

TEENS and TWENTIES

Ghaash Pukur a Break From University Blues

by Shammi Mohabbat

BANG! Bang! BOOM!! Destruction, terror, mischief and mayhem. Yep, the above is probably a good summation of how most people regard the University of Dhaka (DU).

To be honest, these days the biggest occupational hazard facing contemporary DU students, is being agonisingly bored by reminiscing pre-liberated graduates who ooze absolutely gratuitous levels of nauseating nostalgia and sentimentality while harking on incessantly about the former "Oxford of the East."

DU academia's fallen angel it may be; hedonist's nightmare it certainly is not. For at the heart of the beast lies sanctuary behind the Fine Arts Department. Shielded from traffic, people, dust, political speeches, personalities and marches, this area is known as the Ghaash Pukur i.e. Grass Pond (GP).

It is not to be confused with that veritable garden of Eden known as the TSC. While not wanting to impinge in anyway on the TSC's relative orderliness, neat gardens and fountains, courting couples and adda groups, compared to the pond however, it is frankly bland and devoid of personality.

The GP lies surreptitiously behind the Fine Arts Institute ready to ambush and subsequently ravish the senses of the unsuspecting. With an oval perimeter and basically bowl-like structure, its vital statistics read as 80m diameter and 15m in depth (apply ceteris paribus before accepting these figures).

It looks archaic, a throw-back to neons past, a place time forgot and evolution skipped; to me the embodiment of a natural goddess, daughter of Gaia, bursting with vitality, whose primordial beauty is adorned with a wild kaleidoscope of trees, undergrowth, bushes, butterflies, weeds and climbers for tresses. All totally random, anarchic, chaotic. Far beyond the superlatives and semantics of any spoken and written language.

I must stress here that

this is not some airheaded bimbo of a place but one whose abundance and fertility lend a perfect backdrop to scores of academic artisans honing their sculpting, painting and drawing talents during the day. As day ends budding bohemian intellectuals, herbmasters, and others (all usually camouflaged in denim and pan-fab) gradually setup court in the surrounding grass which encompasses the whole pond. Voices free from aggression and agitation but not

from passion are raised in tribute to Nazrul and his lyrics waft into the night sky intermingling with a few strums of the guitar and beats of a tabla.

