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Published by the Editor from
Transcraft Ltd, 229, Tejgaon
Industrial Area, Dhaka on behalf
of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel
C.A., Dhaka-1000.

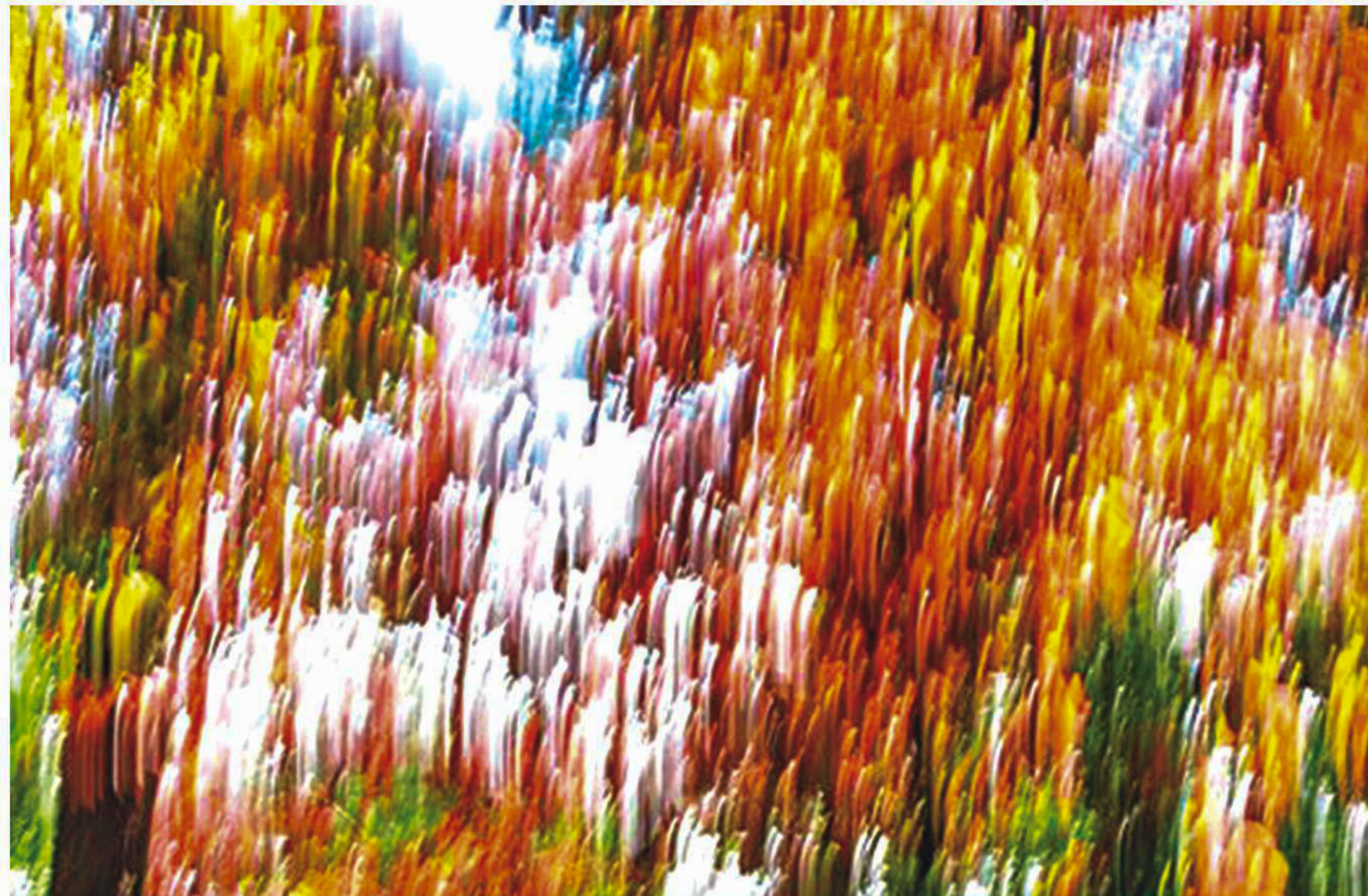


PHOTO: BIR AZAM

Autumn burned brightly, a running flame through the mountains, a torch flung to the trees. — *Faith Baldwin, American Family*

SNAPSHOT

Photo was taken at Rocky Mountains, Colorado, USA

MAILBOX

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The Joy of Eating Well

I would like to thank *Star Weekend* for publishing the article titled "The Joy of Eating Well" published on 14 October, 2016 and also thanks to Nilima Jahan who wrote the article. Bangladesh is a small country but it has large population to feed. Most of the people of our country are so poor that adequate supply of food is a near impossible task for our government. Children belonging to these impoverished families lead a life full of sufferings and deprivation. They work hard from dawn to dusk to earn a square meal for their families when they are supposed to go to school. The underprivileged children do not get proper food to eat and education for them is a far cry. 'Bidyanoondo Foundation' has done an amazing job by providing food and education for these children. Like 'Bidyanoondo Foundation' if we all can take such welfare initiatives from our capacity for the street children, it will be possible to eradicate poverty from our country.

