

# ARISING STARS

## For The Love of A Country

by Sadia R Chowdhury

**A**FTER walking for what seemed hours, I asked Tarek how much further Dhirpura was. "You silly girl, we've only walked for an hour," he said with a slight laugh.

Only an hour? It seemed like days. Food... I was so hungry. An hour? That meant it was two o'clock already. We were still in Dhaka. Would we be able to get out in time? What if we didn't? Water... I was getting dizzy again. Couldn't we take a break? No, we couldn't. We had to get out of here by four. Boy, was I tired... but on we walked.

Kamal Bhai was getting tired. His shoulders were sagging. "Here, give Raka to me." I took her and continued to walk. Hour after hour, we walked. Finally, my dad said that we were out of Dhaka. I sighed with relief. We had just made it. According to Kaya, it was a quarter to four.

Sunset was approaching and we were all very hungry. We hadn't had anything since breakfast. We neared a gram. "Abba, is this Dhirpura?" I asked.

"No, honey. It's still a long while to Dhirpura." And so, we continued to walk. As we got close to the gram, villagers came to greet us.

"You must be hungry," said one of the villagers. "Here, have some mishti." Another person offered water. They pulled out chairs. Tears came to my eyes. Never had I seen anything so spectacular. These villagers had very little to start with. However, what little they had, they were willing to share with us, who to them were total strangers.

One of the inhabitants took out a crib for Raka. We stayed for a short period of time, and then continued on our trip.

I was refreshed now. It seemed as if we were walking much quicker. I looked ahead and saw that there hundreds, more like thousands, of people ahead of us. They were all fleeing from Dhaka. "Where would all these people go?" I wondered.

As we passed another gram, more villagers offered us food. We declined, thinking that other people needed it more than we did. I asked one of the villagers, "Excuse me, sir. How much further to Dhirpura?"

"Why, it's the next gram. Shouldn't take you more than an hour."

"Thank you," I replied and on we went. An hour... that had already walked for six. By

nightfall, we approached Dhirpura, and it couldn't have been a moment sooner. I was so exhausted again. It hurt to move my legs. My feet were swollen and filled with painful blisters.

Once we got to Dhirpura, it was only a matter of time until I would be able to sleep on a nice comfortable bed, or so I thought. Dhirpura was a rather large gram. We had to get directions to find Hashem Ali's house.

I don't know exactly what I expected, but it sure wasn't what I got. Hashem Ali's house consisted of one room only. I just kept on asking myself how on earth we were going to fit the seven people in our family and the seven people in theirs into one solitary room. It was crowded enough with just their family.

That problem was solved quickly. Since 'shaheb' had come, the family was willing to give up their house to us. They would simply sleep in other people's houses.

The walls of this room were made out of clay. There was no actual floor—it was made of mud. There was a single bed, no pillows or blankets. Hashem Ali's family went around to their neighbours and found us some pillows and sheets. We placed the sheets on the floor, and lay on top of them. It was a rough night, but at least I felt safer than I did last night. I went to sleep rather quickly, probably due to fatigue, and woke up fairly late.

The only reason I did get up was because my stomach was growling. I hadn't had anything to eat since yesterday afternoon. I was just about to ask Abba for food, when I heard him talking to Hashem Ali.

"I'm sorry, sir. We have no food at home. Dhirpura has been experiencing a severe drought; there's no food anywhere."

"Here's some money," replied my father as he took some Taka. "See what you can salvage from the market."

Hashem Ali came back an hour later with moori, dhal, and some rice. "This was all I could find that is edible."

My mother looked at the food and said, "This won't last long, especially with fourteen people to serve."

"Well, we'll have to make it last," replied Hashem Ali's wife. "We'll have breakfast at eleven and dinner at five."

Days passed like this. I

was hungry all the time, as were my parents, brother, sister, and cousins. We tried not to complain, but it was very hard. On the other hand, Hashem Ali's family never said a thing. They accepted their fate. Raka was always crying. She needed milk, something that was so rare here that it was considered a delicacy.

Amma spent the whole day in one corner of the room crying. I tried comforting her a couple of times, as did everybody else, but the efforts were futile. Nothing helped. I guess I could understand her despair. At one point not too long ago, we were so rich that buying and eating food were actions we did without thinking, or caring. Now, the odour of food

made us giddy. Imagine having to see your kids starve. That's probably the most painful thing to have to experience.

