

“Psychosocial counselling is very appropriate, especially in Bangladesh, where there are a lot of conditionings, and therefore a lot of conflicts. It's very practically possible here,” says P K Saru, and Indian psychotherapist and consultant with 20 years of experience. Psychosocial counselling is one of the most effective therapeutic interventions becoming popular day by day because of its effectiveness among people having psychosocial problems and minor mental disturbances.

“People in our region think going to a therapist or a counsellor means you are mentally disturbed to a point of madness. Mental illness or disturbance, of any kind, is looked down upon. Whereas even highly functioning people like me and you need therapy. We face conflicts in our day-to-day lives, we get stressed and low in our energies, and at times like these- psychosocial counselling is already warranted, let alone those who face bigger traumas.”

P K Saru has been visiting Bangladesh for the past 13 years to work with Ain O Salish Kendra, upon the request of Khurshed Erfan Ahmed, Co-founder, past director and advisor of Ain O Salish

Transactional Analysis Conference- a psychology conference using Transactional Analysis framework for development, growth and well-being. The keynote speakers of the conference are P K Saru herself, Khurshed Erfan Ahmed, English psychotherapist John Heath and Australian psychotherapist Elana Leigh. The conference will include over 35 workshops by moderators from over 12 countries. The theme of the conference is 'Freedom Within', and is open to all aspirants of personal and professional growth and change- therapists, counsellors, educators, consultants, trainers, corporate executives, coaches, parents and students.

Psychosocial counselling over the past years has become popular in our country, and while methods like psycho-drama, Freudian method, solution-focused therapy and neurolinguistic programming (NLP), Transactional Analysis (TA) has proved to be a very pragmatic approach. The TA framework deals with personality, communication, child development, and more. “It deals with the day-to-day life, which is why it has been proven to be a very powerful tool for therapy,” says Saru. Here, 'transaction' means 'give and take', which the Berne felt relationships were all about. “So whenever we analyse the



P K Saru

# HEALING MINDS

PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND COUNSELLOR, P K SARU TALKS ABOUT TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS AND HER WORK IN BANGLADESH.

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Kendra, a national legal aid and human rights organisation.

Saru is an internationally accredited Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst (TSTA) in the field of psychotherapy. She is a master practitioner in the neurolinguistic programme (NLP) and has a diploma in Child Development. She is also the managing trustee of Centre for Holistic Integrated Learning and Development and the Director of Asha Counselling and Training Services.

“Keeping the need for psychological well-being in mind, Khurshed apa wanted someone to provide a diploma course in psychosocial counselling. I first came and did a basic course, and then based on that, we chose students to move on to the diploma course. Such a thing would not only train individuals, but would also spread awareness in the society, which is really the main purpose,” says Saru. “We have already given 3 diploma courses, and a lot of people are also being trained for another international certification. As a result, there was already a vibrant community forming who are using Transactional Analysis. All the programmes and courses of mine were hosted and sponsored by Ain O Salish Kendra.”

P K Saru comes back to Dhaka this year in September for the South Asian



communication, the stimulus and the response we give in a relationship, we can understand the personalities of the people in it. It is basically analysing relationships,” she says, “At the core of every conflict is estrangement of a relationship. So when we become aware of what is wrong with it, and are aware of the changes that can take place, the options we have for change and growth, the relationship becomes better- there is peace, there is joy and well-being, and that is the basics of TA.”

The framework primarily focuses of growth, change and cure. “It is essential for healing, which takes place at an emotional

level, not at a cognitive level, which the TA framework encompasses. There are many different models that handle the same situation. If you look closely at it, the truth is one- the paths are many.”

Ain O Salish Kendra had successfully used the TA framework with survivors of the Rana Plaza tragedy. “When there is a major trauma, like the Rana Plaza Tragedy, as a victim, you are hit on a psychological level very badly. No cognition or thinking can take place. What you need is somebody to hold your hand and help you address your trauma, and to tell you that they are there. You need someone who can

'give' in the 'give and take' relationship. That holding of comfort, of release is what TA provides. They need to hold someone and cry, and vent. Some of them are very angry, some are very sad- they lost everything they had, they lost lives, possessions, and they lost a bread-winner, so they will go into their shells. TA gives them the chance to ventilate- which itself is healing,” says Saru.

