

Happy New Year!

# TEENS and TWENTIES

Special Issue

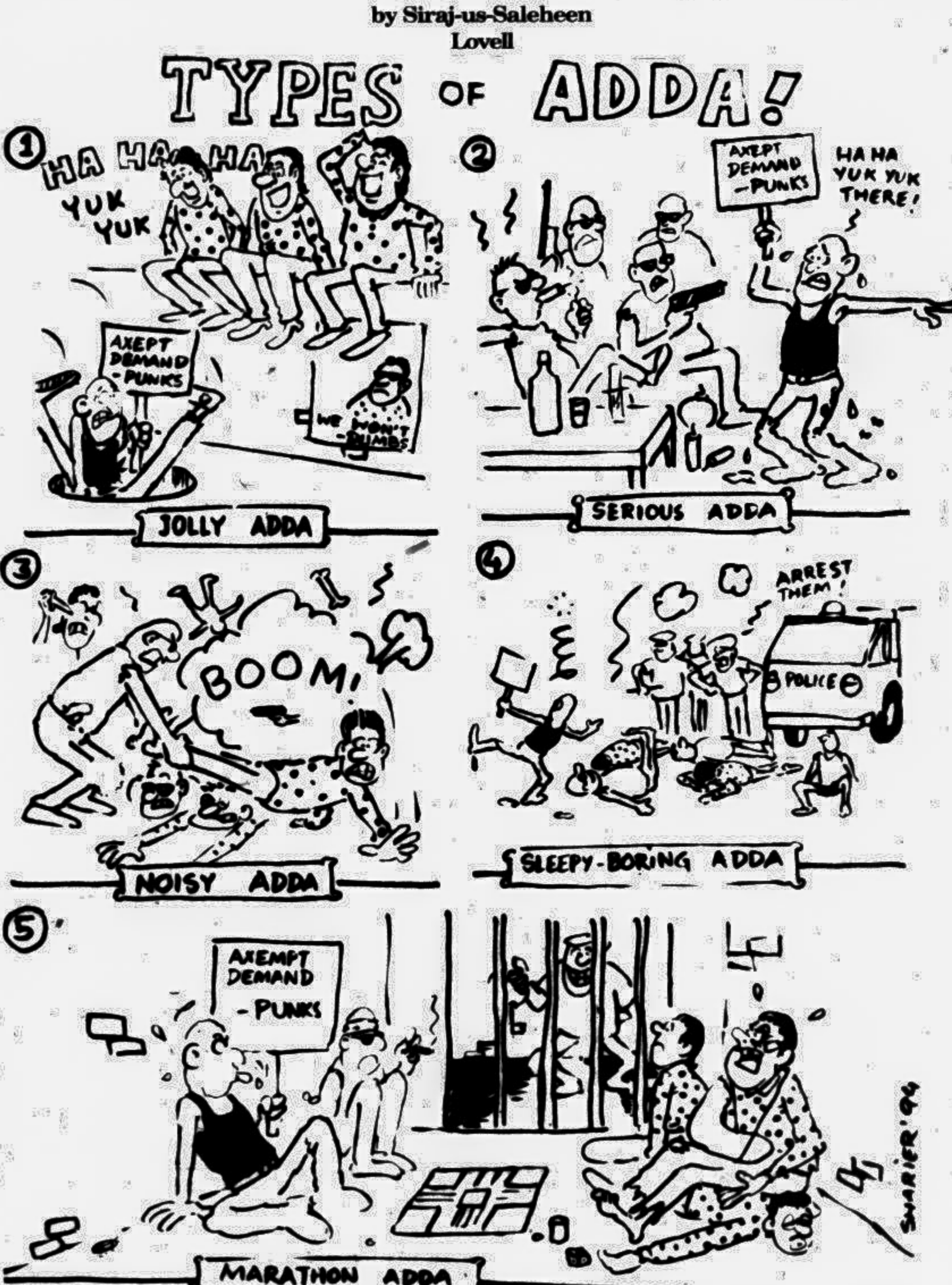
## Everything About Addabazzi—I

### All Work and No 'Gossip' Makes . . . .

If there's one thing that the Bangladeshis have in plenty, it is undoubtedly time, and we while away this leisure, just by gossiping and idle talk. 'Idle brain is the devil's workshop' everybody knows that. But all work and no play and gossip, that's no life to lead either. In such a situation, our only self-pleasuring timepass is 'Adda', the Bengali for gossiping. Who knows what constructive matters may come out of these adda.