Two weeks went by like this, and we were almost out of money. Abba had talked to someone who had just come back from Dhaka. "It's much better now," he said. "The fighting has stopped and everything seems to be back to normal."

When my mother heard this, she begged Abba to go back. "So we'll take a little chance. Anything's better than this hell-hole we are in right now," my father agreed. The next day, we got ready to go back to Dhaka. We never did see Hashem Ali and his family ever again.

To be continued



## The Plight of A-Level Students in Dhaka

by a member

**O**KAY, so you've finished your O-Levels. Now, you've got to decide which school you'll go to for your A-Levels. This decision will lead you to one of the few English medium schools in Dhaka which cater to students, at this level.

There, you'll be asked to sit for an admission test. Don't worry if you think you'll fail. It simply doesn't matter. Pay enough money and you're in!

Okay, you've covered the first leg of the long and tedious journey to 'Frustration'. Now start the classes. Some schools admit students at any time of the year this makes it very difficult for the new students, the old students, the faculty, in fact everybody.

The new students don't know where to begin or where to end; the old students find classes being repeated, making it extremely boring for them; classes become overcrowded and this causes the teachers of lose control over the students; teachers have to repeat classes or have to live with the fact that majority of his/her class does not know

what he/she is talking about on their consciences.

These problems result in this: students are forced to seek out private tutors. These tutors are like the mythical Stryphalean Birds. That is, they profit from the students' discomforts. Each tutor charges between 1500 taka to 5000 taka per month. As A-Level students are required to take a minimum of three subjects, imagine a monthly 'tutor bill' running into the 'big thousands (10,000 taka or more), not to mention high school fees, transport expenditures, books and stationery! Some of you may not have problems with this but others do have trouble keeping up with these expenses.

Another reason why students are forced to go to tutors is the quality of teachers in the schools. Some teachers are from prestigious institutions like Dhaka University. But even so, they sometimes cannot get ideas across to us students. Most teachers do not even bother to try and understand how we feel.

There is a gap in communication so wide that even though some students and teachers (very few) try to bridge it, they just can't. This makes it extremely frustrating. I'm not saying that it's always the teachers' fault. There are 'pests' within the students — young people who pose as students just for kicks, and disrupt classes by being unruly. As a result some teachers take it for granted that the whole class is bad and don't bother to teach properly. I mean, who'll teach if students are rude, pass comments, don't listen to what the teacher says, and so on, making complete nuisances of themselves? The teacher 'll want to leave the class as fast as possible!

But there are some freaky teachers. They act like... I don't have the language to express what they act like, provoking students to be unruly. They do so by not teaching properly, or by not answering students' questions properly. This can be very trying on the tempers of the

students. You see, we students of A-Levels are just the victims of the circumstances. For O-Levels there are so many good institutions to choose from but very few for A-Levels so few that they can be counted on the fingers. Thus we are forced to stay in a particular school, knowing that the place is not worth going to, because we have nowhere else to go. Even if we do think of leaving, we probably will not bother as the admission fees are so high.

Good students who don't have very good financial backgrounds have to study hard to get scholarships to study abroad as they cannot afford to pay for their own tuition as they're very expensive. They have to rely on their O and A-Level results to get them scholarships.

If these problems could be solved, or at least modified to some extent for the better, it would make life much easier for sufferers like myself, my friends and fellow mates. So please, teachers, students, give us a chance and yourselves a clean conscience.

**O**N the 21st of September we went to Nepal. Nepal is a sovereign independent Kingdom. It lies between 80.4° and 88.12° Longitude and 26.22 and 30.4° north Latitude.

The place is surrounded by Tibetan, Chinese and Indian peoples. We arrived at Kathmandu at 2pm. At night we went to a restaurant and saw traditional Nepali dance. After that day left for Pokhara.

Pokhara is situated at the North-western part of Nepal. It is a lakeside town at the lap of the Annapurnas. It is a valley of beautiful river, lakes, mountains, forests and waterfalls. The Himalayan mountain ranges with Mt Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, Lami-jung Himal, Fishtail and especially Mt Machapuctrre can be seen from Pokhara.

