LITERATURE

USHPA bet, aren't you ready yet?" Pushpa sighed, she gave a last glance at her reflection in the mirror. She was not particularly pretty, and purple made her seem even darker.

"Pushpa!" Pushpa yielded to the entreaty in her mother's tone.

"I'm coming, Amma, I'm coming!" All the way to Aarong, Pushpa's mother, Mrs. Rahman, talked about clothes and silk saris. But Pushpa wasn't received for a minute. She knew what all the sudden whispering in the house was about. She knew that her parents were desperately trying to get her married off for the last one year. She knew she was going to be "Shoon" to a prospective bridegroom. Why shouldn't she? This was the fourth time she was being brought to Aarong.

Mrs. Rahman herded her daughter up the steps of Aarong and told her to look at the salwar kameezs. Then she hurriedly went back to the main door to greet the relations of the would-be groom.

Pushpa watched out of the corner of her eve. But how amazing! Where were the plump. bejewelled, sari-bedacked ladies who were to censoriously look her up and down and then later politely reject her? They were only two young men with her aunt. Pushpa grimaced slightly. This one meant business. He didn't believe in representatives. She hurriedly averted her gaze before they noticed her staring.

She studied the embroidery on the sleeve with price concentration. She was so engrossed that she didn't notice one of the young man standing beside her.

"Er...excuse me, I think you dropped your book."

Pushpa looked up and blushed. One of the young man was holding her book.

"Thank you," She said and took it back. "Did you read it?"

"Yes."

"Did you like it?" he asked eagerly.

Pushpa blushed ever more deeply, but thought to herself, does he want to marry a literature critic? 'Yes, I liked it but some of the parts seemed

rather exaggerated," Pushpa answered coldly. "I heard that his latest book has just been released from the Book Fair," he continued.

"Oh really?" Pushpa was interested. She caught the eye of her mother and swallowed back the questions she was going to ask.

"Hello Pushpa!" greeted her aunt, "Have you come shopping?" All this pretense really isn't necessary.

thought Pushpa with irritation.

"Let me introduce you to these young men," continued her aunt, " Dr Kabir and Dr Shaurav." Pushpa greeted them politely. After sometime the young men left. Mrs. Rahman cordially invited them both to come to her house

anytime they wanted. Mrs. Rahman was in a very good mood. She hummed to herself all they way home.

"Let us go to Mirpur tomorrow to look at some benarasee saris," Mrs. Rahman suggested. Pushpa assented quietly and went to her room.

As soon as she entered, the room less younger sister Priya threw down the book she was reading and looked at her face hopefully. Priya was 2 yrs. younger than her, and was extraordinarily attractive.

"How did it go?" Priya inquired eagerly. "Don't be impertinent!" snapped Pushpa as she made her way to the bathroom.

Priya rolled her eyes. "No luck," she sighed dramatically. "Ah well, my marriage will be postponed further."

Pushpa scowled flercely at her and shut the bathroom door with a loud bang. It wasn't as though she didn't love her sister, but when she considered the fact that has marriage was hurried up so that her younger sister could get married, tried her temper sorely, specially at times like this.

When Pushpa emerged from the bathroom. Priya was perched on the table.

"Tell me what happened? Who came? What did they say? What-"

"Quiet! Quiet!" ordered Pushpa holding up

her hands in entreaty, Priya obediently felt si-"There were two men only, Dr Kabir and Dr

Shaurav. I didn't like either. Dr Shaurav talks too much and Dr Kabir seams dumb!" "Ah! The tall, dark, silent man who broads on nameless crimes that litter his past!"

"You copied that from Byron!" accused Pushpa. "Well, I might be a sociology student but

I'm not illiterate," said Priya unrepentantly. "I'm feel up with all this marriage busi-

ness," said Pushpa exasperated," "I hate being put on display like a piece of merchandise." "Well it might be the best time," pointed out

Priya. Pushpa snorted in decision and left the

The next day Pushpa returned from the university to find her mother in a panic.

