

# ARISING STARS



## Sylhet — Heaven on Earth

**W**E got on the train at seven o'clock in the morning. My father had come to see us off. I looked at my friends, Bushra and Nazika and saw the excitement in their eyes. Yes! We were finally going to Sylhet. It was a nick-of-the-moment idea of burs which entailed a lot of discussions among our parents finally coming to a compromise that my mother would go with us and we would be staying at my cousins place who was a manager in one of the tea gardens there.

My brother, Ben and one of his friends, Sayeed seeing the opportunity had also somehow trailed along with us. So on 24th June 1994 we finally set off.

The train started off at quarter past seven. I thought we'd be too excited to sleep but after two or three hours of journey Bushra started to doze off, with the rest of the excited travellers following her. And lucky for me, I was able to take some brilliant pictures of these oblivious sleepers.

We arrived in Srimongol, Sylhet at around one o'clock next day. My cousin and his wife were there to receive us. My cousin's tea garden was just a twenty-five minute drive from the station. As we entered the garden we were struck by the beauty of it.

Miles and miles of lush green was quite a relief from all the garbage cans we got to see in Dhaka. And then there were the bungalows. They were gorgeous. They were like something right out of a fairy-tale book. My cousin later told me that they had been built by the British during their reign.

After taking a bath and having lunch we went to the factory near my cousin's bungalow. FINLAY TEA, JAGCHERA FACTORY, it said in bold letters. The smell of raw tea reached our nostrils and the sound of different kinds of machinery greeted our ears. We looked at all of them and asked the labourers what they were doing. They

answered our questions patiently. It was all very fascinating. That night we all played monopoly. To live up the game everyone tried his best to cheat, which was reduced to a minimum by Ben, the honest banker. Since we were very tired that day we went to sleep right after dinner.

Early next morning Bushra and I went for a walk to explore the place further. The early morning light made the vast landscape of tea gardens seem even more magical. We noticed that though early but the women were already busy at work, picking tea leaves.

We had walked quite a long way — entranced by the beauty of it — we realized that we were lost. We started to walk back and look for a landmark to find our way back. I soon spotted an old tree with initials marked on it, that we had noticed earlier. I started to run excitedly, lost my balance and fell right into a paddy field. I stood up and turned around to see Bushra laughing her head off. When we came back we found that Nazika and Sayeed had gone on a motor-cycle ride.

Later we went to a stream nearby. It was breathtakingly magnificent, but very slippery where the mosses grew. We had a great time there and came back after an hour or so. We girls went into one of the bathrooms to shampoo our hair and Bushra clumsy as usual (sorry Bush, no offence meant) fell right into the bathtub.

We had a party invitation to one of my cousin's colleague's place that night. We decided to doll ourselves up. Sayeed must have taken it very seriously because he finished half a jar of my cousin's

hair-styling gel to obtain his "wet-look". We had a good laugh much to the poor guy's embarrassment. We set off at one am and reached their bungalow in forty-five minutes. On the way there we sang loudly in the microbus. After having a good time there we reached our bungalow at five am, half-asleep.

On the days that followed, we went to Tamabil, the border of Bangladesh. We also went to Sripur, Jafong and Madhobkundo. We loved Madhobkundo the best because of its magnificent scenic beauty. The falls and the greenery was overwhelming. I had no idea Bangladesh

was so beautiful. We spent the nights gossiping or playing cards, sometimes till four or five am. But like all good things, our week-long trip had to come to an end. We came back to Dhaka with my cousin and his wife on their microbus on 1st July. We were quiet for most part of the journey, lost in our own thoughts. But as we neared Dhaka, everyone started to moan and groan. Dhaka was noisy and ugly, our dreamland was gone.

To anyone who hasn't gone to Sylhet, my advice is, go there, you'll love it.

by Hana Shams Ahmed

**A**t eleven o'clock, we all crammed into my father's car. Our destination was still unknown. We were definitely going to a gram, but which one, we were unsure of. We could either go to my paternal family's gram, which was Jessore. Otherwise, we could go to Faridpur, my mother's gram.

