



# When Decors and Collections Speak of Roots

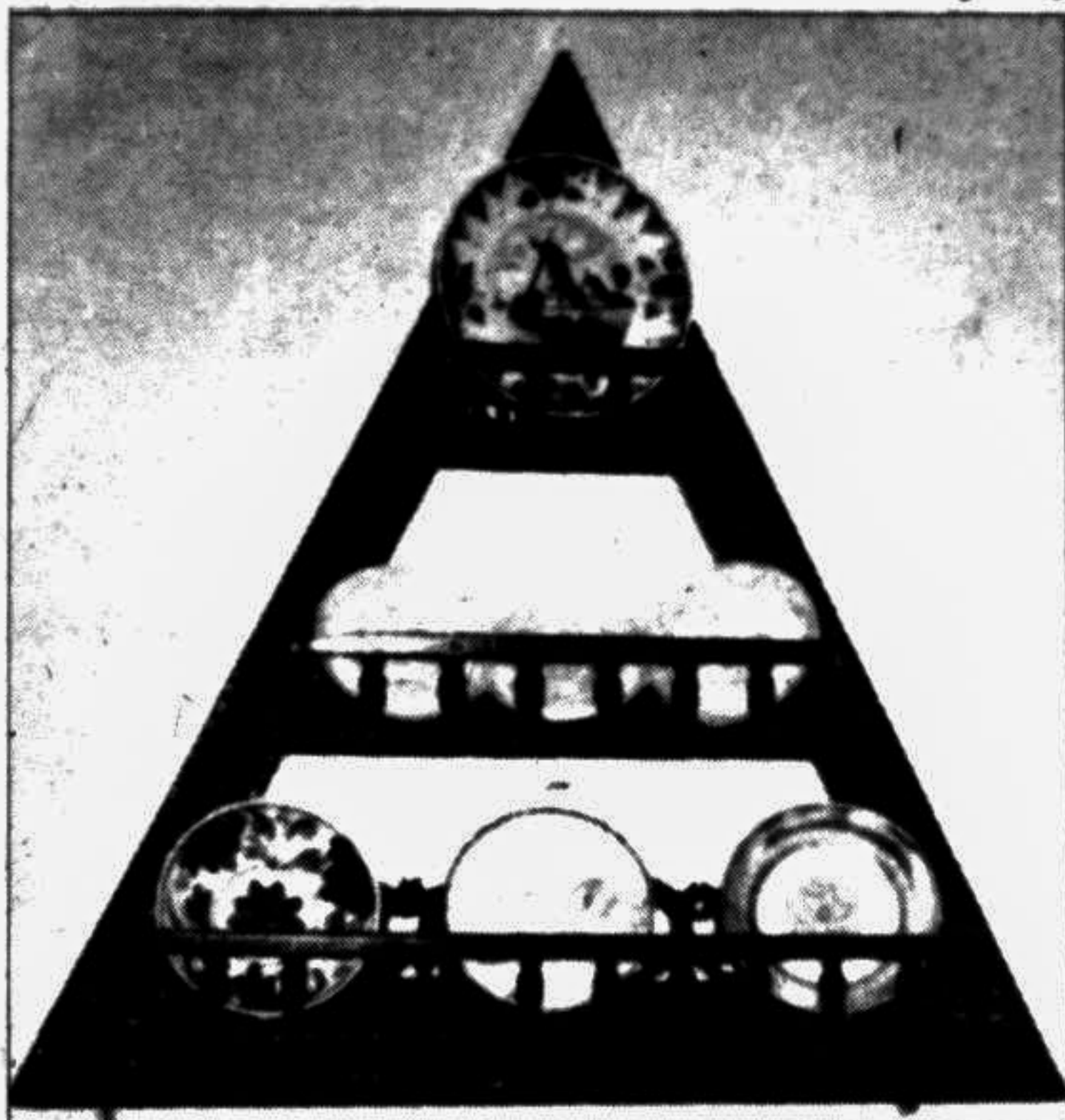
by Fayza Haq

IF the world seems to be going berserk and you have nowhere else to tranquillise yourself, you have just to visit Captain Himayatuddin Chowdhury and his gentle, graceful sophisticated wife, Shefa, at their house at 6/A Dhanmandi. You might envisage that you have come for a tour of a European home, or somewhere in the peaceful environment of Darjeeling or even the tranquil homes in Sylhet — and you are no longer in a Subcontinental cosmopolitan city.

As you cross the path to the house, where dwell a family of four — the elder son having been married and now staying elsewhere, as is natural and consequential — you come to the landing of a unique house.

