

# RISING STARS

## Liberation — Through the Eyes of a Child

by Nadia S Hossain

**A**N exhibition of children's paintings on the Liberation War of Bangladesh was held at La Galerie to commemorate the first death anniversary of *Shahed Janani* Jahanara Imam.

With over forty participants, all between the ages of four and twelve, not one painting was similar to another. Each picture told a different story, each child's impressions of the pain, suffering and even blood shed caused during the Liberation War of 1971 was clearly represented in the form of beautiful water colours, poster paints, pastel colours and crayon pictures. Children as young as four and five painted pictures of families crying over the death of their loved ones who lay on the ground in a pool of blood.

One of the children painted a picture of a troop of endless soldiers wading through swamps holding their ammunition above their heads. Another painted a picture of two people tied to a tree with soldiers aiming powerful guns at them, beside them on the next tree were another two people being hanged and opposite these four were a number of people being lined up awaiting assassination. This painting was done by a nine-year old.

The impressions of a young child who was too young to have been there but old enough to realise just how much people suffered, fighting for their country.

One painting in particular that

captured your attention was that of a ten year who's painting covered almost everything that people experienced during the Liberation War. Starting from the soldiers flying the Bangladeshi flag entering a small village with children hiding in oversized drain pipes to the soldiers kicking in doors of houses, with women and children crying over the death of their husbands and fathers and lastly young men and boys on the roofs of their houses aiming their guns at the enemy. This one picture depicted all these different images, all the images of the ten-year old artist.

*Shahed Janani* Jahanara Imam was born in Shunderpur of Mursheedabad on the 3rd of May 1929. With an impressive educational background at the age of 23 she was made Headmistress of Siddeswari Girls School, twelve years later she went to the United States on a Fulbright scholarship, she then received her MA from Dhaka University. Jahanara Imam became a professor at the Teachers Training College in 1966. After leaving the institute in 1968 Jahanara Imam began to get involved in various socio-cultural organizations as well as writing, 'Of Blood and Fire', which was published in 1986 and was one of Jahanara Imam's best sellers, she wrote a large number of other books on various subjects, hence making a name for herself as a well respected leading women writer of Bangladesh.

## My Special Brother

by Rohin Francis

**W**HEN I say disabled, most people think of someone in a wheelchair, but this is really only half the image of disability.

I shall explain very simply. There are two main types of disability, one to the body, one to the brain. The former is usually a person with a perfectly ordinary mind, however perhaps with a physical problem from birth or possibly someone who has lost a limb after birth.

I do not know a great deal about physical handicap, but I do know about mental handicap.


My brother, Neil, is mentally handicapped. Mental handicap, as you probably know, or may have guessed by now, is where the handicap affects the brain. There are many different types of mental handicap, all do different things to the brain, but they all cause certain forms of learning difficulties.

Neil is nineteen years old and at the moment is going to the Richmond Tertiary College (London). He is capable of doing nearly anything a mainstream person can do to some extent. In many respects his and many forms of mental handicap are in a way worse than physical disability, because they affect the brain, the mind is not able to make the body do certain things, although the body could probably do them otherwise, but this does not bother Neil!

In his college, which he started this term and he likes a lot, Neil does 'core work', which consists of the main subjects of the Curriculum which involve developing 'life skills'. He also takes walks in the park with his friends, where he studies wildlife. Besides college, Neil goes to three outside college activities on a regular basis. These are a youth club, Scouts, and another club specially for people like Neil. The first mentioned youth club caters for anyone who wants to go, mainstream or not. Neil especially enjoys going there to meet all his friends and the monthly disco! Even when he is ill, he is always keen to go.

The Petersham and Ham Sea Scouts was originally for mainstream participants only, but Neil and another school friend went along a few years ago, and they became the 'pioneers', as now several people from Neil's old special school and college attend. The Scouts is probably the most active of the three; Neil goes to swimming galas and, of course, Scout Camps. In fact, he and I have endured nights under snow-encrusted canvas in Ham and the Highlands of Scotland.

The last club is specially for people with learning difficulties, like Neil. Neil often goes on hikes — he enjoys walking, greatly — and last half-term he took a trip to Thorpe Park with his club.



