

RAMADAN OF 1954

AN APPLE A DAY |

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ILLUSTRATION: AALIF NOOR BIN GHIAS



It was 1954; Dacca. The summer and Ramadan vacation of our school started together. It was summer. The sun was glowering. I was a student of class III; a boy of 7.

There was not much to do for the boys before and during Ramadan. We went out into the school playground. We played cricket with a wooden bat and tennis ball. Or when there was nothing we soiled on the ground with a game of marbles!

Soon, the Ramadan moon was sighted. Ramadan was to begin from tomorrow (4 May 1954). Folks in my nearby *Nanabari* with my two unwed *Khalas* were preparing for *Sehri*. The busyness infected the small boy. I became inquisitive; eager to take part in *Sehri*. I dozed but found out with my sleepy eyes that most of them were awake.

They got up for *sehri*. Meantime the *Qasida* singer Akram crossed our area calling on the faithful to get up for *sehri* with his finale melodious call *Akram duaakarchalea la* Mohammad Rafi. Whenever Ramadan comes I still pine for Akram to revive the time. *Sehri* dishes were served, rice and chicken curry, fried egg and omelets. The aged were taking rice with milk and banana. I squeezed in the corner!

My mother hectored me to go to sleep. I would not – I am fasting tomorrow! My Nani pleaded that let the kid take a try, if he succeeds it will be his first fasting. My mother relented and let me have rice and chicken curry. I relished it much and with so much of enthusiasm. O! I can tell my school friends that I was a *Rojadar*!

After *sehri* I did not have a wink of sleep and got up early. As a new *Rojadar* I was feeling breezy! During breakfast time my Nani told me an easy way out of the rigours of fasting; that of keeping my *Roza* in an earthen pot and take something to see through the blazing sun. She could not wheedle me to acquiesce to her ploy!

I was feeling BIG! I was fasting for the first time. Most of my friends were fasting. When they asked me if I was fasting, my confident reply was – I WAS!!

I returned home. My spirit was sinking! The heat was unbearable! There was not a wisp of cloud in the sky. The sun was beating down with unremitting hostility. My thirst would rip me open. Every moment was a trial. I could not take it any longer, yet I stuck on!

A drop of water! I took a table spoonful of water and gurgled it to make the thirst bearable. A handloom towel also helped. I soaked it in water; placed it on my crown and rubbed my face. It was 3 in the afternoon. The hours would not go. Indeed water is life! As a boy of 7 I understood that mid-afternoon is a tyrannical time.

All this time I was asking myself could I make it to *Iftar*? I learned time goes on. My folks were unjustly critical of my mother. Meantime *Iftar* dishes had been

sent to nearby Star mosque. There were special *iftar* items for the youngest boy in the family - *sutli kebab*, *paratha*, *dates*, *banana*, *dahika sherbet* (drink of sweetened curd), *jilapi*, *piyaju*, *beguni* and yes *muri*. He was fasting for the first time! I retired to the bed hoping that the call of Maghrib prayer would soon be wafting in the air.

O! Yes! The hour did come! In 1954 the first of Ramadan did come to an end, the sun went down; the muezzin's Maghrib call was wafting around and the *iftar* was mine to share with my folks!

Belief is in fact a test of will. For every success if it is to reach its goal of enduring value nothing can be reached without belief - Be it scaling a mountain braving a desert or overcoming an adversity! ■

NUMBERS |

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The number of Bangladeshi indigenous men, women and children who tried to cross into India fearing torture and harassment allegedly by forest officials. These people of five villages under Kalenga Reserve Forest in Habiganj, were stopped by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and later were brought back to Bangladesh.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA



MUHAMMAD YUNUS
(born 28 June 1940)

The founder of Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus is the first Bangladeshi to win the Nobel Peace Prize for pioneering the concepts of microcredit and microfinance. Along with Saskia Bruysten, Sophie Eisenmann and Hans Reitz, he co-founded the Yunus Social Business – Global Initiatives, which empower social businesses to address social issues over the world.

A believer in humane capitalism, Yunus was rated in the second position in Foreign Policy's list of Top 100 Global Thinkers and was named by Fortune Magazine as one of the 12 greatest entrepreneurs of the current era. He is also one of the only seven people to have won the Nobel Peace Prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal.

“In my experience, poor people are the world's greatest entrepreneurs. Every day, they must innovate in order to survive. They remain poor because they do not have the opportunities to turn their creativity into sustainable income.”

My greatest challenge has been to change the mindset of people. Mindsets play strange tricks on us. We see things the way our minds have instructed our eyes to see.

To overcome poverty and the flaws of the economic crisis in our society, we need to envision our social life. We have to free our mind, imagine what has never happened before and write social fiction. We need to imagine things to make them happen. If you don't imagine, it will never happen.”

STARDIARY

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

Recently I was returning home from Dhaka University campus after finishing my classes. When I was crossing the alley between the Arts building and IBA, I saw some students crowded in a spot. It was 9:30 pm at night. I was interested to know what happened there, so I approached the crowd and saw a very old skinny woman was lying on the ground with a bandage around her head. As I talked to the students on spot, I came to know that the woman had been lying unconscious from 2 pm that day and some people had abandoned her. As some students of DU saw this scene, they just swarmed the place to help her. Some students suggested that she should have been hospitalised while the rest decided to send her to any old home. In the meantime the old woman got her sense back and told us that she was from Comilla and her family member had left her. Finally we decided to admit her into DMCH, and once she recovers she would be shifted to old home. I find the initiative that the students took was really praiseworthy. There were some female students as well who remained by the old woman ignoring their curfew for entering the hostel. Seeing students' activities for this woman, I returned home really happy and satisfied. But just after two days, I was very surprised finding that the old woman was still there and asking for money. I was surprised thinking that even if we often think of doing something great, we don't continue to work on making it happen in the end.

Md Zonaeed Emran
Banasree, rampura, Dhaka



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

THE GLOBAL PACIFIER

These days it seems like everywhere I look, there are people staring at their smartphones. The other day I went for an *Iftar* party with my family in a restaurant in Gulshan. As I looked around, I found most of the people sitting in their respective group drifting into their own world and completely zoning out when they are engaged with their smart phone. They are totally engrossed texting, scrolling through their Facebook, reading and what not. I know parents who themselves are addicted to smart phones and also use them as a pacifier for their kids. I don't understand why we need it, back when I was a kid, we never really needed one. Our parents used to give us some toys to keep us quite and at peace. These days, people just seem like a group of zombies with their heads down mostly into their smartphones and tablets. They are training their children as well to turn into one.

Sharmin Chowdhury
Mohakhali, Dhaka