"I am a sailor by profession, I went to sea when I was about 15, trained at Dufferin in 1946, completed my course in the 1948, and joined a British India steam ship company of the PNO group. While I was at sea I collected a few ship parts such as sextants, compasses. The ones you see in the landing have been collected from and junk yard in Narayanjanj, Captain Chowdhury explains.

As you progress to the drawing room you are taken aback by the magnificent black shields, exhibited in a sophisticated and subtle manner. They are decorated with brass



Heirloom plaques on a shelf

with windmills and other patterns of Netherlands origin.

In a shelf, opposite to where the rhinoceros shields are displayed, is a magnificent wooden show-case, containing interesting souvenirs and which are collector's items, of even 2,000 B.C. There is a piece, a fragment of ochre and

elaborated on a container which is close to the wheel.

"This too, I inherited from my father," the captain comments. They were used by the tea-garden officers to chill their drinks, during the British days.

At a corner of the same living room is a delicately designed but firmly made black shelf, which matches perfectly with the decor of the salon. Despite the apparent fragility of the shelf, heavy metal objects are displayed, which are again collector's items. There is the sextant on the top shelf; there is then a ship's tri-compass to navigate the ship. There is too a beautifully preserved ship's clock.

"As for the sextant you take the position of the sun with. The time that you take a record the position of the sun is exactly noted. If you are out by four seconds then the ship's position will be out by a mile. You have to be exact and accurate," Captain Chowdhury says. You next see a barometer. "This is used for atmospheric pressure," the sea captain explained to me in his soothing voice, quite unlike that of any of the versions of Captain Bligh of 'The Mutiny on the Bounty.' You can then calculate when a storm is coming," he elaborated further.

The 'hookah' which you see close at hand belonged to Captain Chowdhury's grandfather, as he informed you. The base is made of crystal and the 'chillum' is cup of pure silver. Nearby, is also displayed five Japanese god figurines.

The set originally contained seven pieces. Displayed carefully at the back is the photo of Karina, the captain's granddaughter. Hung in the middle of the wall where you find the 'hookah' and the god figurines, is the enlarged coloured photo of the captain's gorgeous daughter Tahya, taken in a ship, when she was a child. There is also a lamp from Mozambique, chose at hand, which is beautifully carved in a gorgeous style, recalling Roman sculpture. It depicts a lady playing a harp and which is of salmon-pink.

By the side of the lamps are Buddhist statues, obtained from Gandhara, as recognised by the Graeco-Roman features of the head pieces. They collected from Pakistan. I had been there for a holiday," Captain Chowdhury says. Between the two sofas on the same side of the salon, is a ship's lamp, of copper and brass. "It is used when the ship is at anchor and it is to guide your way," Captain Chowdhury elaborates.

Walking back to the showcase which holds the family's prized possessions, and which has been written about earlier in the article, you see an ash-tray and cigarette holder, presented by a Dutch ambassador, when he visited the 'lord of the manor,' when the said dignitary had taken a river cruise.

