

TEENS and TWENTIES

Casual Comments

Nothing To Do With Our Political Realities

by Asit Roy Choudhury

HERE goes the story of a poor but 'incorruptible' political leader who gathered the courage to be loud in his criticism of a corrupt king.

The king had the reputation of using the resources of the country as his personal property. The queen was also known for her extravagant life style. Since the king was all in all in the country, no body dared to say a word against the royal couple. The palace witnessed an unending series of lavish banquets and other opulence when ordinary people lived in a state of utter misery and hardship.

The bold politician could not take it any more. Hazarding reprisal he opened his mouth against the unjust king. In no time he found himself to be the undisputed leader of the anti-royal lobby. People — suddenly inspired by a sense of realization and courage — rallied behind the leader. Soon they began to utter things publicly what was considered unutterable.

The conceited king — always flanked by a batch of yes-men-found it hard to digest this harsh criticism. Obviously he was mad at the ring-leader of the trouble-makers — the foul-mouthed politician. He was so infuriated that he even contemplated engaging assassins to silence this audacious person once for all.

A shrewd minister of the king strongly advised him against it. The king, who had great faith in the villainy of this claque of a minister, finally gave in rather grudgingly.

"Do not make this tall talking fool a martyr. Allow me to handle him and I shall not take long in turning this fiery politician into your faithful dog," the confident minister declared. Pretty soon the minister arranged an interview with the politician.

"The king appreciates your job. By criticizing him publicly, you are actually helping him do his job more prudently," the minister observed.

"Did you come all the way just to tell that?"

The politician was still suspicious.

"I came to tell you that the king has proposed to help you with fifty thousand in cash every month plus free transport facilities so that you can do your job more efficiently."

"Trying to bribe me?" The grim-faced politician snapped back.

"Not at all. The king is giving you all these without any condition whatsoever. He appreciates your bold criticism, and wants you to do it regularly and efficiently. We want a person of your stature not to bother about such petty things as the maintenance of your family, proper education for your children, or a bit of allowance for your wife. Well, the proposal of this unconditional assistance is ours."

"You take your time to accept or to reject it. Possibly you could talk to your wife or children before taking a decision. Please communicate your decision by tomorrow."

The politician had a prolonged domestic conference that night. His family — accustomed to a very modest life style — never tasted affluence or luxury. A generous financial offer was something which the wife and the rest of the family found difficult to throw away specially when it was 'unconditional'. To make a long story short, the politician phoned up the minister the very next morning to indicate his acceptance.

Things went on smoothly. The politician criss-crossed the country in a posh chauffeur-driven car provided by the king. The regular — and lavish — allowance changed the very life-style of the politician's family. Expensive delicacies began to grace their dining table. Costly clothes began to adorn their bodies. The ominous shadow of poverty and hardship disappeared from their life. They were gradually being spoiled by an extravagant life-style made possible by the king's money.

When the minister was totally convinced that the politician and the members of his family had been thoroughly spoiled by affluence — unearned and undeserved — he arranged a second interview with him.

"The transport can't be spared any more for you," the minister informed the revolutionary politician.

"But how could I move around?" The protesting politician forgot that once he didn't mind going a long way on foot. He was very unhappy

at the idea of moving around without a car.

"That's none of our headache. One thing more. You won't get any allowance either from now on. After all why should the king pay you for slandering him?"

"But how could I pay for the kids going to international schools?"

"Send them to free primary schools."

"How could I meet my wife's fat club bills and expenses of those lavish parties?"

"That's not the king's headache."

The minister was blunt in his replies and got up to leave.

"Please, please..." The desperate politician did not know what to say in order to retain those unearned facilities.

"Look, the king can still retain those facilities only on one condition. You can pretend to talk against him, but you must actually talk for him. Pretend to be in the opposition, but you must retain your unquestionable allegiance to the position. You can vomit some political debris here and there, but you must ultimately do what the king wants you to do. Clear?"

This time agreement came from the politician quicker than expected. Since then the great public leader has been secretly working for the king.

Oh, no. This is just a story. It has nothing to do with our political realities. For one thing, very few of our politicians — in position or in opposition — are worth buying.



An unusual yet exciting duel.

Photo -- A K M Mohsin

Realizations

Life is But Death Postponed !

by Sanjida Shaheed

"REMEMBER, today is the first day of the rest of your life!"

A statement I found in the Reader's Digest that made my brain cells go head over heels. If you have a whet of perspicacity, then you do detect a subtle irony in that statement — that is, life is but death postponed!

The tall headwork almost made me kooky. I have to take charge of my life! And now! — it was all that I could think of. And the way to take charge of your life is by taking charge of your time. I frantically began to keep an eye on time — not a single moment will slip under my nose anymore. From now on it will be a dog-eat-dog race against time.

