

TEENS and TWENTIES

LANDMARKS OF MY LIFE

by Rahnuma Wahid



My native land, a land of lush green foliage and quite natural grace.

—Star photo

It was a mammoth metallic form which dominated the nocturnal skyline. Powerful night lights shone upwards, illuminating the twin towers, standing guard over the Thames River. The water of the river was quiescent, a silky spread of liquid gold, reflecting the splendour of the grandiose structure. Brightly lit buildings, along both banks, added to the picture of London by night. In the centre of it all stood the Tower Bridge, magnificent and glorious in its understated 19th century elegance.

At the impressionable age of six, I had returned to the land of my birth, to rediscover British hospitality and history. My amazement at the sights visited was profound. I had lived in Great Britain until the age of four, but my recollections of those years are indistinct and fleeting images. During my short sojourn in the UK, I reacquainted myself with the sights and sounds of London, and amidst the many memories associated with that visit, one stands supreme—Tower Bridge in the dark of night. The sheer majestic strength of the metal arms that swing out to let high-masted ships pass under it, fomented a great wonder in me. Against the pearly black background, the usually gray looking Bridge was transformed into a shining golden gateway. Nothing equaled its beauty.

From the man-made beauty of the UK, I returned to the natural beauty of the delta stretching into the pure blue of the Bay of Bengal. As the plane circled over the skies of Bangladesh, different shades of green, ranging from the yellow of mustard flowers to the dark green of jute stalks, greeted my eyes. The little plots of land, each a varying shade of green, together resembled a patchwork quilt, traversed by glimmering streams of silver. As we lost altitude, I could see people working in the fields, and the silver streams became immense rivers navigated, not by huge ships of immaculate white steel, but by small boats of dull brown wood powered by men with long poles of bamboo. Yes, this is my native land, a land of lush green foliage and quiet natural grace.

Yet, in this atmosphere of seeming tranquillity, many tumultuous waves have swept over the country. In 1952, while still a part of Pakistan,

one of the most bloody battles in all of Bengali history took place in present-day Bangladesh. The Bengali speaking people of East Pakistan refused to have the Pakistani Urdu language, imposed upon them. Their mother tongue was not to be changed. Ensnared in this refusal, West Pakistani troops stormed into the city of Dhaka, firing machine guns on the thousands of students assembled on the roads in protest.

A great many lives were lost, but the Bengali population won the battle. In commemoration of those who gave their lives, a memorial monument was built in the place where the first martyrs had fallen. I visited this edifice, at the age of seven. The

bold white structures, with the fiery red sun rising behind them accurately reflects the Bengali spirit. The language I speak today, survived only because of this latent pride, that the Bengalis possess.

Every year, on the 21st of February, the people of Bangladesh remember their sacrifice, and thousands march to the memorial ground to shower the place with floral wreaths. Their spirit pervades the minds of the multitudes and is the source of much inspiration.

I left the historically rich Bangladesh, to travel to another land of surpassing natural beauty. Here the natural elements have worked together to create a country of contrasts. There are undulating plains of sparse natural

vegetation, mountains with snow-capped peaks, and a coastline filled with the diverse marine life of the Indian Ocean. I lived in Kenya for five years, and in that time I became intimately acquainted with the untamed beauty of the nation, and the animals that roamed the open plains.

Suddenly in front of me the ground fell away almost vertically. I was on the lip of a gigantic chasm. Below me stretched a great plain, a haven for wildlife. In the distance I could see another almost vertical wall, rising to about the same height as the one I was standing on. The entire landscape was so uniform and continuous to the north and the south, it seemed unreal. Called "a scar on the earth's face," the

Great Rift Valley is a 4000-mile fissure stretching from Lebanon to Mozambique. Violent subterranean forces tore apart the earth's crust, causing huge chunks to sink between parallel fault lines, creating this sunken corridor. Standing on one of the most dramatic sections of the Valley that runs through Kenya, I surveyed the view in front of me. Never have I seen anything to compare to the natural symmetrical magnificence of the Rift Valley.

Animals roam freely in the level yellow plain and craters of the Valley and birds, especially flamingoes and pelicans, flock to the lakes that are an essential feature of the sunken land. So deep and so long is this parallel walled scar, that it is visible

from space, 90,000 miles away. I have since seen another wonder that is so immense, that it too is visible from the moon. However, it is in another part of the world and has required me to travel to another continent. My next destination is China.