For the last three years, when Neil was in his old special school, Neil participated in the London Special Olympics. Over these years, Neil won two gold, two silver and three bronze medals, all either sprinting one hundred metres or walking. His most memorable run was in the first year, when he won the gold for the hundred metres after two heats and a final. A few days later he appeared in the Richmond, Twickenham and Barnes Times, our local newspaper.

People with a mental handicap, are often known to possess a particular talent. A young adult with severe learning difficulties, and who appeared on television several times recently, was able to draw buildings and scenery to the absolute correct scale and to every detail, days after seeing the real article, perhaps only for a few minutes. Neil is not able to do anything so spectacular, for after all, that particular talented artist was a rare case, but Neil's memory really is where he excels.

When we go shopping, my mother or father need never take a list, for he remembers every item. Every week, he pops down to the local news agent and picks up the television guide for the week. He will study it for a maximum of fifteen minutes, and for the rest of the week we can ask him, "Neil, what's on this evening on Channel 3?", and he will list the whole evening's television programmes!

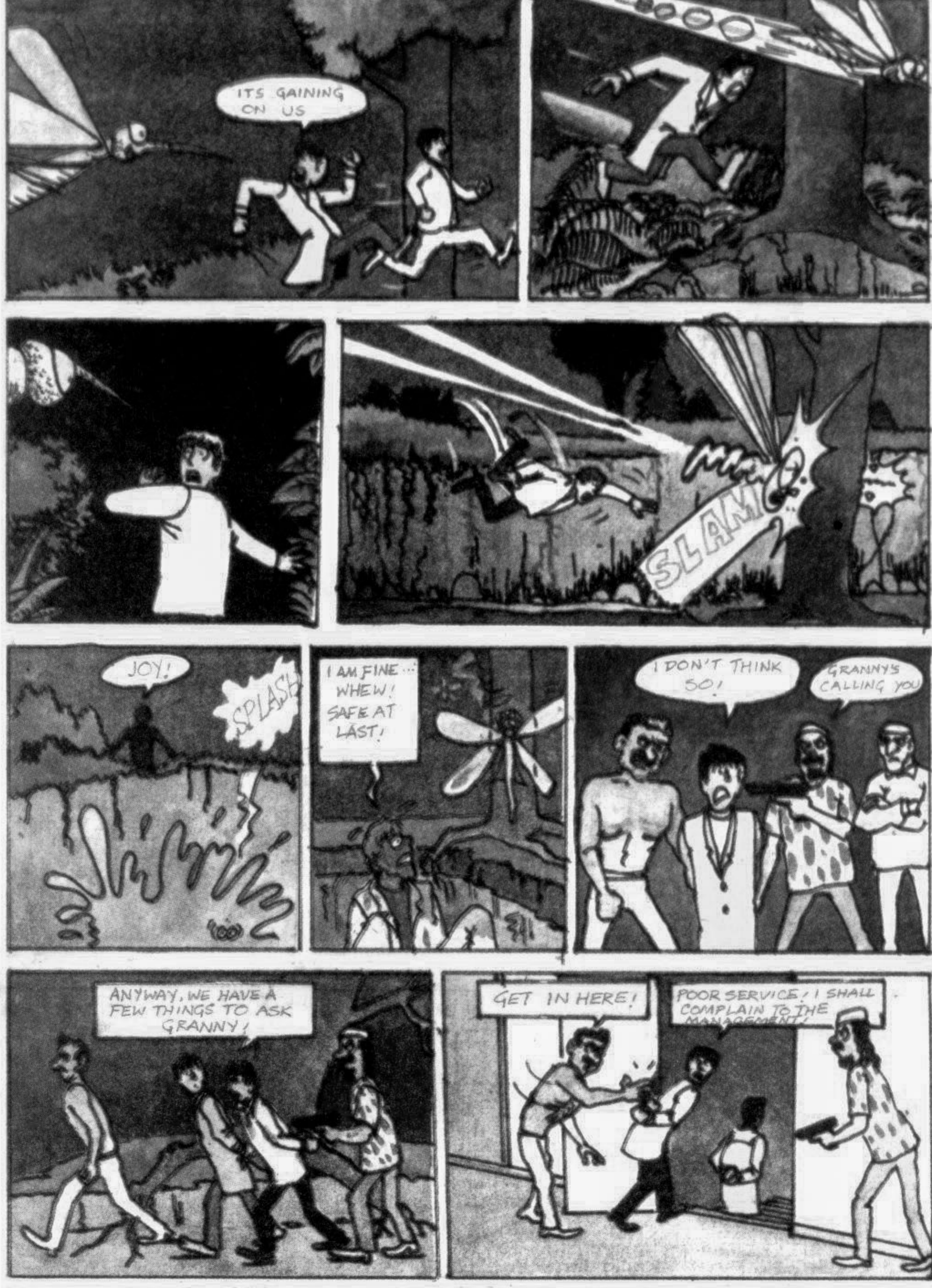
Neil's sense of direction and recognition of roads is superb, and if the driver takes a wrong turning he will be the first to notice. He is our morning 'alarm clock'. Because he is such an early riser, he will wake us up whenever we want.