The next day early in the morning we went to our Hotel roof and saw the beautiful ice-capped Pyramids. After several hours we went the Phenwa lake for boating. Swimming and fishing are done best in the lake. We went to an island temple name Barahi in the middle of the lake. The next day we visited Davis falls. And then we went to the Tibetan refugee camp. This was an interesting place we bought a number of handicrafts there. We also went to Mahendra Gufa a Cave a series of large lime stones caves near the village of Batulechaur. The next day we left for Kathmandu. It was a seven hour journey.

The after we came to Kathmandu we left for Patan. Patan (Lalitpur) is the oldest of the three cities in the Kathmandu valley. It is famous for its Hindu temples, Buddhist monuments, artisans working with stone, wood or metal. After that we visited Dhulikhel.

Dhulikhel is a small quiet town. And is known for its

## The Royal Nepal

by Jeeshan Ferdous Mirza

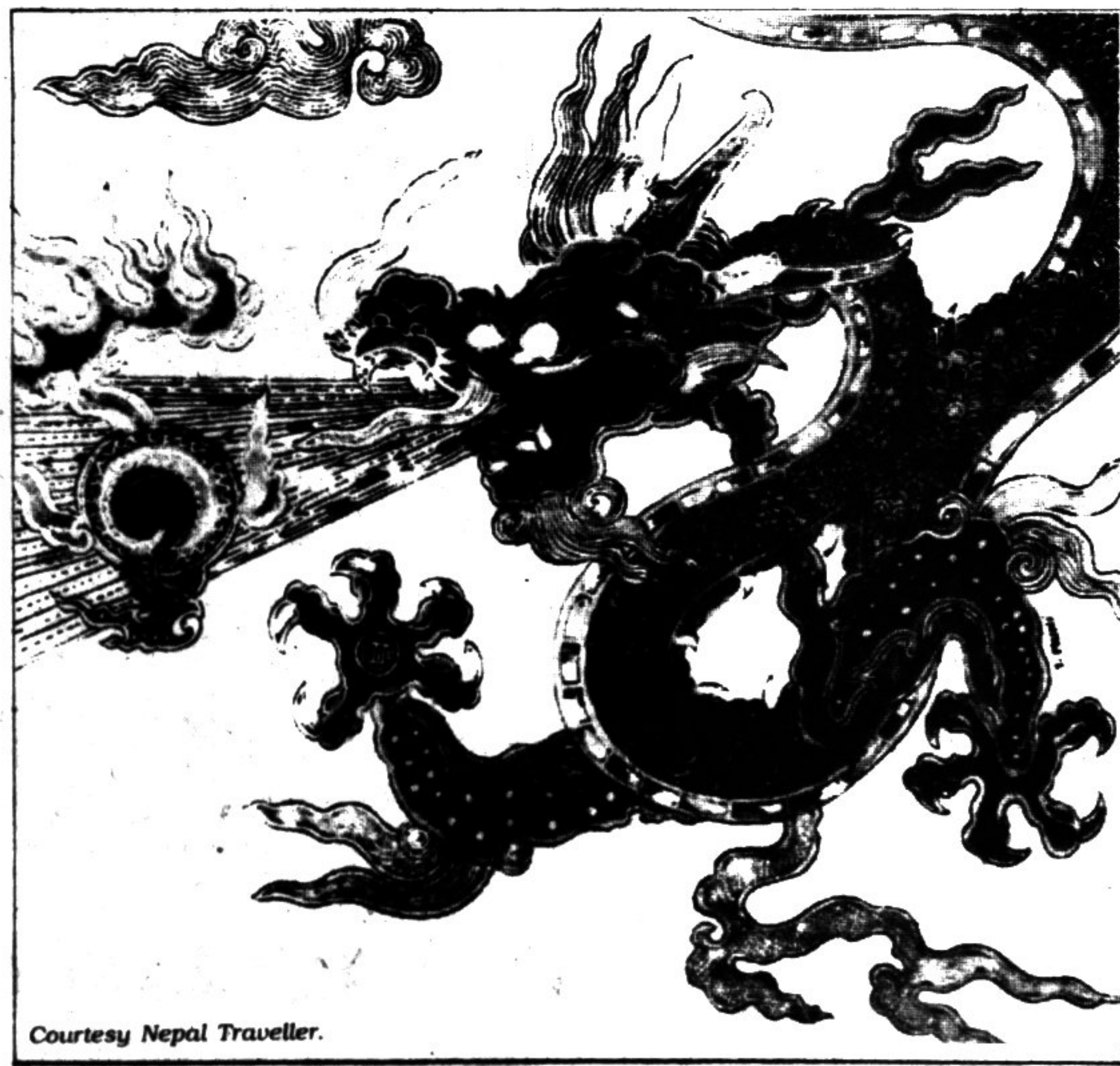
traditional crafts, it offers a spectacular view of the Himalayan range, from Cho-oyu to east to Himal-chulix in the west. The reflection of the sunset in the snowy peaks creates a beautiful panorama of colours.