"Where have you been?" demanded Mrs.

Rahman as soon as she entered the house. "I went to the University," replied Pushpa looking surprised.

"Well what took you so long?" continued Mrs. Rahman. Go and get charged immediately. We've got visitors," she pushed Pushpa to her room. "But why," asked Pushpa.

"Dr. Kabir and Dr. Shaurav have been here for the last half-an-hour. Priya has been entertaining them," Mrs. Rahman explained in a voice of doom.

Pushpa gaped at her in astonishment. It was virtually impossible for the parents of marriageable daughters to introduce the prospec tive groom to a more attractive younger sister.

in case he preferred the younger to the elder. "Get dressed quickly," entreated Mrs. Rahman almost wringing her hands as she left the room.

Pushpa got changed as requested but most reluctantly. She was tired and hungry but now she would have to dress up and smilingly entertain those two irritating men. It was enough to make her scream. She imagined the reac tion of everybody if she screamed in reality and smiled as she entered the room. Priya was looking most enchanting and judging by the expressions of both her companions they

thought so too. As she had judged vesterday Dr. Shaurav was more social than Dr Kabir, who was doing his best to imitate a wax statue. A very enamoured wax statue, amended Pushpa glancing at him a second time. Oh, well, she didn't blame him. Priya was a thousand times more attractive than she was

Pushpa turned to look at Dr. Shaurav. Judging by their conversation, he had seemed to have reached a good understanding with Priva.

Priya caught sight of her and immediately

Pushpa entered the room and greeted the

"There was no trouble at all," Shaurav as-

Pushpa was about to say something sharp

"Priya was telling me that you really admire

"Lots of people don't," replied Shaurav,"

"Why?" asked Pushpa interested. "Do you

Shaurav laughed. "I can't answer that. It is

"I'm sure Kabir Bhai is a very talented doc-

On no, he isn't," contradicted Shaurav.

Pushpa looked at him in amazement. "But

"But how much can one help?" Shaurav

"But you must try your best," argued

"Of course we try our best but in some cases

"Yes," agreed Priya. "Why slave away as a

"Kabir hasn't touched a patient since he

don't you want to use your knowledge to help

people? I mean you have a social obligation to

asked." "90 per cent of the people are mal-

nourished. How can treatment be affective of

their socio-economic position is not im-

it is quite hopeless. At least Kabir is spared

some of the misery and frustration that I face.

doctor when you can earn so much more as a

businessman? Shaurav Bhai, if I were you

passed. He manages his father's business."

tors," Priya said smiling at him. Kabir

against the code of medical ethics," "Of course

medical ethics was just created to protest

inefficient doctors!" Pushpa was going to con-

especially patients who have been treated by

cried. "Here is the person you've been waiting

visitors. "Have you been waiting long?" she in-

quired politely. "I'm awfully sorry to have kept

you waiting. I hope you didn't find it too irk-

sured her. "Priya has been entertaining us

but controlled herself just in time. "Yes I can

doctors", Dr Shaurav commented.

coughed, choked and turned red.

"Who doesn't?" aid Pushpa lightly.

to see for so long! Apa come and sit down."

some."

very well."

see that!"

kill them.?"

the people."

proved?"

Pushpa.

He earns more too.

Your father has also not a business. Why don't you join that?"

Pushpa gave Priya a reproving look. Sometimes Priya had a sensibility at all. The next day Pushpa found Priya volubly talking into the phone

And then she said you talked too much -Priya stopped and listened. "No! No! It's not him! She doesn't like him!" - "If you ask me your strategy is wrong - Something like that might do - Priya suddenly caught sight of Pushpa and laughed. "Oh apu. I didn't see you!" and then "Apu wants to use the phone I'll call vou later!"

"Who was that?" inquired Pushpa. "Oh that — that was um...Monica," replied Priya. "Monica is having a troubled love-life."

"She always is." remarked Pushpa. "What's the problem this time?"