Come to think of it. I'm already 20, yes 20 (save a year or so). And what have I achieved in the two decades? (A bleak past flashed in my mind). How much have I grown intellectually? (I perceived black holes overpopulating my upper story).

I'm 20, that means I only have another thirty years to live. To answer your question: no, of course I don't know that I'm gonna live (only) upto that or any other specific time. Nobody does.

It's just that I want to have at least another 30 yrs before pollution, road accident, stress, heart disease or cancer slings me down (those things are high in the air these days). Ah! It'd be plain flukey to have the guarantee of another 30 yrs.

Like money, everybody wants to have 'just a few more' years to live. I wanted to be not a tycoon, but a Methuselah! After all, who wants to die? And they say a well planned diet, vigorous exercise and staunch discipline helps make this dream a reality. So I literally glued my eyes to the (strict) food chart and was all agog with yoga and aerobics.

Now, ever since I was a fledgling I wanted to cut a figure. That is, I wanted to be an egghead — you know — be really somebody. Someone who gets interviewed, participates in high-brow discussions, whom people stumble across the street slack-jawed, is fired a salute posthu-

mously. Yes I very badly wanted to be famous. I had an acute aptitude for art, literature, music and drama. But I settled down only for penning and doodling. After all, life's only an awfully short span and I could not afford to burn my candles at both ends. Besides, never pays to

ing a winner. Now was the time to live the dream. I stooped over ponderous books and was hell-bent about mastering artistic techniques. I was simply iron-willed.

But you know something? One thing wrong with iron is, though rigid and reliable, it

garding the schedule. I had not an answer to prop me. But I vowed, tomorrow will be different.

But when 'tomorrow' finally came and I turned out, paradoxically, I kept on killing time listlessly. 'Tomorrow' was just another day-dreaming caravan to take a joyride in. And then, at night it was again the inevitable fruitless pondering on the day's harvest. It seemed as if it was some sort of a luxury to be dozy during day and indulge in self-pity at night.

Well, I soon got sick and tired of such lethargy and inertia and followed my schedule. With that sure-success schedule to suck up to and pegging away like I did, I was bound to cut the mustard. Why, I could smell success coming my way. I felt so terrific working my head off that I knew that I was never going to be lethargic again. Alas, I spurted only for a few days. Then again it was Fabian policy with me. The endless cycle went on and on and on.....

Self-abasement seized me. All my life I thought myself to be competent and responsible. But I was dejected when I discovered my own fly-by-night nature. Those who make a good fist work steadily. How could a delinquent like me make it? My whole life's dreamings proved to be flash in the pan. Rather crestfallen, I spent the next few days in sheer apathy — sigh, the jig was up.

I tried to pretend life's no big deal, after all. Maybe it wasn't so all-fired important to 'make it'. I tried to persuade myself that there's nothing wrong in indolence.

To my utter surprise, I found out that after my apathetic days, I could again work like crazy. I then realized that maybe every single day doesn't have to be jam-packed with accomplishment. That it's possible to have few loose days now and then and still win my purpose. I'm ever so much happier after realizing this. Well.... I'm not exactly happier, for I haven't convinced myself yet. But hey... I'm trying.....

does get rusty. The same thing hap'ned to my IRON-will. Somehow, after a few busy-beaver days, my will lost some of its vim.

It seemed that I liked to daydream about success rather than paving my way to it. My iron-clad schedule went by the board. Either I was lying in bed and visualizing my fire-ball image in the future, or I was caught up in the line for hours or I was goggling at the TV. This went on for a few days.

Even though philosophers verify sleep (i.e.: inactivity) to be the natural state of human beings, being a faintant robs one of complacency and self-confidence. Everyday after the fanciful hours, when I finally turned in, I had to face a spitfire in myself: my conscience.

Nothing seemed more excruciating than the grueling grilling session with my conscience. When I asked myself what I did the whole day re-

have two many irons in the fire.

Now that it was clear to me what I wanted out of life and how, I settled down for an iron-clad schedule. What I've achieved in the two decades is fit to be in the dust hole. I was a born champion only in day dreaming (pity, daydreaming aren't recognised as an accomplishment). I could not possibly wait for later. I just had to pitch in! For now was already late enough.