Adda has no age limits or class bars; people from different age group or profession have individual (comfortable) places and set time for gossiping. The young generation of our country mainly like to chat in specific tea-stalls and restaurants at their mohallas (areas). (In Calcutta, young people gossiping in the corners of the streets in groups were called 'RockBaz'). There are also some 'Street-Romeos' who's main target is to chat in front of a local (Mohalla's) beauty queen's house and whistle at her whenever she would be seen at the door or window, an interesting way to kill time. Nowadays the young generation have unlimited areas for gossiping. You name it, they will be there, be it a park, be it a restaurant or even a library. There is also the TSC, the Hakeem Chatterjee and the library of the Dhaka University and also the Public Library. Group-wise gossiping can be frequently seen around the Public Library premises. The interesting fact is that there is an unofficial time limit for every kind of adda. From 11:00 am to 4:00 pm the love-birds can pick up a suitable gossiping place and exchange their feelings towards each other (but is it three a crowd). During this time you may see a lot of pairs either under trees or on the steps in front of the library in cozy positions unaware of everything around let alone the world. God knows what they talk about for such a long period. May be it's true after all — 'love knows no bounds'. From the evening upto 10 in the night a different kind of inert and indifferent gossip goes on between the 'addict groups' they are both druggs and adda addicts. There is basically no specific subject in their chitchat as they are always in an euphoric state. Storing themselves with good amounts of phensedyd and ganja (Bengali for marijuana) they sit like sick chickens and blabber within themselves about who knows what.

Another type of adda is the 'intellectual adda' (trying their best to do something constructive). The participants of this gossip are those who think themselves as a part of the intelligentsia. There are young poets, novelists, authors and band members who are having a bit of bad luck in achieving fame, those poor things. This group-gossip turns out to be a bore, though our young intelligentsia think it a high-thought productive adda. Anyone participating in such adda's, which start around 9 am upto 2pm (i. e. until these so called intellectuals feel they should have lunch now) are sure to lose whatever sense they have left.



poets, novelists, authors and band members who are having a bit of bad luck in achieving fame, those poor things. This group-gossip turns out to be a bore, though our young intelligentsia think it a high-thought productive adda. Anyone participating in such adda's, which start around 9 am upto 2pm (i. e. until these so called intellectuals feel they should have lunch now) are sure to lose whatever sense they have left.

The common fact about these adda's is that, no newcomer or outsider is warmly welcome in their circles. You can't just amalgamate into any adda-circle except if you are previously known to them, otherwise *Adios Amigos!* The teastalls outside the library premises are also perfect

adda-places, you may just while away time with your friends by chatting, sipping on tea and smoking cigars or cigarettes. Just beside the Public Library there is the Art-College premises. This is also an ideal place for intellectual gossip, and adjacent to the Art-College there is the gossipers heaven, the Dhaka University area. A big notebook is needed to describe the adda's of this area. Rather let's see what's the case in the Shahbag area. Just some steps away from the Public Library passing the Museum and crossing the road you may find some restaurants situated in the market in front of the IPGMA hospital. Such restaurants are also places for adda's of a different dimension. In the afternoon around 2pm upto

Every University student knows what a 'Varsity adda' means. Any student without adda as a common subject in his or her daily routine is definitely out of their minds. Amongst the universities the Jahangirnagar University premises, 32 kilometers away from the bustling capital city, is renowned for its scenic beauty, which definitely spice a good adda, it's even better for the Romeo and Julietts, (with trees, green fields and red brick buildings). The most common meeting place during class hour is the central cafeteria where students gossip in groups, class-wise or year-wise in between-gaps. Around 10 am you may not even find seats because that's the peak hour for rush. Then there's the renowned entrance called 'Prantik', situated in the middle of the campus premises combining some restaurants and grocery shops. From 5 pm to 8 pm this gate area becomes like TSC of Dhaka University.

