

A Taste of Bangladesh for the Parisians

by Fayza Haq

The exhibition of contemporary paintings by Bangladeshi artists at the Galerie Nord-Sud, Paris, is undoubtedly a triumphant achievement. The display is being held in October/November '91 and February/March '92.

As the precursors to the moderns are two delightful paintings by Zainul Abedin. These include two famous sketches of two 'santal' women and fishermen. There are magnificent oils by S.M. Sultan too. These comprise a painting showing women at work and some bohemians. Qamrul Hasan's 'Woman', of perennial interest, is done in green and blue. A mosaic like 'Melody in Oil' by Saifuddin Ahmed has also been included in the show.

The main exhibit has three entries by Kalidas Karmakar. These are pure abstracts with dramatic black, turbulent reds and brilliant yellows. Kalidas has the eternal female symbol in circles and triangles. The creations are vibrant, imaginative and pulsating with life.

In the exhibit one finds Kanak Champa Chakma's idyllic and dream-like creations of the Chittagong hill tracts women. The faces, clothes, simple jewellery and surrounding flowers have been depicted

in a romantic manner. The paintings in oil show simple scenes like tea-pluckers and visiting neighbours with umbrellas. Often washing being hung out to dry is also included. But all this is done with a light fantastic touch, with warm orange and gold blending with the surrounding blue or green.

Sketches and acrylic by Jamal Ahmed are there in the collection. These include a portrait of an old man in the cold, a conservative couple with the wife in a 'burqa', plus a rainy scene. Jamal's Impressionistic works always have the simple 'people of Bangladesh in mind.

There are Buddha Karmakar's prints too. These deal with the pain and suffering of mankind and include telling images and symbols. The vision is optimistic in the final analysis. The symbols of the butterfly and the woman usher in hope and joy.

There are the bewitching oil creations by K.M. Mithu. His paintings are absorbing, with his preoccupation with man's present dilemmas. The kite, chair and steps represent human aspirations. Mithu is also well-known for his photography.



(Clockwise) The Couple — Jamal Ahmed; Composition 2 — Rafiqun Nabi; Life in Bangladesh — Pranesh Mandal; and Bird-Object — Ruhul Amin Kajol.

There are the mysterious and enigmatic images by G.S. Kabir. They are highly imaginative and abstract and could be visions from outer space. Yet the oil painter has mankind's problems in mind. The purple and blue, with the abstract squiggles has human endeavours as their prime theme.

Ifikharuddin Ahmed's pre-occupation with the Dhaka rickshaws is fascinating. He has presented them from various angles. Twisted and turned about the images of the rickshaws stand for man's eternal struggle.

Rokeya Sultana's fairytale like creations are there too with naive child-like images in graphics. A little girl's uncomplicated world is seen repeatedly. The butterflies, crescent moon and flowers create a carefree romanticised image.

Mohammed Kibria's oil sketches add dimension to the display. The lithographs and the oil are pure abstracts in blues, greens and browns. They appear austere and aloof.

Rafiqun Nabi's compositions and prints are again a reflection of the chaotic world. The squares, circles and the repeated scratches speak of a turbulent vision of fear, danger and disappointment.

Samarit Roy Chowdhury has delineated life in the villages with subtle and deft strokes. His pastel and acrylics illustrating birds, kites, flags women and children are rich in colours and pulsating with life.

Apart from these are the works of Eunus Mohammed, Haque Mahamadul, Karim

Rejaul, Nabi Rafiqun, Mandal Kumar, Reza Mominul and Sarwar-e- Kabir Gholam.

Included in the exhibit are the works of Bangladeshi artists living in Paris. This has Shahabuddin Ahmed's vivacious pieces involving action and colour in the abstract. Monirul Islam's 'Musical Notes in Autumn' is also diverting with the prominent blacks on the mauve background. Ruhul Amin Kajol's surrealist piece adds colour and drama to the exposé. Shahadat Hussain's abstract 'Monument' lends a positive dimension to the display.

