

# Confessions of a Choco-holic

Crazy Cocoa

Often chocolate has something to say that only you can hear.



**I**F I were in those therapy groups that deal with addictions I would begin with a solemn "My name is so and so and I am a Chocoholic," after which I would relate to my fellow addicts how I became obsessed with the world's most delicious sweet — chocolate. In this part of the world from where I belong however, there are more pressing issues to be concerned about than a whining soul with a 'chocolate tooth' and hence there are no Chocoholics Anonymous centres here. Still, since I have the liberty to write for this paper under an assumed name and given the fact that at least a handful of readers may read this — just because they have nothing better to do I will make my confessions even if it is to lighten my awesome 'chocolate' guilt.

It all began when I was no more than an ova (or perhaps not even that) of a little girl who used to buy Cadbury chocolates on credit, from a local shop in the 1940s. It was at that time when the insidious chocolate began to invade the DNA of this girl (who later became my mother) thus transferring the gene for chocolate addiction to her female offspring. (As with everything else, naturally the mother will be the ultimate scapegoat).

Thus I was born as an addict, with an innate capability of sniffing out the chocolates hidden in all those secret places that mothers have, to keep the goodies that will be doled out only under special circumstances. Well into my childhood, when the cocoa was practically in my blood I became so obsessed with the sticky, melt in your mouth, stuff, that I would dream of chocolates falling from the sky into my arins or of myself opening my wardrobe to find drawers filled with long bars of Swiss chocolates and even of tins that gave gallons of liquid chocolate instead of water.

At the age of about eight when I had almost stopped having chocolate tantrums — throwing myself on the middle of the street and screaming my lungs out I found the ultimate solution for my obsession — I decided, I would marry a man with a chocolate factory. Being a bit of a 'choco snob,' my first choice was Mr Cadbury (I was

a little partial towards English chocolates (that I used to devour when we lived in England a long long time ago) were actually available in Dhaka. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw those yellow wrappers of Flake filled with crumbly milk chocolate or honey combed 'Crunch' and even my favourite Milk Tray boxes of assorted mouth watering chocolates.

My mother after a series of exhaustive trips to the dentist — for my benefit, began to worry and envisioned a premature toothless future for me, especially after my third root canal and God knows how many fillings. 'She'll grow out of it when she's older', the optimists said.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. Rather the opposite. As an adult with the freedom to buy my own, I became even more choco-frenzied, spending whatever money I saved on Smarties, Picnics, Fruit and Nuts (all various brands of choolets) and so on.

When I went to study in the US I was disappointed with American 'candy' as they called it, which didn't even come close to the English brands with their unique smoothness, subtle sweetness and warm cocoa qualities. This, however, did not stop me from eating at least one Snickers bar — a gooey concoction of peanuts, nougat, caramel and chocolate, a day and occasional Reeces Pieces (peanut-butter filled chocolates), and chocolate covered peanuts called Mn'M's. My only complaint was that the peanuts took away the space which could have been filled with more mouth-watering chocolate. But on desperate moments they certainly helped.

Now that I have built a career of sorts, gotten married and even managed to become a mother, one would think that the heavy burden of responsibility this would entail, would certainly cure my terrible addiction. Unfortunately this is not the case. If anything I have become even more obsessed with it. Just a mention of the 'C' word lights up my eyes and makes me delirious. After work when I go home it is almost impossible not to drop in at those shops in Dhanmondi where they sell a variety of foreign chocolates. With the joy of a love-lorn maiden meeting her loved one after years of separation, I discov-

ered that many of my beloved English chocolates (that I used to devour when we lived in England a long long time ago) were actually available in Dhaka. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw those yellow wrappers of Flake filled with crumbly milk chocolate or honey combed 'Crunch' and even my favourite Milk Tray boxes of assorted mouth watering chocolates.

Before I knew it I was going into these shops every day, hiding my spoils in secret places at home. In moments of generosity (rare in the case of chocolates) I would share them with others, especially my husband since there was no way of hiding it from him. But late at night when everyone was asleep I would tiptoe to that secret drawer, take out the precious bar and head for the bathroom since taking out the wrapper is quite noisy in the silence of the night.