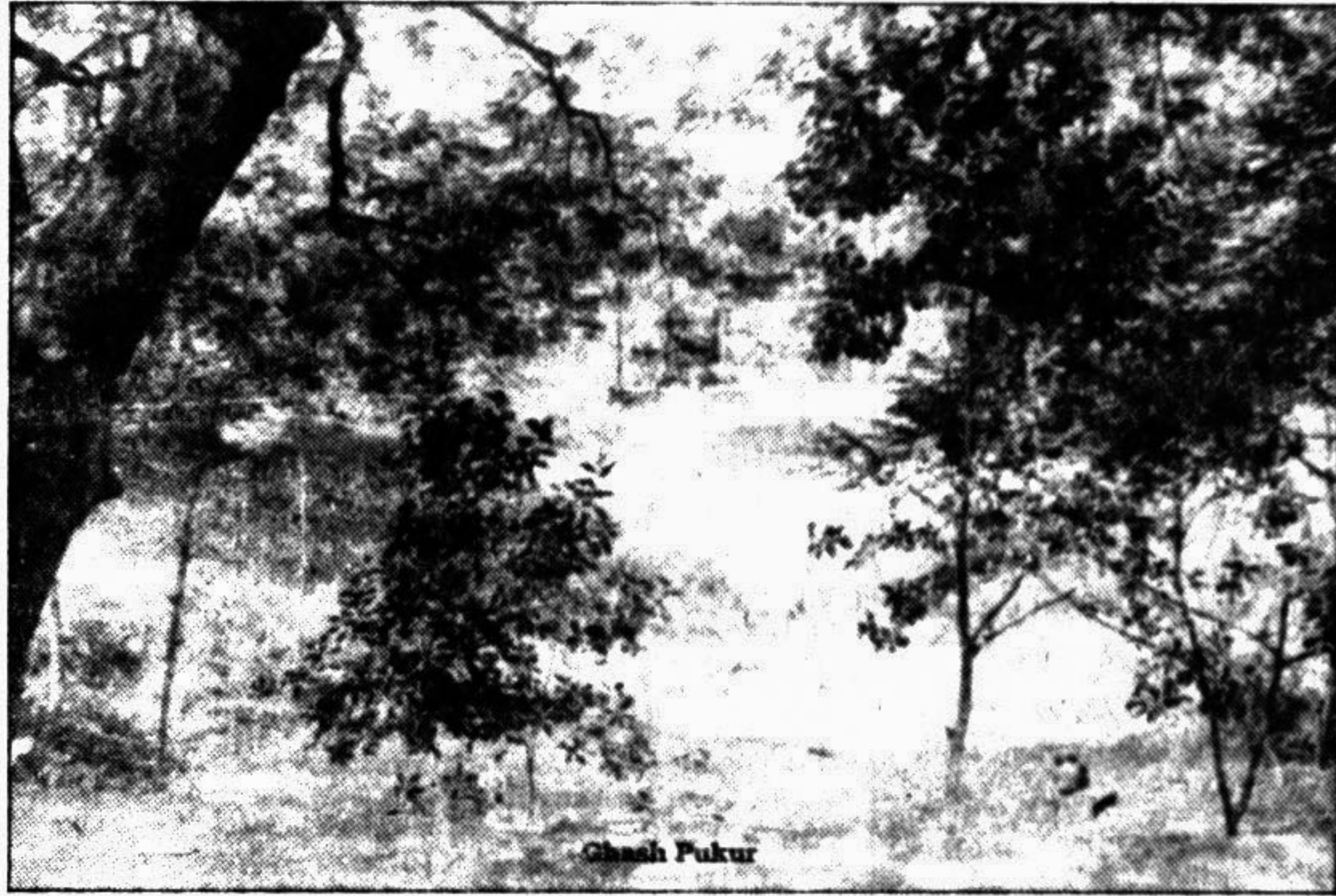
Among the many stories that from part of university lore, I have my own personal favourite 'myth'. The inverted comma's because I have a little superstition that if similar things are from three sources whom I consider reliable then I assume what I heard is generally true. Furthermore there is another condition

that the three persons may not know each other professionally or socially. I suppose this all sounds a very crude and naive way of making judgements but this is personally justified on the you-know-life-would-be-far-too-complicated excuse. The need to mentally extrapolate comes, I suppose, from my need to rationalise any situation exhaustively which leads back to the myth it basically goes along the lines that in the past(?) volunteers would clear parts of the undergrowth and set up stage at the bottom to form a natural amphitheater. This splendid group of people would go on to organise various cultural happenings such as songs, poetry recitals, debates and so on.

Thus if anyone reading this is one of the beautiful people who organised or were in anyway involved with the above, please drop me a note because I think it would inspire us to arrange something similar.

Finally finding prose inadequate I resort to poetry (doggerel perhaps being a more honest description) with an absolute and complete disregard for metre and myth:

If you ever feel burnt out, tired, strained, in doubt. Of the meaning and sanity of modern life, Besieged by deadlines, despair and strife, Then blow aside those clouds of stress, By going to pay homage to my goddess, Over the roundabout past the wall, Behind the Fine Arts Institute lies all.



Ghaash Pukur

The Blue Diary - II

by Md Atiqzaman

'I'll never hurt my Mona', Faye whispered into her ears.

'Whose carressing is this?', this is a frequent question from Mona.

'Ours', Faye answered casually.

'Whose happiness is this? Ours'.

Then all the sufferings would be... ours. You know... there won't be any car... to take you to your student's house.

'I'll take risk... bus'.

'You don't have an AC here', her eyes more lazily all around.

'I have Mona'.

'No cassette-player'.

'I have Mona'.

'No curtain for the windows'.

'But I have Mona'.

'Your mother won't come here'.

'So be it'.

'Rimu won't be allowed to come'.

Here Faye stumbled. His younger sister, Rimu, she didn't shed a single teardrop to see him go. Her swollen eyes were gleaming, as she silently thrust her earnings in Faye's hand - for her dear Bhabhi. Faye's eyes are now soaked. Mona continues.