Seeing the wealth of art coming from Bangladesh one hopes this will help to remove the image that there is about the country — that we are a poor nation with little to contribute towards other cultures and civilizations.



The season of flowers is here and when flowers are around admirers are not far behind. Photo: J. Osman.

Television about Africans, by Africans, for Africans

The growing influence of television companies like CNN has heightened fears in the South that citizens of developing countries are increasingly getting their TV news about each other from the industrialised North. Afrovision — a news exchange programme between nine African countries — hopes to challenge that trend by using satellite connections to share the day's top TV news from around the continent. As Gemini News Service reports, Afrovision has overcome some difficulties since its launch in January and is now looking at ways to improve its service. by Yao Dziekpor

EVERY afternoon, television newscasters in nine African countries link up by satellite to beam each other their top stories of the day. Before the January launch of their partnership, such newscasters had to rely on Northern sources like British Visnews or Atlanta-based Cable News Network (CNN) to find out what their African neighbours were doing. Now African editors, working from a central headquarters in Algiers, can use their own news judgement to put together a collection of the day's images. News by Africans, about Africans, for Africans.

working quietly behind the scenes to push reluctant African governments to accept the concept. After several years of preparations, the January 2 launch date was set at a conference in Algiers in December 1990. Algeria — a country selected because of its experience as a member of Eurovision and the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) — agreed to provide facilities for a co-ordinating centre in Algiers. It was initially agreed that the project would be experimental for its first three months; thereafter, participating countries would book time with Intelsat satellite on a

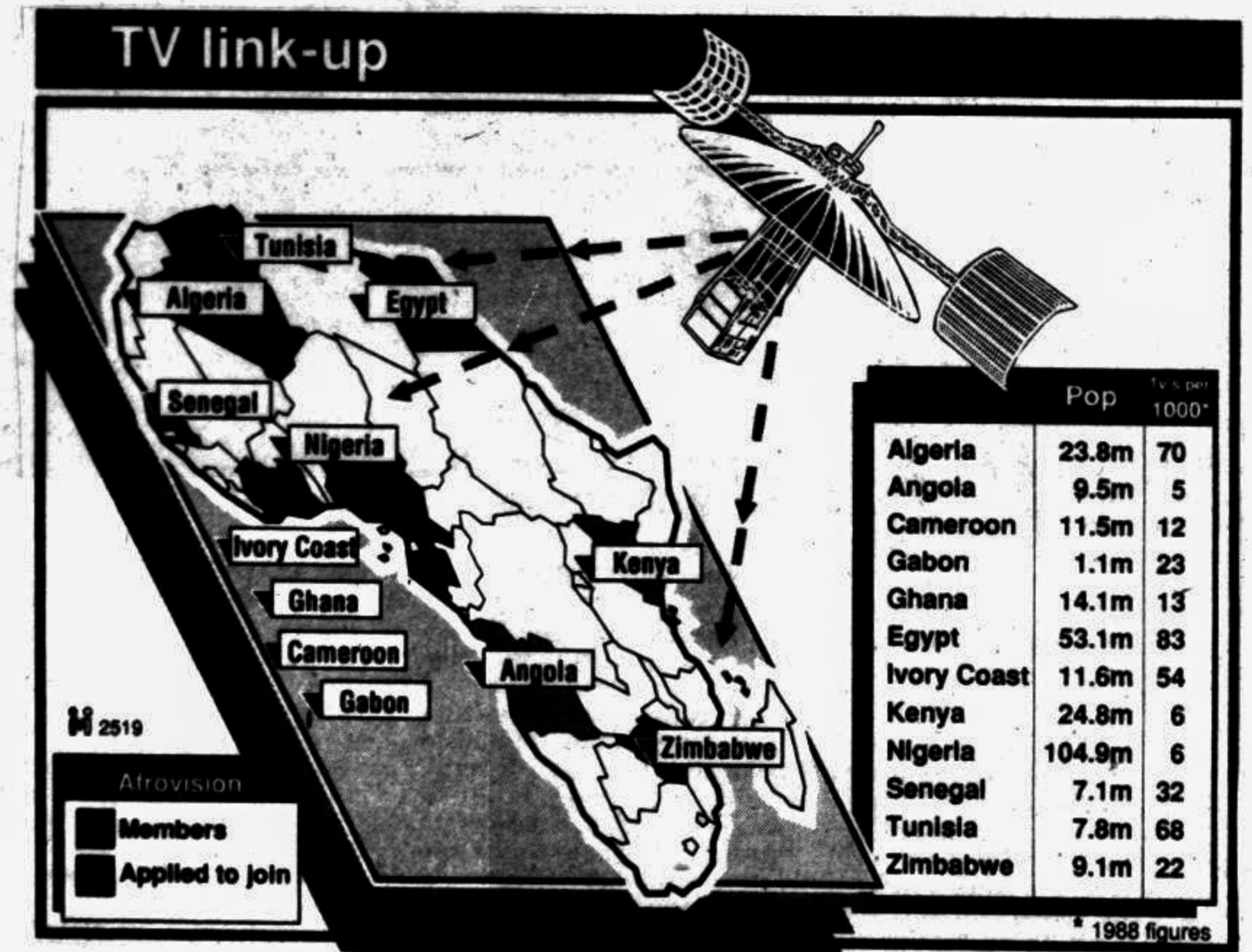
permanent basis. Since January participating networks have rented time every afternoon at 1600 Greenwich Mean Time to transmit images over Intelsat. Brief explanations of the stories are sent by telex but no voice reports accompany the images — only background noise captured when items were shot. A training school for journalists, camera people, sound technicians and film editors has been established in Cairo to train personnel for the programme. But most African countries still lack the technology needed for a smooth start-up of a satellite news exchange.