No matter where we went, we had to cross the Padma River. Once we crossed the river, we could go to either gram, whichever was safer, because they were both on the same route.

To cross the river, we had to go through Mirpur, which was a three-hour drive. Mirpur was predominantly filled with Biharis. Biharis were Indian refugees. When India and Pakistan divided into two different nations, the people from Bihar, India, who were Muslim decided to leave the Hindu nation and settle in East Pakistan. The Biharis

were Muslim, but spoke Urdu. Basically, Mirpur was a refugee camp. On our way to Mirpur, I wondered which side the Biharis would take. Would they help the rebels, or would they help the Pakistani government? I didn't have to wait long for an answer.

As we approached Mirpur, we got stuck in a traffic jam. Ever so slowly, we inched forward. After waiting for what seemed like an eternity, Tarek got annoyed. He yelled out from the window, "Hey, beta. How far is to Mirpur?" The boy replied, "Another mile, sir."

"Well, in that case, it shouldn't take us too long," he told the rest of us. As we progressed, we saw a lot of cars turning back.

"I wonder why they're turning back," I said. I heard a lot of clamor ahead. It seemed as if the area was in pandemonium.

A man approached our car and told the driver to open his window. "Don't go any further than this. The Biharis are killing any Bengali passing through Mirpur. It's chaos up ahead."

"Thanks for the tip," replied Kamal Bhai. "Turn the car around right now. Don't risk the chance of getting killed by going through Mirpur. We'll find another route," said Amma with a tone of fear in her voice.

The driver turned the car around and started heading back to the urban area of Dhaka. We stopped at a secluded street. "Where to now, shaheb?" asked the driver.

Time was ticking away. We had to leave Dhaka quickly. The longer we stayed here, the more danger we would be in. "Let's go to my jomi," replied Abba. My father,

owned a large rice paddy on the outskirts of Dhaka. It was a long drive from here. The caretaker of the jomi was Hashem Ali. We would probably live in his house.

As we approached the end of the urban portion of Dhaka, we realized that there were no roads for the car to go through. "A large train blocked the exit from the area. This way, nobody would be able to leave by car."

"What do we do now?" I asked my father. "Leave the car. Getting out of the city is far more important. So, we all got out of the car and got ready for our long trek to Dhirpura, the gram where my father had his jomi."

We started walking. It was already one o'clock. After an hour of walking under the scorching sun, Raka started to cry. She was tired and agitated, as were the rest of us. (She refused to walk anymore.)

(To be continued)

fact! The bell rang! A boy of seventeen opened the door. My father explained the situation and was finally permitted to sit inside. Just then a familiar giggle of laughter caught his ears. Timmy, walked into the room, gossiping with two elder girls. My father's heart skipped a beat, seeing his missing son.....

