

# TEEN and TWENTIES

## SELECTIVE AMNESIA

### The Art of Remembering

by Dina M. Siddiqi



diaries and photographs to empty shells, blood soaked clothing and other personal effects of those who participated in the war. Material objects that signify notable events in Bengal's history, such as a khaddar sari from the swadeshi period, have also been included. Various icons of Bengal's anti-colonial struggle — from the revolutionary Khudiram Basu to the rebel poet Nazrul Islam are featured alongside images of the martyrs of the Language Movement and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman demanding implementation of the Awami League's 'Six Point Programme'.

with corpses being devoured by stray dogs, and the bodies of mutilated, half-naked rape victims. The effect is dramatic, if not traumatic. No one will be able to walk away without being deeply moved. The collection in the first room, which attempts to cover the entire history of Bengal up to 1947, reminds us of elements of Bengal's syncretic past as well as the struggle against British colonialism. In this respect, the museum narrates the history of the Bengali nation from 'time immemorial' (as indicated by the first exhibit of two 'prehistoric' rocks, symbolic of the soil of Bengal and the enduring quality of the nation) to the establishment of an independent state in 1971. It appears that the Bengali nation was created out of a continuous and unified struggle, primarily around the language issue, with one voice and one history. To draw a straight line from ancient history to the present, however implicitly, is somewhat fraught. For nationalism, linguistic or otherwise, is a relatively new phenomenon, part of the history of modernity. The Bengali language itself is of fairly recent origin. As in the writing of any master narrative, other histories are necessarily suppressed.

stepped. But British rule did not only create Khudiram and Preeti Lata. It laid the groundwork for identity formation on the basis of religion as imagined community — within a legal constitutional framework. I hasten to add that to take into account the significance of events leading up to the Partition cannot be equated with supporting the two nation theory. Nor does it invalidate the legitimacy of the struggle that culminated in the creation of Bangladesh.



One of the most eloquent and evocative photographs in the collection is of a young *nukti jodha* touching the feet of a peasant before leaving for war. Although the university student and the share-cropper fought for the same cause in 1971, the motivations and meanings of the struggle were surely different for each. For urban educated groups, the nationalist movement was predominantly articulated in terms of cultural imperialism, since they experienced most immediately Punjabi discrimination in their everyday lives. For the poor, and mostly illit-

erate peasants of East Pakistan of much greater significance than the language issue was the intensified appropriation of surplus from the country side. The lament of the jute farmer was against the *jotedar* as much as the Pakistani. In this context, a clear depiction of the economic relations between East and West Pakistan would have been appropriate. The heterogeneity of struggles and the specific nature of inequalities have, on the whole, been glossed over in favour of a more general, unified national history.

The museum is clearly set up to generate a raw, emotional response. I was told by the guide that most visitors have recommended there be more images of the violence inflicted by the Pakistani army and its lackeys in 1971, so that the extent of the brutality would be emphasized. Perhaps.

Photographs by themselves can be curiously decontextualized, floating without giving us information about where, how many and even why? I couldn't find any statistics of how many people lost their lives in 1971 and under what specific circumstances. Some

of the images, in their insistent emphasis on bodily violence, border on the sensational and the voyeuristic (for instance, those of the rape victims). I should note that in general great care has been taken to portray the participation of Bengali women in all aspects of the nationalist movement — not just in conventional roles of support and nurturing — but on the streets as students and artists, as politicians and as guerillas. Yet the violence inflicted on the *birangona* goes much deeper than the physical act of violation can ever reveal.

More haunting and poignant than any depiction of brutality is the photograph of a nameless, faceless woman, hunched over and hiding behind her long hair. The camera, which becomes the unwanted witness to her grief, shame and humiliation, eloquently captures the agony of having lost face, of being forced to live with the kind of shame this society does not easily forgive of its victims. Part of the reason interested quarters today are able to question the existence of war crimes against women is that there have been no histories written of this episode of the war, there are no testimonials or interviews. For the most part, the issue has been brushed aside, since it requires us to look within ourselves, at the strictures and structures of our own society as well as to condemn the brutality of the other. Clearly, the ambiguous figure of the *birangona* cannot be easily contained within a generalized glorious narrative of the nation.

That uniformity rather than heterogeneity has been highlighted in the Mukti-juddha Museum is to an extent a necessary and practical move. I imagine. It is a sad reflection of our political environment that the smallest sign of difference and contestation can be subject to appropriation and manipulation. In the circumstances, there is only space for black and white analyses, with no room for more complex story-telling. No matter, there are still other histories, waiting to be told.

## The Teen-Ocabulary

by Adnan R Amin

"A language is like a polyglot river — I really don't remember who said that, but what I do remember is that I agreed completely with it. A language, in my opinion, is one thing that is never self-sufficient, and elements from numerous foreign languages, enriches every other language over the years. Likewise Bengali or Bangla is also a language, which contains many elements which originally are foreign words.

The extent to which the language has derived its components, is pretty awesome. Words have entered the Bengali vocabulary from English, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish and Burmese. This way — many have contributed in the enrichment of our language. And, surprisingly enough, the latest contributors have turned out to be the teenagers of the country.

Wondering and pondering as to, why most teenagers come up with new words, I've come to (or jumped to) the conclusion that, during this stage, the younger generations discuss many things that they would really like to keep away from the ears of the elders. (now-don't let your imagination run wild!) And in order to do so, they invent sort of codes which are difficult to decipher. For example, if you've ever come across the word 'chikki', and wondered what it meant, let me tell you, it simply implicates a beautiful girl, and it was probably derived from the word, 'chie'.

