

LIVING

Nothing to Deter This Keen Karate Expert



RANI Padamsee, the first woman black belt karate expert of Bangladesh, who runs a karate school of her own, when asked as to what attracted her to martial arts, replies, "I had been practicing Indian classic dance since my very early childhood. Arts with perfect coordination always fascinated me. When I turned 16, I went to see a karate demonstration, I found the movements there to be swift and dance-like, combined with others that were powerful. I thought this was a perfect blend of strength and dexterity. It was surely also a wonderful way of self-defence." Giving her reasons for opening a school of her own, Rani elaborates, "Although martial arts was introduced to Bangladesh in the 70's and 80's there were no exclusive classes for women and children, so I stepped in, and began my school.

"Mine is the only well-equipped school in Bangladesh, with proper rubber floor, air-conditioning, and seven trained teachers including Shihan Mitsuo Yoshida, the only Japanese teacher in our country. Being a woman I can handle women and children better than any man."

Explaining the meaning of the word "karate," she says, "Kara means empty, 'te' means hands and 'do' stands for way. Thus, literally 'karate' means

by Fayza Haq

'the way of empty hands.' You are taught to use your body as a weapon. Your reflexes become spontaneous and your self-confidence is developed. You are affected both mentally and physically.

Giving the philosophy behind the martial arts, Rani elaborates "Martial arts developed as a form to maintain good health, vigour and peace of mind. The monk Bhodhiraama felt that human beings needed to express their energy, either in anger or brutal confrontation. He felt that if this energy could be channelled, human beings could be more at peace by dealing with the animal within themselves."

What is the difference between karate, kung fu and tai chi? To this Rani says, "Karate was developed by the Japanese, while kung fu (pronounced gung fu) and tai chi are essentially of Chinese origin. Tai Chi might appear to have a soft style but it is equally if not more powerful than the other methods. All the martial arts have the same philosophy and similar basics."

Explaining the difference between the belts, she says, "Usually a grade belt test is given every three to four months. The student begins with oth kyu (white belt) and gradually works himself upto the black belt, having passed

the white, yellow, green, purple and brown belt.

Elaborating on the final degree Rani elaborates, "In Japan the belt tests are given till the fifth dan black belt."

Speaking about the duration of the classes, she explains that the classes are for two hours, three times a week. They do exercise for 45 minutes each time and the rest is karate.

The first woman black belt in Bangladesh, Rani has a son who is a black belt too. She taught him since he was five years old. She was the first Bangladeshi to go for the world championship in '91. She is also the first woman to have won the national championship three times. She hopes to represent her country in the Olympics some day.

How does she combine her karate teaching with her housework? She obviously does this with no trouble at all. Although she is not yet a financial success, due to the high cost of running the school, she has taught karate to other members of her family including her two children and her brother-in-law. Rani says that her family gives her all the support in the world. She is surely the only woman in the world to wear a *hijab* and teach karate.

Rani's hobbies are classical Indian dancing and gymnastics.

SEXUAL abuse of children is a subject of much debate and controversy in the West. In the East it is not a subject at all. In Bangladesh, for example, it is treated as if non-existent. But childhood sexual abuse does exist in every single society. In fact unofficial estimates would claim that one out of every three people in Bangladesh have been abused sexually in some way or the other during childhood. In most cases the person abusing is a relative who takes advantage of the close relationships between relatives that is endorsed by our society. More than anything children's vulnerable position and inability to protest against the abuse inflicted on them has resulted in these crimes going unpunished and therefore repeated again and again. For the first time, in Bangladesh a forum titled Breaking the Silence, has been formed by a group of like-minded individuals who have decided to speak out against this unspeakable crime.

On April 27th 1995, the Forum arranged a public discussion on the subject at the WVA (Woman's Voluntary Association) auditorium in Dhaka. Among those who attended were writers, teachers, psychologists, scholars, journalists and NGO officials, all with the common goal of discussing this sensitive subject of sexual abuse and trying to chalk out strategies that will protect children from such heinous crimes.

The discussion began by Mahbuba Aktar Mahmud's brief yet informative address on childhood sexual abuse and how it can be prevented. The Forum, started in March 1994, has two main objectives: to discuss the subject as extensively as possible thereby publicizing it and secondly, to exchange views on the subject with school and college teachers.

