

The Valentine Day

Today is the 14th February
No sorry, no angry
We are very happy.

Today is the Valentine Day
No violence, no quarrel
We dance in gay.

Every lover gives flowers
To make him/her lover know congratulation
Every isolated lover forgets the past
And wishes to get solution.

This day is reared
To the every country
As we rear in the happy
New year and day of victory.

It is not only for the adult
But also for girl and boy
So let's go with our sweethearts
To do delight and joy.

READERS' POEMS

I get a lot of poems from readers all over Bangladesh and abroad. They are slipped, metaphorically, beneath my door or left on sunlit windowsills, gathering a film of dust before I pick them up. Here are some poems from a fat file I have marked 'Stuff'. Because why not. Because a literature page in a sense is nothing more than its readers and it must return once in a while to its roots, one of which is its readership, the great living mass out there watching, reading, sending poems, learning, absorbing, tracking the page, getting to know its quirks, coming to like a lot of the things done, critiquing some others, but hopefully always faithful, always staying with us, cheering us on when we are down, waving when we are up, saying knowingly at times 'Ah yes, you mean The Daily Star literature page, oh yes yes yes...'

---Editor, Literature Page

P.S. And please, once you send something in, don't keep calling to pester The Daily Star staff about whether it'll get published. It's indecent and discourteous. Leave an editor alone to do his/her job.

Riverside ghazal

By the banks of the river
I pine for you
By the mists that rise
I long for you.

It is not the touch
It is the feeling behind the hand
It is not the glance
It is the eye of the mind
It is not the words
It is the voice you speak in
How can all this be
And yet we die?

By the banks of the river
I pine for you
By the mists that rise
I long for you.

Mira Hossain
London

Today's diary

5/2/03 7:37:49 AM Friday

Now it is morning dear
Clouds are all over the sky
It is raining somewhere near
Winds are cool, softly they fly

I like
Mornings, clouds, skies, rains, winds-
All of them
Beauty is my name.
Always
I like them to meet
Happy is my spirit

I am in my residence
Have just left the bed
On it all are scattered-
Pillow, *katha*, bedsheet,
I am with the computer
Talking to each other,
On my right is north
Windows are open,
Looking often outside the windows
And writing without a pen.
The buildings are still sleeping
Only sparrows are chirping
Voices and other city sounds
Are slowly increasing
Rabindranath is singing
In my computer CPU
There is no mist no fog
There is no morning dew

I like
beds, windows, sleeping buildings, sparrows,
Rabindranath, mists, dews, computers, voices and sounds-
All of them.
Beauty is my name.
Always
I like them to meet.
Happy is my spirit.

Rais Hasan
Dhaka

Bangladeshi American

(for my sister)

Once in Oakland beneath a
Curd-and-wheysky
I stood on the pavement
Stopped a yellow taxi
Hopped inside
And grinned
'Take me to Cox's Bazar.'

I went to a party
In a tank top
Danced and flirted
Smiled and laughed
Stood in the backyard
By the barbecue grill
And heard Tagore songs
Falling down from the trees.

I speak English
Like a chainsaw all day
In my dreams at night
a man by a green pond
looks into my eyes
and says
'Apni kemon achen?'

Gulrukh (Lily) Akhtar
Chicago

Pearls Drop

Whilst you come, room is full of sweet smell
Whilst you walk, I keep my heart under your
feet
Whilst you turn up your lips, honey drops
Whilst you smile, pearls drop
Whilst you close your eyes, world is covered in
darkness.

Mahboob-ul Alam
Barisal

Message For You

Wait for your next mail
It'll be on its way
If you let your hopes live
It'll find you some day

Meantime you may listen to silence
Sail the breeze your forest blows
Taste everything along the course
As your insight shines and glows

Touch whatever needs your touch
In a world that's got to change
As you rise and rise to meet
The mighty god of outer-range

Visions and dreams, always true,
Make this great god work for you
If you let your hopes live
He will send the mail to you