'Our friends will also... Impossible'.

It is but a mere fact, dear. We might be starving a day or two. I'll be looking for a job, then I'll be doing a job... I'll decorate the house for you and me. You'll come home in the evening and you won't find me... you'll be sad.

'Let's forget these things. Had we not decided in this manner, I would have lost my Mona. Mona would have been somewhere else, someone else'.

'We'll soon be three from two', Mona mumble absent mindedly.

Faye is now irritated with such a realisation that neither of them can escape from the anxiety. His father... would observe silently for a few days. And then, each of his measured steps regarding this 'mishappening' would concern his son, and only his son. He has no emotion of regarding Mona and any other women outdoors. An uneasiness frightened Faye as he tried to assess his father's 'steps'.

He felt that his shirt was soaked with sweat Faye pulled his body and sat straight.

'People are watching... let's go inside', Mona pulled the bedsheet.

Faye started traversing the room diagonally, while she leaned on the wall beside

the door to the balcony. He turned to see her. She seemed tired, pale... no ornaments, no cosmetics... long hair running down over the simple saree. Then those earrings would glisten from beneath. Two tiny beautiful earrings - ornament or chain or bridge?

Sun has become dull. Timid air is fondling with her hair. Faye felt hungry. But he is confused, if he should go out, leaving her alone. Nothing else to do as well. Staring

around to face Mona. He tried to pierce her with penetrating eyes, but felt weaker and weaker down inside. Her cool, stable appearance was becoming strange. More strange than his own voice.

'Daddy has already known... Mom won't let me come out'.

A meaningless smile appeared on Mona's lips. Ground beneath Faye's feet seemed to tremble. He almost ran to open the front door.



Smile

at the ceiling he began speaking.

'No light bulbs... no books to read, if I had my flute right now...'

'You left your watch'.

'Oh! yes!'

'Your blue diary!'

A blank-faced Faye stood still as if lightning had struck him. Helplessness is now unmistakably apparent in him. Mona continued in a low pace.

'Would you... go home?'

With all the reflex of his five senses Faye turned

Faye heard Hassan out of nowhere. 'Dulabaa, Shoitdaa baala?'

He stormed out of the building. Every moment, he felt the pain of chains tied all around his body, he wanted to escape. He stepped on the pitch road. He knew there's a leaning figure, a pair of wet eyes, purple saree. Faye turned to find Mona leaning on the balcony, motionless.

Faye stepped toward his destination.

[The story is dedicated to Thomas Hardy, my guru]

Tony Banks the Shy Keyboardist

by Sharier Khan

GENESIS' keyboardist Tony Banks is considered to be one of the few pioneers who brought synthesizers to the forefront of rock music besides Keith Emerson of ELP and Rick Wakeman of Yes.

Although Genesis' name reminds people of the husky voice of Phil Collins, it is actually Banks' works which has bred the distinctive sound and style of Genesis. And the compositions of Phil, who has successfully launched four solo albums since the early eighties, have also been distantly shadowed by the style of Banks - with whom he has been playing drums since 1970.

Founder member keyboard player and co writer Tony Banks (born Surrey March 31, 1952) has much to be proud of since the band came together.

So far, Banks has worked on 18 studio albums with Genesis, four solo albums which include movie sound tracks (Lorca and the Outlaws, Quicksilver etc.) and countless world tours.

The first ever concert played by Genesis was in front of an audience who wanted to dance but Genesis failed to make them dance. There were lots of 'Boo's (if there was any Bengali around may be a : oi gell. Azam Khaner gaan ga) and the band was paid only 25 pound sterling by the host who did not bother to conceal his dissatisfaction.

Banks is reputed to be a shy guy. One would find it hard to believe that despite his frequent shows in front of a stadium full of audience - he prefers small venues like clubs. Although his works gradually promoted polyphonic synthesizers to computer-aided music, he prefers not to use Sequencer (pre-recorded music in keyboards or computer, used by most pop artists) in live concerts.