In her address, Mahmud pointed out some of the disturbing characteristics of sexual abuse of children:

- children are vulnerable and often become used to the abuse before they realize what is going on.
- children are targets of such abuse because of the perverted sexual desires of certain individuals who find such deplorable acts pleasurable.
- by abusing a child the abuser is breaking his or her trust and disrupting normal development of the child. In the case where the child is abused by a close relative, the child becomes disillusioned and afraid. In such circumstances it is vital for the child's mental development to restore his or her trust.
- a child's inability to protest against the abuse be-

Breaking the Silence

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

cause of shame or fear allows the abuser to continue the abuse without getting caught. In the case where the child is a servant, the fear of losing his or her job may act as a disincentive to protest against the abuse.

— sometimes the child is bribed or scared by the abuser so that he or she does not say anything.

— the insensitivity and ignorance of society often causes the abused child to feel ashamed, guilty and partially or fully responsible for what has

happened to him or her. Society, too may blame the child victim instead of the abuser, thus giving the abuser further licence to continue to abuse day after day.

Mahmud stressed that this silence must be broken. Children must be taught to protest against such crime and people must be made aware of the fact that such abuse does occur within the hidden walls of our society.

Rokunuzzaman Khan, Director of Kochi Kanchar Mela and feature editor of

any follow up of such cases, people just forget and the criminals go scotfree."

Khan emphasized that people must be made aware of such crime and laws related to child abuse, kidnapping or murder of children should be made more effective and quick in enforcement.

Dr Nilima Ibrahim teacher and writer, also a speaker at the forum commented that although sexual abuse of children was common in all classes of society, it occurred more amongst the poor. "In

Shafiq Rehman, "Jai Jai Din" editor spoke on the role of the media in preventing child abuse. "I think almost all of us have been victims of such abuse one way or another. If people especially prominent personalities would come forward and speak of their own experiences, greater awareness could be created about this terrible crime," he said.

Rahman pointed out that in our country because it is considered a taboo subject people do not talk of such experiences and there was no information or statistics on the number of cases of sexual abuse. Rahman also warned against irresponsible reporting by the media of such abuse as this causes more harm than good.

Safia Azim, a lecturer of psychology at Dhaka University gave a psychological analysis of sexual abuse and its effects on the victims. "Sexual abuse occurs at every stage of childhood," she said, "and can change the personality of a person." Drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, phobia, schizophrenia were some of the effects of child abuse, she said.

Azim said that even showing something that would be considered obscene should be termed as sexual abuse since even this has adverse psychological effects.

Azim also said that there was a misconception that child abuse occurred only amongst the poor but actually it was present at all levels of society with at least 50 per cent committed by relatives including the father, step-father, paternal and maternal uncles.

Dr Ahmeduliah Miah Director of UCEP, spoke on the role of developmental organisations in preventing child abuse. Among the suggestions he put forward were: parents should be more vigilant; the working environment of child workers should be monitored; children should be made aware of sexual abuse; and better child care facilities should be provided so that children are safe when they are not with their parents.

At any point in time, somewhere, somehow a small child in Bangladesh is being abused sexually. We may not be able to reach that child on time. We may not even know who he or she is. But we can certainly work towards saving the child who may be the target of someone's perverted, debauched desire in the future. Child abuse is a very sensitive subject in a society where the word 'sex' is a taboo subject. By bringing it out in the open the Breaking the Silence Forum maybe opening a Pandora's box as Shafiq Rehman suggested. Yet it is definitely a box that needs to be opened.



parents in a *basit*. During the day little Halima would be left alone since her parents would have to go out for work. One evening when Halima's mother a part time domestic maid came back, Halima was nowhere to be found. After a relentless search, Halima was finally found, her body mercilessly wounded and a metal rod in her private parts. She later died in hospital. "Now after three years," says Khan, "nothing has been done to capture or punish the culprit. This is because there is never

happened to him or her. Society, too may blame the child victim instead of the abuser, thus giving the abuser further licence to continue to abuse day after day.

Mahmud stressed that this silence must be broken. Children must be taught to protest against such crime and people must be made aware of the fact that such abuse does occur within the hidden walls of our society.

