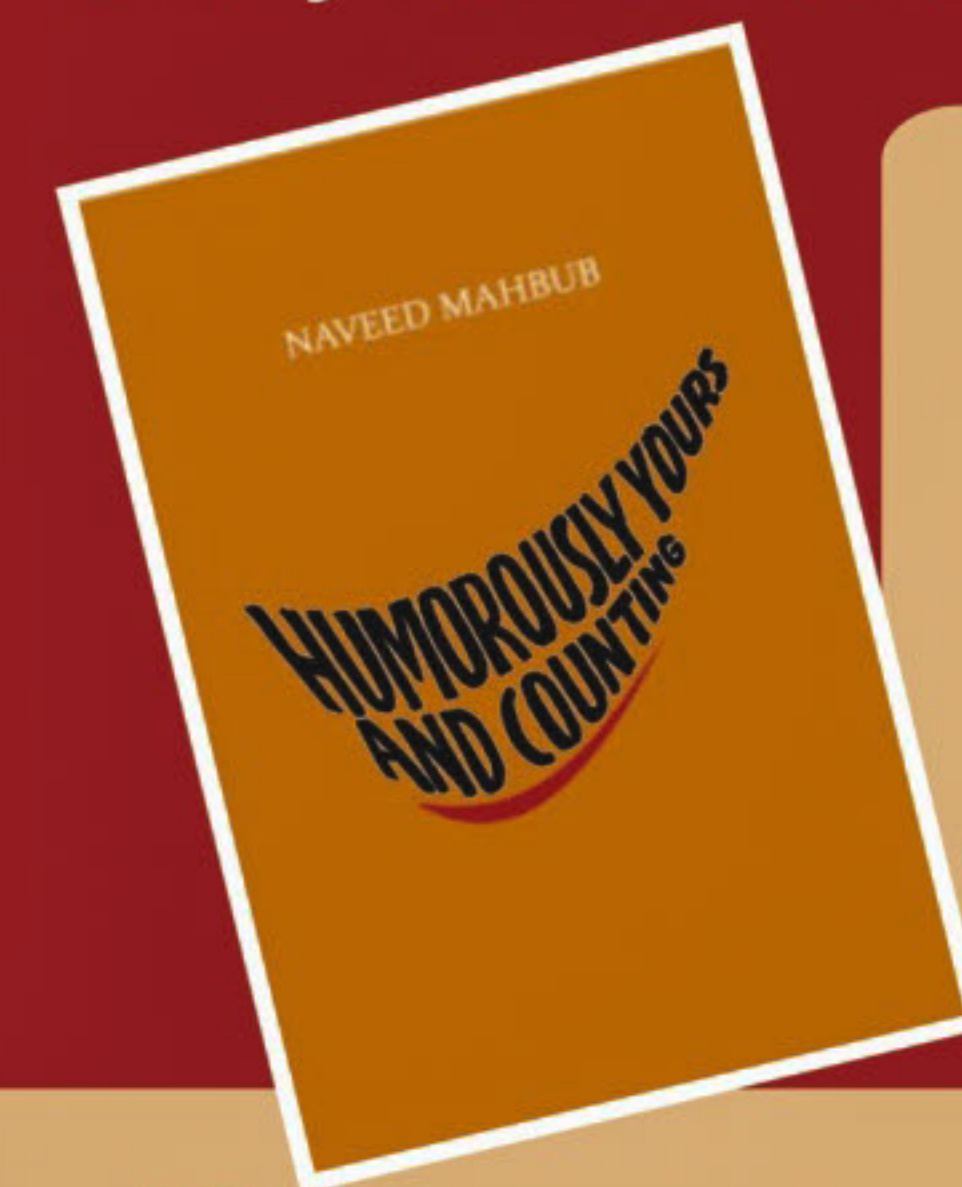
The monument was again demolished during the infamous 'Operation Searchlight' in 1971 and a signboard reading 'Mosque' was replaced over there. But in the following year, the company of Hamidur Rahman started constructing today's Shaheed Minar, and it was finally complete during Ershad's regime.

According to the book of Dr Abdus Satter, during the construction of the Shaheed Minar, writer Alauddin Al-Azad talked to Hamidur Rahman about the significance of the structure. Hamidur Rahman said that the columns of the monument symbolise mother and her martyred sons. The half circular column is the mother who is standing on the dais with her four sons around. The sons sacrificed their lives to uphold the dignity of their mother.

In 2010, nine directives were issued for the preservation and reformation of the Shaheed Minar by the High Court. Public Works Department was also asked to set up a museum and a library on its premises.

Every year, on 21st February, Bangladeshis visit the Shaheed Minar to pay homage to the language martyrs. Apart from this, the monument has also become a centre of cultural activities in Dhaka. Many patriotic non-residential Bangladeshis have also replicated the monument to be able to honour the souls of our martyrs from wherever they are in the world. ■

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