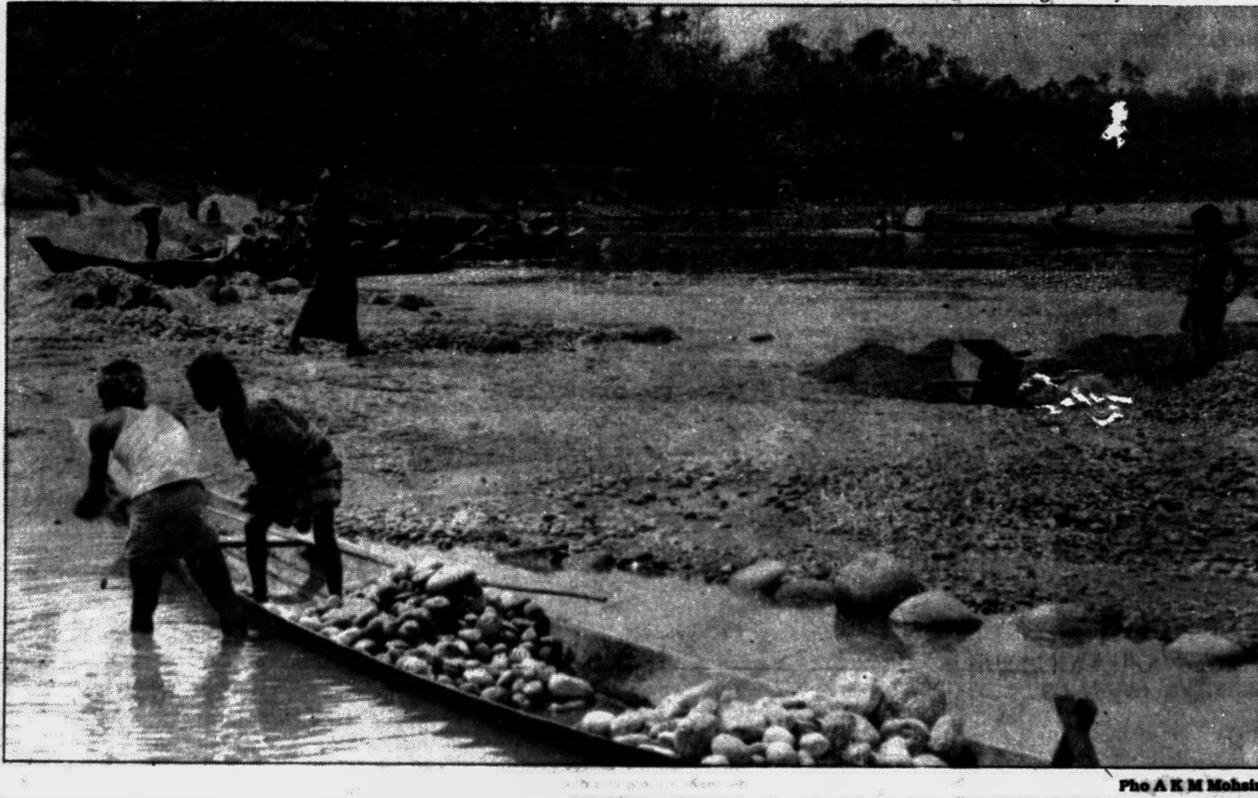
Two and a half hours had passed. My mother was in no condition to be described. She had broken down completely and her neighbours were trying their best to comfort her. My mother stepped outdoors, recklessly and hopelessly. Right at that moment, she caught sight of a little boy coming her way. Timmy was gallantly walking up the stairs, with no care of the world. Seeing my mother's tear strained face, he put out a straight innocent face and simply declared, "I was just going to school....."

Later, when I came to know this whole incredible incident, I could not believe my ears! Is it really plausible? Wow! I wondered why and how he ever dared to do it. I got an even greater shock when I asked Timmy, "Why?" Timmy valiantly answered, "It's no big deal..... I have grown old enough to be on my own!"

at the rear of which our building was situated. Calling out Timmy's name the whole time, father reached almost the end of the lane. There, a rickshawpuller informed him that he had seen a little boy of about three, wearing a black sweater and white

trousers, around that area. He also mentioned that two teen-aged boys had taken this kid to a house on his own rick! After requesting him, to show the house, my father was soon on his way to that specific house. His heart was beating fast — pounding, in-