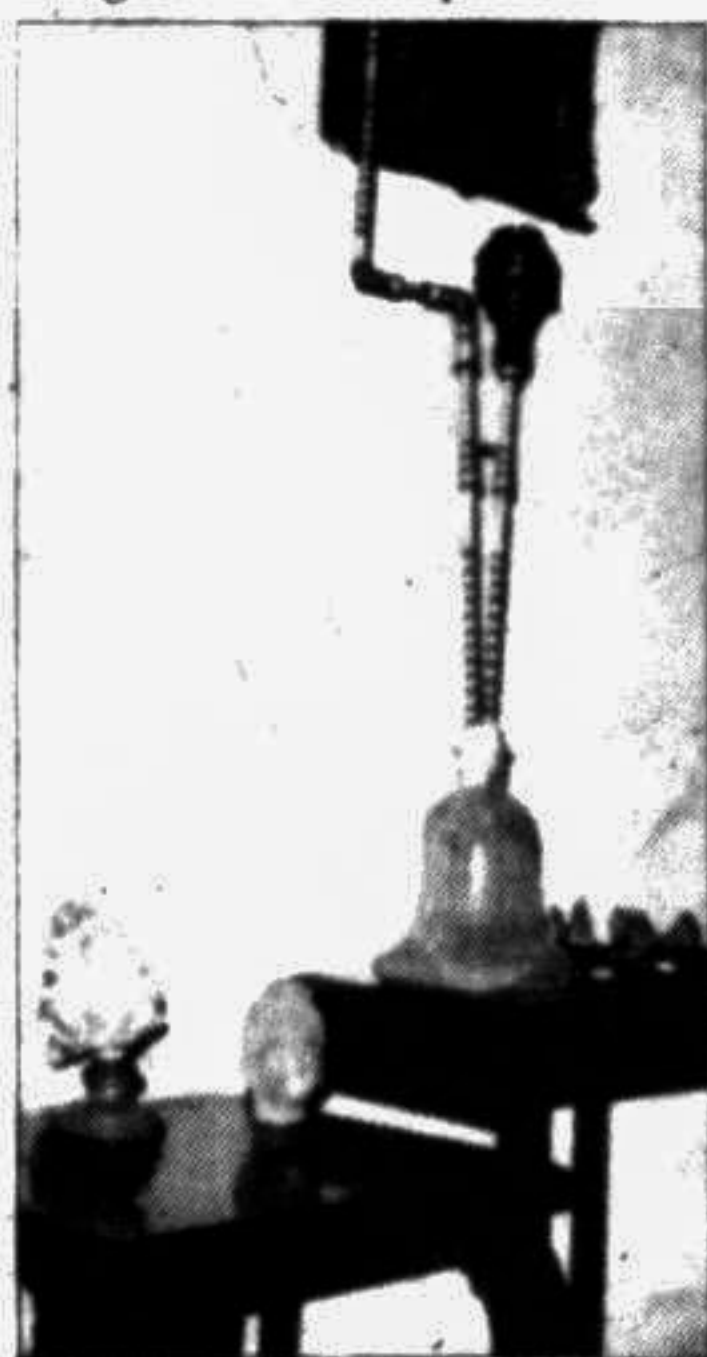
One of the shelves, in the same, room is made of black timber, collected by Captain Chowdhury father. It bears the design of an angel with outspread wings. "This would be at least a hundred years old," Captain Chowdhury informs you.

The piece de resistance of the captain is an ivory dagger presented to my father by Sir Michael Keane, who was then the governor of Assam. The handle of the sheathe is made of ivory. Captain Chowdhury points out this is carefully arranged with original Gandhara sculpture pieces from Pakistan. Captain Chowdhury's father's picture is displayed on top of the showcase, which contains the most precious items in the living room.

The salon has suave green and blue curtains and has a floral lacy screen, behind it, as is often seen in Europe. The comfortable fabric sofas have floral motifs with wooden hand rests. Yet another interesting piece in the living room is a brass sitting stool with geometrical patterns, with three elegant legs. Ship's anchor lamps are noted at the entrance of the drawing room, as you sit and sip your tea on coffee.

ice, while you chat with Captain and Mrs. Shefa Chowdhury.

In the dining room, adjacent to the bedroom, is a case with Buddha in the repose scene. It was made in Bangkok, and was presented to



Hookah with the antique 'chillum'

by the daughter, Tahya. On the two sides are large exotic conch shells, which the captain had collected from Mauritius Island.

Also placed in the sale a manager, adjacent to the salon is a gourd. It has beautiful figurines carved in to it. It has a crescent room, a buffalo, a swan, various types of birds. It has geometrical patterns to highlight the figurative work.

There is also a replica of famous statue of Napoleon's sister Pauline. It was bought when he visited Paris in 1963. Two elephants are tastefully placed along with it, which are from Colombo dating '52. More antiques in the sale a manger are the antique oil lamps, with crystal base. They are from the Sylhet tea gardens, and have been handed down to him by his father. There are the old curvy bowls, "One is of Dutch origin and the other one is Chinese," Captain Chowdhury explains to you. The Dutch piece is royal-blue and white. The other is vermilion and has geometrical pattern on top. It is coloured with red, blue and green colours. It contains Chinese scripts on it. It has white chrysanthemum in white. "These are at least a hundred years old," Captain Chowdhury says. "There is also a China jug, which was used to kept in the toll in the old days," he added.

In the dining-room is also a roast-dish with floral motifs. "It has grooves in it," the sea captain points out, "I have the history from a British lady Garrett Copeland and the company, Spode New Fane, that made the dish and exist from 1832-1837," he adds. In the center

of the wall of a side of the dining place are two ivory tusks with a silver base. "These too have been handed down to me by my father", the captain says. There is also an old painting, which he has collected in his sea-going days. It depicts a European port and has a faded gold frame.

As the couple, captain and Shefa Chowdhury take you for a guided tour, you enter the daughter Tahya's bed-room which is carefully curtained. This contains an ancestral bed with a foot post, mosquito-net posts, and a head piece. It is carefully carved with geometrical patterns and floral motifs, and has been well preserved. It is covered by a bed-cover which is a replica of a 'Nakshikatha'.

