

RISING STARS



A Comparison to Notice

by Susmita Roy

At first sight anyone could assume mistakenly that Lucy, a dark girl of four was born and bred in her own country, Bangladesh. However, her softly spoken neat English sentences with a strong British accent hinted at her three and a half years' stay in England.

Probably seeing that I had studied in the country she so loved Lucy took me into her confidence. As she colourfully spoke of her beloved school, I fell into a reverie. I visualized the large airy infants' classes

or He-man. The young hero suddenly charged at the girls and boys at the sand pit and managed to up set the huge sand. Castle into which had gone half an hour of tedious labour. There was confusion among the children for a little while but soon they made peace when the Indian chief came along to bury the war

ously weeding and planting white two or three juniors delighted themselves looking at the daffodils planted earlier that year. The PE lawn of the primary section swarmed with determined young athletes most of whom were frantically trying to master the magic of hoola hoops.

After I had taken in the

games such as lego which would allow the creative young minds to expand and explore. The cupboard tops were decorated with shoes, flowers, houses etc moulded by the children with clay and plaster. The little desks and colourful plastic chairs certainly gave away the fact that the room belonged to an educational institution but the fact that each of the 20 pupils owned a personalized drawer gave each boy and girl the feeling of being a part of the school.

During class hours when the students weren't busy at making models out of paper-mach or painting or writing, they sprawled on the carpet listening with undivided attention to the teacher who dramatically told them about Cinderella or Robinson Crusoe. Often the whole class would participate in discussions ranging from biology to philosophy where each pupil is given the freedom to express himself and voice his opinions and share his experiences. Instead of imposing authority over pupils, the teacher wins love and respect with wisdom and understanding which gives rise to a bond between teacher and student. As a result, the teacher, like apparent gains the confidence and trust of every child, be he shy, naughty, disobedient or otherwise. Indeed, school is life a second home for the children and although many may shed a tear or two on the first day of school, many more weep with the grief of parting on the last day.

The sensation of a drop of tear on my arm brought me back to reality and as Lucy spoke of how she missed her teacher, I fumbled for some words of comfort. However, she soon gathered herself and told me brightly that she couldn't wait to start school in Dhaka. At that enthusiastic statement, my heart sank with pity and share welled up inside me. When I thought about a suitable school for her, all I could envision was a residential house converted to a school. I

imagined Lucy walking into a classroom cramped with at least forty other children sitting uncomfortably in wooden benches. There would hardly be any space in between rows and three to four students would be packed into a single bench. With minimum number of windows in each class, summers would mean torture. The hot, clammy and stagnant air of the rooms, would possibly result in the fainting of one or two weak minded children. The teacher who would be tired of shouting out lessons would dictate or write down questions and answers to be learnt by heart by the pupils. Often there would be back benches who attend classes unnoticed by teachers except when they scream "Miss, his ruling my hair" or "Miss she's pinching me". The teacher may either ignore the commotion or if in the mood, make the nuisances stand on benches holding their ears as a form of punishment. When, according to custom, a nonchalant and disinterested pupil is made to read out a passage from the text book, some follow the story out of fear while many show their mates a new toy and others just drop off to sleep because of boredom. It wouldn't matter if half the students gained no knowledge after school because they would have parents or private tutors to give them attention at home. Through an entire period, there would be hardly any question put forward to teachers by students and there are usually no class discussions. An unwanted communication gap is set up between teachers and student and the children may lose interest in school resulting in unwillingness to study.

I imagined Lucy sitting sandwiched between sweaty classmates, gaping in bewilderment at the numerous noisy four year olds. She would start each time her teacher shouted at naughty boys and slammed the duster to draw attention. Except Lucy, all her classmates would be used to the age old system. However, probably Lucy herself would eventually mingle in with the crowd, forget to learn things in the proper way and start complaining like her classmates "Miss She's pinching me!"

Adnaan and Shahzad, two teenage boys pass it just like any other day. Another student, Shaheen, held responsible her school and family. According to her, the history of Bangladesh was never taught while they have already learnt about Rome, Greece, and India. Hence, it seemed as if no great incident had occurred in the past; no great souls were born. Therefore, they grew up bearing that feeling in their hearts. Parents too, never gave the details and nor did they themselves do anything on the day of Independence or Ekushey. The present condition is so, that we do not have anything

The Discovery

by Zaki Wahhaj

"I never knew they could do that with ordinary string!"