sent out by telex to participating countries before or during the exchange. Unlike Eurovision, where the line-up of items is decided by an editor, stories are presented alphabetically by country of origin. Afrovision members bear the cost of beaming stories up to the satellite link equally but they pay Algiers a fee to defray expenses for the co-ordinating centre. The cost of bringing the signal down from the satellite is up to member countries to sort out with their own telecommunications companies. Most Afrovision items are received and re-transmitted the day they occur. This has nagging question remains over how the service can be sustained. The answer will depend on the political will of member governments. The daily cost of the programme to members is about \$100, a burden for some. Already, Cameroon has temporarily withdrawn from the programme for financial reasons. Moreover, Ivory Coast had technical problems with its sending facilities two months into the programme and has since become a member — receiving items but not contributing to the daily service. Senegal has also temporarily pulled out as its television facilities undergo renovations in preparation for the Africa Cup competition which it will host next January — a sporting event which will no doubt be covered by Afrovision.

plex, the more life form changed and on the path of amelioration and or gradation through time, they left their progenitors behind. One form of expression became different than the other. Slowly over a long time through a long process different life forms evolved. Mankind is the end product of one of these processes. But these changes did not stop. It still going on in us. The basic one cell without any nucleus through a long chained process has come down to a very complex cellular brain of ours. It will continue to change and we will change our expressions with the cell change. As these cells ameliorated from the beginning sensations/sensibility of the living organism changed as well. Change or development as we call it today are the results of this long process. 'Idea' is the result of one of these changes in the human sensation as well as consciousness. As the humans were on the path of becoming real humans, cells in their brain were also changing. With their sensibility and consciousness were also changing. Mind you they were all for survival. With the development/change in the expression of survival over this long period, so changed these 'ideas'. With time as the cells are changing, ideas are also

