

In a house at Mohammadpur for recovery and rehabilitation of the drug addicts, as the hired barber laid Tamal's head against his knee and slowly turned the razor in his thick long hair to shave off, he gradually drifted into the bad lanes of his memories. He, an addict, had strayed away from his home and was recently discovered by some social workers in a slum and put into this house for treatment.

Inside, he wanted to blame somebody for his debasement. He wished he could point his fingers to one of his guardians and take out the disturbing monster in him. He tightly grabbed his imaginary gun of condemnation and moved it from side to side but could not find a single person to make responsible for his plight. He could only envision his own image at the gun-point and heard the pounding of an accusation, "You, you, you!"

In 1971, when the liberation war broke out, his family fled to the village of his maternal grandfather. Despite all the scourges, being a boy in his very tender age, he found it a pleasant time. No classes, no homework, all games and fun and foods of choice. In the town, they were managed in strict family rules and were not allowed to mix with anybody not related to the family.

In the free world of the country and the natural beauties, he mingled with the cowboys, plough-men/servants of his grandfather. They took him around, to the fields and other places. He found the living interesting and more knowledgeable.

One day, one of the servants being very angry with some woman, shouted, "Bitch... bla, bla". His utterances of disrespectful words for that unknown woman seemed strange and intriguing to young Tamal. He asked for the meanings of those seemingly prohibited expressions and the servant tried many other crude words to make him understand. But his words could not explain the improper inkling to the inexperienced boy. Finally, the man advised him to see him at his room after lunch when the elderly people of the house would be deep in siesta.

His heart was bursting with curiosity. He could not wait but the time was not ticking away as he wished it to be. After lunch he was jet ready to go over to the servants' quarter but the elders were still moving here and there. As soon as the elders retired in their beds, he slipped away.

The man holding back the secrets for him was lying in his bed and moving from side to side listlessly. As he saw him, he grinned naughtily and asked, "what do you want?" He straightaway wanted to know what he meant by those words.

Realising that his words could not make the

innocent boy understand his nasty allusion, he practically demonstrated something dirty and narrated about mating. He heard something very new. His curiosities were raised thousand times. He became impregnated with the speculations and excitement about the private parts of males and females.

While the seed of naughty ideas was germinating in him, one day one of his companions in hide and seek game became missing for a long time. Later, he came to know that the boy was trapped in a room. He had hidden himself behind a big gunny bag full of paddy.

Suddenly a young woman entered there in wet clothes after bath and shed off all her clothes to change. After changing she left the room latched from outside. The viewing of the nudity of a grown-up woman scared the boy.

However, this thrilled Tamal further and his eagerness to see female body became intense.

Amazed of these and in a rush to discover some secrets of life, he shared the experiences with his contemporary cousins and friends. It seemed that they had been already aware of the secret matter of males and females. So, he insisted them to tell him more. He felt a little

indignant too and thought, "what a fool I am!"

One day, they took him to an abandoned house and gave him a cigarette as they themselves lighted theirs. Then they explained how they watched the animals mating in the fields.

After independence, his family came back to Dhaka. As he shared his experiences with the friends, they reciprocated theirs. This way he became more aware of the physical relationship between a man and a woman. Indeed, he was a boy in body and a man in mind.

After his SSC exams, as viewing movies on VCR became popular in Dhaka, his opportunity to delve into the world of taboos widened. He first watched one Hindi movie at Begumbazar area of the city and then he saw screening of prohibited pornographic movies at underground spots. In the meantime, he and his friends used to gather at Ramna Park to puff cigarettes, pull grasses and pop in sedative pills. They drank liquor together at only places. His secret world flourished unhampered.

When they got admitted in the BA class, he started business with one of his friends. As the profit swelled, he borrowed more money from friends and invested and indulged in amusements and merriment. He was shot up to heroism by his friends in admiration for his extravagant expenditures.

He appeared in the B Com exam, without any preparation with a very good arrangement of 'supply of copies'. But God dispossessed, he failed to pass. This further thrust out the monster in him.

One morning, as he woke up from the sleep caused by intoxication of foreign liquor at one of the rooms of a hotel of the city, he found out that the girl who spent the night with him had fled with his purse full of money.

His days of heroism and flow of easy money started to wane. His friends visited his home to remain him to repay their money. Gradually, bitterness overtook friendship and they threatened to refer it to the police. On the otherhand, his friends with whom he invested his money, began to avoid him. The earth moved away from underneath his feet. His family was also fed up with his unruly way of living.

