

LANGUAGE

The Question of Identity

by Nupu Chaudhuri

I read Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury's thought-provoking article (Bilingualism, Identity and Education) on April 28 last in this magazine with great interest.

You that these facts alone will not identify them and certainly not define them. They are not fully Bangladeshi nor are they fully British, but they are emerging as a unique force in society with their own sub-culture.

of the ways we are similar, resulting in marginalising people not uniting them, and this breeds discrimination.

In the Pocket Word Finder Thesaurus, I looked up "Identity" and found these words which may be interchanged: character, disposition, distinctiveness, heart, humour, inclination, individuality, nature, personality, quality, spirit, state, temperament, tendency.

For these young immigrants who feel enough pressure to adapt to the life-styles their friends have and the conflicting stress of conforming to their parents' ideals, it is understandable for them to feel like they belong to neither.

Because I was raised in a multi-racial environment where the children treated each other more equally (barring personal differences) than the adults, I realised early that discrimination is an evil that is acquired, not inborn.

In order to move with the times, standard background information, place of birth, nationality, ethnicity, native language, no longer comply.

PROFILE

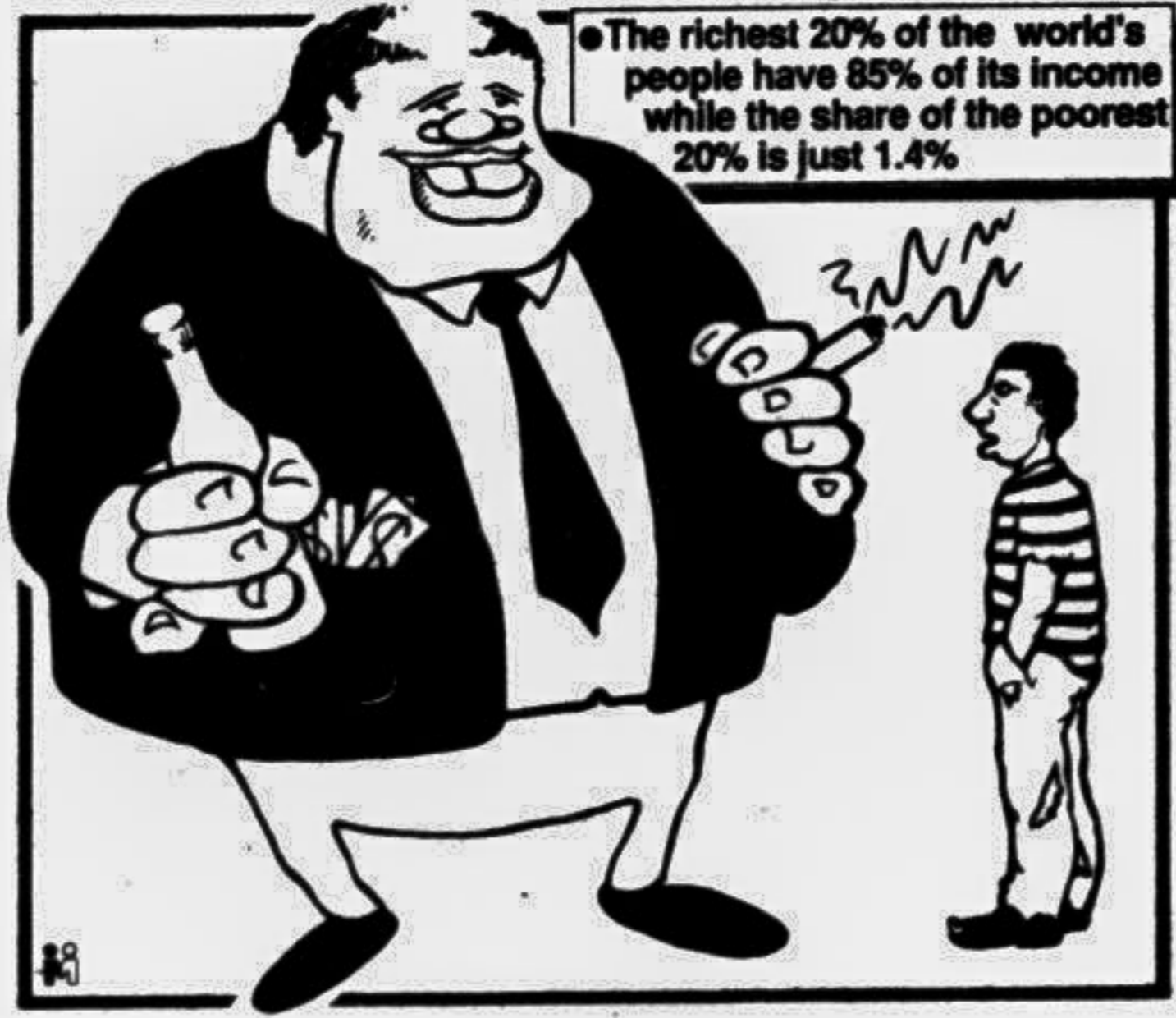
When an Odour of Sanctity Combines with the Smell of Money

Some of Mexico's "Super Rich" are very rich indeed. But they also claim a spiritual dimension through their relationship with a controversial Catholic priest, Father Jacques. Gemini News Service reports on a man who "smells of spirituality" — and has a great ability for raising money.