The Genesis set up its own studio, called Farmyard Studio, in Surrey in 1981, from where they first recorded Abacab (1981) before Abacab, the style of Genesis music was very different and those contained compositions by individual members. After Abacab, Genesis recorded fewer albums and almost all the songs were composed by Banks/Collins/Rutherford - all the three members of the group.

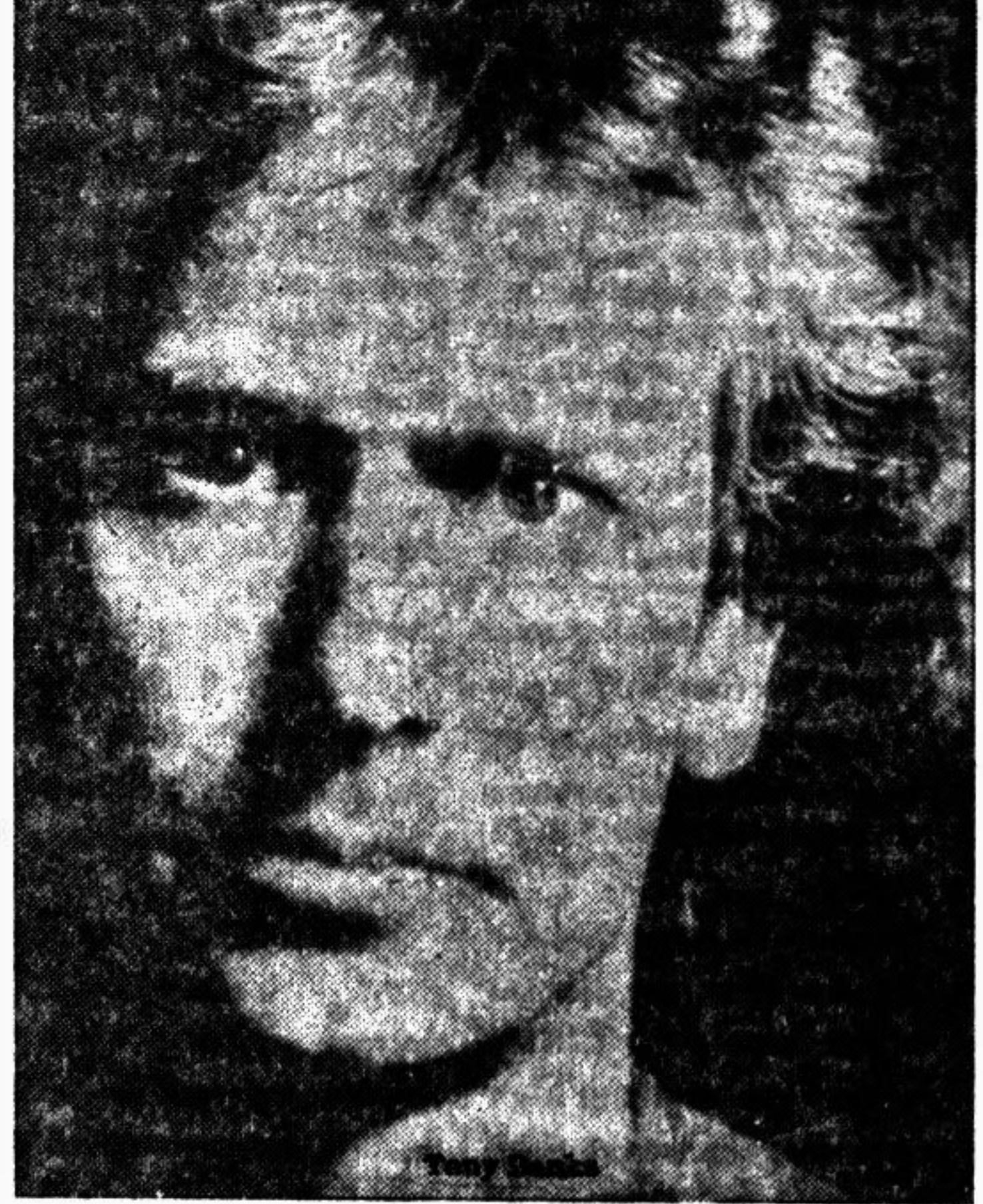
'We decided from then on to come into the studio as a unit with no pre conceived ideas whatsoever.' Tony Banks told the Korg Preview magazine in an interview. 'This idea became almost a policy really - because we all do things individually. We now try to create on the spot, with the three of us in the same room.'

