

# TEENS and TWENTIES

## VD, Love and Then Some...

by Shammi Mohabbat

I abhor Valentine's Day (VD). Why? Primarily because it is a profit-propelled vehicle and for me anything that commercially exploits youthful emotions is inherently not right.

Furthermore being selectively xenophobic I see it as a foreign influence we can do without. My feelings are that the day seeks to conventionalise love; to make it conform, to 'package' it, to establish stereotype, bring it down to the lowest common denominator, full of trite, cliché, and ultimately sterile — all of which I consider truly unforgivable.

Sour grapes. I imagine some mutter or Mr-Patronising-thinks-he-knows-it-all or basically who-the-hell-does-he-think-he-is thoughts occurring to the more worldly or sardonic of my readers. The truth is I don't have a monopoly on the topic but like every ex-teenager, have by virtue of age, enough credit hours to have earned an honorary PhD (Phagolier Diploma).

Looking back on my five-year academic odyssey abroad, more important than having achieved a few letters after my name or a few more hairs on my chin and chest, was to have travelled in the ways of amour and to have shed much of my insecurities and confusions on the matter. A sharp contrast to the pitifully wretched creature of years earlier whose soul was racked by passion, lust, naivete, sincerity, deceit, conceit, inconsistency, guilt, perpetually falling in and out of what I thought was love.

For me love is basically to feel a sense of activation, energised, dynamic, fantastic — like having a Duracell alkaline heavy-duty battery fitted into the back of you. You talk, walk, laugh, eat, write, giggle, do whatever with gusto, better than normal.

In his book *History of the World in Ten and a Half Chapters* "love" according to Julian Barnes "releases this capacity within us to be happy" which is very much distinct from buzz derived from loving or being loved. Indeed 'tis the soul on amphetamines.

The word on one stage was so precious that rather than risk befouling its sanctity through ignorance, I'd say "I antelope you". Why antelope? Antelope is representative of any word (the more irrelevant the better) other than 'love' and is used to express that the person feels all that he/she could possibly feel for the other person at the given moment in time; but given that people, feelings, and conceptions are in constant flux, antelope is used to avoid premature. After a while though I fund the antelope syndrome to be debilitating to my independence and would vigorously avoid relationships.

Despite being virtually invulnerable protected by rationale, experience and cynicism, Cupid's shaft found a chink in my armour and once again I was lost caught up in the turbulent roller-coaster trip of thoughts, sensations and feelings. The least bit of attention from my enchantress causes my thoughts to accelerate to the point of incandescence. Having reached the speed and intensity of light, these gravity defying thoughts would shoot into the cosmos and ride on the Milky Way, hunt with Orion, tango with the Great Bear and onward

However reality makes an unwanted entrance. This be Dhaka and my goddess and I have academic, family, professional, social, whimsical commitments that mean getting time and space together is well impossible. Despite mixed blessings in the form of getting dish-mished from Dhaka Uni's premier institution, much by way of sacrifice plus-minus a few white lies is going to have to be invested.

The favoured Dhaka response is to conduct the affair by phone. For all their convenience I for one cannot and refuse to woo my woman by phone. Soundwaves are not enough to convey my panache let alone my soul to her. I am a creature who flourishes on spontaneity and faced with a telephone I'd rather curl up and wither.

Intuitively I know how her exception change, how her eyebrows elevate and angle depending on her mood I observe (joyously/thirstily but on the phone — I be robbed; the quiet smile, lowered eyelashes and turn of head when an impulsive compliment eludes her defences and hits the mark but on the phone — I be denied).

So what recourse for the extremetelephono-phobia suffering lover? Having been brought up on Byron, Cervantes and Rostand, I am by nature inclined to letters. Yes the written word, of the 'pen is mightier than the sword', the ink of a writer is more precious than the blood of a martyr etc. ilk. They are personal and intimate and they are not bound by any convention.