John Ross writes from Villahermosa, Mexico

AS Mexico's economy shipwrecks on the shoals of currency collapse, massive layoffs, and world record bank credits, business leaders here look back nostalgically at the boom years when huge fortunes were made and extolled.

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Hai! Maintenance

THE maintenance of equipment and gear in the developing countries pose many technical, logistic and administrative problems; and in addition, the expenditure of hard-earned foreign exchange.

erational honeymoon, poor maintenance takes its toll, but the alarm bells don't ring (not only in Bangladesh, but in all the under-developed countries).

Training can never catch up with new and evolving technology, and the bureaucracy have not that much general technical knowledge at local level to get things moving fast.

For state maintenance set-up, the in-service training structure has to be strong, for output of adequately trained and dedicated personnel. In the project document, it may be more practical to double the maintenance load, as the service degradation curve tends to be logarithmic — difficult to maintain efficiency in the LDCs.

The Passing Show

by AMZabr

bile maintenance teams all over the country at public or private-sector level? Another arbitrary example: Tens of thousands of hand/shallow tubewells were sunk during the last decade.

creasing the inventory budget (including the foreign-exchange component). The private sector (contractors) will face the same problems, as they do not possess the magic wand, but have the advantage of less bureaucracy and speedy back-up from the principals.

Today we hear much about "system loss" in many sectors of public services. There are two main areas: the technical maintenance, and the human factor (corruption, inefficiency).

Any scheme can run well, anywhere, if planning is carried out with foresight and accumulated local experience. The foreign manufacturers do not design equipment for developing countries. Small is beautiful, if not imported.

THE road to Dubai, Bahrain and other Gulf states is no longer paved with gold for engineers from Australia, maids from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and "hardhats" from other developing countries including India.



Shattered Dream

bassies.

Thus, a Filipino maid wanting to work in Dubai or elsewhere must first get a certificate of approval from the Philippine embassy in the country of destination.

sands. Sometimes the maids are so brutally treated that they have to be flown home by diplomatic missions.

Because of this and other restrictions, the dream of a good life may have faded for many would-be overseas workers. Some half a million Indians, nearly an equal number of Filipinos and thousands of other Asian workers living and working in the Gulf may be in for disillusionment.

In several instances, maids and other workers have to pay large amounts to recruitment agencies which arrange passports for them and their employment.

Adding to the woes of domestic helpers is the increasing incidence of rape while physical abuse seems to have become the rule rather than the exception.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has been looking at the number of foreign workers in the Gulf but is unable to stop atrocities against them.

Maids, who number close to almost a million in the region, must now comply with several rules and regulations. It is now mandatory for them to obtain first an employment visa which will be for a limited period only.

For thousands of Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and Filipinos who returned to the region after the Gulf war in search of jobs, even the promise of an easier life through higher wages has faded as prices and the cost of living went up.

From the Corridor of Memory Personality Profile by A KM Jaluddin

Shafiu Azam

Yahya junā from the services reorganization committee headed by Justice Cornelius. I was then in the third year of my service; I felt very bitter and asked the Chief Secretary "Sir, why should we have joined a service that is going to be disbanded?" Azam laughed.

participant in the meeting which was attended, among others, by Planning Commission member Khair and Finance Secretary Syeduzzaman. I was then a deputy secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Secretary Khorshed Alam was overseas on official business, and Joint Secretary Janab Yahya was stuck up in Sylhet because of a flight cancellation. Hence the small shoulders of a pensive Deputy Secretary had to carry the onerous burden of representing the executing ministry.

Azam, of course, enjoyed the reputation of being extremely competent and decisive. I was looking forward to a one-to-one face-to-face conversation with him.

Being the youngest in the group, I thought that silence would be the better part of valour. Syeduzzaman gave an excellent rundown of the whole project. And I found that all the points I had jotted down for my intervention were anticipated by Syeduzzaman. I felt relieved that I did not have to face Azam's razor-sharp scrutiny.

As a matter of fact, he was informed when the meeting was over and tea was being served. The meeting in the meantime had assembled a strategy to face the onslaught that everyone was expecting, under the active encouragement of the

In the discussion, the question of PL 480 grants came up. Joint Secretary, Dr Ekram Hussain was representing the ERD and made his points with quiet confidence. He said that if we took certain actions the US government would forgive the loan.

The issue of PL 480 grants discussed for some time. Addressing the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Dr Ekram Hussain, the impressive ERD Joint Secretary said, "Sir, they will forgive the outstanding amount if we make the right moves. Now it is only a matter of formalities."

Embodied by government encouragement, Peniche bought one recently privatised bank and joined it to another. At its zenith, his empire included over 1,000 separate enterprises and \$2 billion in assets.