'She really likes this person but he doesn't like her. It is so tragic!" Pushpa thought there was more to the story, but didn't inquire any further

One week later, Mrs. Rahman came with dire news. "Do you know that Priya talks to Shauray on the phone everyday?"

Pushpa wasn't very surprised. After all,

"Does she also talk to Dr. Kabir every day?" Pushpa asked. Mrs. Rahman's expression changed. "No. And that is another thing - "she sighed and left the room.

Priya was very pretty and very lively.

A Short Story by Saifa Rashid

wrapped parcel

me a parcel?"

"Apa, a parcel," he said.

scription on the title page.

down several times.

books at Priva.

tinue on this subject, but Priya changed the at her scared face for a minute and threw the

as if he had propositioned her.

Pushpa looked at him in surprise. "Who sent

"I don't know, apa. Someone sent it by car."

Pushpa took it from him and turned it over

Inside were two of the latest novels by her

curiously. Then she tore open the wrapping

favourite author. She opened one to find an in-

Dr Shaurav had simply written, "To Pushpa,

How dare he! How dare he! His temerity, his

from Shaurav." But Pushpa was as taken aback

impudence took her breath away. He went out

with Priya and sent presents to her, Pushpa!

He most probably had the impertinence to

think she would favour his courtship of Priya.

Well, she would not. If she would help it, she

wouldn't let Priya marry that man at all. Unable

to contain her feelings Pushpa walked up and

"Priya! Priya!" Pushpa screamed. "Come hare

Priya appeared immediately. Pushpa looked

"Tell Shaurav with my compliments that I

Priya picked the books up from the floor

"I said take than away!" Pushpa's voice shook

"All right I'm take tan," replied Priya. "But

Priya fled from the room before Pushpa

Pushpa was even more upset. To think that

Maybe, mused Pushpa as she browsed

Priya could defy her specially for the sake of

that -that-! World failed her and she burst

through the bookshops a of New Market a few

days later, she had been too harsh. She could

have kept the Shaurav seemed a polite, well-

informed man and was also good looking.

Perhaps, it would be better to apologias. She

don't want his presents and never to send than

and looked at them. "But they are written by

"Don't contradict me! Take than away!":

you won't be able to refuse his gifts forever."

your favourite authors," she protested.

"But-" began Priva.

with suppressed emotion.

could attack her.

into tears.

From this Pushpa deduced that Dr. Kabir was the prospective suitor and they still hadn't sent any word which was a polite type of relection.

The next day when she was studying in her room a servant entered bearing a brightly Talking of Priya, there was Priya and who was

with her? It surely couldn't be Shaurav? Pushpa quickly hid behind a shelf of and let them go by. Then she emerged and cautiously followed them. hoping that they would not look back. Luckily they did not, but that was because they were too engrossed talking. thought Pushpa caustically. At least Priva was talking and Shaurav was listening. He looked exactly like a hypnotized sheep, said Priva to herself trying to keep her temper under con-

The couple entered a sari-shop. Priya's favourite sari-shop, one of the most expensive sari-shops in New Market. - Priya had always declared she would buy her wedding sari from this shop. Suddenly Pushpa. Stopped. Was Priya contemplating marriage? Inspite of all her liveliness Priya had strong principles. she wouldn't go sari-shopping unless she was serious about him. Than would Priya get married before her? Pushpa developed a headache and went home.

Pushpa sensed an air of excitement in the house, but she ignored everything and locked herself in her room. How could she watch Priya get married to Shaurav? if only she was married herself, she didn't are to whom then at least she would retain a shared of dignity. If only she was married - a.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Mrs. Rahman timidly tapping the door.

"Pushpa. Pushpa beti. open the door," she requested.

"Amma. I've got a headache." Pushpa replied.

"Please beti, It's important."

Mrs. Rahman sat on the edge of her bed and fidgeted with the end of her Sari.

Pushpa sighed and opened the door.

