

RIISING STARS

The World Summit For Children

By Tahmima Anam

S EVENTY-ONE world leaders got together on September 30, 1990 to discuss the state of the earth's children. They came to find out how they could save the 40,000 children dying every day from preventable diseases. They came to see what could be done to help the thousands who were malnourished, and the millions who suffered untold injustices at their tender ages.

The 159 countries that were represented at the summit had answered a call by the leaders of Mexico, Mali, Egypt, Canada, Pakistan, and Sweden. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and President Benazir Bhutto co-chaired the summit, which took place in New York at UN Headquarters. When announcing the summit the six initiating governments stated that the purpose for having a world summit for children was to "...

bring attention ... at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection, and development of children ..."

The largest gathering of heads of state in the history of humankind put their heads together on that September day and came up with a definite plan of action which aims at radically reducing malnutrition and child deaths

in the next decade. Another one of their aims is to provide basic education for all children and primary education for at least 80%.

The plan of action isn't only for children, it also has provisions for another abused section of the human race: It is women. One young woman dies every minute because she is not properly taken care of during her pregnancy. It is hoped that by the year 2000,

all women will have access to pre-natal care, will have birth control available to them, and will be able to eat as much as a pregnant woman should. If these things are properly seen to, maternity mortality rates will be halved.

These aims are ambitious, but they are technologically feasible and financially affordable. The approximate cost is estimated at 2 billion dollars per year until the year 2000.

This may seem like a lot, but is only the amount of money that is spent on the military every single day.

For one day the leaders of the world forgot their differences and committed themselves to the betterment of the next generation. It was the first time that leaders had paid so much attention to the plight of their children. If they keep all their promises, they won't have to do it again.

Last Year's Candle Light Vigil

By Sarah Zober & Taheerah Haq

Last year on September 23, 2,000 children gathered in the Dhaka Women's Sports Complex to take part in an International Candlelight Vigil hoping to heighten awareness among people and leaders of the needs of children. The event included speeches by local school children, singing and the lighting of thousands of candles. Over 50,000 people observed vigils throughout Bangladesh encouraging mem-

bers of the World Summit for Children, held on September 29-30, to rank the needs and rights of children high on the economic, political and social agenda of the 1990's. The Candlelight Vigil was a great success thanks to the support of many international and local organizations, embassies and UN agencies.

Joining with Candlelight Vigils all over the world, the

IN OUR HANDS

by David Pomeranz and David Shire

Like a little child I've done lots of wishing
Hoping it would make the world okay
I have wished upon a star
Then watched it moving farther away
Till today—
Nothing comes from waiting for tomorrow
Hoping someone else will make it bright
It's because of you and me
I see a future flooded with light
In our hands
There's a world in our care
In our hands
Lies the power we share
In our hands
It can grow
Even more than we know
If we all understand
All that is in our hands
Sometimes when I read the morning paper
Something in my heart just wants to scream
Thought the world a better place
Till one dying child's face makes that seem
Still a dream
Then I hear my children's morning laughter
And I know there's still a choice that's mine
Under all the blinding smoke
The fires of tomorrow still shine

Bet You Didn't Know

— Albert Einstein's parents feared their child was dull because he did so badly in all his high school courses except mathematics. One of his teachers asked him to drop out saying: "You will never amount to anything, Einstein".

— The greatest height attained by a single kite is 28,000 ft.

— Queen Christina of Sweden (1626-89) who detested fleas had a special miniature cannon built to fire at any poor flea that met her eye.

— Cooking in Tibet is done over dried cow or yak dung.

— At the initial stage baby pelicans are fed regurgitated fish by their parents.

— Both male and female pelicans take turns incubating their eggs.

(Talk about women's lib!)

'Voice of the Children'

By Tahmima Anam

LAST summer I was selected to attend a conference called 'Voice of the Children' in the Netherlands. It was a meeting of children and Nobel laureates from around the world, sponsored by UNICEF and organised by the 'Voice of the Children' foundation.

The atmosphere of the conference was incredible — here were the newspapers, the radio, CNN — all waiting to hear our opinions and views on how to change the world. It made a lot of sense; after all, grown ups have had the world for years and they've made a mess of it, so now they wanted to know what we were going to do with it when it came our turn.

There were 80 children at the conference, all selected to be there because of their commitment to the betterment of our present state of affairs. Fifty-six countries were represented — from Lithuania to Sierra Leone. We stayed in a hotel right on the beach in an area called Noordwijk. The place was beautiful, and for two weeks, it became our home. We sang in the hallways, shared little trinkets from around the globe, and became the best of friends in that short time.

We did three main things during our time in Holland. All of our ideas and proposals were compiled into a book, which was to be presented to the leaders at the World Summit in New York. We made a video message, which was also to be shown at the summit. On the last two nights of the conference, we all performed a musical play, called 'Peace Child', which was partly written by us. Many Dutch ministers and industrialists were there, and they all joined in as we sang our last song.

Besides doing all that, we had a dialogue with the Nobel

laureates who supported us. Those wise men who had lived so much longer and who knew so much more than us still had hope that we could change the way things were. They inspired us because they told us it was our responsibility to reverse the figures and turn the tide. They really believed we could save the world.

But the best part of 'Voice of the Children' was not the press conferences, or the meetings with all those important people. It was in the air of harmony among us. We were all there supporting a common cause, fighting for the same rights, living for the same ideals regardless of our political, religious, or national affiliations. Nothing mattered at the conference except our dedication to our hopes for peace and human understanding. This probably sounds like some hippie idealism notion, but it's not. Sometimes I think back on those fourteen days and wonder if it really happened. If there really was a place where kids had a real voice and adults listened; if I was ever in a world without prejudices, abuses, or injustices; if all those people I met and grew to love really existed. It all seems so far away from reality; so detached from the real world. I only hope that someday the real world won't be so different from the one we want it to be. Some day when realities will cease to be harsh, and when the truth won't hurt.