Masum Khan
Chittagong College,
Chittagong

Beyond Flush and Forget

I would like to thank Shahnawaz for his excellent article titled "Beyond Flush and Forget" published on October 14, 2016. The article deals with a subject that is very important but is hardly published in any newspaper. As I pray five times a day in the mosque, thanks to their toilets, I do not have to face much difficulty when I need to refresh. However, the washrooms of the mosques are not always open and available when I am outside. I feel shocked when I think about those public toilets that we sometimes have to use seeing no other alternative. And, similarly I feel pity for those who have no option except using such unhygienic restrooms regularly. The worst sufferers of this sanitation crisis are women, which has been pointed out in the article very clearly. I hope the relevant authority, especially the city corporations and municipalities, will take the matter into their consideration immediately.

Enam Hasan
Madaninagar, Naryanganj



PHOTO: STAR LIFE

Fine Isn't Fine

Dhaka is considered one of the most crowded cities in the world. Population has crossed 17 million and counting. Unfortunately, we saw a slightly different behaviour among the city dwellers while crossing roads. Running, jumping, are the very common scenes in it, moreover we intentionally avoid using a foot-over bridge where the government has given the facility, but we ignore and then we blame them if any pedestrian dies in a road accident while crossing, despite knowing that it is dangerous. A couple of months ago Dhaka Metropolitan Police charged fine to the pedestrians in Kakoli area of Banani intersection for not using the foot over bridge. Though there are four foot over bridges in between Chairmanbari and Kakoli but not a single one in between Kakoli and Navy Headquarter. So, this is the reason for the people who want to go to Uttara and farther on, to cross the road inadvertently in the Banani intersection. I believe only fining pedestrians isn't enough to encourage them to use foot-over bridges, rather the government should take the decision wisely on where to build a foot-over bridge or not. The government should do some survey among people before building a new one.

Omor Ahmed
Jahangirnagar University

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

CRAFTS

"Potters actually were popularised during the rule of zamindars, and they were patronised to make the statues of goddesses, plates, and other aesthetical items for them", says 62-year-old Sankar Dhar, a phenomenal artist and sculptor. "But when the zamindar system ended, these potters started to make different items for household uses, sold them door-to-door or sometimes in the local markets called 'Hat'", he states.

It is true that there was a time when our ancestors used pottery items in their day to day household work. From the kitchen utensils to aesthetical showpieces, pottery items were the most used household tools in prior times. It was not too long ago that earthen pots, pitchers, jugs, glasses, bowls, buckets, small banks, pot covers, dishes, flower vases, dolls were found in every home, mostly in rural areas. But in this short period of time, this tradition has changed. And, it was this change that took the potters' future to a different path.

Now-a-days, our markets are full of household materials made of mostly plastic, ceramic, metal, melamine and more. "Comparing to the pottery items, these products are sometimes very cheap (for example, plastic products) and durable (such as, metallic items)", says 40-year-old Bijoy Paul, a potter of Nilphamari Sadar Upazilla. "Besides, previously, we could collect clay at free of cost, but now we have to buy it comparatively at an expensive rate", he adds.

Not only the clay, but also the price of instruments related to pottery making, fuel for burning the raw products, colours, brushes, and in a word, every single thing's price has been increased very rapidly. Besides, the lack of demand, production costs and the overall difficulty of the process has discouraged them to stick to this profession, which resulted in a career shift.

SAVE THE POTTERS

NILIMA JAHAN

PHOTOS: HUZZATUL MURSALIN



"Many of us have had to leave that profession and are now working as factory workers, shopkeepers, hawkers and migrant labourers in different foreign countries", says Paul.

But those who could not give up this job of their ancestors are mostly dependent on the sales of different occasions and fairs. "During the occasions, we get most of our orders, as people now-a-days love to buy aesthetical terracotta items for homes and offices", says 45-year-old Nitai Paul, a potter of Paul Paara, Dhamrai. "But it is very hard to maintain a big joint family all the year round with such low sales", he adds.

Potters these days are trying to cope with the demand of people, and hence, are engaging in making different showpieces--

dolls, small banks, flower vases, pots and things like that. They believe that if they can get proper support from the government and other non-government organisations, at least they do not need to switch their jobs. Also, if they can get soft loans from the government and other financial institutions, it would be very helpful for them to continue with their family business.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) says that as small and cottage industries are their main target group, they always have a soft corner for them and hence try to do their best to retain these potters in their traditional profession.

"We are trying to inspire them with our easiest loan system with 10 percent annual

interest rate", says Md. Shafiur Rahman Regional Director, BSCIC Dhaka. "Also, we provide them with registration and Small and Medium- Sized Enterprises (SME) loan from SME Foundation and others organisation", he adds.

But the potters believe if the rate of interest is kept low, it will be more convenient for them. Also, the government should arrange frequent fairs, both in urban and rural areas, or create a marketplace for the potters, so that they can get more benefit. Last but not the least, instead of letting this profession be extinct totally, if the government takes necessary steps to revive the art through professional training, the potters can innovate new products in today's competitive market. ■



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS





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