Yes, it was now time to make a rigorous routine, fit to bust with activity. Checking out all silly things that I needn't do, I made a schedule that could beat one of a dashing workaholics. Couldn't afford toiddle time over pimpling matters anymore, so my schedule strictly interdicted jabbering on the 'phone, popping eyes in front of the idiot-box and of course building castles in the air. All along, I only dreamed of be-



Women are Inferior to Men?

by Farhana Yusuf

MANY people, particularly men, would have possibly thought so in the early twentieth century but what a woman is nowadays is a far cry from what a woman was even a decade back. We're standing at the edge of the twentieth century but society is rapidly heading towards the 21st century already. With time running fast, we're also thinking ahead, laying down the self-made belief that men only have the thinking and working power. If men still think that women are inferior to their sex then they are giving a very narrow outlook to life. Women are independent in their own right. They have long since proved that they are not dependent on men but dependant solely on themselves.

It is true that women in the earlier decades were suppressed by men but that statement does not go with the women of today. A woman's responsibility is not enclosed within the boundary of her home now. She is perfectly capable of entering any profession she chooses. And because women in our country have already proved that through various examples, they are recognized today as not only a person in the family but also in the society. Therefore, a woman's role and her contribution should be evaluated properly both in the family and society. There's hardly any profession that a woman is not involved in, nowadays. A woman is working and maintaining her family by driving a van and delivering goods. When asked why she chose this method of earning, her prompt and direct answer was, "If men can, why can't we?" In Bangladesh Ansar, women are being trained in Karate, Shooting and Swimming, playing baseball, basketball tennis etc etc. In handling electronic goods, and in helping to make these stuffs, women are considered to be more efficient. They

have a keen concentration and possess a sure and steady touch which is important when it comes to handling such delicate objects.

Even in villages, women are rising to levels that was not seen before. They're making pottery, shoes, clothes and have been trained in welding and mending. In offices, factories,

airports, garments, shops, schools, colleges, universities and newspapers, women are seen working side by side with men, sharing the weight of the responsibilities ungrudgingly. We even have a woman as a pilot in Biman's DC-10 and surprisingly the first ambassador of Bangladesh also happened to be a woman.

Women in Bangladesh

have advanced so far with great potential. They still have a long way to go and many barriers to climb. But what they had passed by and gone through was also difficult and hard to achieve. And it must have been a tough job for them to erase what seemed to have been the universally accepted fact that they can never stand beside men much less outshine them. But their future work and responsibilities can be made much easier and simpler through many steps. These are very plain suggestions — only natural and deserving for women who have progressed this far with their own will-power and stamina. Many young girls' future are demolished in the villages when they are being married off early. Therefore, consciousness should be raised against child marriage and dowry and ofcourse right implementation of existing laws must be ensured. Political empowerment of women must be ensured and voices of women MPs should be made move effective in the parliament. Men and women should have equal rights at all levels of production system. Women should have their own right to utilize their earned money. Arrangements should be made to ensure that women are trained regarding protection of environment. Last but not least, laws of all kinds regarding violence against women should be implemented and that relating to marriage, divorce, guardianship or inheritance right must be either modified or corrected. There are many other rights that a woman must have but these are the few important ones. And only when they are carried out properly can a woman devote herself wholeheartedly. Her full co-operation is vitally necessary because in the long run we have to remember that since half of our population consists of women, there is no question of progress without them.

Into a Man-hole!

by Iftekhar A Rashid

IF you ever thought, that walking in Dhaka city is a pleasure-you better change your opinion. There are hundreds of streets with open manholes, open drains and dirty ditches and it is possible that you may easily find yourself stumbling into.

Allow me to relate some of the personal experiences of a few of my relatives. One of them, who owns a well-known men's boutique on Elephant Road, was going out for a morning walk — taking extra care to show off his new short wave radio (as if the Dhakaites didn't see such a radio ever before) — sporting his appropriately tinted sunglasses. Amidst his thoughts (probably thinking that everybody was admiring his fine radio and of course him), he happened to walk right into a dirty ditch of a Dhanmondi street!

It was school starting time (well chosen by the relative to show off) for the institution that was opposite to his house, and the incident was seen by a lot of people, not to mention the students, who started the day with a laughter.

of her car, she fell stylishly into yet another open man-hole. She was not only hurt and drenched by the odoriferous sewer contents, but humiliated as well.

It may be mentioned that a lot of tourists visit this shopping complex for Bangladeshi handicrafts and to get a little glimpse of this country of ours — if one of them happen to fall into such a man hole, then he or she would surely get the bad taste of life here.

A third friend of mine was strolling along one monsoon evening with another friend. Suddenly, in the middle of an enthusiastic sentence he was stunned to find his walking companion, not only inattentive, but missing altogether. He looked around hysterically, only to find him a few feet behind, waving his barely visible arms, desperately trying to get out of the manhole he had dropped into!

All of these incidents made you wonder whether the concerned authorities care about the safety of the citizens on the street. It is felt that measures would be taken by the authorities only when somebody of that office falls into an open ditch himself. Till then we are keeping our fingers crossed.