Photo: A. K. M. Mohan



## Being a Chair

by Reshmin And Jesmin Haq

**I**t was one winter's day. I was standing with a dozen of other chairs, yes I am a chair, it was very cold, though the heating was on but I still could feel the cold as most expensive chairs like me do. I was only two months old, I was made of the best tree in whole England and burnished with the brightest colour, and I also had a wonderful cushion fixed to me, as I was too expensive people didn't want to buy me, until now, the shop too opened a young handsome very young man came in, he had come to buy a chair, he started to look at the chairs, for a while then he looked at me, then he asked how much would I cost he liked me very much, he said to the shop sales man, "I like this one, my room would look wonderful with this little chair". So soon I was set on the top of a black toyota, and takes to a beautiful house with a little garden. Then to my new owner's room it was a room full of books, an ordinary chair and a table and a bed and a pile of a games a twinner, a TV, a VCP and a large wardrobe, he set me near his bed. My owner's name was a large he had two younger sister and a father and a mother who growled when she saw me as for wasting so much money on a chair, just like humans, they use things like them, but never care about them. George liked see very much, so did his sisters, they loved to sit on me which warmed me to my they never stepped on me or did any thing rude, as long as I was young beautiful, cosy and comfortable. George's favourite time sitting on me was, when he had a wonderful mug of hot chocolate milk with a book.

Now I'm quite old and worn out. My colour has faded, my cushion is almost flat, and I'm quite wobbly wobbly all the time. George sits on me less and when he does he is always rough on me. I feel very lonely know, nobody likes me anymore. One day George came in with a hot cup of coffee. He was just about to sit on me when suddenly he tripped over the carpet and spilled, the mug full of coffee on over me, you

won't believe how terrible I felt my whole body burden, and nobody ever cared to wipe the coffee of me. Things were terrible for me now, I was always cold, lonely and unhappy, one day George and his mum had a terrible row, George's mum was so mad at him, that she took me up, life makes me shudder when I think about it, any way and thawed me to the door. My back was half broken, and I was more weak, George picked me up, but didn't fix me nobody even didn't looked at now, until one day, George was sitting on the ordinary chair, when one of his friends came in a French boy, George told him to take as cat, the boy's eyes fell one me and asked George in French as George know's French "ES-ce une chaise?" You know what George replied to this, he said that I'm a stool now on expensive chair like me compared to a simple stool is insult, and disgrace, they just like humans, they use something worth it out, break it, burn it throw it. From then I realized George or anyone else would not look at me any more. But with the hope, of one day George will turn his face and attention towards me once again. By that I am still living.

**Note:** Please send typed or computer printout of your article to us. Otherwise our press department face serious problem with your H. writing. — RS Editor.

## Jokes!

You're very late in coming from school, aren't you?  
I stayed in for fencing lessons, Dad.  
Right — tomorrow you can help me mend the one behind the garage.  
Doctor, how can I cure myself of sleepwalking?  
Sprinkle tin-tacks on your bedroom floor!  
Have you any experience with machines?  
The foreman mached the youth.  
Yeah-slot and pin-ball!

## For the Love of a Country

by Sadia R. Chowdhury

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## QUIZ CLUB

**W**E have a winner to declare! He is Ahmed Tareq Rashid, a resident of DOHS for correctly answering the quizzes printed on January 1st, 1996.

- Well done! Please collect your Quiz Club Prize from our Dhanmondi Office on 20-1-95 around 12.00 pm to 2.00 pm. And here are this week's 10 quizzes. Crack them and send the answers right away. After all, you may become a winner like Tareq Rashid!
1. What is the name of the Libyan currency?
  2. What does IBM stand for?
  3. How many boarding bridges are there at the Zia International Airport?
  4. Who is the writer of the book, "Heart of Darkness"?
  5. The writer Najib Mahfuz comes from.....
  6. Who was the President of the Confederate States of America?
  7. Who is the Foreign Minister of UK?
  8. The capital of El Salvador is.....
  9. What is a P-N junction?
  10. Insulin is secreted from ..... cells of islets of Langerhans.

- Answers (12.01.96)
1. 14 years.
  2. Ryutaro Hashimoto.
  3. Around 250 people.
  4. Hague.
  5. Intelligence Quotient.
  6. Bujumbura.
  7. Sudan.
  8. Germany.
  9. Yuri Gagarin.
  10. 15th February 1996.

## ERRATUM

We apologize the printing errors in your favourite Quiz Club column, published in January 5th, 1996. The errors are:

In Question section and in number 1, instead of President, it should be Prime Minister.