There's another adda spot near the Kamaluddin Hall premises known as the 'Coffee-House' where you may get original coffee. Love birds here generally date in the jungles situated between the Social-science faculty and the new women's hall. The outer pillars of the central library are also ideal dating places. Then there is the adda of the campus boys (sons of teachers and officers) who gossip in a place called the 'Nanar Dokan'. The most pleasing fact is that different political leaders in the campus gossip together sometimes, a very good relation prevails between them. When asked the famous adda-baz's of the campus to comment on the coming new year, they all said the same thing, 'Oh great! A full year for more gossip and a chance to get to know new faces'. Another adda-baz commented, 'Whatever you do, when you see a bunch of girls gossiping or chatting together, just turn around and walk away as far as you can. Keep a good distance from them.' He also quoted a humorous dialogue, 'The gossip of women is more powerful than the nuclear bomb.'

The truth is adda, gossip or table-talk whatever you call it is the most harmless way of whiling away leisure time. It is a part of Bangladeshis' life. Whether it's outcome is good or evil, one things for sure, it atleast gives us pleasure, keeps us happy and lets us forget for a while the curses like economic insolvency, political instability and many other subjects. Well, you guys out there, don't worry, be happy, keep on smiling, carry on gossiping and have a very happy new year.

To be continued

On this day last year I was in New York. It snowed every day. Most people, including my roommate, had already left for home. Getting up in the morning, when it was still dark outside, was difficult, the thirty minute drive to work on the slippery New York-New Jersey highways was downright dangerous. Everyone complained of seasonal depression. I myself had failed my road test for a driver's license and had come down with a horrible cold right afterward. The year was dragging to slow and miserable end.

"So, what are you doing for New Years Eve?" my American friends asked. Most of them planned to go to a party at a bar. The usual cover charge was anywhere between twenty and sixty dollars. Everyone at work was celebrating at the Intrepid, an abandoned plane by the Hudson River. It was a black tie affair, and the women were busy buying formal gowns.

TV talk shows like Oprah concentrated on all aspects of this great occasion, suggestions on how to spend the night, warnings not to expect too much from the evening, and other important advice. Meanwhile, it was still dark and miserable, outside. (No wonder these people want the year to end so much.) I thought, (December's awful in this city.)

"So, what are you doing for New Year's?" my South-Asian friends asked. They had a more sophisticated idea than a bar party — dinner followed by whatever we felt like doing afterwards. I decided to join them. People also came up from other cities. My college friends came from Philadelphia, Indiana and Washington, and some high school Bangladeshis friends came down from Boston. We made reservations at Beni Hana, a Japanese steak-house in midtown. This was a

## Last Year in New York

by Gemini Wahhaj

smart idea because most restaurants had a two-hour wait that night. We met at a friend's place in midtown and decided to walk to the restaurant. This was not so smart because we almost froze to death. The restaurant was in complete chaos. People were waiting everywhere for tables, even outside in the cold. We were lucky we had reservations because we had to wait only half an hour.

After dinner we went back to a friend's place in order to plan where to go next. The New Yorkers wanted to do something mellow. Our friends from out of town wanted to go to Times Square to see the apple fall from the Citicorp building. "There is no way I'm going there," I said. "It'll be cold and crowded and miserable."

But the Pennsylvanians thought it would be criminal not to bring in the New Year at Times Square. So they left, promising to meet us at Greenwich Village an hour into the new year. The rest of us took so long to decide where to spend the remaining time that it was half an hour to midnight when we finally decided. We would just go straight to the village. Adnan and Ali told us to wait downstairs while they went to fetch their cars.