Neil is also a great fan of sport and he knows a great deal about cricket, snooker, tennis, golf and bowls. When he watches the TV programme, 'A Question of Sport', which I believe is also shown on 'Star TV', he gets many of the answers right, and sometimes before the contestants!

On the whole, Neil is extremely kind, and always puts his family before himself. He has no hatred in him at all, he is polite and always very concerned about what is going on around him. We all love him and we hope he will get on fine throughout his life and is always happy.

## The Missing Machine

by Sharier



## INSANITY

by Sonia Hossain

**H**OW can anybody wish me for my dreams to come true when for the couple of weeks I have been only having nightmares. Wild ones, terrifying, takes the day lights out of me. I don't know how many more nights I would be lying awake, my head underneath the pillow, haunted by my haunting dreams.

I am so very confused, days don't seem days anymore and I just get terrified when it starts getting dark outside. I lit my house up, with all sorts of lights, the electric bill is now always outrageously high. I forgot how it's like to eat and taste delicious foods, which goes in your palattestimulating all those taste buds, making them gambolling with ecstasy.

For I am an epicure, now I eat food for survival only. I hate looking at meat they seem to turn into life, and then starts doing in most horrible thing imaginable. I just loathe thinking of it! Talking about survival if it goes on for much longer I wouldn't be surviving at all. I just live, waiting, waiting for what God only knows. My eyes got huge big big cycles underneath them, my hairs have lost their luster and growing grey day by day, my clothes are a crying shame, they don't seem to fit me anymore and my house stinks, man does it stink.

The kids next door started calling me a witch, I can't really blame them, I could use a broom for transport! All day long I listen to funky music at least to lift my spirits, dance along with the music or read books on dreams, insomnia or look into the mirror searching for an answer, to where I have lost myself to.

Tori my best friend came over yesterday one look at me and she gave a shriek, if only my dreams weren't that scary, I would have had, got frightened by her shriek, nothing could scare me now. I used to be frightened by a mere cockroach, now it makes me laugh, I laugh and then start crying, uncontrollably. They (my friends) suggest that I start seeing a psychologist, which I do, but nothing seems to help much my nightmares don't go away, even when I don't sleep, I seem to be seeing them wide awake.

My maid suggested it was the Saturn that had bought my soul, and that I should offer my body and mind, and have it garnated with prayers then they will leave me in peace. Thank God I still have the sanity not to listen to some illiterate witch for nowhere. Tori got me some food from a restaurant, not much cooking herself, we sat down with the food, she was blabbing away how awful I look and what had happened in her office since, and about a new

movie, which she would like to go with me, and on and on.

I don't mean to be rude, I loved company but I was not much liking it when the food was tasting like someone's vomit. (not that I have tasted anybody's). My days and nights are the same to me. I started hearing our neighbour speaking Greek, while she can't much speak Bengali properly, I didn't myself know Greek, but I could swear I understood it now. To confirm my wildest fear, I called the University's language department, I explained everything to them, and I repeated whatever I heard my neighbour in Greek to a professor who knew Greek.

He said I spoke perfect Greek, even better than a Greek. GOD! There was only one thing left to speculate-I, Carma Chowdhury, not in perfect sound of mind and body is insane. What next, will I start singing, killing people, burning houses? Like what they do when you are mad? Are they going to admit me to a mental clinic? I cried and cried letting my emotions out, I stared bawling, I didn't want to own my body, my head anything.