According to P K Saru, a psychosocial counsellor has to have a secure base. “They have to believe that this person, the patient, has the potential to change, grow and heal. When the therapist believes that the power is in the patient, they can facilitate that power and that is the ultimate scope of the therapist.”

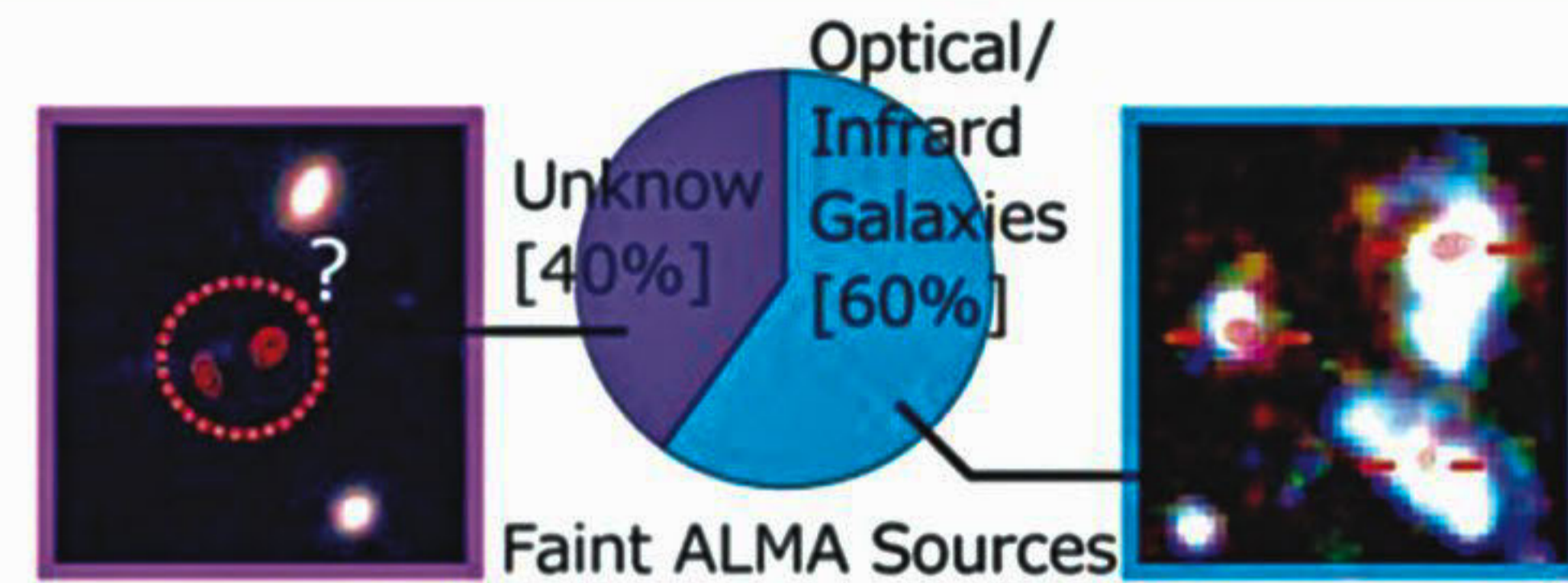
P K Saru's enthusiasm and dedication towards Bangladesh is inspiring. “I am always very impressed by the dedication of the people who have attended our trainings. I generally love the spirit of the people in Bangladesh, even if you meet someone impoverished on the streets, you will see- they look directly into your eyes, they make contact, which is proof of the humanness in them,” she says.