In fear, he left his house. The days of hiding began. Then without money, engaged in all sorts of immoral activities and decadence, he took refuge in one of the poorest slums of the city.

As tears began to roll down his cheeks, the barber jolted him out of his imaginations and declared, "It is over". He looked at the mirror and was shocked at the sight. Suddenly, a determination surged in him, "I must give up this one way road to hell. I promise to live like any other human being — a healthy man. I do not want to become larger than life."

# Bad Lanes of Memories

A Short Story by John Arun Sarkar



I VE a love affair with words for as long as I can remember. As a writer, I spend my days in pursuit of the right word. Words can be used to express or repress, to release or restrain, to enlighten or obscure. Through words, we can adore each other or abhor each other. Nations can offend or befriend one another. Words can enslave and keep people in their place.

English may claim to be the international language of business but I am made to feel that it may still be some time before colloquial English is approved by Professor Higgins. No doubt English doesn't have as many tenses or filigrees as French. It isn't as pleasing to the ear as Spanish and it isn't as easy to learn as Esperanto. But one significant fact in favour of English is that its highly flexible resulting in some delightful anomalies brought about possibly by transliterating the grammar of a second language into English.

The elasticity of English is best felt in Japan and to be precise, Japanese hotels, where you are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid — such quotes have acquired classic status. Few other Japanese signs are: "Is forbidden to steal hotel towels please. If you are not person to do such thing please not; to read notes." In another hotel room: "Please to bathe inside the tub." And instruction booklet about the hotel air conditioner: "Cooler and Heaters. If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself." Another brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo: "When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstinately your passage then tootle him with vigor."

In Japan, the English language has transcended the realm of logic into that of the blatantly surreal. Witness, and observe, what the word 'inscrutability' really means. A busy lady (rare in Japan) sports a T-shirt reading: "The Private — That's Great Member

Come to Hers." It's not my dirty mind, but surely that makes three Freudian buzzwords on her chest!

From Japan we move to Hong Kong supermarket board: "For your convenience, we recommend courageous, efficient self service." And a nearby tailor shop proclaims: "Ladies may have a fit upstairs." Another tailor shop instructs: "Order your summer suit. Because in big rush we will execute customers in strict rotation." A still better execution awaits you at a Swedish furrier: "Fur coats made from ladies from their own skins."

Tailoring of English has taken place almost everywhere. And the best places to discover the plays of English are at the hotels, restaurants and parks. Life may get a lift at Bucharest hotel lobby. The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable. Another hotel elevator in Belgrade sounds more systematic: "To move the cabin, push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter more persons, each one should press a number of wishing floor. Driving is then going alphabetically by national order."

If you survive the lift, welcome to the Soviet Union where the door of a Moscow hotel reads: "If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it." A real welcome awaits you if you happen to visit the Russian monastery: "You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Soviet composers, artists, and writers are buried daily except Thursday." Another death toll can be culled from the Soviet English speaking weekly: "There will be a Moscow exhibition of Arts by 15,000 Soviet Republic

painters and sculptors. These were executed over the past two years."

From Moscow we fly to the fashionable destination, Paris, at a dress shop: "Dresses for street walking." If you despise street walking, think of Thailand advertisement for

donkey rides: "Would you like to ride on your own ass?" If you feel punched, pursue the Czech tourist agency: "Take one of our horse-driven city tours — we guarantee no miscarriages."

If you are sportive, don't discount the Austrian ski resort: "Not to perambulate the corridors in the hours of repose in the boots of ascension."

And finally its time to camp at the famous Black Forest in Germany: "It is strictly forbidden on our camping site that people of different sex, for instance, men and women, live together in one tent unless they are married with each other for that purpose." Sounds akin to the notice outside a Buddhist temple in Bangkok: "It is forbidden to enter a woman even a foreigner if dressed as a man."

If you feel uneasy with any of these global English signs and symbols lets come to a hotel in Athens: "VISITORS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLAIN AT THE OFFICE BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 9 AND 11 AM DAILY."

Many of those who write in English language, either regularly or casually for the average readers of the sub-continent, often feel it necessary to quote a line from prose or a couplet from any local language in Roman script. But the readers generally find it extremely difficult to pronounce the quoted line or couplet correctly due to deficiencies of English vowels there and absence of phonetically suitable letters from the English alphabet.