I didn't know of any family madness, if there was one, anyway what did it matter now, I am mad, I just wanted to be normal, not knowing what normal was any longer, but still normal. I put my head into the oven and let the gas run. But I remembered it could be lethal to my neighbours so I thought I rather take an overdose of sleeping pills.

It was very misty, foggy and cold this creature resembling an orangutan, its eye's caught fire in pools of blood, screaming without any sound, turned into a bloody skeleton. Another disgusting creature rose from the gutter spurting blood from his mouth, ears, eyes and nostrils, sinking away into a pool full of leeches. Thousand of screams, of mad people everywhere, than nothing. Silence, even frightening than the screams.

Trembling with an explosive mixture of fright and fury Carma woke. She had heard from someone that it harder to die than survive. She woke up to find her best friend Tori, couple of nurses and a doctor crowded near her bed, trying to comfort her. She gave up. What was she fighting anyway, her battered inner conscious? How long are they going to last anyway.

She found that she had develop and enormous appetite, and ate whatever they severed her and more.

She thought she could eat forever, and it even tasted great. Whatever it was, it was just a terrible nightmare, she didn't want to have one the rest of her remaining life.

## The Sky's the Limit

by Khandaker Tanvir Ahmed

**T**HREE decades ago, when Alan Shepard was preparing to strap himself into a Mercury capsule and become the first American in space, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) needed a small, lightweight electrocardiograph.

Finding nothing of the sort in existence, NASA doctors and engineers did the only thing they could: they built on themselves. That instrument, the size of a pack of cigarettes, began an era of space medical research that continues with the Space Shuttle Program and promises to be a centerpiece in NASA's efforts well into the 21st century.

In the early days of space flight, medical concerns were always at the fore. Each new milestone in space endurance—from Shepard's 15-minute suborbital hop to the two-week marathon of Gemini 7 in 1965—knocked down "straw men" hears that the human body would not function in space. But it was not until the early 1970s, after the Apollo moonlanding program was over, that NASA started medical research in orbit.

Three missions to the space station, lasting 28, 56, and 84 days respectively, amassed a mountain of data on human adaptation to weightlessness. Skylab crews underwent some disturbing changes including loss of muscle mass, bone demineralization and a decrease in red blood cells.

These adaptations to zero-gravity would have to be understood and dealt with before permanent space stations and visits to other planets could be feasible. But after Skylab, NASA settled into a long space flight hiatus while engineers developed a reusable Space Shuttle.

Only the joint Soviet-American mission in 1975 broke the seven-year lapse. During NASA's hiatus, advances in miniaturization, computers and microelectronics developed for the space program were finding their way into the commercial medical arena. NASA touted among such "spinoffs" the tiny, implantable programmable pacemakers derived from space

technology.

Space hardware can also be adapted for terrestrial research, such as the Bioreactor, a cell-culture device developed at the Johnson Space Center for Shuttle research. In ground-based tests, the Bioreactor has generated bits of human lung and small intestine tissue from normal primary cell cultures, apparently for the first time in any laboratory. And while the Bioreactor is destined for space, part of the technology is applicable and will be marketed on Earth.

While Shuttle missions will continue to include medical activities, bigger opportunities for industry are on the horizon. For the rest of this century, NASA's focus will be on its permanently manned space station, Freedom.

It remains the centerpiece of NASA's program. Slated for habitation by 1996, the space station will be home to as many as eight astronauts on tours of duty lasting from 90 days to six months or more. For the station, NASA needs a new generation of space medical hardware. The first priority will be to keep Freedom's crews healthy, and for that NASA is creating the Crew Health Care System (CHCS).

This will let astronauts cope with anything from routine injuries to heart attacks. In the event of a medical emergency, the goal would be to stabilize a patient before putting him or her on a Shuttle for return to Earth.

In addition to an extensive pharmacy, CHCS will include such familiar items as a defibrillator and a ventilator, as well as innovations like an automated clinical chemistry analyzer and a digital x-ray camera that can transmit its pictures to doctors on Earth.

Also under consideration is a small CAT scanner to study how an astronaut's bone density changes in space. Once the station is operational, one main goal will be to pick up where Skylab left off, studying human adaptation to space flight.

NASA hopes to have the space station, outfitted with the first components of CHCS and Biomedical Monitoring and Counter-measures system, ready for its first visitors sometime in 1996. It will include equipments like gas chromatographs, EKG with Holter monitor, bioimpedance analyzer, centrifugal incubator, urinalysis system, osmometer and miniaturized flow cytometer.