The four sides of a blank page are there for you to fill longingly, poetically, prosaically, lyrically, sentimentally, seriously, hysterically, passionately, whateverly — in this case all you wish to say is limited only by yourself. Thus, letters I feel to be the most self-expressive and self-indulgent of any form of personal communication. In modern world deprived of dragons to slay and honours to quest, I discard my steed and lance for rickshaw and pen.

Letters have the advantage of being read by my lady in whatever mood or situation she may be in: busy, lazy, inside, outside, train, plane, baby-rick, in private, in public, hungry, stuffed, night, day, one-handed, one-eyed, one-toothed, hot, cold, tired, moody, stressed, saucy, awake, in company, alone.

To my sorceress if I were to say verbally "There are only three things in life worth pondering. Firstly, the indestructibility of the soul. Second, the nature of matter and third, love" — this would be instantly ignored, missed, dismissed as flattery, a product of a diminished/demented/fermented (?) mind.

However, if this were written to her, she would read it, hesitate, reread it and essentially no matter how she responds (enraptured, confused, annoyed, sarcastic, whatever) at least it will have registered.

In quintessence paraphrasing the immortal lines of the bard Cyrano "If kisses were words, You'd be reading this with your lips..."

Finally for those readers who have reduced to a state of crisis having taken in my spiel about not hyping Valentine's Day — there is always Poitelia Falcon!

## Competition

### Valentine's Special

On their first acquaintance, Jahed and Trishna were exchanging some bitter words with one another regarding a trifle issue. With the passage of time, however, when they got to know each other better, their initial resentment faded away and soon became intimate friends. And this intimacy grew until the time they exchanged their hearts.

Every evening, Jahed and Trishna would have a chat over the phone, often whispering when their parents are at home. On this Valentine Day, Jahed wishes to take Trishna for lunch. Already, they have made up their minds what to tell their parents. Trishna would ask her father whether she could spend the day at a friend's house, while Jahed will coax his mother into giving him some money for bid marketing, the amount which he will use to pay off the bills.

Like Trishna and Jahed many teenagers are not free enough to discuss their own affairs with their parents. Although, some regret lying bluntly to their parents and spending their money on these purposes, many say they have no other choice. Is the society too stringent to these young people? Should the parents be more liberal? Is it the teenagers who should change their attitude? Or, should both the parents and teens make conciliatory efforts?

We ask you to put forward your opinion in this matter. And of course, those who can support their views cogently, he or she will be awarded 1 God Valentine special gift. Please limit your comment within 800 words and send your material by the end of this month. We also welcome parents to participate in this discussion.

### Things you could give someone special on a Valentine's Day:

1. Bouquet of roses
2. Fancy cards
3. Chocolate box
4. Teddy bear
5. Baked chocolate cake
6. Perfume
7. Heart shaped pillow or cushion
8. T-shirt
9. Tie

### Places You Could Hang Around: (provided hartal allows!!)

1. Wonderland
2. Waterfront
3. White castle
4. Rainbow (for ice cream)
5. Kintuky
6. Sously's
7. Hot Hut
8. Lemon Grass
9. Shenai

## Has There Been Any Lost Love?

by Shakib Ahsan



Love is knowing that even when you are alone you will never be lonely.

MINNA, my jenny wren.

Last night the drencher found me brooding in the verandah, wee tipsy from the 'vicious wigh', the drink they call here.

A chilly shower it was, marking, as the people here say, the end of winter. It won't be long when the sweetened air of summer sun-downs will hunt me down — with memories of the bustling bazaar at the skirts of the old fort. Our milk maid here woke me up, yelling that there was a girl shown in the BBC news reel who looked like the girl in the photo I have. Apparently she was talking about you.

O my Lord! it was you! I could not believe my eyes, they were showing you, Mama and Papa. Thank God you are all alive! How frail Papa was looking, shaken but resolved in his unbending way. Mama, was she baking her special breads with that same unremitting candour? And you, my love, with the cropped-up hair and in my favourite pink overall — you looked as beautiful as ever.