"I don't know how to say this," Mrs. Rahman began nervously. Pushpa looked at her in growing panic. She wasn't going to announce that Priya was getting married next month?

"But you're a sensible girl," Mrs. Rahman continued." You won't make a fuss of I speak plainly." No! No! No! begged Pushpa silently.

"The fact is - well - I've received on offer of Marriage for you." Mrs. Rahman tried to gauge Pushpa's reaction.

"For me?" Pushpa was amazed. "Yes that nice doctor — "

"I'm marry him," declared Pushpa. Mrs. Rahman was pleased but slightly suspicious, "Don't you want to know anything about

him?" she asked. "What's there to know? asked Pushpa flippantly. "He's nice and he's a doctor."

Dr Kabir was also stupid, pompous, and money-loving Pushpa reflected her eyes filling with tears. She turned her head away so her mother could not see them.

"He wants to go out with you tomorrow," said Mrs. Rahman hesitantly. Pushpa sobbed. "Don't cry beti, don't cry." Mrs. Rahman hugged her daughter tightly.

Since Pushpa cried all day and most of the night nobody mentioned the marriage to her again. Pushpa spent the whole time visualizing her life with Dr Kabir. He could most probably grow fat and touch and would never have time for her. Oh how she hated businessmen!

At 10 o'clock the next day, Mrs. Rahman entered the room purposefully and drew the

curtains to let the light in. "Pushpa of and have a bath. I'm get your clothes ready, "she ordered Emerging from the bathroom Pushpa was surprised to find Mrs. Rahman laying out a new Sari; It was a Mirpur soft silk in a beautiful shade of light

pink. "Where did this come from?" she asked. "I sent Priya to buy it yesterday. Your in laws wanted to send a sari but I disagreed."

Mrs Rahman said. Do they think they had bought me already

thought Pushpa in indignation. Mrs, Rahman was putting the final toucher to Pushpa's hair when the doorbell rang. "He's here already! "She cried and rushed off "Priya bring Pushpa in!"

Priya was wearing a new silk sari, "Come on apu. Your husband is waiting for you," she said

putting her. Pushpa eyed her fulminatingly but remained silent.

Priya pushed her in the sitting from and ran

"You!" exclaimed Pushpa in amzagement as Shaurav turned towards her.

"But of course," Shaurav said. "Did you expect anyone else?"

,"Dr, Kabir," she faltered. "Dr Kabir!" said Shaurav, "He has the bad

taste to prefer Priya. As for you I fell, love with you. when I saw you peering out of the corner of your eye in Aarang. You were so scared, so brave, so beautiful," "But Priya", began Pushpa

"Priya was my greatest help. She gave me

the inside information I needed. "Of course," he added reflectively "All her information was wrong. She said you wanted to marry me, but I hear you've been crying non-stop for 24 hours, so I'll be direct. Do you

want to marry me?" Pushpa should and nodded.

must ask Priya if she had returned the yet. would leave my job." A Monologue by Shakib Ahsan

HESE care worn men sulking around arbours and squirting poison under the azure firmament which no longer houses the metro birds, fall right where they belong to a nicety. Yet the composition is flawed. I try to call to my mind what is wrong with it, straddling on the wall, then it hits me looking down at the waters still as dawn. I can slip off and impart my final touch on this picture before the veil is drawn completely over. Afternoon has brought me your letter. I'm a bit edgy. For the first time since you left I'm looking civilized with the haircut and all. Having suppressed the appetite all day to run over the letter I thought I had lost it. I have been out of temper until I started to go through it late at night. Now I'm more composed, more suave. Forgive me my untoward feelings I had for you, I'm truly ashamed. You've closed your letter with the beautiful word "please" six times. This is the first time

For Goodness's sake how did this wee girl occupy me inextricably, who isn't aware of her own elements let alone the place she covets for. Why do ! feel like dying just to see her? Day by day this infatuation is on the rise, running riot in my

someone has thought me

worth addressing with it.

cleft of quiet, unimpeded, throwing me off the hinges. I can't afford to let on all the weaknesses I have towards her, it'll cut me dead and it is

Alone in the evening halfengrossed in reading I was listening to a lullaby being rhymed for some brat next door. A very musical, soprano voice, I couldn't help notice and also a nebulous felling in me for that unforseen girl who speaks so eloquently under her breath.