Unlike space station crews able to return to Earth in an emergency, Mars astronauts will truly be on their own. Autonomous medical care will be necessary. Computer aided diagnostic systems may be included on the Mars ship.

Undoubtedly the astronauts will need the capability to do major surgery. The sheer length of the flights will require blood and pharmaceuticals with extremely long shelf life. There is even a potential need for "telemedicine", giving doctors in mission control the ability to "examine" the astronauts using high resolution television pictures and other data beamed to Earth.

Ultimately, the most daunting challenges will be both medical and psychological. "We've never done anything like this before." With talk like that, it's no wonder they call space "the final frontier."

### My Mother

Oh! How I love my mother!  
Who loves and cares  
And if I lie  
She could not bear.

She gave me birth  
So that I could live on earth.  
She is always alert  
So that I could not get hurt.

Oh! How I love my mother!  
Who looks like a choc-bar  
And smells like a flower.

by Aysha Wisam Rashid

## The Rain and I

by Fyaz Shahnoor

**S**OME people dislike the rain, they despise how a shower can disrupt their already set routine. But I adore the rain.

It spoils me to the hilt. It pampers me until I'm almost gurgling in ecstasy like a child who's accidentally found out where mom has been hiding the cookies all this time. Maybe this is because the rain to me, is a symbol of freedom from the chains of everyday life. For a brief moment I can break loose from all worldly responsibilities without the slightest remorse or guilt.

I don't know whether this affinity towards rain was God's gift to me at birth, but I can vividly recall how as a child of six a rainy day seemed like a present bestowed upon me from the heavens. There I was, dressed in the school uniform, school bag on my shoulder, standing in tense anticipation with an expectant look in my tiny eyes. Like a wretched prisoner at the gallows I was waiting for the final verdict of my mother. It was a grave question that mothers for unknown generations have been trying to solve: whether to send the child to school or not in this rainy weather. Then just as my six year old heart was going to burst, it had been decided. I would not have to go. I believe that it was then that my young mind first decided that rain is synonymous to freedom.

A rainy day at Didima's house had added significance. There were all sorts of *achars*, burned jackfruit

seeds, *khichuri* and a story or two thrown into the bargain almost free. And with a troop of four *mamas* and two aunts this young dude did all the partying he wanted to do.

*Chota mama* used to tell me about the Bill Board charts in America, it didn't matter if I didn't understand a word he said, just having a grown up conversation was enough for me. Baby auntie told me hair raising ghost stories which would keep me up most of the night but I loved to hear them during the day time.

And then there was *Kabir mama*, who, given the opportunity would grab me by the hair and ask me to recite the multiplication table. I had serious doubts whether he knew it himself. Those were the good old days, I'd give anything to go back.

It's strange, now I come to think of it, how my young mind would conjure up romantic and sometimes funny images of rain. I don't remember, but someone once told me that rain was actually the tears of generations past.

It was fascinating. I had no idea that dead people could cry. I used to watch the rain in earnest belief, poor souls what were they crying about? After all everybody went to heaven after they die, so why are they sad?

This explanation suited me just fine until a distant cousin discretely furnished me with a more interesting and enjoyable explanation to the phenomenon. It was the dead spirits untrusting on us in utter disgust at the way the world was being run. Oh, yes I thought, rubbing my hands, that's more like it. Logic was never one of my finer qualities, and you have to admit to a six year old it's the originality that counts.

As I grew older the scenario didn't change much. I cherished a rainy day with as much gusto as before. I think the lexicographers moulded the word *lazy* after me. A rainy day means living in perpetual slow motion, a moral catastrophe for the workaholic. But for me, it is as if the devil himself beckons me to commit the ultimate sin, ease my body into a soft chair by the veranda, coffee at my side, and read an angry Stienbeck or Melow Du Maurier.

And ever so often I will doze off into a wonderful daydream coaxed on by the hypnotic stimulae of the sound of rain. I've carried off countless fair maidens and solved innumerable world problems sitting on that easy chair.

I sometimes wonder, it would have been a tragedy if God hadn't created rain. You'll agree, if you're as lazy as I am, we're fortunate that he did.