Here in this most populous of lands, more man-made wonders have greeted me. The Great Wall of China, constructed by millions, over hundreds of years to protect China from the marauding Hun tribes from the north, is also visible from the moon. It stretches east-west across China, over hills, plains and the Gobi Desert, like a giant writhing snake, or as the Chinese say, a king dragon. I have walked along this magnificent testament of Chinese strength, marveling at the breadth and solidity of the centuries old, gray and weather-beaten Wall. The head of the dragon plunges into the China Sea and it is a stupendous sight as the waves crash against the mighty barrier.

The Wall which has all but disappeared in certain sections, is lined with watch towers, from where the sentinels of the past, had a bird's eye view of the vast level territory on both sides of the wall. Today, this landscape encompasses a view of the vast city of Beijing on one side, and distant buildings of another Chinese city on the other. Considerable changes have taken place over the centuries, but not so of the Great Wall.

It remains a symbol of Chinese history and might. For the Chinese people it is a source of pride and honour, and for me it has represented a challenge, a promise that any obstacle can be overcome by perseverance and dedication.

Each new country brought a unique experience for me to savour. Each landmark gave me fresh inspiration. As I stand at the brink of another momentous change, I await a new wave to sweep me over the edge and carry me to another land. Where shall I go? What shall I discover there? There are many questions and few answers, but I am content to wait, for I know that wherever I am led, I shall find a landmark to mark my passage and to represent a new and vital experience.

The writer is presently living in China.

Truth is Never Far Behind

by Muniza Shehzeen Haq and Syeda Nuzhat Zaman

I read with interest the article "Stunning Revelations," second series by Mridul Chowdhury who said that his aim is to bring to the forefront the ignorance about Bangladeshi history and culture among English-medium students in this country.

He noticed that 74 per cent students do not read any book on the history of Bangladesh and the students do not know about the Liberation War, an event of only 24 years ago. His survey included students of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). I strongly disagree that none of the students included in this 74 per cent are from IUB. Because no IUB students can say that they do not know or are not interested to know the culture or heritage of Bangladesh, I guess, Mridul Chowdhury only wanted to add a number to his survey.

IUB pays keen attention while designing its academic curriculum and in order to acquaint students with our sweet homeland, IUB has introduced a course named National Culture and Heritage (NCH101 & NCH102, 6 Credit Hours) as a compulsory foundation course. Having completed these two courses, a student of IUB does not only graduate in Business or Computer Science or Environmental Science and Management or Communication but are also furnished with a solid background of national culture and heritage.

As IUB sophomore students, we are very proud to say that "We" IUBIANS know our Bangladeshi history and culture. I cannot understand why anyone wants to give a false picture about our university with a label "English medium students". I would like to point out that private schools and private universities are not the same. One cannot compare private

schools to private universities. Apples and oranges cannot mix. A private university is an institution providing higher education, whereas private schools give primary and secondary education.

Some people keeping their eyes shut, based on ignorance, want to put English medium students to shame. Ignorance of history is not necessarily restricted to the student of English Medium Schools. Though history of Bangladesh is in the syllabus of Bengali Medium schools many of these student do not know much about it either now-a-days it has become a very common matter all over the country and it is not wise to blame only English Medium schools. We wish Chowdhury would think about it and include Bengali Medium schools and other renowned universities in his survey to find out the real view of the country.

The mission of IUB is to achieve the goals of higher education and of sustainable economic growth in the country but not to ignore the culture and the heritage of the country. We are becoming well-equipped with the latest management theories and emphasis placed on real life scenarios. Independent University students want to be world class graduates and serve their nation. They will be representing Bangladesh all over the world broadened and strengthened by knowledge of their culture and heritage.

We know some students intentionally deny the fact that they know a lot about Bangladeshi History and Culture. But as IUB students, we hope and believe that the poor and shameful view, he mentioned about students are not from IUB. We are confident that none of IUB's students will have trouble in passing the history exams of Bangladesh.

Truth is Here !!!

by Mridul Chowdhury

I read with disappointment the article "Truth is Never Far Behind" by Ms Muniza Shehzeen Haq and Ms Syeda Nuzhat Zaman, who seem to have grossly misunderstood the objective of my article "Stunning Revelations".

From their article, I could gather that Ms. Haq and Ms Zaman assumed that I had meant to discredit the schools whose names appear in the list of institutions, whose students were questioned. Let me assure them that the list was merely to indicate how varied the survey had been and not meant to point fingers. I wish to restate the fact that nowhere in my article did I imply that the schools mentioned have been identified as the ones whose students are ignorant about Bangladesh nor did I try to "mix oranges and ap-

ples". As to the question of why we have restricted the survey to the students of English-medium schools only, I would say that it has been our intention to isolate this issue of "teenage ignorance" one step at a time. An over-ambitious programme might very easily end up in fiasco.