Insiders attributed Peniche's success to an amalgam of sources: his friendship with

When I studied the English Romantic Poets at school, Wordsworth-Coleridge-Byron-Shelley-Keats were to me, the names of a single entity; a hydra-headed monster that loomed threateningly before an examination. In college I had no time for what I considered, a bunch of anemic Englishmen languidly scratching the flowery tablet of poesy with plumed quills. And I had firmly pledged my loyalty to the more full blooded and muscular poetry of the Moderns: Yeats, Auden, Larkin, Ted Hughes, Wallace Stevens, the lot.

The Nightingale that Arrived in Italy had Lost its Power of Singing

Neeman A Sobhan



I borrowed an armload of books, and quite by accident I came upon a recording of a famous stage actress reciting poetry. After the langour of too much Italian, perhaps my ears were starved for the crispness of well enunciated English.

of his matter, he is assured a place in the history of man's humanity if not in the history of man's art. Since art without humanity, without humane feelings is of no value to man, it is fitting that although Severns name is not mentioned either in the Great Book of Immortals, nor on the door of the house he shared with Keats, in death, thirty years later, he lies buried beside his famous friend.

I had known that Keats was buried here in Rome, at the Presbyterian Cemetery near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius but I had never bothered to go and visit him. Also to my Rome visitors I had always habitually and dutifully pointed out the narrow second floor windows of No. 26 Piazza Spagna as the rooms where Keats lived until he died.

There is a dichotomy in the life of Keats. There is the productive part of his life which began in England from Dec 1811, 1816, when he was just of age and Leigh Hunt, the editor of

back the money loaned by relatives for his passport and visa.

The world-wide recession has not spared even the golden boys of the corporate sector. Schools have raised their fees and medical services are costing a lot of money.

Recently, too, the Ministry of Immigration slapped a ban on the hiring of foreign doctors and nurses. Apparently there are too many Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi doctors and a growing number of nurses from India and the Philippines.

Expatriates with their own businesses are also faced with more stringent rules for the issuance of bank loans because of many bad loans which the banks do not expect to recover.

A sudden rush of Russian engineers, Australian professionals and even British accountants to Dubai and Bahrain also lowered wage levels. A recent arrival from Bombay, accountant Mahmud Ali, said: "We can no longer get salaries of 7,000 or 8,000 Dhirums (US\$1,913-2,186) per month. This is because Americans with degrees from US universities are quoting lower wages. They are ready to work in the Gulf and enjoy the services of a Filipino maid for their families. The status symbol in the Gulf is still a Filipino maid and not the kind of car you drive." — Depthnews Asia

"Ekram, what are you saying?" Shafiu Azam said with some passion. "It is only your Creator from whom you can ask for forgiveness; and none else." Azam said emphatically. His sense of conviction left and abiding impression on all. Shafiu Azam was a deeply religious person; not a bigot. He held all religious faiths in respect.

"Forgive" was actually a legal jargon used in public law 480 itself. It is an Americanism meaning "write off". Ekram Hussain was right but he apparently did not wish to have further discussion on the subject especially after Shafiu Azam's passionate observation. Azam's sense of conviction could be overpowering and, probably, infectious.

Ekram Hussain said very respectfully, "Sir, we could perhaps deal with this question later on. May we possibly move to other items of the agenda?"

Shafiu Azam was in a limbo on his return from Pakistan in 1974. He made only one attempt to see the Head of Government. He would make no other effort to get back his job. Dignity, above all, was the drill-surgeant of his march in life.

In January 1972, just after the birth of Bangladesh, I happened to hear late Tajuddin Ahmed's (wartime Prime Minister of Bangladesh and later Finance Minister) views on him: "How much do you know about Shafiu Azam?" he asked. "He was our contemporary and we have seen the dazzling heights of his brilliance."

"Sir, then why should not be employed in your government," I asked him as his Private Secretary. "Well, frankly Azam made some mistakes. We are also an immature society. The whole nation is in a state of euphoria; we shall need time to fit him in," he said.

the radical 'Examiner', published his sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'. Then there is the last bit when dying of consumption, he was almost forcibly sent off to Italy in a last attempt to prolong his life by removing him to warmer climes. He never wanted to leave England and be exiled from all that was dear and meaningful to him. The Nightingale that arrived in Italy had already lost its power of singing and was merely a caged soul.

It would be facile to say that the poet found peace in his last days, because it isn't true. Physical and spiritual anguish marked the end of his life. Towards the end he dictated to Severns his epitaph: "On my gravestone, you may write — Here lies one whose name was written in water." To Keats lovers, the nightmarish last months of the poet's life is a great burden, difficult to justify and too sad to be redeemed even by poetry. And to those who are, in addition, lovers of Rome, it feels ironic, even unjust that a sensitive and sensitive poet like Keats should have come to this inspiring city so late when, ill and despairing, robbed of his gift for poetry, homesick and heartbroken from his separation from the love of his life — Fanny Brawne, he had already turned inward and bitter, calling this Roman stage of his life his posthumous existence.

The claustrophobic room near the Spanish Steps is a reminder of the most abject period of Keats' life and need, less to say, in all my years in Rome, I have never gone back to that ringing void. On the other hand, I find the Protestant Cemetery an almost cheerful place which, with its intimate charm, someone aptly described as being like an