Genesis' last album - We Can't Dance (1994) - took four and a half months to write and record. The policy of writing together produces a spontaneity that Banks believes is the most effective way of working. 'You get a different kind of result when you first get a good idea. You're kind of excited by it

and now we have less tendency to over-embellish the result.'

Banks, who once made a number of synthesizer masterpieces like 'One for the vine', 'all in a mouse's night' (album - Wind and Wuthering 1976), said, 'We realized that what I used to do was write something that we thought was great on the first day and then layer and layer it, until it was unrecognizable by the end of three months. Most of the time, however, the reason you put a particular song on an album is because you thought it was fundamentally good when it was little more than skeletal.'

'I enjoy playing live, but I am not really a natural performer. You know in another incarnation I would never be



someone who performs. I would just be a writer and I know Phil and Mike see themselves that way too,' Banks noted.

He revealed that most of the live playing is 'live' and very little is sequenced. 'We don't really like sequencing and we prefer to keep live gigs live.'

Regarding his preference of playing in front of a smaller audience than a stadium, Tony said, 'we just sound better playing in smaller theatres. It's more testing on us that way.'

learned to play our instruments properly. These days a band has a hit single, a video and suddenly they are on stage in front of a huge audience without ever having done it before.

Of influences, Tony cited Keith Emerson (who was a virtuoso on keyboard and had introduced destruction of keyboards on stage - but obviously, Tony did not follow his manners), the Beatles and the Animals as early influences to his playing, but thinks it is a shame that there is a lack of newer exciting players breaking through today.

This is purely because of the record company process of weeding out players who try anything too elaborate. 'You're allowed to be elaborate

and nothing in the world can change that. We are Bangladeshis and proud to be so. We are Bangladeshis, and that is our greatest identity.'

I took birth in a country, so rich in culture, a country so beautiful, a country made by love, and I am rightfully proud of it.

However another group of us seem to have no identity of their own. They find their identity, national of course very embarrassing, degrading. So they try to copy those in the west. Some settle down in a foreign country, marry a foreigner, and start living like them-denying their Bangladeshi citizenship. This is a case of 'neither a crow or a peacock' or maybe 'trying to make a piece of coal turn white by washing it.' But I really do wonder what would happen to their children. What would be their identity, a Bangladeshi, or a citizen of some foreign country?

There are others, who live right here in Bangladesh, and pretend that they cannot speak Bangla properly, and speak English in a supposedly 'British accent! There are also cases where the parents are constantly talking in English with their children, thinking it's very 'smart'. And the children are growing with no foundation of their mother tongue! What is their future? Would they grow up knowing nothing about our culture and history? We sure have some great representatives of Bangladesh, in the future.

This is a very big problem, facing us today. But what is even worse, is that we are hardly aware of its existence. Even if we are, we are taking no action. If this continues, we have dark days ahead. We cannot lose our identity; without this, we are nobodies. No-one would respect us. If we don't respect ourselves, we are completely ignoring this subject, perhaps unconsciously.

Identity Crisis Do You Care for Your Citizenship?

by Navine Murshid

WE are Bangladeshi, and nothing in the world can change that. We are Bangladeshis and proud to be so. We are Bangladeshis, and that is our greatest identity.

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There are others, who live right here in Bangladesh, and pretend that they cannot speak Bangla properly, and speak English in a supposedly 'British accent! There are also cases where the parents are constantly talking in English with their children, thinking it's very 'smart'. And the children are growing with no foundation of their mother tongue! What is their future? Would they grow up knowing nothing about our culture and history? We sure have some great representatives of Bangladesh, in the future.

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Some may laugh and don't claim, 'Identity Crisis! Don't

be ridiculous, we know who we are! But do you? Do you really? Think, and tell me, how much you really know about our culture, about us, Bangladesh, its people. Laugh 'all you want, but Bangladesh is in serious trouble, and we should all step forward to put a solution to it. For once, we should wait, and think.