We all have two options to choose from. One, we can put aside this "ignorance problem" among teenagers with the excuse that the school we are in and the friends we are usually with are "fine" the way they are. Two, we can consider this issue a national problem that needs serious attention from all sectors of the society including teachers, parents, the government, the media, and most of all, ourselves, and help try to solve it. The choice is yours.

Orala Ochana : Garden City of India

by Siraj-us-Saleheen Lovell

WHENEVER an eyespecialist tells you to always keep looking at green fields or anything that's green-coloured, you start to wonder, "Now where shall I get such a place?"

Well guys, have no fear, 'cause South India has just the right place for you. It's — Orala Ochana.

I'm sure all of you are at least familiar with its common name — Bangalore. But how many of you have had the

around South India. The people of South India are of a religious (but mind it, not ultra-conservative) type. Situated atop a sort of high land, this temple is one of the holiest places in Bangalore (For the Hindu's). A stone-crusted path follows up to the gate-way of the temple. The whole place is surrounded by large stones, on which people, who visit the place, can rest, supported by big Oak trees. Even



General view, Brindavan.

exquisite chance of visiting such a place. I don't know about you guys, but I had such a unique chance a couple of months ago. Hey, it's OK, don't be such a jealous lot. I'll try and make it up to you in this feature by explaining the beauty of Bangalore. Fasten your seat belts as we're gonna have a green journey only in writings, too-bad.

How To Get There?

Heh! heh! Silly question, ain't it? Do birds fly or what? You can go by bus, train or plane service. I would suggest a train journey, it would be a most intriguing journey. The first thing that strikes you is Bangalore green-valleys as well as it's huge surrounding gardens which definitely supports it's name 'The Garden City'. Let's see what it has in store for us.

Lion Temple :

A most intriguing temple which is more than 450 years old. It's architectural beauty is as striking as many other historical temples, scattered

around South India. The people of South India are of a religious (but mind it, not ultra-conservative) type. Situated atop a sort of high land, this temple is one of the holiest places in Bangalore (For the Hindu's). A stone-crusted path follows up to the gate-way of the temple. The whole place is surrounded by large stones, on which people, who visit the place, can rest, supported by big Oak trees. Even

At last we've come to the right place. In my opinion, if somebody gives a full tour of this garden, or more specifically 'park', he or she visits 90 per cent of Bangalore. This is one place that I would want to stay all my life.

Covering more than 240 acres of area, the park is full of colorful flowers and plants

on a hot summer day a cool and soothing environment prevails around the premises.

Summer Palace of Tipu Sultan :

Nearly 2 centuries' old, this palace is a small token of the original palace (which is in Mysore) of the Mysore Tiger — Tipu Sultan. Built around the late 18th century by Tipu's father the Great Haider Ali Khan, nearly 80 per cent of the palace is made of wood, and the rest 20 per cent of stone. Entering the palace, you have a fantastic feeling that you're truly back to the past when Kings and Queens ruled the world. A wooden chair, which is said to be used by the 'tiger' himself, is set in the front of a wooden veranda situated on the 2nd floor. During the summer heat, the Sultan would visit this palace for a little cooling off. In this time he would sit on his chair every evening and the best Indian dancers would entertain him and his family.

In the back of the palace are the rooms where they used to stay (But unfortunately, due to security reasons, those rooms are closed to outsiders. I don't want to bore you with the description of it's architectural beauty, cause each and every palace, as well as temples of South India are unique (and fabulous) in their own way. One thing's for sure, after so many, many years, the palace still has a soothing effect which brings peace to both the mind and body.

Lalbagh Botanical Garden :

At last we've come to the right place. In my opinion, if somebody gives a full tour of this garden, or more specifically 'park', he or she visits 90 per cent of Bangalore. This is one place that I would want to stay all my life. Covering more than 240 acres of area, the park is full of colorful flowers and plants

All over the place the green grass is always a welcome to anyone resembling to any Arabian carpet, cropped methodically adding to the beauty of the park. In the center of the garden is a tall and lengthy house, fully made of glass, another 11th century work. Shaping like a dome, this glass-house has a minimum of 10 to 15 various coloured glasses fitted on its

roof top, which when lighted up at night gives a fabulous coloured show time, summed up with a BARGO effect. The heavy drunken and mind clouding scent of various flowers is your constant companion, and the only needed guide for this tour — Ah! a place close to heaven.

