



Their Happiness

by Zinnia Ahmad



Happy and may be content in their own way. — Star Photo

I T was one of those hot and sticky afternoons. My car was the fifth or sixth in the queue at the petrol-pump station. I scowled at the workman up front taking all his time fitting the hose into the small blue Towny. There was so much to do at home and here I was stuck until lord-knows-when. I looked out of the window trying to observe anything worth observing.

A girl nearby was earnestly picking up pebbles from the ground and gathering them in her frock which she had held up. She caught me looking at her. And as I feared she got up from her kneeling position, still holding up the frock, and came over to me.

"Apa phool nben? (Will you take flowers?)" and she held up a couple of small, smelly flower garlands.

I looked away, concentrating on some crows cawing continuously from the wall at the passersby. Why hadn't God gifted them with a better role? It wasn't fair, they were deprived of everything.

"Apa, nenna (please take them). The last thing I wanted was this pest bothering me.

Nibota (I won't take them). I looked at her. She was probably another of those sorrowful stories. The eldest, although, she looked eight, among five-six children. Mother died or father left home. Hardly had two meals a day. Her light brown, untidy hair and emaciated limbs confirmed at least the last point. She was half covered in sand and stinked horribly. Just then a woman in a dirty, green saree with a baby on her waist came up. Probably the girl's mother.

Kulsum, what are you doing here? I told you to be at the traffic lights," she scolded, "and what's all this? She shook the girl's hand holding the frock up and all the pebbles fell down. The eyes that were shining a moment ago were filled with tears. "I want to take them home."

"I won't let you do that." On an impulse I decided to enter the scene. "Your daughter?" I asked the mother. The skinny face broke into a smile. "Yes".

How old is she?"

"Ten". She certainly didn't look it!

What do you do?"

"Work at a garments factory."

And she?"

Sells flowers but is not good at it."

She can work at a home."

Who'll take her?"

I will."

You will? God bless you. May your life be..."

"I'll take good care of her. I'll bring her here every two weeks on Saturdays at noon. Can she come now?"

"Yes, yes." Only too eager to send the good for nothing daughter away.

"Ma, I won't go."

"Oh, yes you will," the mother snapped back.

Reluctantly, the girl got into the back seat with me. In the mean time, my car had come up to the front and had been filled up. The girl sat stiffly as the car started off.

My mother was furious at the sight of another maid. "She isn't a maid," I explained.

"I am going to teach her manners, reading and writing and simple household chores. Not a maid in the real sense — what I would call — a personal maid."

"Personal maid!" My brother sneered. "As if you are the Prime Minister's daughter. Per-

Footpaths In The Air

by Labiba S Ali

THERE is no definite answer to when the first bridges were made. Our ancestors, the primitive man, probably used a natural one consisting of a tree trunk which has fallen across a stream. Later on, he made bridges by cutting down trees and throwing them across a waterway. He also made suspension bridges, using vines to tie and fasten it on either side of the stream.

The construction of bridges have gone back to a very early day. The Chinese built arched bridges, which allowed boats to pass. The Greeks built bridges of stone and wood. The greatest builders, however, were the Romans. During their reign the Romans built large aqueducts to supply large population centres with water. The word 'aqueduct' comes from two Latin words meaning pipe, or canal, for water.

Many fine bridges were constructed during the middle ages. Some of the famous bridges were the one over Thames in London, UK, the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy, the seven arches that forms part of the Chateau Chenonceaux near Tours, France, the one built across the Elbe River at Dresden, Germany.

Suspension Bridges
This kind of bridges have their roadways hung from thick steel ropes or cables which are swung down from tall towers and anchored securely on either side of the bridge.

Cantilever Bridges
The cantilevers which forms the bridge are really huge brackets, each of which rests on a pier and fastened behind the pier. The outer parts of this brackets meet in the centre of the span.

Bascule Bridges
This kind of bridge have one section of it called a leaf that can be swung up to one side to allow ships to pass by. Sometimes there are two leaves.

Bridge Construction
The construction of bridges begins by building the piers on

which the bridge will stand. When this structures are to be below the surface of the water, special methods must be used. One is the open cofferdam system. An area encircling the proposed site for the foundation is blocked off by driving piling, of wood or of steel, to form a water tight enclosure. The water is then pumped out and the construction begins.

Another method which is used when construction must go on a large distance below the surface of water is called the pneumatic caisson system.

Another type of bridge construction includes the pneumatic caisson system, which is used when construction must be carried out a great distance below the surface of the water. A pneumatic caisson is an inverted air tub of steel, with a hollow tube at its bottom sealed off from the rest of the caisson. The caisson, then, is towed to the site of the pier.

A pneumatic caisson is an inverted air tub of steel, with a hollow tube at its bottom sealed off from the rest of the caisson. The caisson, then, is towed to the site of the pier. The air trapped at the bottom is released and weight is added to the top till the caisson sinks to the bottom. By

means of compressed air water

is forced out of the caisson which includes the working chamber and construction begins. As this proceeds the caisson sinks deeper and deeper until some solid surface is reached. The work chamber is then filled with concrete and the caisson remains permanently in place. On top of this the pier is constructed.

The True Self

There are times when I am an unabashed guile, wasting away in pursuit of a good flirt, a spry laugh, never a thought for tomorrow, a year for the past;

And I think of me and no other, me.