Being at the 'Voice of the Children' has changed me. I no longer despair at the state of our world. I don't cluck my tongue at all the things which other people have done wrong. I have become a hopeless idealist instead. I believe we human beings have the potential to change the way things are, and that we will, very soon.



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What is Life?

by Irfan Qamar

Life is a challenge : Meet it.
Life is a structure : Accept it.
Life is a sorrow : Overcome it.
Life is a mystery : Unfold it.
Life is a tragedy : Face it.
Life is a joy : Spread it.
Life is a duty : Perform it.
Life is a performance : Enjoy it.
Life is a gamble : Watch it.
Life is a song : Sing it.
Life is bliss : Embrace it.
Life is a game : Play it.
Life is a dream : Realise it.
Life is a journey : Complete it.
Life is a promise : Fulfill it.
Life is beauty : Admire it.
Life is a puzzle : Solve it.
Life is an opportunity : Grasp it.
Life is God's gift : Cherish it.

Letter to a Son

HALF-EMPTY

K EEP your brain fully working, and keep your mind half-empty.

If your mind is full, it cannot work, as you need some place or space to work. To play football, you need a field. To eat you need an empty (or half-empty) stomach. For your mind to work, you must have an empty area. You need a 'reception' area in your mind to receive new ideas. Then you play with the new information, that is, examine it, and decide what to accept and what to reject. You have to compare this new opinion with your old opinion, and change the views you hold, if necessary.

A full mind is a closed mind. It cannot receive anything from the outside. It cannot develop or improve without new input. You may like to follow the latest fashion or style in dress. Similarly you should be familiar with the latest information on a subject. Fashion changes, but knowledge always increases. You have to throw away old knowledge and information, and be up to date. Open the windows of your mind for fresh air and light. Let the visitors come in. Use your own judgement, or consult superior minds.

A mind full of old ideas does not like to face a changing world. Such a person will argue and try to defend his views, without examining properly other viewpoints.

So you have to keep your mind not only half-empty, but also flexible, to get along in life. Tolerance is a valuable tool you will learn to use. There are other key words which you should remember: consideration (for others), and co-operation (with others). It works the other way round too. Many a time you would desire that others consider your views and co-operate with you. You must consider others' rights and views. It does not mean that you have to agree all the time.

A full mind means that you know everything, and there is nothing else to learn! Nobody in the world is like that. You are learning all the time.

There is some 'bad' news — you have to remain a student all your life. I am at the end of my career, but I am still a student — of life. I keep my mind half-empty.

A Mawaz

Contributed by Adeeb.

RULES FOR SPELLING

This is a continuation of our last week's 'doubling of letters' in this column.

1. If we add 'ly' to an adjective ending in 'l' to form an adverb, we double the 'l':

sinfully officially
orally brutally

2. When a prefix ends with the same letter as the first letter of the word to which it is added, doubling takes place:

dis-, mis- dissimilar, dissociate,
misspell, misstate
in-, un- innocuous, unnoticed,
unnecessary
im- immature, immovable, immaculate
il- illegal, illegitimate, illegible
ir- irreligious, irredeemable

3. The suffix '-ness' added to a word ending in '-n' results in doubling:

meanness stubbornness
sternness keenness

FEIFFER



The Diligent Shoe Shine Boy

W E have all seen these boys and girls on the streets selling flowers, working on tempos, or polishing shoes. But do we ever actually take notice of them. I think many of us do not. We sometimes even get annoyed when they try to sell us their merchandise.

I myself never took notice of these kids until the day I had a conversation with Sonjibon. I have seen him many times over the last few years, but never had I had a conversation with him. He would always come and ask me with a smile if I wanted to have my shoes polished. I would always point out to him that I was wearing sneakers. On this particular day, though, I was wearing dress shoes and there was no way he was going to let me go without polishing my shoes. Due to his persistent pleading I decided to let him polish my shoes.

He worked diligently on my shoes. I did interrupt his work to engage him in conversation. Some of the things he told me made me realise never to take anyone for granted. Also never to judge a person by how he looks but to make it a point to find out more about the person before passing judgement on him.

He told me that he was 19 years old. He looked more like his 13-14 years old than his 19. I guess this must be due to malnutrition. For the past few years he has been working as a shoe shine boy. He arrives at 8 a.m. every

morning and works till 3 p.m. If he has a good day he might earn as much as Tk 60-70. Of course there is a great fluctuation in his earnings.

He lives with his eldest brother because both his parents have passed away. His brother was also a shoe shine boy but he had worked his way up to second year in the university. He could not continue his education because he had to get a job to support his other brothers and sisters. Sonjibon started working with his brothers kit; he was even given some shoe polish by his teachers. From that day onward he and his eldest brother have been supporting the family. One of his brothers is a cripple and cannot work and the other is looking for a job.

What surprised me the most was when he told that he was attending night school at Notre Dame College. His classes are from 6-9 p.m. He is at the level of class 4. After he finishes class 8 his teachers will help him to get admission in a different school. He does not have to pay for any fees or books. This is a great help for him because he does not have very much money left over since his earnings are used for household expenses. He told me that he is working very hard to learn as much as possible.

I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He replied, 'Sir, anything but a shoe shine boy for the rest of my life.'

—By Zaki Omar