Although English is now a global language and there is every possibility of its becoming the second language of almost all the Asian countries, it has its own limitations too. No doubt English is a tricky language, but it's equally difficult. Nevertheless one doesn't require mastery over it for communicating thoughts in simple words correctly. A single thought can be expressed in more than four or five different sentences without grammatical error. The language has its own thirty-five sounds, but the letters are only twenty-six including vowels, yet they are left sufficient to cover all the sounds of English.

The real difficulties experienced by us are not in writing or reading English with its five vowels which sound differently at different situation/occasi-

ons, but whenever we feel necessity of quoting any sentence or couplet from Hindi, Bengali, etc. A couplet from Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Persian or Arabic is impossible to read correctly, especially when the readers don't know the language from which the quotation was picked up. This embarrassing situation arises simply because of the different sounds of a single vowel and absence of half-sound "N" (nasal).

"N" is pronounced by the tip of tongue rising and touching the back side of the upper row of teeth, but the half-N is nasal sound through nose. To make the point clear let me quote a rondo of an old but very popular Hindi film song:

Man Dole, Mera Tan Dole, Mera Dil Ka Giya Karar, Kuan Bajaye Bansuria... (Who does play the flute, my body and soul have started dancing...)

This famous song was set to tune by late music director Hemanta Kumar who died recently, but will be remembered throughout the subcon-

tinental for centuries for his music in Hindi film "NAGIN".

In the first world "MAN" the vowel "A" is meant to sound like "U" as in FUN, GUN etc, but one may pronounce it as the English word "MAN" itself. "DOLE" should sound as "DO" phonetically as "SO" and "LE" as "LAY" "SAY" etc but here "DOLE" may be pronounced as the English word "DOLE". In the last world "BANSURIA" (flute player) "N" is a nasal sound, but it is not expected to be pronounced so; instead one may read it as English "BAN" and also "SUR" as "SIR".

One more difficulty is with "R". For simple sound "R" we pronounce it with the tip of the tongue slightly moving forward with lips a little open. But to pronounce the second sound of "R" which is being used in thousand of words like "BADA SAHEB" (big boss) "LADAI" (Fight), there is no alternative. In "LADAI" or "LADAE" 'D' is actually meant atleast to sound as 'R' in "TRY", "FRY" even if it does not fulfil the demand of second sound "R" which is called BADI RE in

HINDUSTANI and SANJUKTA RA in Bengali.

I'm afraid I have failed in expressing my contention vividly. This demands more space and time. However, I am not totally dismayed. The Daily Star has wide readership. Many old stalwarts of English language, Hindustani and Bengali are its regular readers. I am confident of their knowledge and vision. I would request them to express their views and find out some solution.

The time has come when there must be uniform rules and regulations if not a whole grammar to write Urdu, Hindi, Persian, Arabic and Bengali words correctly in Roman script, so the quotations from these languages in English writings may be read and pronounced correctly and instantly.

TAILPIECE: Someone sent a telegram from Delhi to his relative in Bangladesh in Roman script informing the addressee that "ZAID AAJ AJMER GIYA". Unfortunately, when the telegram was delivered to the addressee he read it in a way which meant "ZAID DIED TODAY" and informed all the concerned members of his family accordingly. You may well imagine what would have resulted!

# English for Everyone

by Shahid A Makhfi

## Tricky Business

by KR Zakhmi

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## Affliction

by Abul Momen

Can I go away saying 'what if I didn't get it?' The roses will bloom all over the sky. Shall I go away saying 'it's OK you don't give me'? Can I not spend my time under a 'shult' tree?

Let there be only fragrance, only laughter, only pleasure of his touch and the bygone days enchanted by music and tune.

Can I not endure the suffering saying, 'Well, you don't have to make me hear that particular word'?

Does my suffering last as I endure it? In your conversation with me now and then blood drips from my heart. Why does it drip? It is because roses do not bloom.

Give me roses in your words, Give me fragrance in your love and songs; What if you don't give me those? More blood will drip from my heart. The heart will turn into a rose. And the feelings of it the love of the rose. Even then can I move away silently whispering only 'OK it's alright you don't have to let me know....'

Translated by Khurshida Haq

## Father

by Samsul Islam

In midday struck the mood of renunciation. As the man wandered alone holding the hand of his heart among the cypress trees, he did not want to entangle himself in the salty lever of lush green.