changing. They are taking on new forms every day. Like the way it is with every other forms of sensibility and consciousness, ideas have also branched out and still bracing out into different forms. In fact, two forms of ideas are prevalent at present in our societies everywhere around the world. They are 'Tangible' and 'Intangible' ideas. 'Tangible' are the ones that are being produced by the human hands, whatever the produce may be. They are the commodities that can be tangible or seen ranging from growing seeds to the present day computers. 'Intangible' are the ones that cannot be seen at the time of production. They are 'Ideologies' ranging from different religions to Marxism, Confucianism, Hellenism, Taoism to the modern day Philosophy of varying kind. There might be questions about why and how these are Tangible and Intangible or their source. The cells were changing in the human brains. Four million years back, when the humans started the march towards newer future, their brain cells started to multiply, the size of the head slowly became bigger to accommodate the growing cells. This is the inherent nature of the cells. Now as the cells were growing with the diversity of the consciousness, expression for the survival

changed. The more humans confronted the adverse environment the more they started to think how to overcome it and as the environmental barriers were crossed one after another, the cells were also growing at the same time. These barriers were in fact the root cause for the consciousness to become mobile and diverse. And this diverse consciousness means new thoughts or ideas forming in human brain. In the beginning, men were busy catering to the very basic needs of survival, the bare necessities of life. To fend off the cold, heat, rain and etc; they had to make/create clothing and shelter. And as soon as the barest of these necessities were fulfilled they went ahead to create something new again like clothing, grains, ornaments, artifacts, all in surplus to exchange them for some other commodities. And all forms of commodities have changed gradually over time down to computers and high technology. And since the commodities are the end products of human ideas, therefore, they are called 'Tangible Ideas'. Because, commodities are always tangible. Behind all these creations, as I said earlier, human ideas worked incessantly. Therefore, these divers ideas spinning the consciousness are the main causes behind these creations, be it ideologies or commodities. As the fulfillment of the bare necessities were carried out side by side, other fulfillment became necessary. That fulfillment were the ideologies. Fear/ insecurities from the sky, water, sun, rain, animals and etc, sprang up as Gods. These Gods had to be appeased so that no harm came to them. So ritualistic days came into being. Rituals and liturgies varied from one society to another because of the variation of the environmental hindrances are the main causes behind every ideology from the primitive ages. In the first ever civilization in Egypt people were afraid of the sun, sky, water, rain, wind and etc. So they all became Gods. But in Mesopotamia, because of the recurring floods with rain and wind the main Gods became affiliated with flood, rain and wind. In Arabia, before Islam came, about 360 deities were worshipped by the people of Mecca. They were all insignificant ones with the main being the goddess of the sun. In the later period Christianity and Islam became monotheistic religions. Hinduism became polytheistic because of the increasing number of environmental insecurities such as rain, water, fire, sun, wind, forests and etc. At the fears were being overcome gradually, the forms of ideologies were also changing through the middle ages down to the modern times. These ideologies changed their forms so much that they became postulates or hypothesis during the 19th and 20th centuries. Marxism and finally Capitalism are the two of those main idealisms. Both of them employed people though Marxism ran its course and capitulated lately. Previous ideologies also employed people but they were of a different form.



Members of the partnership, called Afrovision, include Algeria, Cameroon, Ivory coast, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Three more countries — Kenya, Gabon and Angola — plan to join, and organisers hope their fledgling news exchange programme will grow into an African equivalent of Eurovision, a similar partnership that has been transmitting European TV images for more than a decade. The aim of Afrovision is to break the vicious circle in which Africans learn what is happening on their continent from reports prepared by Northern news agencies, radio and television networks. The idea of the news exchange was first raised over a decade ago but financial difficulties and a lack of technical knowledge prevented it from coming to fruition until this year. The German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, an organisation specialising in development and media education — gave the concept a boost,

been the case with reports from the Organisation of African Unity conference in Nigeria in July, the ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Ghana in September and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Harare in October. But some difficulties have arisen. The first few days of the project exposed shortcomings in the audio and visuals of most member networks, for example, and there have also been problems with the nature of some news items. Said one broadcaster: 'At the start there was a tendency in some countries to send only stories about what the president was doing that day, but we seem to have gotten over that.' By April 17, when the trial period ended and permanent service began, participating countries had exchanged over 600 items on politics, economics, culture and sports. Some Afrovision sports items from Ghana had even been picked up and broadcast by Eurovision countries. Despite initial successes, a