We stood in a tight circle on the sidewalk, huddled together for warmth. The twins sang to us from Sound of Music. The streets were already crowded with cars full of drunken revellers. People waved to us happily as they drove by. Our drivers were taking a while to return. Suddenly someone looked at his watch and declared there were about twenty seconds remaining to midnight. We

started to count down, right there, out on the street. "Three ... two ... one. Happy New Year!" We grinned at one another happily, whistling and stamping our feet. Then some angry New Yorker threw water on us from a nearby building, and told us to shut up. It was impossible to drive in the city that night. Not only were the streets packed with cars and cabs, but most drivers were obviously not sober. People waved to us from cars, wishing us a happy new year. All of New York seemed to be smiling. We parked near Washington Square park in the village and walked to Le Lanterna, an underground Italian cafe. We were lucky to find a table for the fifteen or so of us, and glad to be inside by a fireplace.

The cafe was dimly lit by shaded lamps and very conducive to weighty conversations. We sipped Cappuccino and espresso and reminisced about 1993. We were all young and had just made huge changes in our lives — we had moved to new cities, taken new jobs, made new friends. But no one could have known how many more changes would happen in the future. I had no idea that in only another year I would move back to Dhaka. Our friends from Times Square joined us soon. They said they hadn't been able to get very close to the Apple because of the crowds, that it was freezing, and they had been pushed around. But it had definitely been worth the excitement. It was four in the morning by the time we left the cafe. I went to bed at six and didn't wake up till noon on January one, 1994.



## A view across generations

### December: The Party Month of the Year

I love December for very many reasons. Every morning your body revolts with your mind as you reluctantly drag yourself out of the warmth of your blanket. The alarm clock wakes you up from slumber quite literally, with an alarm! (Nobody asked you to set it at 6:30 am?) You shiver and reconcile that it is past your wake up time and, therefore go head-on into trying to catch up your early morning classes, assignments, work — or whatever it is that you do for a living or occupation.

People polluting whatever is left of the stale fresh air by smoking cigarettes, and automobiles belching black soot into the sky. You go to wherever you are studying or working, looking smarter than usual because you are wearing sweaters, blazers, suits - whatever, and yes, you are relaxed, just as everybody around you because nobody sweats profusely in December. In essence there is nothing smelly or awful about December! Come afternoon, when the sun comes blazing down mercilessly, you unwillingly 'unsmarten' yourself, by pulling of the pullover, loosening your tie, but before 4 pm, you feel the need for warmth, and again you smarten yourself up. Evenings there is really so much to do - atleast for me. I have an infectiously dynamic zeal for 'life', and therefore consider December as the 'party month of the year'. Everybody is partying down in Gulshan, Baridhara, DOHS or Uttara.

Mobile discotheques rigged up like miracle, in Chinese restaurants, where groups of people are dancing the night away. Weddings are almost a boring daily ritual, where you end up over eating *Kacchi Briyani*, and gulping *Borhani* etc. (Everything that you want for blood cholesterol or a rounded waist line!) This December started on some very good notes.