We saw the largest mountain of the world the Sargamatha (Everest) from there. The next day we went to Bhaktapur and Pashupatinath. Bhaktapur formerly Bhadgaon is the second largest of the three cities in

Kathmandu valley. We saw a part of the Golden cow (an idol that Hindus worship). A few hours later we went to Pashupatinath.

Pashupatinath is a temple and is Nepal's holiest Hindu shrine and Boudhant and one of the world's largest stupas. It is also known as Little Tibet.

After that day we went for a short trip to Calcutta and then to Dhaka. And that was the end of a great journey!



Courtesy Nepal Traveller.

## Quiz Club

Answers (26.01.96)

1. Homer
2. 19th
3. He was alleged to have connection with setting fire at Reichstag.
4. 1969
5. Curriculum Vitae
6. Very High Frequency
7. 1920
8. Baghdad
9. Amount of glucose in blood stream
10. Cornea and Lens.
11. Libraville
12. Mahanow
13. 449,700 sq km/173,600 sq m
14. Sharon Stone
15. 320 16. 23 17. 5.6% (approx.) 18. Dubai
19. LTTE (Tamil Tigers)
20. 22nd January

You have 20 quizzes to crack in two weeks!

1. Which country's capital is Kinshasa?
2. Approximate height of K-2 is ----
3. Population of Brazil is ----
4. What is the Literacy Rate of Bangladesh?
5. Which country has the highest Life Expectancy?
6. In which year the English passenger liner, Titanic sank?
7. Length of the river Nile is ----
8. What is an incubator?
9. Inelastic collision, there is a loss of total ----
10. Fatigue of metals is caused by ----
11. What is Delta Ray?
12. Who were the Vikings?
13. The Russian city, Leningrad is now called as ----
14. Who was the first American President?
15. In which year Zia-Ul Haque, former president of Pakistan, was assassinated?
16. Who won the Golden Globe TV Best Actress?
17. Who is the new James Bond?
18. What is the full form of IMF?
19. INTERPOL's HQ is in ----
20. According to PPRC, what is the percentage of people unlikely to cast vote on 15th February?

**N**IKITA! Sanam shrieked. "You're wearing my wedding dress!"

Nikita looked at her friend, stunned.

"What the hell are you talking about?" she exclaimed. "My dress... You're wearing my dress, you nincompoop!" Her hands flew up in the air in despair. "My dress. You've made it old. Tell them to get me a new one," she wailed.

"Oh, Sanam! You're becoming hysterical again. This is not the time nor the place." Nikita looked at her exasperated. "I can't help it if our lehengas are so similar."

"Huh. Who says? My lehenga is one of its kind and now you've made it common, just like yours!"

"Your lehenga maybe unique but my Junaid is unique unlike your husband-to-be," she flourished.

"You're simply jealous. I never should've agreed to a double marriage with you and that comic you call unique."

Sanam snatched Nikita's lehenga and stomped off into the dressing room. She came out wearing the dress.

"Sanam, you're looking pretty in that thing!"

"How dare you say that I look nice in this drab outfit of yours."

Suddenly, a gleam entered Sanam's eyes.

"I've a brilliant idea... as usual."

fire if the guys weren't as stupid as they seemed.

We pulled down our dupattas (veils) so as to partially cover our faces, just when the door burst open.

"They've come. They've come," Milla and Shila cried out excitedly.

"Guess what we're going to do," spoke up Milla. Then without a pause said "We'll hide the grooms' instead of their shoes and demand money for them from their respective parties." She

laughed at her own stupid outburst. "I am just joking."

"The stupid grooms were too clever for their own good. You know what they did..." she continued.