On his shoulder perched three peacocks. When the rains came with cries of 'Father, Father', the gondola went loose and floated away.

Translated by Kabir Chowdhury

## Grasp

by Rabiul Hasan

What if it does not register in space, in blank, on slabs of stone, or on dabs of clay? In the winter of life one may become supine and fall asleep on the other side of the light. Lest I forget do not rasp or rattle but write it.

## My Country's Greatest Gift

by Abul Ashraf Noor

I can't go wrong With my country I taste the difference When I stay in a foreign land.

Faith is essential To cope with adversity Even late in life I put my hand into the hand of God In the darkness I begin to live again With my country's examples Of resourcefulness, courage and beauty I feel inspired, with its decency, To give blood And give life for others.

I'm tired of strikes, violence and vandalism It's time we look after the victims To project responsibilities Where it belongs — on our sacred land.

In any contest between power and prudence I now believe in patience To reach into the soul Of my country with rainbow But not the eyes with tears.

At last my country tells me of a life on good intentions To realize that it is all humanity Throwing off positive ions, Excellent for growth And peace of mind on earth for everyone.

## In Eulogy to Bangladesh Cricket

by Helal Kabir Chowdhury

Today's victory tomorrow's pride Today's victory yesterday's achievement It is like wooing and wooing Much awaited lover's moaning.

Bring glory to a country Prowess of yours is above fathom. Your win over braves Full of swashbuckling craze.

Like boatload aspirations in a sailor's mind, take it to a height Beyond enemy's count Walk on and surmount.

This poem was composed recognition of Bangladesh's victory over India 'A' team in the SAARC cricket tournament.

## Spelling

by Nico den Tuinder

It's deuce: some juice is due. I scream: "Icecream." The merry fairy is very clever. The Polish bootblack puts his polished shoes on his leg. You have an immature nature. He's very sad, he said. Put your ear here. Eating is a threat to your ears. There is tough dough throughout the world. A whore and a boar give a war.

Do you know that knowledge has no use now? There may be a plane from Spain. I don't have my left eye. He is campaigning for more champagne. Try trading trays, Tristrani! It's either a deity or a laity. The dealer dealt with the matter in the letter. Some dew was due. This cases diseases. Few future feature films are feasible. Sue and Bo, you too two tickets to the Loo? Dying Diana is dying her hair. This mass is a mess.

Can you understand why English has become the most widely written and spoken language in the world? I don't.

## Young Bangladeshis in North America

Continued from page 9 adults ourselves practice in our own lives?

**Solution:** We believe the teaching and learning of religion should be a matter best left to the individual family. How much of religion a youth should learn and practice should depend on the family's own orientation, values and adherence to religion. However, we must all teach religious tolerance and religious harmony. In a world with so many religions, such tolerance and harmony are required for co-operative living.

### Issue 4

Marriage in Western culture takes place through acquaintance, courtship and dating. Most of these practices are not

consistent with our religion and culture. How do we then handle the marriage affairs for our youths?

**Explanation:** The United States and Canada are large countries, and we Bangladeshis are spread over and across hundreds of square miles.

Thus, despite the most sophisticated technical means of communications, there are many obstacles to personal contacts, especially face to face contacts.

These days many marriages in Bangladesh itself, particularly in urban Bangladesh, result from pre-marriage acquaintance and familiarity, although the nature and quantum of these practices are vastly or sometimes com-

pletely different from those prevailing in Western culture. Many parents do not wish to see their sons or daughters married to non-Bangladeshis, specially White or Black Americans or Canadians. However, one should realize that we cannot ask our youths to marry according to our choices, alone. This does not really work, and some may say that it is not working even in Bangladesh! If this is the case, we should think of creating a dignified and cultured environment in which our youths can meet and know each other for future relationships.

**Solution:** To promote more meaningful communications amongst our youths, we must create, sustain and nourish youth organizations side by side with existing adult asso-

ciations. These youth organizations should hold regular and periodic forums for exchange of ideas and views. Our responsibility does not end with simply organizing a session for our youths at the annual Bangladesh convention. We must reserve spaces in our weeklies and magazines for contributions from our youths.

We must publish and distribute Bangladeshi youth directories with all relevant facts. Parents must frankly exchange views with their sons and daughters. Our youths will marry according to their, and to the extent possible our, choices, not solely at our directions. Parents must realize that youths do not always take wrong decisions, and their marriages are for their future lives, not ours!