"Ah well, you learn something new everyday."

The two archaeologists stared at the fifteen feet deep excavation site. Above them, the sun burnt fiercely and a gentle breeze lifted dust from the ground. Far away, a group of Aborigines shouted expletives at one another as they dug yet another hole in the Australian desert.

"Look at the size of the skull, will you?"

"Is this a time to listen to music?"

"It helps me think. Look at the jawbone, its like nothing I have ever seen before!"

"It couldn't be a Neanderthal man, could it?"

"In Australia?"

"Perhaps they crossed the oceans during the ice-age."

"Unlikely, I am pretty sure this is the answer to the Missing Link — the one we have been waiting for all this time!"

"How much longer do we stay here?"

"We pack tonight. No use staying here now that we have made our find. Then off to Darwin to the research labs."

He began to walk towards the

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with gigantic double glazed sliding windows which almost covered all of the two walls. Two of the windows had their blinds rolled up and eyes event out to the two large playgrounds. In the corner of one was a miniature grassy hill which arised fantasy in the imaginative minds of the little children scurrying about the playground. It amused me to see a boy with a plastic sword in hand, run swiftly up the hill and stand legs apart, sword raised, imitating King Arthur

tomahawk.

As my vision strayed beyond the sand pit, I noticed a lovely water pond just near the school building. Inquisitive youngsters leaned over the water surveying tadpoles with wonder in their bright eyes. Evidently, a tutor was explaining the life cycle of a frog and had managed to convince his pupils that those tiny 'big headed fish' were going to turn out to be frogs. A little distance away from the pond, a group of senior students were industri-

common activities in the playground, my eyes leisurely swept over the interior of the nursery. The nursery was big and spacious with walls displaying the creative work of the youngsters. Lady-bird books and other picture and pop up books adorned the tiny library at one corner of the large room while a miniature play house with its very own hitches and couch was set up at another corner. Cupboards lined up along the walls contained stacks and stacks of

Being a Bangladeshi is not uncool

by Trishna

not get equal priority as English in such schools. It is always the latter language that has been encouraged in writing and even speaking. Teachers had forbidden uttering Bangla in corridors, stair cases and especially in classrooms. Except for the Bangla class, where we spoke that 'foreign language'. Result — difficulty in speaking Bangla in that one and only class. If out of six hours, one speaks in his/her mother tongue for only forty minutes (that was the duration of Bangla class) then I guess this consequence is not unexpected.

Another thing that happens in case of O'level candidates is that the standard of English is comparatively much higher

than that of Bangla. As a result of which students take English with greater seriousness than their own language and therefore, the former gets more importance. 21st February is advancing closer everyday and so we have already started deciding how to become Bangladeshi for one day. How we can introduce ourselves as Bangladeshis, not foreigners. Some would go to the Shaheed Minar with hands full of flowers, others would take part in functions and television programmes while most would just sit home and enjoy the holiday. As the Bengali culture is dying among the younger generation, simultaneously

they are also losing track of its history. The not-so-hypocritical young students of English medium schools feel so and do not hesitate to express their true feelings.

Mehnaz Reza, a student of class VII bursts into laughter at the very mentioning of how she feels about Ekushey. Well, it surely answered almost the entire question. Sasheen and Sayema, two teenagers feel that the ideal way of celebrating that day would be to go to the Shaheed Minar with flowers and spend some more time there. But unfortunately, the atmosphere there is so that for girls, this is rather not safe. Natasha blames her upbringing for the way she feels and celebrates Ekushey. "I have not

brought up like that. My parents never really did anything special on that day, so the question of one doing it shouldn't arise."

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"Almost half the size of a human brain, wouldn't you say?"

"And the torso!"

"Incredible!"

The one in the giant-sized hat cautiously stepped into the hole. Very gently, he pulled the thin spring that the skeleton had clasped with its right hand. He held it up in the air and smiled.

"Definitely used for setting traps, I would say."

"But look at its size. The torso is too small for it to be an Afarensis. At the most, it's a Habilis. And they couldn't use any tools."

"How else could you explain the string?"

"Maybe the wind brought it here."

"And tied the string around

habits." He fished out a rubber ball from his jacket and threw it in the distance. The hound ran after it. "The first ever completely intact primitive skeleton to be found since Lucy, imagine!"

"Fame and glory at last!"