That first bite into the delicious creamy chocolate is like heaven. As it melts and completely invades my mouth, everything else except that sweet sensation disappears. My heart sings, all the disappointments, irritation and sadness of the day vanish replaced by a warm serenity that engulfs me like a goose down blanket in a winter afternoon.

After my 'chocolate fix' I carefully lick out every trace of the stuff from the wrapper, wash it under the tap to avoid attacking ants who might give me away and then hide the wrapper in my handbag — the waste basket being too risky. This is not without disadvantages. Once, in the middle of a meeting when I was trying to find a pen in my handbag totally forgetting about this practise — and to my profound embarrassment, out came three chocolate wrappers which everybody, I was sure, noticed. Mortified all I could do was to stuff them back in as quickly as possible and put on a nonchalant expression as if it was the most normal thing in the world to be collecting empty wrappers with bits of chocolate stuck on them and storing them in one's handbag for safe keeping.

It is only recently, however, that I have realised that perhaps I should try to at least reduce my enormous consumption of the gooey stuff. This was when one day

I was happily munching away a stick of chocolate covered wafers, my baby girl of six months woke up from her nap and caught me red handed. What could I do? I had to make an accomplice of her, which she readily agreed to. As I watched her greedily chew on the rest of the wafers, making all sorts of approving 'mums' and 'num nuns' I realised that I had given my child what my mother had given me — the Chocolate Eating Syndrome (CES). Naturally, I was alarmed recalling all the moments of agony from recurring tooth aches, an extraction that had gone haywire, piercing pain from exposed roots, nagging aches from sugar weakened gums the list was endless. Although the damage was done, I still felt that I must do something to at least reduce the severity of the addiction.

Now, I have resolved to eat fewer chocolates — instead of everyday, I have them twice a week (at least I try). I have completely stopped eating them in front of my daughter and have resorted to opening the wrappers in the bathroom when she is sleeping. Whether she will be saved from this terrible affliction, only time will tell.

I must admit, of course, that all these noble intentions have sprung up from the fact that after a lot of abuse and neglect my teeth have rebelled and are protesting in the most painful way. So its back to the torture chamber. And every time, I see another of those diabolical drills coming menacingly close to me, I promise to myself; never again will I have another chocolate. Until I get home of course, when I just have to, just have to pop in a teeny weeny piece of the hunky slab of milk chocolate I keep in a secret drawer in my dressing table.

You see, I must confess that in spite of all the drawbacks of weight gain, bad skin, tooth decay and heightened blood sugar, I don't really want to be cured of my addiction. It is something that sustains me when I'm down and gives me a sense of optimism in the most desperate of situations. In that sense, I guess I am totally incurable.

**W**ho is your Panda? In the crowd of the rail platform of Puri, this is the first question one can expect from a complete stranger wearing white panjabi and dhoti.

"Who is your Panda?" the question began to bother me now. The man waylaid me. I am a stranger in a strange land and had many things to bother about but I never thought a Panda belonged to anyone in Puri. I was a little dumbstruck. I am here on vacation. I am not ready for a "Goonda-Panda" affair.

"Look here, I came in peace. I am from Banglade..." I mumbled. The stranger in dhoti raised his eyebrows.

blue waters of the Bay of Bengal. As the rickshaw moved near the town, Puri started to remind me of Cox's Bazar without it hills.

The Puri hotel is just beside the bay. As our rickshaw neared the Puri hotel, we saw the clear green water of the bay. It was not roaring like the waves of Cox's Bazar, but seemed much calmer. The colour of the sand here is reddish while the Cox's Bazar sand was whiter.

"Who is your Panda, dada?" a man with a loud moustache waylaid me at the gate of the Puri hotel — one of the very early establishments of this beach town.

lakhs of Hindu devotees come to Puri not to jump in the Bay of Bengal but to pay rich tributes to Jagannath. The man gave me one of his visiting cards which says he was "Panda somebody". "It means I can go with you to the temple and see the historic artifacts. No problem that I am not a Hindu?" "No... I mean, hey you are not a Hindu?" "the Panda seemed shocked. He declined saying, "forget it, you can't go in."