· I love old cities. The Appian Way winding past all those caravansaries where the pristine moon once shed its light on the very cobbled streets. whited facades, stripped cornices and cabbage carts. A peachfaced little girl brought. up in overt negligence has been standing in the street corner. Have all the poignant, tortured girls been born without a promise of sunlight? Downbeaten, on way home I looked for her, she wasn't there. Midday! Rooftop. I had been in the arms of Orpheus through the evening. Then heard somebody calling for me and found myself caught between a pair of sedating eyes from the roof next. Close of days break my heart, the ineptness of every surrounding thing is never so ubiquitous

especially of this fleeting life.

while I leaf through The Morning Sun. Browsing through a book in the attic or

simply idling the rest of the day is how time is generally killed after supper. Evening gets as long as it takes over a cup of tea. After that turning in is just hours away. I'm wriggling to get away from this nihilistic living. When are all the exams going to be over? When is that month of Sundays com-

Morning passes into the day

ing? A skein of duck rejoiced at the brevity of night shredding its fog-still silence. Lazy rooks cawed its first much later. listen to every faint twerp not yet ready to turn out. When I had got out of bed the night was still there lingering in that half blanch half dark world. Blusters of chilly wind blew stopping briskly. I could even hear blobbing sounds of dew drops on leaves. I love this serene world. If only I could

take you on a walk with me!

But this world has a life so short that it vanishes into the thin air as soon as it appears, much like yours.

I was sauntering alone in the rooms, when a girl whom I don't remember meeting with darkened the door before took notice of her. She took me by surprise with her few muffled words. Probably she had asked my permission to enter. Her silent poise, bland voice left me shaken that long afternoon. I climbed into the attic to catch my breath. You may think, has he lost his mind? Watching at the swirl of dry leaves all day reminded me of two long forgotten hands and fingers as beige as butter. The loss of you bleeds the same way it does when it is time for the leaves to fall.

I was in the bus when two faces put me out of countenance. One was of a sad girl in rags, her carmine lips were knitted with a frozen disquiet,

eyes run down. The other one was much younger, fair, thickly salved around the eye. I tripped into those fathomless pits as soon as I started to step down and got out of the bus with some invisible scars.

Not much going out these days more if not in the evening. To walk up and down the roof is outing enough for the nonce. The sky is bereft of clouds, all the stars are familiar but still I'm not bored out. The Orion resembles a plaid filigree in the southern sky. may be it has casted far away like every thing in nature, like you, like the flowers coming out in rounds. We only count our days, in perilous and ghastly wait.

It was blowing hard with plashes of showers when went over to bed. A small feathered creature blinded by the lightnings and whipped up by the winds had found its way through the open window. I had the lights put on, the shivering uninvited guest was a tiny sparrow, smell of wilderness was still on her wet coat, bewilderment in frightened eyes. I left her in the cosy shelter of the garage with the choice of leaving it whenever she would feel.

Nobody writes me a line, desperately need to be heard. squirm and gasp but don't put down a single jot. What is more to there to make us under-

stand? You told me. "We're going nowhere." I amassed enough strength to look you in the eyes. You said, "What are you looking for?" In this world of dire neces-

sity, selfish interests, whowould-rule-the-roast races there still are women to whom to love is be-all and end-all; who also hardly forget about the crow or bone whatever there was to pick with. Some passions are inborn among men like for the moon, some has to be nurtured like my love for you. How are those nimble feet and soft eyes getting along with the woman my heart once went for who could easily pass off as a girl ready to read anyone a lesson?