After finishing this flower-furnished, brain-washing tour of the garden (which is done very reluctantly), I'll bet my braces that you'll be spell bound for at least rest of the

North Bank Fountain, Brindavan.



North Bank Fountain, Brindavan.

that are a real treat to the eye. And there's some unique statues said to be of the 10th and 11th century. Most of these statues are made of Marble-stones.

On entering the garden, the first thing you'll see is a huge clock — Hey! no joke! if really is a big clock (only an unusual one), but the difference is that, it's made of pure and natural hedges and flowers. And the wonderful fact is — it works! (Just time, no complain).

Pick the only narrow stony path from here and keep walking. You'll find glass house full of unknown and unique plants: small but fascinating stone-crusted bridges linking the land through which a small artificial stream runs through; Oak trees older than my great grandpa stand high and huge, both guarding the sanctity of the park as well as nesting anyone who's tired, with a cold shivering effect (Fabuloso dude!).

When going to visit the lake, I was basically a little perplexed and scared. Hey don't laugh man — I thought, may, be he who visits this lake would want to commit suicide, or something like that. But I was assured by the locals that nothing of the sort would happen. It was named after rather what occurred. Long long ago, a very beautiful girl and handsome boy loved each other deeply in this place. You're surely wondering, "So what's wrong with that, loving each other?" But unfortunately the girl came from a poor family and the boy was the son of a very high official of the king's court.

When the girl was sure that she wouldn't get the boy, one night she came to this lake and jumped into it. And then, as the formula, the boy followed her foot-steps. You may say, "what waste of young age", but mind it, this is 1995, and that was centuries ago. Well, when you see the lake, a strange shivering effect flows in you, chilling down the spine. The jet-black water, which is nearly 50 feet in it's deepest, adds more to it. You literally would want to jump into the lake and feel what it's like (to be

CAUTION! : BOTANICAL TOUR EFFECT : You may not recognise your own family or friends.

Hah! Hah! Just joking. Let's move on.

Suicide Lake :

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close to death?) and how those young budding lover's felt. Centuries ago.

Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum :

After a very remarkable greenish-grooping, let's now move on to a totally different side of the same city — to a technological museum. Well, you can't say they're totally different, cause nature and technology merge well together.

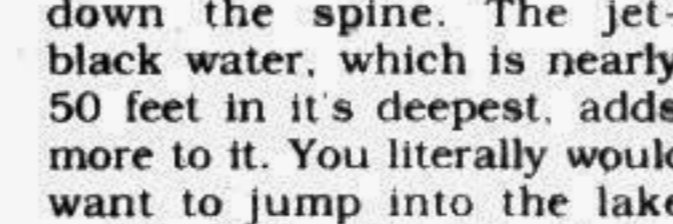
Situated in the South side of the city, this five-storied humongous building is an ideal scientific learning place. For both kids and grown-up. The ground floor is where you'll get visual, as well as practical information on a good variety of engines. Practical in the sense that there are a lot of experiments in which you may bodily participate.

In this floor you may see how a lock works under the influence of a key (now, now, no key-hole peeping), or even can handle, group and examine the huge mass of a Boeing-707 engine (and it's for real!). Besides these, there are a variety of buttons which each represent the task of various engines. In the corner of the room there are a few scientific devices by which you may weigh your strength (are you like Hercules, or like Jerry Lewis?).

The first floor represents the science and wonders of 'Air'. The third floor is interesting as well as educational

to the kiddies. They can handle, press, pull, push, hit or even break anything they like (oh God! heaven for kids but hell for parents). The second floor shows everything about light and electricity. The top floor gives us maximum information and idea on the great big Universe and it's family. It shows us how planets and stars were born; what a star, comet, asterisk, pentagram and many other celestial bodies are made of; what our own planet wants, to say and many other things. There's even a contraption by which you may find out how much you weigh in every other planet in the galaxy. An average bully weighing 250 lbs weighs only 45 lbs on neptune (Heh! Heh! Joke of the year) there are many more interesting experiments which I keep for you to discover.

Besides these, there are many other places to pore and investigate and be breath-less about. Among them there's the Venkattappa Art Gallery, which has a collection of nearly 200 'sai gengeris' painting works of various renown artists of the world. Then there's the Cuppan Park, covering nearly 360 acres, is no less attractive than the Lalbagh Garden, with deep green grass — cropped to it's finest, green



Enchanting musical fountain, Brindavan.

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