Panda means Pandit. Every devotee has a panda of his or her caste. When one visits the temple, he has to reveal to the local panda who his personal panda is and what caste he is from. Accordingly,

huge fight and then the whole tourism business was suspended for a year," said Raghunath Reddy, a 45-year-old South Indian rickshaw-puller who has been working in Puri for the last 25 years.

Peace and security was restored in the beach town and people started to visit the holy place again after the Government intervened.

Most Orissians in Puri seemed to be very poor. Apparently they do not differ with the Bengalees in appearance. The Orissan language is also similar to Bangla — if you talk to some Orissan who does not have any local accent, you would be able to

# "Who is Your Panda?"

Sharier Khan

"Its alright, you can tell me who your panda is."

As I was pondering what to tell him, a rickshawpuller came in rescue. "Come with me, babu, you don't have to talk to him. I will take you to a hotel."

"Ah a hotel! take me to Puri hotel right now!" I deliberately ignored the Pandaman and rushed with the rickshawpuller with my luggage.

Though tired after a 12-hour journey by train, the serene Puri morning woke me up completely. It is a beach town — a major beach resort for the Orissians and Bengalees of West Bengal. I am here to jump in the wild

What the heck! I must get to the bottom of this Panda affair. I hold this man bitterly. As I was eager to get a room in the hotel first to freshen up and get some sleep, I said, "What do you care who my Panda is? I have no Panda. I do not know any Panda. Anyway, I am from Bangladesh."

The man smiled sweetly. "No problem, I will take you to Jagannath temple even if you do not have a Panda. I will also arrange some Proshad for you."

So... Panda is related to visiting temples. How foolish of me. I should have had remembered that Puri is famous for its ancient Jagannath temple and each year,

the pooja is offered and the person gets his Proshad. However, one has to pay for the whole thing. That is why, Pandas rush to rail platforms and hotels instead of staying inside the temple where they are actually supposed to stay.

According to local people (no government or official version), Puri is totally dependent on tourists. A large number of people here earn their living by taking commission from Hindu devotees for offering pooja and taking Proshad.

"Twenty years ago, these pandas became so irritating and dangerous, they used to snatch peoples' money in broad day light. There was a

understand the language. However, as a Bengalee tourist you do not have to bother at all about the language — because Bengla is Orissa's second language.

"Dhai Kiri Kiri have some chowmein!"

You will often hear this "Dhai Kiri Kiri" at the beach side fast-food stalls where they sell everything from a fried crab deluxe to chowmein, in Puri. For a Japanese tourist these words might remind him of Harakiri or Perhaps some other word. To an intelligent Bengalee, "Dhai Kiri Kiri" is not anything absurd. It is a funny way to say "quick! quick!"

# Egypt Revisited

Arshad-uz Zaman

**E**GYPTIANS have a unique quality to adapt. From the Pharaohs of more than six thousand years ago, passing through monarchy, we have today the presidential system. From socialism we have now free market economy.

This was stated in an exclusive interview by a high official in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry who preferred anonymity. This pretty well sums up my impression of a very recent visit to Egypt, where I was ambassador fifteen years ago.

Eternal Egypt, with an unbroken civilization which is the marvel of mankind, has undergone a massive facelift under the leadership of President Hosni Mubarak. President Mubarak, with his long innings of fourteen years has undoubtedly held the ship of state with steady hands although there are signs of discontent arising from rising expectations. Fifteen years ago Egypt had a totally broken down telephone system and we ambassadors wondered how the delicate negotiations between President Sadat and President Carter were conducted. Today there is a perfectly functioning telephone system. Traffic was a jungle fifteen years ago. Privatization and market economy have brought more visible prosperity and specially many more cars. With flyways crisscrossing Cairo, which like Athens has a quarter of the country's population, the traffic jungle has considerably eased. What has not changed is the attitude of motorists towards the traffic lights for they must be fully complemented by the stick welding police.