Captain Chowdhury is a descendant of Sulaiman Khan, a Pathan, who had been an army officer in 1,500 A.D. The captain can trace his roots for fifteen generations. He has manuscripts of his great grandfather who was a lawyer around 1850. This is his great grandfather's transfer letter in Persian, and is signed by Mr. J. R. Collin, a judge in Calcutta and is dated 1851. He has even the original regret letter from Nawab Sir Salimullah to his father's marriage.

As the finale for a visit of a family friend, you notice the magnificent bed that captain



Antique kettle on carved holder  
Photos: Albab Ahmed

and Shefa Chowdhury possess. It resembles beds of royal origin, displayed at the Dhaka museums — which in turn — impress you and your friends from overseas. The head piece contains a heart pattern, with leaves and flowers. There are designs on the sides posts and begs. Flower pots with large leaves spread out at headpiece. Similarly, the rest of its 'accoutrements' are graceful and chic.

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Such an interesting visit of a home, tucked in the city, serves as both a tranquiliser and a pep pill for you when you maybe disenchanted with life.

## Soups for Winter

by Shama Lutfullah

Fish Soup  
(for 5 to 6 people).

500 gm (1 lb) fish fillets (for 5 to 6 people)  
2 litres (8 cups) water  
2 large onions  
2 sticks celery  
2 oz (60 g) butter  
1 kg (2 lb) ripe tomatoes  
Salt, pepper  
1/4 tea spoon saffron

Place fish and water into large pan, cover, bring to boil, reduce heat, simmer V gently for 2 hours. Strain stock and reserve; reserve fish.



Heat butter in large pan, add peeled and finely chopped onions & peeled & finely chopped celery, saute gently until onion mixture is golden brown. Add peeled & finely chopped tomatoes, stir until combined. Bring to boil, boil uncovered for 5 minutes, mashing mixture well with potato masher.

Add fish stock, salt, pepper and saffron, stir until combined cover pan, bring to boil, reduce heat, simmer for 45 minutes.

Remove skin and bones from reserved fish, flake fish with a fork, add fish to soup just before serving. Serve with bread slices heated in the over crisp.

Garlic Soup (for 5 to 6 people)

2 table spoons ground coriander  
1 table spoon ground cummin  
1 dried chilli, optional  
1/4 teaspoon whole black peppercorns  
8 curry leaves  
5 cups hot water  
1 table spoon tamarind pulp  
1 medium onion, finely sliced  
4 cloves garlics.

Put coriander, cummin, chilli, peppercorns and curry leaves into a saucepan and dry roast over medium heat, shaking the pan or stirring constantly, until the spices smell aromatic.

Add the water, tamarind onion and garlic and bring to the boil, then simmer for 20 minutes or until onions and garlic are soft. Serve for sipping between mouthful of rice.

Another odd feature is that of Shar-Pei, which is so massively wrinkled that it can almost turn round in its own skin.

Unlike these developments, a breed named as Basset Hound is the most musical of all. This hound is a superb hunter of hares as well.

In the city areas where life is busy and open spaces are less, people usually prefer possessing smaller dogs to big ones. Any dog owner should know that puppies are ready to leave their mother when they are eight weeks old. No puppy should be punished for following the order late since that would simply confuse them. After a bath, your pet dog rolls and rubs its body on dirt, carpet or soil. This seems ugly, but the reason behind it is that every dog tries to remove the smell of soap or shampoo by doing so.

Now it is up to you to select a proper breed of dog for you. But it should be kept in mind that the pet dogs think of human families as their pack; and their owner as the pack leader.

(Joshi is a Nepalese student studying at Dhaka)



A St. Bernard coming to the rescue

## Belle Mode in Bangladesh

FASHION in Bangladesh is something that is not restricted to the country alone. We are constantly borrowing from India and Pakistan as regards the 'sari', 'shalwar-kameez' and 'kurta pajama'.

We, in the cosmopolitan city of Dhaka, find the European and American fashion being also borrowed by the teenagers and even the older generation, specially among the well to do bourgeoisie and the upper classes in cities, in the capital itself, and in places like Chittagong, Sylhet and Comilla town.

The west, meanwhile, in their haute couture, have been taking from the Near East, Middle East, Far East, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent — going by studies of the 'Elle' magazine alone, and other photo journalism from Germany, other parts of Europe, USA.

High fashion is something universal. It does not belong to a single place like Paris, Japan or New York alone. Like music, intrinsic fashion styles and patterns are being borrowed and exchanged. Kipling's 'The East is East and the West is West' has been put to test long ago, in music, fashion interior decors, and all modes of life and living.