Some have this feeling that these 'illiterate' people are only those who study in English medium schools. This is a wrong statement. Yes, cases like this are present in English Medium schools, but these are not the only places. This a problem faced in both English and Bangla Medium schools alike. This is a household problem. I guess it's a case of 'neither a crow or a peacock' or maybe 'trying to make a piece of coal turn white by washing it.' But I really do wonder what would happen to their children. What would be their identity, a Bangladeshi, or a citizen of some foreign country?

The problems we would face would be disastrous, almost epidemic in nature. We must put a stop to this and make them realize that a foreign country will never accept them wholeheartedly, they will forever be second class citizens. This is the way of life. You cannot change who you are, you cannot change your identity.

Our identity is Bangladeshi, and even after we die, the identity doesn't change. It is with us forever, so even if you don't like it, learn to like it. You can't do anything about this fact. Even if you dye your hair, have a plastic surgery, you are still a Bangladeshi. You cannot change this. And the sooner you know the better. It would save a lot of time, save a lot of tears and a lot of money(!).

This article is not to insult these 'smart' people, but to point out that if we continue to copy foreigners, and ignore our heritage, we'll soon reach the dumps. Yes, I agree we should take some foreign ideas to improve our styles, but NOT by forgetting our own.

It's time to take action, so let's all face the PROBLEM and take the first step together, by a discussion. Courtesy: SBWD

Goodwill Ambassadors

by Ziaul Hakim

MY visit to North Carolina as a goodwill ambassador so we were to be known, was a fulfilling one in every sense of it.

The fatigue and exhaustion of the long air journey was forgotten in no time, seeing the warm smiling faces of the members of the host families awaiting to receive us at the airport in a frosty evening.

The visit formally began with the rotary District Conference in Wilmington, North Carolina amidst pomp and grandeur. In this conference we had the opportunity of representing our country and our culture by giving speeches and presenting cultural programmes. District Governor Will W Kirk along with a large number of Rotarians were present.

The Group Study Exchange (GSE) a Rotary Foundation Scholarship, team from North Carolina that came to Bangladesh spoke about their experiences in Bangladesh. They highly praised the rich culture, hospitality of our people and scenic beauty of our country. The conference provided a good occasion for having lively interaction with a number of Rotarians coming from various professional fields.

Rotary Club of Fayetteville honoured us with presenting the key of the city given by the Hon'ble Mayor. Different schools, community colleges, universities, defence academies, museums, historical places, modern hospitals, banks, industries, tourist spots were the other places we had visited that immensely helped me enrich my knowledge. Staying with the American host families was the most delightful experience I had ever had.

My hosts were lawyers, dentist, CIA official, teacher, hotel manager, businessmen. They were of the age group from mid 30's to mid 70's. I was made to feel so much at home that even for a moment, I did not miss the affections of my family. Nights ran to midnights talking about the much publicised O

good exposure. Witnessing the techniques of trials and advocacy helped me add to my professional skills. I met a number of lawyers, went to their law firm and discussed the communalities and differences of the legal system between the two countries. I was enlightened by their knowledge and acumen. We also managed to meet a native American and came to know about their vanishing culture and their movement for restoring it.

The major complaint of the host families was that whenever they got hold of few materials or informations on Bangladesh it was a grim picture of poverty, flood and famine. We determinedly tried to erase the negative image about Bangladesh and focus on the positive aspects, for example, we told them about the success of Grameen Bank, BRAC, booming Garment Industries, various NGO's role in development, growing foreign investment, increasing women's participation in various profession and advancement in other sectors. We also told them about our family values, rich cultural heritage and about our historical events like the Language Movement and Liberation War.

Visiting the USA as one of the goodwill ambassadors was a great experience.

To You (Whoever You Are)

by Kazi Khaled Arafat

SOMEWHERE distant pleasure calls As far away as never As a materialized apprehension maus But it won't hurt hearts forever You told me you loved me too when I said I hated you Reality rules the whole dream through When we're all so damn clever Here we are now holding hands Love lurks in our eyes My alibis you'll seem to understand Unless you see through lies Tomorrow you'll learn that your voice Your words are no longer my choice And that's something at which we rejoice When another memory dies