Watching the attic room that took a direct hit, you and Mama were cleaning I could not hold my tears back. How many evenings did I spend there listening you play Mozart, Beethoven, Chekovsky? All these years I thought, I had lost you, maybe you were bundled away to somewhere west. I am all right here, a bit skinny though.

One of the cows was in labour when I went to check them out last night. It pays to see a burst of energy going nuts in the first rays of a tropical sun. Driving past the longer's point I remembered how mad I was to get out of this blight ridden back of beyond faubourg four years ago — when you saw me off at the bombed out station.

Slouched from work, subsided in an arm-chair, day in day out, I would try to recall for the thousand and I-don't-know-what times, what you tried to tell me standing against the window of the dogged train. Nothing in the world could convey my pain, anger and love. You stood there between Mama and Papa, clenching their hands like a baby.

Sometimes I woke up in cold sweats with memories of saturnine night skies flared up by hurling rockets rushing in my head. I prayed that you, Mama, Papa, the old postman, the news paper boy, our neighbours all stay alive. I have carved a little home away from home out here. Where we can start afresh with renewed hopes, where you can set up your piano school and Papa

can have all the world's time making fires for Mama. I know Papa, he will come round. All he had believed in all his life have fallen apart, that is what is eating him inside. The time has come for me to stand up for what I think is right. Every man suffers alone for the decisions he has made.

Have faith in me, dear, just hold on a little while. I promise you the world here, the dingy cruises, the barbecues, the tiny plot of land for our children everything we dreamt of. And of course the dog house. I can hardly wait to hear from you.

The ice on river Neretva has started to melt by now, is it not? The whitened cypresses are getting back their old colour by the day. I miss the coffee shop rambles we indulged ourselves into skipping the chemistry classes, is Mr Pinochio...? Probably he did not make it, buried in any of the countless mass graves scattered around. How can I return to the city where I grew up in, saw you, took you out — only to find it in rack and ruin.

Last night I dreamt we were strolling by the bookshops you loved to pop into, down town. Guys from the drama club were at the usual hang-out, the way side cafe. It was a beautiful sunny morning and by God we were happy! We were a great team. I hope we still are and will make one very soon.

A time to dance... a time to mourn... a time to kill... a time to heal... our favourite song, every time some station plays it and I happen to be around, I stop and listen, eyes closed, suddenly all alone, I try to reach for you, separated by miles and years.

I have kept a diary in my exile to give rent to the black moods that gets into me some times with a forlorn hope that we will read it together in a not so distant future. It has been hard waking up every morning, knowing, I might not see the person I lost my heart to. Am I sounding too mushy? I hope not. Are you still sending your brows as you go through this letter.

I wish I were there. Nothing is more important to me now as you are and it will be always like this. So much water has flown under the bridge on Neretva, so many moons have come and gone. I hope you are as deep in love with me as I am with you. Remember what we carved on that old pine tree where we used to play in summer and dream?

Walls crumble, thickets grow, bombs go off but love no...

Your Rume.

## St. Valentine's Day

Valentine, special form of greeting card exchanged in observance of St. Valentine's Day (February 14), a day set aside as a lovers' festival. The custom has no connection with the two St. Valentines or with known incidents in their lives. It is probable that the valentine was the first of all greeting cards. The paper valentine dates from the 16th century; by 1800 hand-painted copperplates were produced to meet large demands. These were followed by woodcuts and lithographs.

— Encyclopaedia Britannica

## The Road to Freedom - IV

THE departure of one Khan brought another Khan in the arena. He immediately declared military rule in Pakistan. Facing unstable political conditions Yahya Khan announced Pakistan's first general elections. 7th and 17th December were the dates announced for the national and provincial elections to be held. This very Yahya Khan would write down his name in history as the person under whom atrocities were committed which could only be compared to those committed under Nazirule.

12th November, 1970, a devastating cyclone hit the coastal areas of Bangladesh killing one million people. The central government of Pakistan did their best to keep the disaster a secret. The national media had no news on the disaster and the people of this country learnt about the disaster from foreign broadcasters.