Rokunuzzaman Khan, Director of Kochi Kanchar Mela and feature editor of

the *basit*," she said, "because of cramped living arrangements, children witness sexual acts at a very early age and when they are abused they begin to accept it as undergoing great psychological trauma." The former director of Bangla Academy also mentioned small girls as young as seven or eight years old who are married off and are forced to have sex with their much older husbands. "This is also a term of sexual abuse" she said.

Forced to Sell Daily Bread to Put Food on The Table

Barbara Akakpo writes from Luanda

MARIA Bumba has been selling food in Angola's Roque Santeiro market for seven years. She once worked in an ice cream plant, but could not make ends meet on her salary.

Now she sells anything she can get her hands on — rice, sugar, oil. Today it is soap.

"Life is really difficult," she complains. "You must search for the goods all the time. If you don't search you don't eat because you don't have anything to sell."

Maria Bumba is not alone. With the resumption of the civil war in 1992, a lack of production and soaring inflation, many Angolans have been forced to supplement their income by selling anything they can find.

About 70 per cent of the population is engaging in such economic activity, particularly women, says Henda Pinto de Andrade, coordinator of a project to improve the business management skills of self-employed women.

"Angola is facing 40 per cent inflation on a weekly basis and basically a 10 per cent devaluation on a weekly basis," de Andrade says. "This means men still working in the public sector are effectively making no money. So women are forced to engage in any kind of economic activity to make ends meet and support their family."

Sometimes Bumba walks all day looking for goods but returns home empty-handed. "Then it's necessary to start all over again the next day," she says. "But sometimes I get nothing for the whole week."

For those unable to sell in Roque Santeiro — the largest market of its kind in Angola — because they lack the cash to buy goods in bulk, there are even riskier ventures.

Today's Special

RICE

3,000,000 KWANZA

3,500,000 KWANZA

4,000,000 KWANZA

4,750,000 KWANZA

Antonio Manuel, mother of five children, sells bread in the street next to the main bus station in Luanda. She would like a pitch in a large market but can afford to buy only about 40 loaves.

"It is very difficult to sell on the streets because there are a lot of police around," Manuel says. "Sometimes they shove us out. They seize our goods and divide them among themselves."

Sometimes there are arrests as well, she says.

"There is more protection working within the market in relation to the police," says Donna Antonia, coordinator of Roque Santeiro.

"Also there are many people who come to the market so there are lots of potential buyers. If you sell from your home or on the streets people may

A cousin visiting Dhaka about ten years ago almost died of boredom. "People here have just so much time," she said. "It's as if life runs in slow motion here."

"Hmmm," I said, struck by this perception of my city.

"Too, too much time," she continued. "Lazy afternoons, gossip sessions, afternoon tea. What is this? Back home, we slave away at the office... we lead very busy lives, you know."

Now that I'm an adult in Dhaka, I seek the lazy city, in vain. Where are those notorious lazy afternoons, family get-togethers, gossip sessions?