Dear Mita, I have been reading a lot of your letters and found that you sometimes give the right advice or solution so I too thought of relating my problem to you for a good solution. I will be getting married very soon, which I am very happy about, but at the same time I am upset as my future husband's parents are expecting me to stay with them after marriage. You see I have my parents whom I just cannot leave. I had explained it to my future husband and he had agreed to live with us. (He is out of the country at the moment.) I don't know what he will say after returning. How do I convince him? Anonymous, Dhaka.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita, I have been reading a lot of your letters and found that you sometimes give the right advice or solution so I too thought of relating my problem to you for a good solution. I will be getting married very soon, which I am very happy about, but at the same time I am upset as my future husband's parents are expecting me to stay with them after marriage. You see I have my parents whom I just cannot leave. I had explained it to my future husband and he had agreed to live with us. (He is out of the country at the moment.) I don't know what he will say after returning. How do I convince him? Anonymous, Dhaka.

Dear Anonymous, You have not given the reasons as to why you cannot leave your parents. It is very natural for your future in-laws to expect you to live with them because that is the custom in our culture. Good or bad this has been going on for years and will take time to change. If you have a very valid reason such as illness of your parents, or if they are old and you are the only child etc. then please explain this to your fiancé. The best thing would be, if possible, to live independently and thereby not hurting any one party.

Dear Mita, My husband can convince me to do anything. It seems I have no will or opinion of my own. Whatever is the situation, ultimately it is always he who wins. This is frustrating me very much and I don't know what to do. I feel foolish, but once my friends used to admire me for my intelligence and humour. Please advise as to how I can assert myself and not give in to his arguments so easily. Suma, Chittagong.

Dear Suma, What is happening to you is common among our women. We give up our independence so easily and with that our ability to think and rationalize and thus the inferior position of women in our society is perpetuated. There is no reason for you to accept this state of mind. Build up yourself confidence and self esteem. Remember only you can do it. You might be pleasantly surprised to find that your husband will appreciate your new found confidence and will even enjoy an argument which he might lose.

Dear Mita, Both my daughters are studying abroad. I was forced to send them due to lack of other options here. I am so worried they will become misfits here after few years and then they might decide not to return. Many girls after living abroad for a few years are getting married to foreigners. This possibility is also upsetting me very much. What should I do? Can you give any advice? Anonymous Dhaka.

Dear Anonymous, Sending children abroad to study has become a reality for many upper middle class families. The phenomenon of sending girls away is quite recent and parents are still trying to come to grips with it. Whether your children will return someday or become misfits here depends on a number of factors such as upbringing, their personal orientation and also the options they will have on return. As for marrying foreigners, yes, they might or might not. The only thing you can do is try to give them a strong sense of identity and leave the rest to fate.

Dear Mita, I would like to know what is meant by 'Heat Stroke'. One hears about this often but the exact nature of the problem is not known. How serious can it be? And what are the symptoms? My 9-year old son is out in the sun for long periods of time and his father says he will get heat stroke. Shafina, Dhanmondi.

Dear Shafina, The doctor in our team says: Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to cool itself adequately. This happens when the body has lost so much fluid that it turns off the sweating mechanism. If the body is not cooled by removing clothes, bathing etc. the temperature might continue to rise. Signs of heat stroke are a very flushed appearance, lack of sweating, a rapid heart beat, a change in mental state such as dizziness, unconsciousness and a body temperature of 106° F. It is an emergency situation that needs to be treated immediately by cooling the body and administering fluids. The doctor might recommend hospitalization.

Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toybee Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.