Egypt has resumed her central role in the Arab world. It would take years to free Kuwait if Egypt did not intervene' said another Egyptian diplomat. 'Our soldiers were on the frontline right from the first moment' he continued and added 'but President Mubarak told that Egypt did not wish the allied forces to go to Baghdad and

overthrow Saddam'. You will have the whole Arab world quoted Mubarak as telling President George Bush.

Fifteen years ago Camp David peace accord was signed. Egypt was ousted from the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Arab and Islamic embassies were closed down in Cairo. It was total isolation of Egypt from her natural Islamic allies. Following Camp David, PLO and Israel delegations met for peace talks in Alexandria. The talks sputtered and fizzled away. A frustrated Anwar Sadat vented his anger against Menachem Begin when I made my farewell call: 'Begin is very sick. He will die.' During

my informal contacts with my Egyptian diplomat friends, who are knowledgeable, suave and suffer from no complexes, this came out vividly. In an informal dinner hosted by the former Egyptian Ambassador to Bangladesh Kamal El-Miligy, where he assembled a large number of serving and retired Egyptian ambassadors, the evening on the banks of the Nile at the Diplomats club, was informative and entertaining. Egyptians are easy going and very easy to get along with. In my long association with them I have never seen a trace of arrogance at any level.

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aire in dollars by not just shaking her hips but had become a comedienne and was drawing huge crowds. She had bought a flat overlooking the Nile for 15 million dollars. This too was the talk of the town.

Prof Hisham Hasibu, Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister who works out of a modest office, presides over the ambitious privatization programme of President Hosni Mubarak, which he launched in 1991. He explained that 17 Holding Companies each assigned three sectors had been set up. He added that state run enterprises had been divided into three categories, namely 1) successful, 2) restructuring and 3) liquidation. He added that 20 to 25 successful companies had been sold to the public. He informed that oil industry, banks, insurance and military industries are among those that will remain outside the purview of privatization. The present book value of the entire Egyptian economic sector is 500 billion Egyptian pounds (1 US \$=3.39 Egyptian pounds). The present plan is to privatize 80 billion dollars worth of assets. Investment by the private sector stood at 50%. He explained that there was qualitative difference between open door policy of President Sadat and privatization programme of President Mubarak. 'How did he face the labour problem due to privatization?' I enquired. Prof Hasibu stated categorically, 'We shall not allow lay off of a single worker due to privatization. We have created a Social Fund of 1.5 billion EP for the workers'. He also told me that there was no problem like workers strikes, lockouts and the like. As I bade goodbye to this articulate professor turned civil servant he said smilingly, 'Egypt is firmly on the road to economic development and open market economy is an irreversible process.'

Cairo had resumed her vocation of international meeting place and there were conferences galore. Delegates from all over the world jostled in the hotel halls with their delegates badges. Tourism had taken a spectacular leap forward. The Pharaohs had been placed in a fully airconditioned room and Cairo Museum remained as exciting as ever. In another part of the city among drab surroundings rose in the hills the modest palace and mosque of Mohammad Aly, who started the last Egyptian dynasty. Within the precincts of Rifai mosque next to the majestic Sultan Hasan mosque, stood the tombs of King Fouad, King Farouk and the Shah of Iran.

Market economy has whetted the appetite of the Egyptian for more consumer goods. Compared to 1980 new luxury shopping centres stacked with local and foreign goods have opened up. Shopping does not look drab as it did fifteen years ago. On the other hand it has widened the gulf between the haves and have nots. The fixed income people are facing real hardship like the civil servants, civilian and military. There is no noticeable trickle down due to market economy. The story of the superluxury apartment where each flat has its private swimming pool (my late boss Prince Aly Khan had one in his Beekman Tower apartment in New York) and private lifts carrying cars right up to the doorsteps of the flats, was the talk of the town. And eternal Fifi Abdou, the charming belly dancer I had seen fifteen years ago had become a multimillion-

If there is one city that never goes to sleep that is Cairo. As sun sets over the Nile, this ancient beautiful city is transformed, with its lights all along the Nile, the river full of life with gracious boats, which become such places of entertainment for families. There is a serene quality of life not to be seen anywhere else. Egypt is eternal. Egypt is bliss.