"Your Novel, the evil twin," she said looking at Sanam (at least she thought so), "got in from the back door while he made his chanche fool us by impersonating as the groom!"

Nikita was laughing softly, her shoulder shook uncontrollably as the words sunk

in. I always knew Novel to be an idiot, she thought. Leaning towards Sanam, she said so.

Sanam was too surprised to say anything. Milla and Shila, too, were surprised by the reaction they had got from their elder sister, Sanam (Nikita in disguise).

Milla and Shila took hold of the brides' arms and started pulling them outside.

"Oh, dummies, you've to do that gently," Nikita said.

"I thought that brides were supposed to be jittery

stealing my limelight by wearing my lehenga?"

"Put a lid on it, will you?" Nikita said with a tense little smile.

They both at first had thought that they wouldn't be nervous during the wedding, but now things seemed to be different. Their little jokes weren't enough to cover their nervousness anymore.

"My goodness! I don't think I'll even be able to cry!" Sanam fidgeted with her necklace. But Sanam was

and on the verge of tears. But you two have been talking a mile per second," Shila replied, amazed.

They were taken to a stage adorned with red roses, where they sat next to each other.

"Hey, Nikita," Sanam whispered could you move a little. I'm having trouble resting my legs."

"What do you want... to kick me off my own dais?" Nikita laughed slightly.

"Isn't it enough that you're

proved to be wrong. The next thing she knew that she was crying when the kazi had come to hear her say kabul three times!

After that, the grooms were brought in and seated next to their brides to be (Junaid and Novel sat next to the wrong bride without knowing so) Mirrors were brought to the two couples, Milla and Shila, each, picked up a mirror and held it up for the two couples to see each others face.

Nikita thought that the idea was stupid since she had seen Junaid innumerable times before. Sanam inwardly thought so too.

As the groom next to Sanam, saw her face, Junaid let out a gasp of astonishment. Sanam chuckled. Their ideas had produced the desired effects they had wanted to see.

Junaid started with mock surprise. "Who are you? And what are you doing here sitting next to me."

"I'm your twin's bride, idiot!" she laughed nervously.

People were staring with curious expressions.

"What an unusual wedding!" one girl said.

"Free entertainment tool!" exclaimed another girl.

Novel and Junaid changed places. The marriage ceremony ended just as fast as it had begun. The girls ended up in their different rooms. Each sat on the bed which

had been decorated with flowers. The heady scent of the roses was getting on Nikita's nerves, it was so quiet inside and she didn't like it one bit. I wonder what Sanam's doing, Nikita thought.

Sanam too was feeling restless. This is stupid! Where's that drat husband of mine! She felt like throwing her dupatta away from her face. She couldn't see a thing because of it. If only she could have worn her jeans

do all the work around the house and listen to his bidding. Well, he could think twice about that.

Novel came near her and raised her dupatta away from her face.

"Yeeks! You... You twotimer. What are you doing here," she gaped at Junaid.

"What were you doing sitting beside me in the stage?" Junaid smirked.

"Well..." Sanam said haltingly with a guilty and mischievous smile.

be!

"Novel!! What are you doing here?"

"The same as you are." He smiled mischievously. She almost screamed when she saw him make an advancing step towards her.

"Crash! What had happened? Both the Jamai-Rajahs had been thrown out of the rooms. They lay on the floor in a heap.

"Ouch!" cried one of them. "Get off my back you stupid skunk!" screamed the other. "You're breaking my back!"

"If it does, it'll be your wife's fault! And who do you think you're calling a 'skunk's you rodent!"

"I'm older than you!" the other one bellowed.

"Hah! Four minutes doesn't make any difference!"

"If you two don't stop your silly jabbering then you'll both end up spending the night outside our rooms!" pointed out Sanam.

They got up hastily and ran to their wives. Oops! They had gone to the wrong brides again!

"If you guys don't stop fooling around I'll..." Sanam began.

"What'll you do? What'll you do?" Junaid charged her.

"Go to Nikita, where you belong!" Sanam pushed the charging Junaid towards Nikita. He bumped into her and both of them went sprawling onto the floor. Junaid jumped up quickly.

"Why you..." His voice was drowned out by the slamming of the door on his face by his twin.

Novel turned to his wife. "Now where were we?"



# WHO'S WHO?

by Sadaf Mustafiz & Nishat Hussain