In Answer section and in number 4, instead of ex-Prime Minister, it should be EX-PRESIDENT and in number 7, the spelling of the name of the runner-up of 1995 Wimbledon tennis is Boris B-E-C-K-E-R and not Baker.

Special Thanks go to Mr BM Alim Hossain and Ms Rasheda Sultana for taking the trouble to point out these errors.

## Answers You Would Love to Know!!

### What is a Myth?

**S**EVERAL kinds of stories have come down to us from the past. These stories are of four chief kinds: 1. Myths 2. Sagas 3. Fables 4. Folk-tales. Myths are stories that people of the past made to explain mysteries of life, death, beginning of the world and the natural powers. They were, in fact, not able to understand these mysteries. So, they wove stories on the basis of their imagination. As myths were imaginary stories, they were bound to have imaginary characters in them. That is why they had references to dragons, monsters, fairies, giants and gods. All these characters had magical powers and were much more powerful than human-beings. Different types of myths were woven about the same thing in different parts of the world. It was, in fact, these myths that gave rise to different religions in various parts of the earth.

### What is a Saga?

**T**HE word — saga — was originally used for any story of heroic deeds of a medieval Norwegian hero. Gradually it came to mean a long eventful narrative about a family or social group or dynasty etc with several chapters, cantos or even volumes. A saga has several legends of heroes added to it. These heroes may be real or half-real and half-imaginary. But on the whole, the frame-work of the main story is based on truth. An epic is indeed a saga but it is in poetry whereas the sagas are in prose. For example, the Mahabharata is one of the greatest epics in the world as it was composed in poetry. But we can say that it is a saga of the eventful story of the Kuru dynasty. Colonel Todd's "Rajasthan" is a saga of heroism of the Rajputs who dominated the Indian political history for about 1000 years.

### What is a Fable?

**A** fable is a short tale not at all based on fact. It involves animals as essential characters in it and carries a moral for the readers. The animals are described to be talking to men or to one another wisely, foolishly, cunningly and in all other ways as human-beings do. Aesop's Fables are a very good example. Panchatantra too is a collection of fables each of which is highly less-ogiving. The lessons imparted by fables are, in fact, very useful as well as practicable. They can impart guidance in most difficult situations and lead one out of them. Fables are a good source of wisdom, tact and other noble means. Thus they go a long way to put one onto the road to success and well-being if their morals are translated into day-to-day life. So, fables should not be read for amusement only but for learning to be a successful person as well.

### What is a Folk-Tale?

**F**OLK-TALES are light fanciful stories handed down orally from generation to generation. They are popular as they aim at passing the long winter evenings (nights). Folk-tales describe the hopes and fears of common men in a natural fanciful way. As the human hopes and fears are the same everywhere in the world, we can find similar folk-tales in distant apart countries. There may be slight differences in the versions of these similar folk-tales but their theme is almost the same. Almost every social group has its own folk-lore traditions and beliefs. Its folk-tales are based on these traditions and beliefs. So, folk-tales are very near to day-to-day life. The element of fancy and imagination gives them colour and interest. As a result, they become highly fascinating. It is for this reason that children are very fond of folk-tales.

### What is a Fairy?

**A** fairy is a small imaginary female with supernatural powers. Fairies are believed to be very, very beautiful and delicate. They help men (especially women and children) when in a good mood. But they may harm evil men using their supernatural powers when they are angry. Fairies are believed to have wings for flying. They are believed to live in their own land — called Fairyland. This land is ruled by the fairy queen who has a large magnificent palace. Fairyland is considered to be a land of lakes, pools, lush green meadows, flower-plants and fruit-trees. Children love fairy-tales very much because fairies always love and help good children. They come flying down the mountains and roam the countryside. Fairies often fall in love with handsome young men and want to marry them.

## I am Old Enough...

by Najla Sushoma Khan



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