There are times when I am haughty, proud,

full of wit and cool dignity,

sophistication my guise,

laughing with restraint, a wall against hurt;

And I think of me and no other, me.

There are times when I am an innocent baby, a spirit free of

care of the world, naive and

trusting, laughing when happy,

crying when sad;

And I think of me and no other, me.

by Simika

Let Us Build the Country As Per Their Dreams

by Shahid Latif

SO Rehan was nervous and frightened, and when I cooked at him his face was white as sheet. Suddenly I felt I must be ready to do it because I felt Rehan won't be able to do it. And that is what happened, I saw him standing with the grenade in his hand. I ran towards him snatched the grenade and threw it, to my utter astonishment I had hit the right spot and Rehan was saved. My instructor praised me that day and I felt a change in me — a change that I was capable of doing it.

Ten or eleven days later I saw her standing at my window, her hands gripping the grille rods. "Kulsum, do you want to meet your mother?"

"I want to go home."

I stared at her. Betrayer! Ungrateful creature. I had done so much for her and this stupid numskull was saying, "I want to go home". Home? Did she have a home? It was probably those thatched up houses in groups that leaked in rainy days, swaying in the windy seasons and boiled under the scorching sun. Here she was being treated like the queen, skipping in my room on the floor near my bed (on a thick, cotton mattress), with the air-condition on. And now it's, "I want to go home!"

"How do you want to go home?"

"I want to go home." Stubborn pig! Nincompoop! Fine, I'll take you home, and you are never coming back, you horrible pest. You stink of ... Well she didn't stink but she will of ... garbage and rotten tomatoes. Go to hell you ... I controlled my temper. "Okay, I'll take you home."

The next day I gave another new dress (so that her mother understood how well I looked after her) and some chocolates (Arabian cocoa chocolates called Wardhi). We got into the car and I told the driver to take us to the usual petrol-pump station. "The car is filled," he said. "I know," I replied. "Just take us there. Cos I want to dump this stupid creature."

On the way, I thought about why she didn't want to stay anymore. I never scolded her (well only once when she tried to put on my favourite lipstick and broke it), she had more than she wanted, the other servants treated her properly. Maybe she felt like a caged bird. But I had allowed her to go to the roof. Then what was the problem?

We had reached the petrol-pump station. Her mother was sitting near the wall in the shade. She ran up to me as my car stopped.

"How is my baby?"

Grown an ago too big to deflate. "Fine," I answered. Kulsum was struggling with the window handle to get out. I opened the door and she ran out. She hugged her younger brother, probably 6-7 years old, who was hanging on to his mother's anchor. She offered him one of the chocolates I gave her. "She gave it. Take it," Kulsum said.

"Look, what I found," he said and showed her a half-eaten ice-cream cup that was obviously picked up from the ground. "Here have it," he urged.

Before I could remind Kulsum of my warnings, both of them had their fingers in the cup, extracted the remaining stuff and was licking their fingers. Kulsum's eyes gleefully shone as they had the first day I saw her picking pebbles from the ground. As the boy giggled, Kulsum laughed.

It was a laughter of happiness.

THE MISSING MACHINE

To be continued

THE GHOST PLANE

by Zahid Anwar Haque (Shagor)

IT was wartime, 1941, The Battle of Britain had been fought and won when the Spitfire pilot, returning from a routine patrol over a lonely part of the Scottish coast, spotted a strange Bi-plane ahead of him. As he picked up speed to investigate, the pilot was amazed to find the stranger was keeping way ahead of him.

Opening full out to around 350mph, the fastest speed of any warplane at that time, he was more than amazed when, at top speed, his Spitfire, could not catch it up. Discussing the event later with his fellow officers, each one a hardened veteran of the recent air battles, he found that the mystery aircraft had been seen and reported several times.

The unusual thing was that the unidentified aircraft appeared whenever there was

some threat to the area, a raid by a German bomber on the airfield, an U-boat two-miles off shore. Junkers 88 fighter bomber awaiting for the return of planes from patrol and so on. Each time the Bi-plane made an appearance, attracting the notice of the pilots to the danger. The mystery remained until a patrolling Spitfire spotted the shape of a grounded aircraft in a secluded valley.

He immediately reported its location to base and a land rescue was sent out. It took them several days of rugged travel before they came to the plane. It was a Sopwith Camel vintage 1917 — the mystery

guardian of the lonely RAF base. The ancient plane was in a remarkably undamaged condition except for the usual wear of time and weather, but in the cockpit, as it still at the controls, sat the grinning skeleton of the pilot, tatters of the First World War uniform hanging from the whitened bones.

The number of the aircraft was clearly discernible and subsequent investigation revealed the long dead aviator and identified him as an RNAS pilot who had taken off one day in 1917 on patrol and never returned.

Mechanics who examined

the machine found that a petrol blockage had caused an engine failure, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing, unfortunately the wheels had snagged in a small gully, throwing the luckless aviator forward and according to the doctors' report, breaking both his legs, consequently trapping him in the cockpit.

Unable to leave his seat to repair the engine, a simple five or ten minute job, and having no radio to summon help he had slowly starved to death, hope dwindling as each day passed.

His rescuers arrived 22 years too late. Once the remains of the man had been removed and buried, the lone patrol of the ghost plane ceased and it was never seen again, another of the world's inexplicable mysteries.