Fashion changes from place to place and from time to time. We do not have to race after it without considering what suits the individual — it must be according to the time and place. Fashion is to be followed as far as possible and probable. When girls of African origin do the best jobs on Parisian cat-walks, we in Bangladesh can be con-

mented with following what suits us best — no matter what our complexion, height or vital statistics might be.

We see our women in all walks of life wearing the blouse as worn in India, or even the 'ghagra chunni' as seen in Rajasthan. They are gradually getting down the 'kallis' in the 'kurtas' and going in for more simple traditional fashion, as is being done in Pakistan. The 'kurta' and 'kameez' buttons that they flaunt are made in India or Pakistan.

Yes the 'jamdani', the joy and pride of Bangladesh, is being bought by women of subcontinental origin who visit their parental homes from UK, USA and other overseas countries.

The 'jamdanis' are being shaped into 'shalwar-kameez' and 'kurta' and are being worn by our women, and residing foreign women too at times. It is a pity, however, that New Market and Ghausia Market as well as shops in Gulshan, continue to be flooded with foreign 'saris' and materials for 'shalwar-kameez' or 'kurta-pajama' made in India, Thailand, Pakistan and elsewhere.

If one would only use one's ingenuity, the local materials can be sown in places like Ghausia Market or New Market or even the boutiques at Dhanmondi, Naya Paltan, Banani and Gulshan. The local 'saris', about from 'jamdanis' too are not to be scorned in the days of essential domestic budgeting and universal inflation.

Vive la mode in Bangladesh

F.H.



— Star photo

IN Kathmandu almost every house seems to have a dog of their own. Pet dogs are common in Kathmandu (Nepal), but not in Dhaka why? — Human population and expensive manpower decreasing the role of house guards to guard the house and property? This looks probable because house servants and guards are less in Kathmandu than in Dhaka.

Dogs are social animal by nature. They bark to show their jolly spirits, to warn their masters, or to frighten the intruder. Dogs do not attack for fun. They may bite if their growling is ignored. They demarcate their territory by the smell of their urine. They bark or growl when they are in their own territory or when the master is close by.

To understand them better, studies have been carried out. A few basic rules which are true to all dogs are shown by a dog's tail as:

rapid wagging: "Enjoying myself"  
drooping tail: "Boring day"  
tail held high and lively: "Look, here I come"  
forelegs flat on the ground with its tail wagging: "Come on lets play"

The importance of a domestic dog do not require exaggeration. However, selecting a dog to suit your family is of much importance. There are three general ways of selecting a puppy:

a. Children's tricks include the general concept that a low breed dog cries or resists when it is picked up by its ear or tail. But, as a dog enthusiast, I only take this as an example of cruelty to animals.

b. The appearance of a puppy with shiny hair and the

## Of Dogs and Breeds

by Rajesh Joshi

body somewhat beautiful which usually grows up to be a good one.

c. About breeds it is said that there are 360 breeds of dogs. With the immediate purpose of providing information on selecting a proper dog, only a few standard breeds and some odd breeds are here dealt with.

i) Blood hound: This is a big dog. It's superb ability to trace the fading scent which is already a week old makes it a good police dog. It is not suggested as a house pet.

ii) Newfoundland: The interesting thing about this dog is its fondness for swimming. Its body never gets wet due to its thick coat of fur. It will be interesting to possess this dog if the owner has a large pond or a lake nearby. Throw a stick far in the water and your dog will swim to fetch it for you. This dog is also known as a "supreme water rescuer".

iii) Pointer: This is a big dog too. It may be useful to you if you have interest in hunting. This dog stands still pointing towards the game. This breed is also known as "Gun Dog". Its hunting instinct opposes its choice as a domestic member. However, it is sometimes regarded as a hunting dog.

iv) Dachsund: This is a smaller breed of hound family. It is a loyal pet with a long body but very short legs. This feature is advantageous for them to enter the holes made by small creatures like snakes, moles, mongoose etc. For the owner of a cane-sugar farm or something similar, this breed

will be the proper one — both for the farm and house.

v) Terrier: This is a small breed of dog with curly hair. It has several varieties. The Airedale Terrier has an astonishingly wise brain.

Tibetans used small dogs, probably, Shih Tzus, and Aztec priests used Chihuahua as hot water bottles. And some Australian aborigines still carry the wild Dingo (the oldest breed of dog) across their hips to keep their bodies warm.

Present jobs:

St. Bernard is probably the most famous of the rescue dogs. It can scent human beings even buried under snow. And some other breeds like Labrador, Golden Retriever, German Shepherd are guide dogs — to work as a blind man's eyes.

Misfits of scientific progress can be counted on how some breeds have been developed.