Those who have been trained by P K Saru and taken the diploma are already using the framework and skills in such a powerful way in helping people to grow, change, and heal. “I see tremendous growth in a scientific way. That is what really inspires me to come back every time. I wanted to show, what could be done when you are really passionate about making a change, and here we are- making changes.” ■

## STAR PEOPLE

## QUIRKY SCIENCE

### FOLDABLE MATERIAL



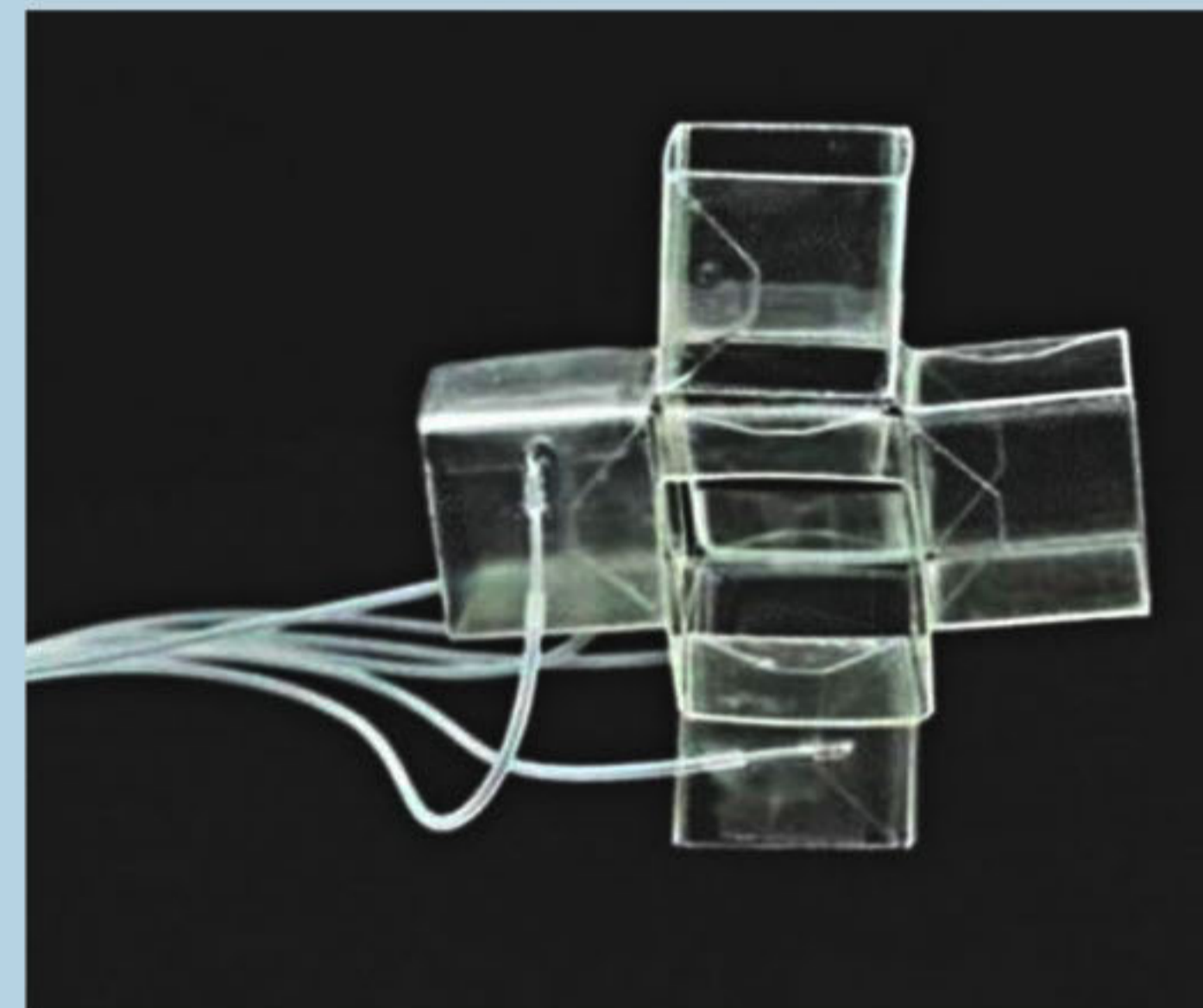
Imagine a house that could fit in a backpack or a wall that could become a window with the flick of a switch. Harvard researchers have designed a new type of foldable material that is versatile, tunable and self actuated. It can change size, volume and shape; it can fold flat to withstand the weight of an elephant without breaking, and pop right back up to prepare for the next task.

