

A TREASURE-TROVE OF KNOWLEDGE **KHAN ACADEMY** NOW IN BANGLA

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A nation's youth must have access to quality educational material, so that they may use the knowledge to lift themselves, their communities, and their country towards lasting socio-economic development. The right to education must never be blocked by financial or other constraints. At least, the barriers must be dismantled as much as possible.

Khan Academy, spearheaded by Salman Khan, an American educator of Bangladeshi descent, was initiated with an aim to provide free, world-class education to anyone anywhere. While the organisation produces micro lectures in the form of YouTube videos, its website also features practice exercises and tools for educators. The best part is that all resources are available for free to anyone around the world. The main language of the website is English. However, to date, the academy's website has been translated into 23 languages and its videos to 65.

Khan Academy offers courses on a diverse range of subjects, including mathematics, history, healthcare, medicine, finance, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, cosmology, art history, economics, music, computer programming and computer science, among others. Anyone with an internet connection can access the organisation's website and/or YouTube channel and immerse themselves into a world of information on these subjects.

As of 2015, the organisation has been offering more than 5,000 courses through nearly 7,000 YouTube videos and an ever-enriching content on its website. The raging popularity of this platform is reflected by 2,415,406 subscribers on the academy's YouTube channel and more than 696 million views.

One may argue how Bangladesh can extract the optimum benefit from this powerful platform? Thanks to the ever-expanding reach of the internet to all parts of Bangladesh, as well as availability of affordable smartphones, most people in the country would be able to benefit from the services. This benefit can be felt especially in the remote areas where the quality of

education being imparted is not of the highest established standards; Khan Academy's wealth of knowledge would highly benefit both students and educators to bridge the quality gap. There is one problem, however. The majority of the educational institutions in the country still provide education in Bangla, and a major part of Bangladesh's population is only just catching up with fluency in the international language. Does this mean a big part of the country's youngsters will miss out on the opportunity to access this information? Grameenphone does not think so.

Grameenphone, the leading telecom operator in Bangladesh, partnered up with Agami Education Foundation (Bangladesh) and Agami Inc (USA) to translate the contents of Khan Academy and open the Khan Academy Bangla site, under the "Localising Khan Academy" initiative. To expedite the translation process, the organisations arranged 'Translate-a-thon' programmes at different educational institutes, most notably the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University. The site was launched on March 1, 2016. Now, anyone looking to take lessons from the Khan Academy Bangla platform can visit bn.khanacademy.org for a world of knowledge in Bangla.

Grameenphone is poised to bring 99 percent of the entire country under 3G data coverage within the end of the second quarter. This means that almost all the people in every corner of Bangladesh will have access to the internet.

"Grameenphone believes that everyone has the right to quality education. We also believe that the internet is the best tool to bring quality education to everyone, which is why, under our 'Internet for All' campaign, we have been undertaking various activities to ensure that everyone has access to high quality education material from anywhere, and at any time," said Syed Talat Kamal, Head of External Communications, Grameenphone.

The internationally-acclaimed Khan Academy, now offering its entire content in Bangla, can only help realise the dream of a 'Digital Bangladesh'.



The Masculinity Project **OPENING UP** **DIALOGUES ABOUT MEN**

NOOHA SABANTA MAULA

'The Masculinity Project' is a series of photo narratives brought together by Saad Adnan Khan and Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo with the aim to highlight the diverse and nuanced meanings of masculinity in Bangladesh by asking a seemingly simple question: "What does it mean to be a man?" In the process of doing so, they have also attempted to actively engage men on issues such as gender, sex and sexuality. The photo narratives were presented at a recent exhibition at EMK Centre in Dhaka from February 27 to March 10. A dialogue session was hosted on February 29.

Saad Adnan Khan is a researcher with an academic background in gender and intersectionality studies while Kazi Tahsin Agaz is a photojournalist at The Daily Star. The duo worked for a year to bring together the photo narratives, conducting interviews of men across Bangladesh.

The visual impact the photos create reflects the idea that there is no fixed definition of what it means to be a 'man'. The men in each photo had been given the full freedom to choose how they'd like to be portrayed and as a result, each picture itself forms a window to their self-identification. As the visitors take in each image and read the corresponding narratives, it creates a clear idea of how different individuals shape and reconstitute the ideals of masculinity. To construct an all-inclusive picture, the photo-narratives featured men from various social classes, occupations, educational backgrounds, sexualities, ages and religious beliefs. However, the audience was left to construct their views of each men and their opinions without being given a name to put to each face.

Several narratives highlighted cases we rarely consider. Under the photograph of a Buddhist monk, the narrative read, "As a man, I try and work for my own sustenance and emancipation. I often wonder if I'm fulfilling my duties and working for my goals as a monk. I could never have the materials a person usually wants in society, for which I grew up and established myself in my own ways. I live outside the material world, for which I am not like other men, and neither do I have the things they possess. Moreover, I don't understand and know a lot of things about the mainstream society."

The reality of what it is like to have a body biologically termed as 'female' but identifying as a male was brought up in another narrative. Another narrative brought up the struggles of being a transgender man.

The findings of the project have been used to develop a flagship course on men, masculinity, and sexual and reproductive health rights at James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University. The course has been designed for students, activists, development practitioners and researchers. It has also been presented in the form of dialogues at various institutions for students.

As Saad said, "I think the project is unique because it explores masculinity from different perspectives, and not just views men as oppressors. That leads to some nuanced and critical feminist dialogues. We want to, however, hold the dialogues in different kinds of spaces through street exhibition and see what kind of reactions that can stir."

The project is supported by EMK Center, in collaboration with the Center of Excellence for Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University.