"Are you out of your mind? We don't tell the others a word about this till we know exactly what it is."

"Not even Professor Warner from the University of Chicago?"

"Specially not him! If he can find out what this is before us, we will get no credit at all!"

The one in the giant-sized hat climbed out of the hole and dusted his clothes. He brought out a recording of Vivaldi's The Four Seasons from his jacket and loaded it into his walk-

to be proud of. It is the past that could make us feel that way. But now it can no more."

The above lines all express the feelings of the so-called future of this country. They may sound bitter but are true. When the improvement of our mother land is concerned, it is never too late for changing things. So let us all hope for the best and pay respect to the martyrs by not only pretending to have honour for them but by also expressing it. Let's not call ourselves Bangladeshis but be so as well.

Life is a cycle of monotony and sameness. But when it has a change it comes suddenly. It is unpredictable like the weather. And delicate like a drop of rainwater resting on a leaf.

Life is an adventure into the unknown, and a momentary joyous blip of light in a dark fathomless void.

Life is an endless race for survival. Only supporting the strongest and the brightest. Not caring for the weak and the disadvantaged. Be that as it may, life is the best thing that the universe has ever had. Despite all its inequality, pain and uncertainty Life is still worth living and celebrating.

Life

by a RS member

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Abacadaba

by Magician Subrata Biswas

'Queen of Hearts'

Props: One set of playing cards with all identical faces, a soap & a matchbox.

Magic: Offer a set of playing cards to a spectator and ask him to choose a card. When he has done so, put the other cards away & ask him to burn his card to ashes. Later, take the ashes into your right hand & rub them on your left arm. Presto! the ashes will form a sentence. That is, the name of chosen card, "Queen of Hearts," which will be quite

On the Fascinating Forbidden- II

by Kazi Khaled Arafat

I've turned to dust the philosopher's stone. I've made the happiest optimist groans I've poisoned the elixir of life. In the pacifist's heart, I created strife. I've placed a weapon on the hand, of the dove. I've even destroyed a mother's love! Don't shrink away cause I'm you But you are the one who first came to find me cause I let you be Call me the Devil — it's true But I'm the only one who'll come to your rescue When you're feeling blue I'm "funny white powder" — I bring you joy A nice little syringe — it's your favourite toy I shall be yours — be mine A justifiable deal — and you'll feel so damn fine Take me, then stop; you'll burn But then, after the first time, it's too late to return. I'm not too hard to find 'Cause you're all what I want you to be — snow-blind! I'll take away your misery, your sadness your pain Don't talk chastity — I know I ain't the narrow lane After all, I'm cocaine.

THE MISSING MACHINE

A Help or a Crime

by Mahbub Ershad

HAT day was like any other ordinary day in the canteen. Atif and his friends were chatting and sipping tea. They had finished their classes half an hour ago and had time to relax. Suddenly Reshad entered the canteen looking for Atif. Reshad was a class mate of Atif's. He seemed very scared, and stammered the words. "Atif, few boys are trying to beat me up for nothing, please help me." Atif inquired why those boys were trying to beat him up for nothing.

Reshad explained that those boys were demanding some money from him, but he refused, and this was the reason they were to practically looking for him. Atif asked Reshad to sit beside him. A few minutes later, three strangers entered the canteen and came near Reshad. They asked Reshad to get up. Atif asked the strangers to handle the situation nicely. Abruptly one of the strangers slapped Reshad. Atif and his friends got angry at this point.

In the mean time Atif's girlfriend, Rimi entered the canteen with a bouquet in her hand but Atif did not notice her. He was already into the tight and punched the stranger's nose. Instantly blood flowed from his nose. Seeing that the other two were getting ready to hit Atif but by that time, Atif's friends had already surrounded them. Then Atif attacked those two and

started beating them as well. Atif usually loses his control when he gets angry. Reshad came into the picture and intervened in time.

The next thing that happened was unexpected. Rimi threw the flowers on the floor and ran out of the canteen. This time Atif noticed her, but it was too late. Atif also ran after her. The only thing she told Atif was to get lost and she also said that she'd not be able to keep any relationship with a belligerent boy like him. Atif couldn't help the situation neither could he expound anything at that moment. She was all he had. Rimi was his hopes and dreams.

Few days later Atif found her with another boy of his class. He also came to know that they had started going out. All his hopes and dreams were destroyed. He only wanted to know, if his action was an act of crime or help?