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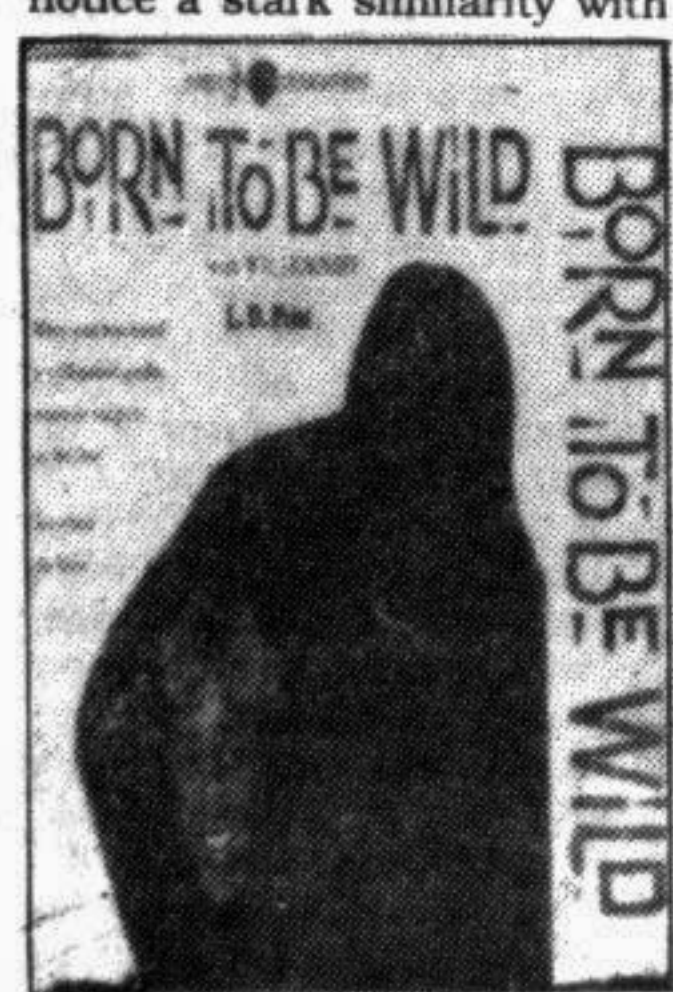
# Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

**S**URVIVING the Game is an action/adventure in which Mason (Ice-T) a tramp is persuaded to meet a man named Burns (Rutger Hauer) who organises



hunting trips. Nothing wrong with that except they don't hunt animals but only humans. And so Mason is now their target. Viewers will notice a stark similarity with



Hard Target. \* \* \* **Born to Be Wild** follows the adventures of a young boy and his 400-pound gorilla which the boy liberates and wishes to release back into the wild.

NAME	ENGLISH TYPE	CAST
1. Assassins	(Action)	Sylvester Stallone, Antonio Banderas
2. Casper	(Com/Adv)	Bill Pullman/Tina Majorino
3. Rob Roy	(Act/Adv)	Al Pacino
4. On Dog Day Afternoon	(Thriller)	
5. A Good Day To Day	(Western)	Sydney Poitier
6. The Dark Dealer	(Horror)	
7. Prison	(Horror)	Lane Smith/Chelsea Field/Viggo Mortensen
8. Rules of Obsession	(Rom/Thriller)	Scott Bakula/Chelsea Field/Sheila Kelly
9. In Your Houses-2	(WWF)	
10. Last Man Standing	(Action)	Jeff Wincott
11. The Trial	(Drama)	Anthony Hopkins
12. Nina Takes A lover	(Drama)	Laura San Giacomo/Raul Rhys
13. First Degree	(Thriller)	Rob Lowe

14. Incident At Oglala (Documentary) (Dir: Robert Redford)

15. Playmaker (Rom/Thriller) Colin Firth/Jennifer Rubin

16. Gang Justice (Soc/Act)

17. Tenny And The Teenage T-rex (Horror/Com)

18. Yankee Zulu (Comedy)

19. Tiger Cage (Action) Erik Estrada, Denise, Richards/Paul Walker, Leon Schuster, Donnie Yen

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