No Chance of Boredom

by Gemini Wahhaj

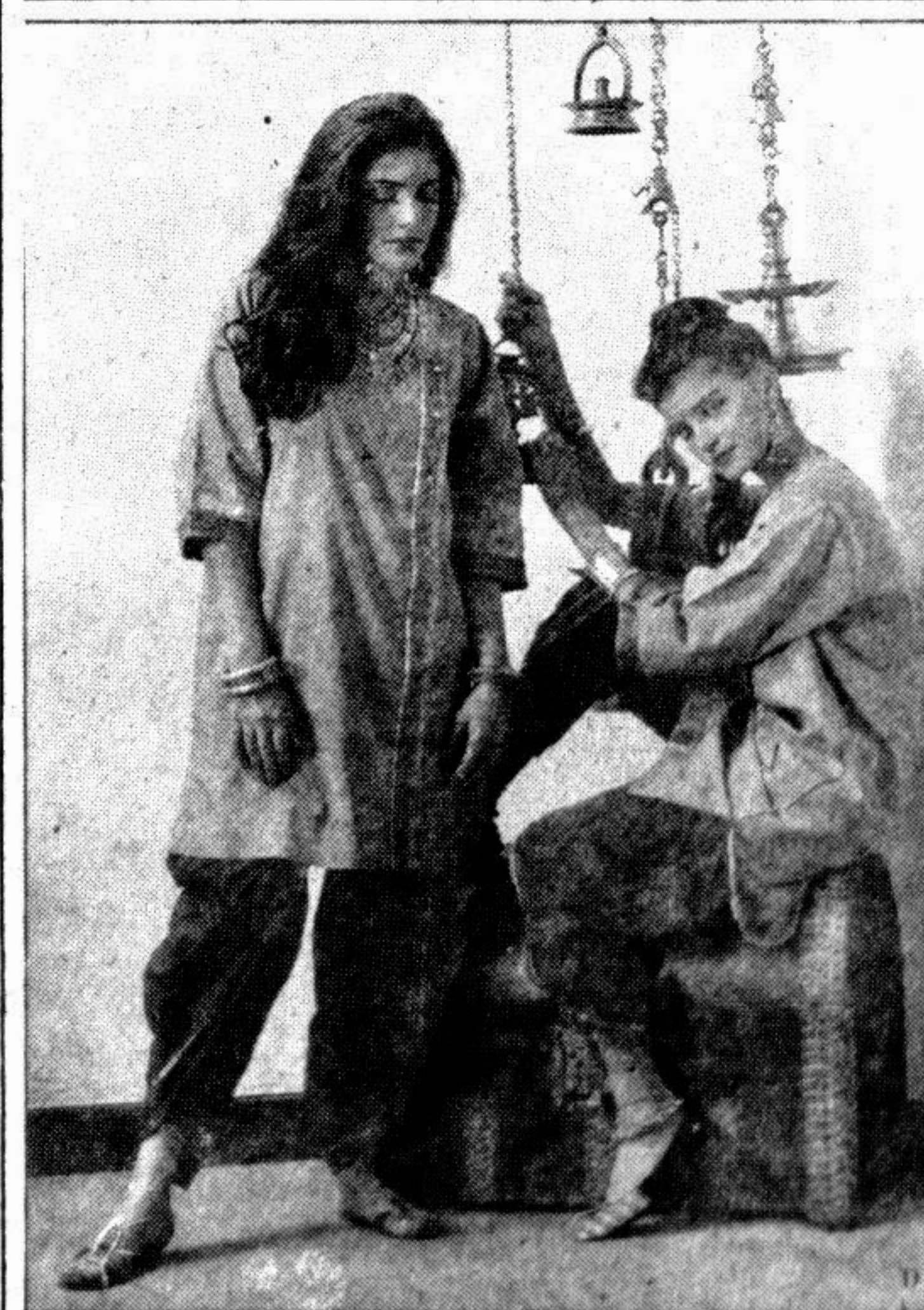
No-one seems to have enough time!

The corporate people in Dhaka work till 6.7.8, even 11 pm. Spouses call up at each other's office. "Listen, I'm going to be late. I don't know how late." Hmm, this smacks of my cousin's western life. Even hartals aren't excused at Dhaka's offices nowadays. Today's executives are put up at various strategic hotels the night before, a walking distance from work.

But Dhakaites aren't just

busy at work. Once I started to take stock, I was astounded by how much a Dhakaites packs into her life. Most *chakurjibis* (working people) lead double lives. If their day-time job is something straightforward, they're bound to color their evenings with a more exciting moonlighting job. You have your nocturnal journalists, actors, singing and art school teachers, private on-the-side income-earners (shady businesses), house tutors... the list goes on.

our careers, our houses, our self-centered lives. But we're not withering away out of inactivity either. Our busy-ness is



