



ECHOES BY
ASRAR CHOWDHURY

How I learned my mother language

I was born in Chittagong. My mother language being Bangla is the language I learned just like anybody else. However, at the age of four, I embarked on a path that would make me forget my mother language for some years.

My father went for higher studies in what's now Aberystwyth University, in Wales, in the UK. My heavenly mother, myself, and my younger sibling joined him a few months later in April 1974. What I can recall of my life started in Wales.

Within a week, I was in Plascrug School. In those days, the Welsh language was optional. I now wish they taught us Welsh properly. That would have given a portal to understand the Welsh nation better. I learned English and English only, albeit with a sweet Welsh accent.

I was never a voracious reader. However, I have been a voracious listener. Thanks to my parents, and the BBC, music and radio have been an integral part of my upbringing ever since I can recall my memory.

I lost connections with Bangla in Wales. My parents did not speak Bangla at home. However, through their music collection I listened to Bangla, Hindi, and Urdu artists.

My senses were developing, laying the foundations of how music would reincarnate later in my life.

I was at the age of going to Grade 5 when we returned to Bangladesh. English medium was not a practical choice in those days. Before I could get admitted to a Bangla medium school, I had to learn the language. It was easier said than done.

My Dada came to the rescue. He patiently taught me the Bangla alphabet (and Arabic and Sanskrit). In spite of his efforts, my orientation of letters was in English. I had nightmares trying to get the pronunciations correct. Then came the short and the long vowels. When do you use the long e? When do you use the short e? How can you



remember so many juktakkhor?

I started school in Bangladesh from Grade 6, in Bangla medium. It was not until another few years I could read Bangla properly. By then, I had reached my teens. I missed reading many Bangla classics peo-

ple at that age would have read.

Once again, it was music and radio that ignited a passion for Bangla. I would listen to my father's LPs endlessly. I can still recall Tagore dramas like Shyama, Tasher Desh, Chitrangada from heart. Through the lyrics, I learned the language, and also metres of poetry.

The Nishuti sessions of Bangladesh Betar opened up a world of music from Bangladesh, South Asia and the world. The more I listened, the more I fell in love and wanted to know more.

Through music then and still now, I drown in whatever is wonderful and worth experiencing in the Bangla language. It makes me feel happy I have roots embedded in Bengal.

Asrar Chowdhury is a professor of economics. He follows Test cricket, listens to music, and spins vinyl when he has free time. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu or asrarul@gmail.com

EXERCISING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Exercising can do wonders for both your physical and mental state; although the benefits to one's mental health are not considered as often. Today, I will aim to change your mind.

Exercise may help alleviate anxiety. According to an article published by Harvard Health, the stress-inducing hormones adrenaline and cortisol are reduced by a good workout session. Therefore, even if you have a packed schedule, you might want to reconsider squeezing in a workout at a safe time during the day. In my case, I have found that working out regularly helps me sleep better.

Chemicals called endorphins can improve a person's mood and act as painkillers naturally produced in the body. Endorphins create a relaxed mood and help you feel refreshed and optimistic after a long, grueling workout, according to the article by Harvard Health.

Though Elle Woods magically working out and studying simultaneously in Legally Blonde may have seemed unrealistic, is actually not that far from reality. This is because working out can help you feel better enough to handle challenging tasks.

The best part about the psychological benefits of exercising or working out is that it does not even require you to undergo extremely strenuous regimes. You may simply speed walk or even regularly walk for long distances, and it would work the same. You also have the ability to modify your exercise according to what helps you relax more.

If you prefer at home slow runs you can do so on a treadmill with some relaxing music. Sometimes having a peaceful environment for said activities, such as, walking in a park or taking a long stroll through a garden or field causes time to fly by, and facilitates walking longer distances than you initially intended to. Beautiful scenery and some ambient music can further elevate your walk or run to be more pleasant, and contribute to your general psychological well being.

There are even specific forms of exercise designed to focus on improving your mental state, e.g. some forms of yoga. The Harvard article mentioned previously also mentions how yoga incorporates deep breathing, which helps you calm down and de-stress. Although yoga poses may seem difficult to get started with, there are certain ways to begin without making it strenuous.

In my opinion, yoga is actually one of the best ways to improve one's mental health as it introduces you to methods of meditation and breathing techniques along with the poses.

Therefore, exercising for a good mental state should be taken into consideration. Given how fast-paced life can get, or how difficult it may seem to be to keep up with life sometimes, I hope this can be a habit we can build, and I hope it helps most people the way it has helped me.

References:

1. Harvard Health Publishing, July 2020, Exercising to relax

Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushrazaman31@yahoo.com