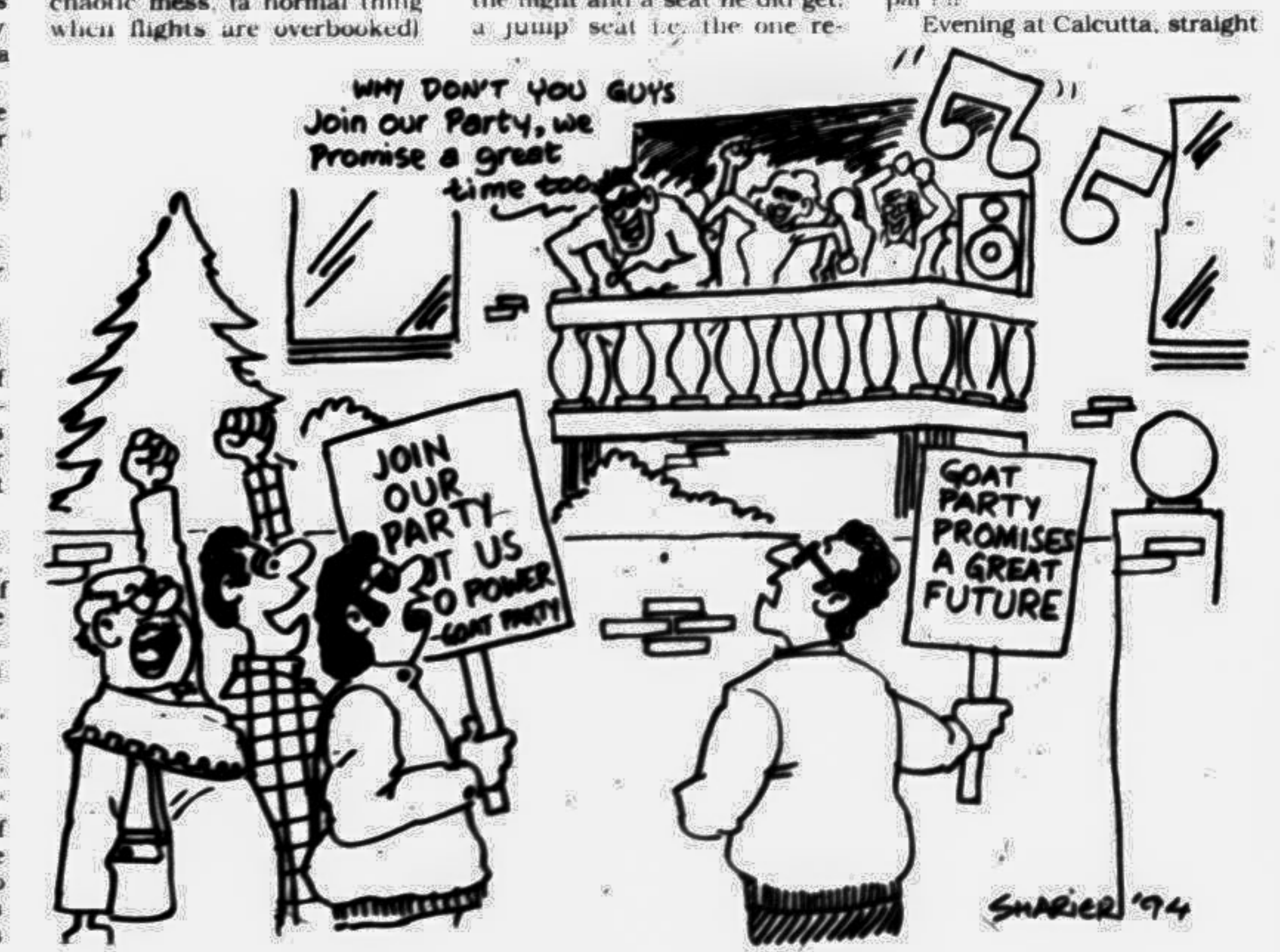
Notes from my diary of special events: 6th December 1994: It is not my perfect idea of a party when political parties plan a party of their own! Reasons: they are, a) Boring. They have one theme 'Put me into power - And I promise you a great time' which is usually what they don't mean. b) Too long drawn out, sometimes they can go on for 48 hours or more. c) As they live in a time warp, they don't know how to party and think peoples idea of fun is to be locked in voluntarily at homes, away from friends or family and watch videos or Zee TV, or worse sleeping it out. d) They can be very violent and sometimes lead to deaths. I believe selfishly in 'self preservation' and value my life far too much to die for a political party or politician, all in the name of a Party! For above reasons, I had to regret attendance to join the 'historical' and 'hysterical' party that they so sensibly planned for the 7th and 8th of December, inviting the whole country to join in. I fled to Calcutta! At the airport it was heartening to note that, I was