More surprising is the fact that they even tried to prevent relief reaching the distressed people. Even after ten days four hundred thousand corpses were scattered in the area. Volunteers from different areas of Bangladesh and other countries came to help the people, only the Pakistani government never came.

The general election of 1970 saw the people of the then East Pakistan firmly united. In this election the Awami League under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won a landslide victory. Out of 310 seats they won 298 seats. On 3rd January 1971, Bangobondhu conducted the oath taking ceremony in front of a mass crowd at the Race Course (now Suhruwardhy Uddyan). The military rulers showed that they accepted the result, but behind the scenes Gen. Yahya Khan was masterminding a conspiracy with Julfikar Ali Bhutto.

On 11th January Yahya came to Dhaka with the intention of meeting Sheikh Mujib. Two rounds of meeting were held on 12th and 13th January respectively. They agreed that an assembly session would soon be held in Dhaka. Before leaving Yahya even congratulated Bangobondhu as the future Prime Minister of Pakistan.

After returning to Pakistan Yahya held a secret meeting with Bhutto, chief of army and his chief staff officer. At the end of January Bhutto came to Dhaka. He sat with Bangobondhu on the 27th and 28th of January. Before leaving he said "There is need of more discussions."

On 13th February Yahya called a session of the national assembly to be held in Dhaka on 3rd March.

Yahya and Bhutto held a meeting on 19th February at Rawalpindi. The blue print for the military action in Bangladesh was prepared here. He also dismissed his cabinet ministers on 22nd February.

On 28th February Bangobondhu called upon the West Pakistani parliament members to attend the national assembly — meanwhile, Bhutto declared that if anyone from his party tries to attend the assembly, he would be eradicated by his party workers.

Suddenly on 1st March Yahya announced the cancellation of the national assembly. — A TAG Research To be Continued

## Freedom, Their First Priority

Lance Naik Noor Muhammad Sheikh (Bir Shreshta) by Shahed Latif

NOOR Muhammad Sheikh was the only son of Amanat Sheik and Joosnatum Khanam. He was born on the 26th of February in the year 1936, his village was in Moheshkhal under the Narail thana of Jessore.

Even though he was a good student, he could not continue his education he was more interested in sports, theaters, songs and other things. After the death of both his parents Noor Muhammad Sheikh had to live a very hard life. Meanwhile he married Total Bibi of that same village, they had children and life was very hard for them because of the limited income. So, in 14th March, 1959 at the age of twenty-three he joined the then East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) the BDR now.

After primary training he was transferred to Dinajpur on the 3rd of December 1959. He was there till 1970 before being transferred to the sector headquarter in Jessore.

During the days of the Liberation War Lance Naik Noor Muhammad was in sector 8 in Jessore where he was fighting along with other soldiers from the regiment. Due to his previous knowledge in army he was the captain of his regiment. Gutipur was of strategic importance to them.

The day was the 5th of September of 1971. He was in a patrol with two other soldiers and their duty was to keep an eye on the Pakistani army, but unfortunately they were seen by the enemies. Around 9:30 in the morning the enemies surrounded them from three sides. They did this so that Noor Muhammad's regiment could not guess where the fire was coming from and put them under intense pressure.

Noor Muhammad understood that they were surrounded, so he began to fire to defend the station, but saving the station was becoming more and more impossible. So, he decided to send back his patrol to the main station.

But a bullet hit one of the soldiers during exchange of gun fire and soon after a 2" motor fell near Noor Muhammad and hit his right leg and his patella was smashed.

But still he was trying to save his other two soldiers so he asked one of them to take the injured person and go from behind while he would fire the self loaded rifle to allow their safety passage giving them the LMG (light machine gun). The captain's sacrifice did not go in vain the two were able to escape but Noor Muhammad laid down his life for the cause and when they returned with strong back-up the enemies were forced to leave the place and after much searching his dead body was found near a bush.

The soldiers found that his eyes were gouged by the enemies. The MuktiBahini took his death body on their shoulders leaving the place to be known as the death place of the first Bir Shreshta of the nation in Gutipur.

## Valentine's