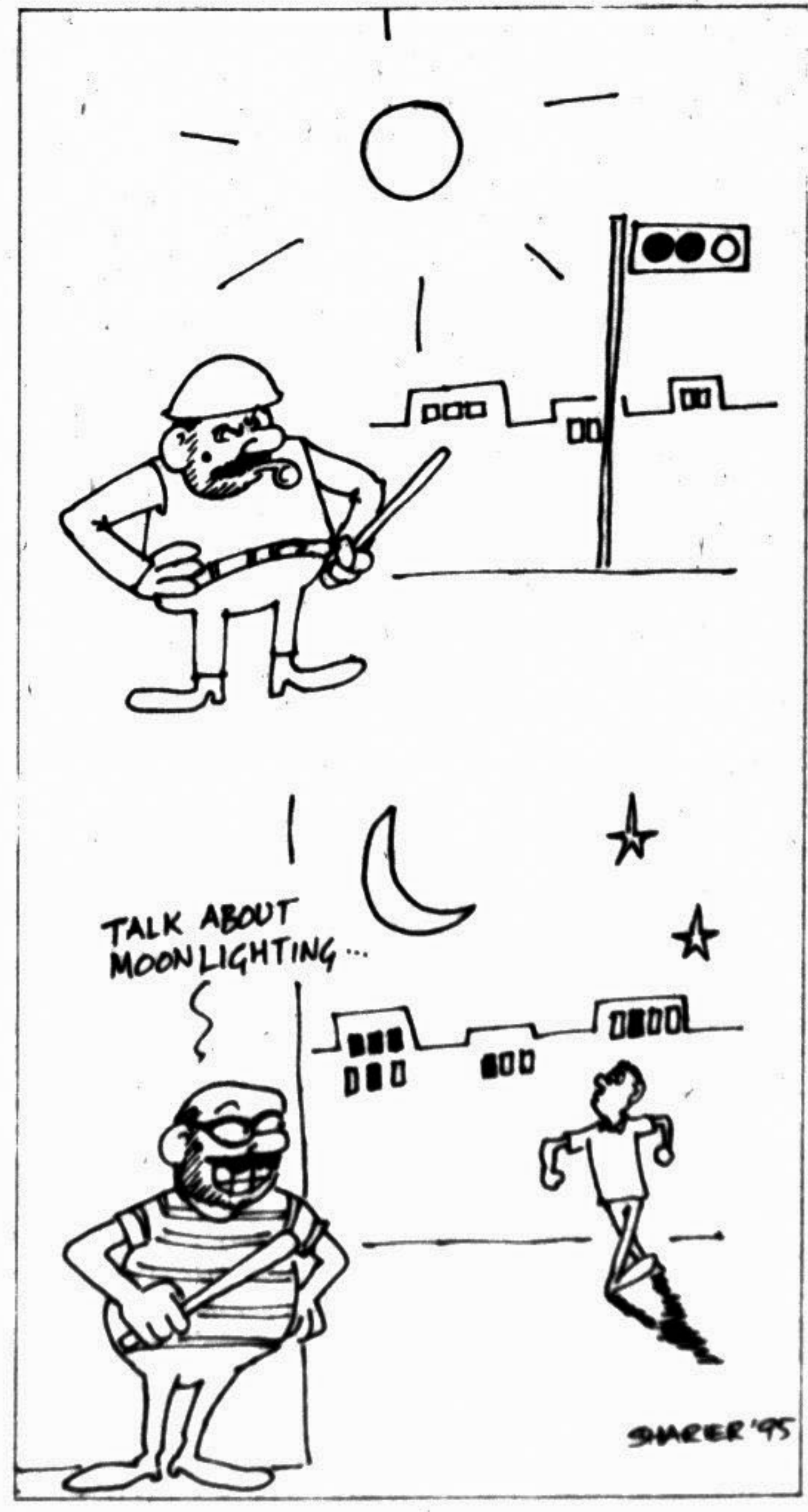
Kurta, dhoti and satin slippers with gold trimming

Then you take your aunt to the doctor, put up the guest from your village home, make a few dresses for your friend's two week old baby, and run over to another friend who badly needs to talk. There are people all around you screaming out for favours. "Please admit my son in this school. I want you to choose a *saree* for me. Can you get me an interview with your company?"

And far from long gossip sessions, even finding someone to talk might prove difficult. My first week in Dhaka, I needed to talk to someone. But one friend had exams, another was busy with her baby, someone was at a computer class, and my cousin was working late at the hospital. I ended up trunk calling the States!

Of course, I wouldn't claim that we rival the west yet. I used to know a professor in the States who made formal lunch appointments with his wife. Sometimes he had to cancel on her. And then a friend and I just couldn't seem to meet, something always kept coming up. "Listen," she said at last. "Do you want me to put you down in my calendar? I could schedule you for next month."

No, I think Dhaka's busy enough. Perhaps we don't spend 24 hour days developing



Shree '95