I don't have a near "you" or a distant "you" to choose from, for better or worse I have the only "you". You say we can never be one, so I should stop longing. Must I not writhe? Life is not worth an hour's purchase but something has to be there, whatever keeps you going. Is staying awake a remedy of dreaming? I have learnt to love you, I can't reverse it. The knowledge is simply not there, the wish nonethemore. What a terrible revelation! I would it never to be true. I love you because my brain has fallen in love with and dreams to live with that of yours by nobodys standards, in nobodys place.

The Great Twilight

(Mahagodhuli)

by Jibanananda Das

The wheelcart idly rolls laden with golden straw

The birds: black, blue and brown-flap their wings in the cellar of the corn field White path dust flies turn into slumber and mingle with the

As the setting sun leans upon the edges of pigeon-peas field.

Now in solitude his blood longs for the taste of sleep The pregnant field looks so good-

fire dims and glows in its eye. One day the smell of comely charcoal will bring relief to fire.

Whereat wastes charter pact commission plan; Why is the uproar of envy jealousy slander exhaustion terror and blood-shed? My heart is as answerless to time as it had shut up Having asked the slender nun the questions

Translated by Faizul Latif Chowdhury

when Buddha deceased

- the late-noon sunshine fades

Your Visit

by Nazim Mahmood

Your appearance springs a surprise Of Ajanta and Elora before my eyes My blood boils, whispers through the vein: Drink the poison — it brings no pain'

Your appearance makes my hours dash Like a sprinter for an Olympic cash The more I win the more I lose The more my lust for you doth ooze

On a surprise visit you step in At once I take it, a lottery win My wit's at its end How the cash to spend Nonsense non-stop My talks do gallop To amuse a friend I am so keen. Your visit, a gust of fun Like the cranes flying in the sun Flaps within a restless bird An express train throbs in the blood.

Striptease

by Gazi Sadeq

When we see striptease on the front stage Like champions of morals We express our rage.

While observing our performance at the back stage The striptease champion Spits on our camouflage.

Revelation

by Helal Kabir Chowdhury When it appeared on the sky Of Thunderbay, it was snowing. I was a little puzzled, no lover's

What did it want to tell me On that afternoon, I was aware, conscious. It was the final toll of the bell My fait accompli, to say good bye to the Bay.

Song was sung at that precious moment.

What was destined for me was so clear My 'gurus' directed me to ascend on a Higher plane, I could not say 'no'. My battered soul pieced together, I was relived.

Why was it best towed on me I cannot decipher, I was made a saint. Divine task was assigned for me, Could I fulfil it for years to come?

It hath been burning ever and anon

When I carried it along hence My fault was none. Maybe the reason is still live. So pleased and undisturbed.

Heavenly Beatitude

In a frame of mud adhesive I feel a spark perennial

by Golam Nabi

Since I was thrown down on the earth of the mortals. Over the years the flame hath remained undimmed. Though desire voluptuous prick me I'm burn'd with a fire celestial Sometimes desire lustful flames me. Yet the desire sublime persists eternally. In moment sedate and comfort I'm fired by that desire exalted I feel the pulse of fervour eternal in my frame corporeal. Though, very often, I desire a life full of sensations, A soul encaged within this material frame yearns to savour beatitude blissful. My heart pines for a communion with the eternal I feel a redounding grace of the beneficent. For a time long I wander'd to find the path fulgent That leads to the land blithesome At long last, I've discovered the Beacon, That beckons man to that land radiant.

n 1 1 1 n Bangladesh Burns

by Faruquddin Ahmed

Beautiful greeneries have turned grey The once pictureseque land along the Bengal Bay Is turning into desert; is it to the world known? For no natural phenomenon or fault of its own Withdrawal of river water across the border Had caused it all in the past and will perhaps in future. Bangladesh dries up but none seems to care For it's a small country and has not much power It appeals for water, but gets only assurances So in the Ganges here it's sand that dances. This time we hear they have promised to consider -Let's hope, sense and humanity will really matter To restore the lovely natural looks of this land And make it again a happy abode to live and tend