not the only one to ditch the upcoming party. Both Biman and Indian Airlines were heavily over booked, and Biman indeed had an extra flight. Four flights on a single day? An airline colleague said, 'you should have seen the rush to Bangkok and Singapore earlier on. The airport was a chaotic mess, (a normal thing when flights are overbooked) and I spied an old friend of mine desperately looking around for someone who has promised him a seat on the flight. He was on the waitlist. Minutes before the flight took off, my friend indeed was on the flight and a seat he did get: a 'jump' seat i.e. the one reserved for the air hostess! I did not realise my wife would be the most embarrassed when I wondered aloud to my friend, 'is the airhostess going to be on your lap for take-off, I don't mind changing seats with you, pal?!!' Evening at Calcutta, straight

into a 'bridal party' of my friend Sandip. I met other friends. Sandip has a beautiful girl named Anuradha in tow. She is 'officially' his wife, but 'socially' his fiancée. They plan on having their social wedding sometimes after the New Years. It was a great evening. 10th December 1994: I was in Bombay to attend the annual party of the company I work for. A party out into the sea literally! A small ship was hired, and left the Gateway of India at 6 pm and after a night of dancing, eating and drinking, we returned back just past midnight. The theme was a Hawaiian night, and people dressed up in their colorful best. The more adventurous among the girls wore grass skirts. An expat Manager (male) wore a coconut bra! There was fun, party galore and games. Everybody danced in wild abandon and we promised ourselves a similar treat in 1995. Aloha! 11th December 1994: On the flight back to Calcutta I am asked a strange question, 'Veg or non veg?' If you are not used to India, you might as well get used to these terms, or you may end up eating the wrong food or starving or both. Back at Calcutta, and Sandip's reception, 'both' are served meaning vegetarian and non vegetarian dishes. 13th December 1994: Disha - the party man, has been a friend for as long as I can remember. He is a self professed

bohemian, and has not forgiven me for letting him down on our childhood pledge: never to marry. Disha remains a bachelor, and it could be a sad day if he ever locked himself up in holy matrimony. With friends like us, he does not need enemies. In winter Disha wants to make, what he likes to call a 'killing' translated into English, meaning organising great parties well into the New Year. Nothing has been clearly worked out as of today, but he has gone 'underground' with his thought, planning and plotting: More on the party underground later. A lesson in Politics - the study of people, or shall we say 'study of our politicians?' Newspapers (which I read late at night) has a new connotation, 'illiterate leadership'. Sheikh Hasina had made the magnanimous gesture of handing over pens and papers to her 'boys' as a befitting retaliation against Khaleda Zia's threat to use her 'boys' against the Opposition. Three questions, 1. What is the minimum educational qualification required to rule Bangladesh? 2. Is it 'literate' thinking on part of Sheikh Hasina that 'leadership' means only the Government of which Khaleda Zia is Prime Minister, and absolves her of any responsibility i.e. as the 'leader' of the Opposition? 3. What has the 'literate leadership' in Sheikh Hasina been offering her stu-

dent front for the all these years - if it has not been paper and pen? This august December unfortunately, both ladies are behaving like ostriches with their head buried in sand to let the storm blow over, while they make pawn of the young and innocent. They have betrayed the trust that so many times have been reposed by the young of this country, and should realise a generation is 23 year old, adult, open to the world around them, trying to catch up with the rest of the world. It will not be easy to keep selling them as 'threats' or 'paper and pen'. 14th December 1994: It time to read my sons report card. He is on holiday with his mother, and I have to speak to him when he gets back about the B+ in Arts, I tell myself. The annual school magazine, of my son is at hand, and I spend time reading it. It's one of those recommended readings for me every year. In essence it gives me a clear idea of how the kids of today are thinking. This is a generation I have decided years back to dedicate my life to. They are such an honest lot. There are very interesting articles, and the emphasis is on the family. My son who turned nine in July has a short piece on his family. The message is clear — he misses me. My New Year pledge, more time with the son — less parties.... Really!



Happy New year! To all our readers. - T T Editor

Continued on page 16