Asifur Rahman
Dhaka

Doves not Bombs

Children live here.
Boy and girls, men and women live here.
Cats and dogs, cows and goats, sheep and buffalos live here.
Tigers, lions, elephants, hyenas, coyotes, gorillas, hippopotamuses,
Giraffes, desert foxes, wolves, zebras, kangaroos, camels, horse,
Bears and Teddy Bears, donkeys, bulls, monkeys, wombats, orangutans,
Possums, lizards, leopards, pandas, minks, beavers, squirrels, moles, ferrets,
Mice, skunks, rabbits, frogs, hamsters, shrews, baboons, deer live here.
Pigs and guinea pigs and chipmunks and raccoons and porcupines live here.
Fishes, snakes, mongooses, koalas live here.
Parrots, parakeets, crows, robins, blue jays, sparrows, flamingoes, linnets, pigeons,
Pelicans, swans, kingfishers, swallows, magpies, cuckoos, chickadees, hornbills, owls,
Woodpeckers, kiwis, mockingbirds, eagles, herons, hawks, toucans, orioles, cardinals,
Mynas, doels, bulbuls, hummingbirds, gulls, pheasants, peacocks, vultures,
Turkeys, chickens, ducks, geese, sandpipers live here.
Plants and trees and mushrooms and fruits and vegetables and flowers live here.
Earthworms and snails and caterpillars live here.
Butterflies and dragonflies live here.
Ants and flies and cockroaches live here.
Crabs, oysters, clams, shrimps, scallops live here.
Alligators and crocodiles and octopuses and turtles and platypuses
And eels and lobsters and sharks and starfishes live here.
Penguins and polar bears and seals and walruses and dolphins live here.
Beetles and rhinoceros beetles, bees, grasshoppers, spiders, crickets, chameleons,
Katybirds, termites, wasps, bumblebees, fireflies, ladybugs live here.
Joy and delight, happiness and sadness, laughter and tears,
Pleasure and pain, love and hatred, kindness and cruelty,
Caring and neglect generosity and greed, health and sickness,
Beauty and ugliness, tolerance and anger, hope and despair,
Birth and death live here.

Let shower upon them
Doves not bombs.

Sajed Kamal
Boston

Native Commander

Fire! Roared British commander Dyer
Myriads of innocent peace-loving persons were
Down on green grass of a park in Amritsar
Dead dying fleeing scenes: to teach natives never
Dare face frown and challenge mighty master
Many a year elapsed since the massacre
Behold 'history repeats itself!' year year after
Long tedious journey home of Union Jack over
A bloody scene, a bloodbath again in Amritsar
Operation Blue Star: temple and commander.

A.K. Pramanik
Khulna

Memory

Only your melody goes on ringing in my veins
With bated breath passed I a long way
And so many lingering moments of leisure
A deep pall of darkness descends on the horizon of memory
And came the wind of oblivion pell-mell crawling the dusty way:
Moments uncounted and a long way had I passed with bated breath
Crying of countless hours ceased
Yet only your melody goes on ringing in my veins.

(Samar Sen's poem translated by
Mujib Rahman Chittagong)

LIMERICK CONTEST

And all the above makes me think that this might not be a bad time to start a limerick contest. Entries are invited from our readers (Daily Star staffers and regular contributors excluded) both here and abroad. The theme of the entries must be related to Bangladesh. There is a limit of five per person/entry. Last date for entries is July 15th, 2003. Entries must be sent to The Literary Editor, The Daily Star, 19 Kawran Bazaar, Dhaka 1215, or to dseitor@gononet.com, attn: literary editor. All entries must have their mailing addresses, and/or email addresses. Failure to do so will disqualify entries. The best three entries will be published in the literature page along with photos of their authors. And if the winners present themselves at The Daily Star offices, we promise to take them out for some interesting conversation over lunch at a Chinese restaurant.

For all those participants interested in English verse forms, this should be a learning experience. The limerick is a form of light verse (*verse de societe*) whose popularity over the last thirty years is credited to Edward Lear (1812-88):

There was an Old Person of Putney,
Whose food was roast spiders and chutney,
Which he took with his tea
Within sight of the sea,
That romantic Old Person of Putney.

As can be seen above, the limerick is a five-line (what is known as a *quintet*) English poetic form with two rhymes: lines 1, 2, and 5, and then the internal lines 3 and 4 (*aabba*). But wait, there's more: limericks use anapests and amphibrachs, word/syllable groupings where a maximum number of unstressed syllables give its lines a rapid, tripping effect. Participants however should not be overly concerned about the latter, but the closer their

efforts get to the ideal the more points they score.

Limericks commonly have a slightly salacious content. As in

There once was a Bishop of Treet
Who decided to be indiscreet,
But after one round
To his horror he found
You repeat, and repeat, and repeat.

However, since ours is a reputable national daily, we caution entrants against the overly titillating.

As for the Bangladeshi theme, we can give the following two quickies ('quickies' because the lines do not move as rapidly as they should):

There once was a man from Fe-ni
Whose wife could never deny
She had tarried
And then married
Yet another man from Fe-ni.

There once was a mullah from Barisal
Who kept getting quite *taal*
He fell left and right
Then he had a fright
When he woke up toasted in a *khaal*.

So to all you folks out there: come on, let's see what you can do!

PRISONER

One day I asked a friend in the prison
Do you want to be free?
He answered in a strange voice,
You can free a bird from a cage
But can you free them
From the shackle of the sky?

Then I asked a friend who was just jilted
Are you filling free now?
He answered through his silent eyes,
You can be free from a soul
But can you ever be free
From your own shadow?

Then I asked the people after a revolution
Are you free now?
They answered in a mourning voice,
You can be free from chains
But can you ever be free
From the struggle of life?

No one is free
Everyone is in prison
One can only be free
Through the free imagination.

Rumman Uddin Ahamed
Dhaka