The research was led by Katia Bertoldi, the John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Natural Sciences at the John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS), James Weaver, Senior Research Scientist at the Wyss

Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering at Harvard University and Chuck Hoberman, of the Graduate School of Design. It is described in Nature Communications.

“We've designed a three-dimensional, thin-walled structure that can be used to make foldable and reprogrammable objects of arbitrary architecture, whose shape, volume and stiffness can be dramatically altered and continuously tuned and controlled,” said Johannes T. B. Overvelde, graduate student in Bertoldi's lab and first author of the paper.

### MYSTERIOUS INFRARED LIGHT FROM SPACE



A research team using the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) has detected the faintest millimeter-wave source ever observed.

By accumulating millimeter-waves from faint objects like this throughout the Universe, the team finally determined that such objects are 100% responsible for the enigmatic infrared background light filling the Universe. By comparing these to optical and infrared images, the team found that 60% of them are faint galaxies, whereas the rest have no corresponding objects in optical/infrared wavelengths and their nature is still unknown.

The Universe looks dark in the parts between stars and galaxies. However, astronomers have found that there is faint but uniform light,

called the "cosmic background emission," coming from all directions. This background emission consists of three main components; Cosmic Optical Background (COB), Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB), and Cosmic Infrared Background (CIB).

The origins of the first two have already been revealed. The COB comes from a huge number of stars, and the CMB comes from hot gas just after the Big Bang. However, the origin of the CIB was still to be solved. Various research projects, including past ALMA observations, have been conducted, but they could only explain half of the CIB.

Source: Sciencedaily.com

## FIVE THINGS

# 5 WAYS TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR RAMADAN

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO



The blessed month of Ramadan is fast approaching, and while some of us are very excited, some others are little tensed about how to get through it. Abiding by the rules and virtues of this month can be quite the task, but if done with faith and the spirit of the month, is one of the most rewarding feelings one could ever experience. To face the month of Ramadan, some preparation is needed- for both body and mind. Here are five tips for you to spend Ramadan in complete peace, without the turmoils of the 'daily life' hampering your spirit.

**1 Create a Ramadan Countdown:** Whether it is done mentally or by keeping physical signs around the home or office, this will help create hype and buzz in your mind and amongst the people around you. When you, your friends and family are counting down to the same event, it becomes part of regular conversation and spreads excitement, livens the spirit of the month. This month, along with The Daily Star's annual Eid Fashion Magazine, we will have a Ramadan Planner as well to help our readers plan the month our better.

**2 Learn About Ramadan:** There is a lot to know and learn, no matter how much we think we already know. Do some browsing, read some books- this will help you ensure you will do things correctly and perfectly for Ramadan. The more you know about Ramadan the more you can apply.

**3 Prepare Spiritually:** The point of Ramadan is one we all know- to understand the sufferings of the underprivileged, to learn about our own faith, to learn to help those in need, and

value what we have been blessed with. To grasp all of that, we are to Fast, Pray, Read the Quran and give charity. Start these worships early; don't expect to just click into it as soon as the first day of Ramadan starts. Start doing extra prayers from now, start revising and regularly reading the Quran now, get used to being generous and kind- not only will these habits help you during Ramadan, but also your whole life.

**4 Prepare your Mind:** The mind is a whole other story. While we just let our 'minds wander' on a normal day, Ramadan teaches us how to control it and ourselves. Fasting is to refrain from more than just what we consume in our mouth. Start working on your patience; be extra vigilant with your conversations: ensure you are not backbiting, slandering or talking about things that may hurt others.

**5 Say Goodbye to bad-habits:** This is probably my favourite part about Ramadan. I get the opportunity to reform myself and learn to love myself better. It is the best time for resolutions! Know what bad habits you have and stop them from now, don't wait until Ramadan begins. If you sleep late, start sleeping early, if you are a Facebook junky start cutting down, if you are a caffeine addict, slow down, etc, if you are a smoker, what better time to quit than now? It might sound much easier said than done, but once you've committed yourself, purified your intentions- aren't so difficult.

This Ramadan, take it all in- the spirit, the buzz, the faith. Learn to love others and yourself, and there is no better time to start that this Holy month. ■