The word 'manja' is actually a term, applied to ground glass, which is mixed with a preparation of phosphorus and applied to the string of kites. But, now 'manja' means to dress up in a trendy manner, and a person, who fails to do that may well be considered 'khat' (pronounced 'khaet'). 'Khat' is another such word, which means rough, unsmart, dumb and someone outdated or sloppy in appearance. It's been suggested that the word comes from 'khet' or garden beds, and refers to the infamous and somewhat crude dress-code of the (often poor) people who work in the fields.

We all know what the word gather means. But somehow it's continuous form may mean, 'to make a noise or to cause trouble. I've heard many a people use the word 'gathering' in lieu of 'causing trouble' or 'stopping things up'. Those of you, who have had the misfortune of being dumped or tasting the unsavoury experience of a broken relationship, will know what 'tehhak' means! The word, which was presumably derived from tribal dialects in the days of antiquity, originally meant (and still also means) to burn one's self.

'Tankie' is a very popular and extremely widely-used word. Almost everyone knows what it means, and even if somebody doesn't, I would like to humbly decline to explain. Another word I should've mentioned along with 'manja' is 'fetting'. To the best of my recollection, it was used in a Bangla drama serial as a 'rudradosh' of one of the characters — which incidentally has become an inherent characteristic of such roles. The word probably means something like, 'straightening out one's hair'.

Give me one word for a person, who is always seen around with piles of books on his shoulder and spends the break time — studying! There could only be one word to describe him — an 'atel' (pronounced a-tel). Though, according to the dictionary, an atel means an intellectual. But nowadays, it has turned into a derogatory term. Apart from this, words are reshaped according to a person's dimensions too, as in 'Boga' (stork), 'Bolta' (nut-bolt) etc.

There are hundreds more of such words. Today they're considered slangs. Tomorrow — perhaps, we will accept these words and use them in our everyday conversation. And by the way, if any of you is wondering, what is this 'atel', gathering over here for — never fear — I'm outta here!

## The Serial Killer who Lived Under My Bed

BY Kazi K Arafat

"THE Rhyme Slasher continues on his rampage, and dead bodies are being discovered almost everyday. The body count is already up to seventeen; how many more people are going to die? What efforts are the police making to capture this psychopath? And, last of all, who is this macabre murderer who leaves morbid verses on the cadavers of his victims?" — excerpt from the Daily Blah, 30th August, 1997

return of the great grandson of the cow that flew over the moon. Which is extremely irritating sometimes.

back of Mr Prabhat Chowdhury. "I'll see you in Hell But only if you behave well". Obviously another Rhyme Slasher murder. Why has he chosen this particular tragedy-scared family to be the fulfillers of his bloodlust? Were all the other murders a mere ruse, then?" — excerpt from the Daily Blah, 11th September, 1997.

quiet when I'm around, but when my presence is not present, I've heard, bulls in china shops run for cover. I went to the door, unanswering, and closed it. Bolted it, locked it too. (The nervousness must be setting in again — I'm talking like a cheap thriller. Beginning to smell like one too.) Anyway, I shut the door and drew them around me. And slowly killed them. Now there was only one thing left to do. "Until it happens Never say die And when it does Don't ever ask why." The police found this with the flesh dolls of Reaz and Tania later that day. I reported it. Poor kids, I'll really miss them. There shall always be a spot in my heart for them and their nineteen dehmatas.

"But you have to admit, Ziad, this Rhyme Slasher guy's got a plutonium attitude. I mean, it's so cool to write you have to thank me for this death I'm giving-cuz this life sure as hell ain't worth living or something like that and pin it down with a knife or something to the corpse of someone you've actually killed!" In movies, yes. In comics, may be. But this is neither comics nor movies — this is the real world. "Yeah — what you said." Ziad — there's nothing in the world he couldn't find a fault with. Except may be the

I borrowed one of abbu's *punjabis* for Ziad's *qukhani*. Everyone was there. Everyone of our friends included. Ziad's mother was historically hysterical, as any mother of a role model whose son had been brutally done to death with a sharpened fork and a hammer would be. I was wound up tighter than one of Nahseen's corsets and Ziad's father kicked me and Taufiq out of the house when he caught us smoking in order to unwind. Death in the family (and a more heartstopping case than a normal heart-stop at that, a really deadly death) hadn't ebbed the flow of his tempes one little bit. I must be really shocked at Ziad's passing over to the Great Halo Shop in the sky. I'm beginning to sound like a novel. If I am, here's the climax Ziad's ticket was bought for him by the Rhyme Slasher. At least that's what the note ("This nursery crime/had better rhyme") nailed to his forehead said.

Another deluxe Kazi Superkhalad. Arafat write-up. Good old Blah's sales were soaring. So was the imagination of the kid I was showing it to. Reaz lives down the street and is eight and a half. He is a potential genius poet, headbanger, overall degenerate and as such merits my special attention. Besides, he flunked Math too. And his five-year-old sister Tania is too sweet to ignore. "Do you think this supervillain might be a meta human, Arafat bhैया?" "I don't know, but meta-human or mutant I'm not sure of." "If he comes to kill me, won't you drive him away, Arufuth bhैया?" This question came from the chubby brat Tania with a smile that could kill diabetic patients. She always stays

came to the spot. The IG, seeing Sabrina became crazy and took her to another place for a so-called session of questioning. Mia was also taken, but jealous Gani will probably kill him so that nothing (contd on Page 12, col 8)

## The Night Sky

by M Amin and Syed Ashrafuddin

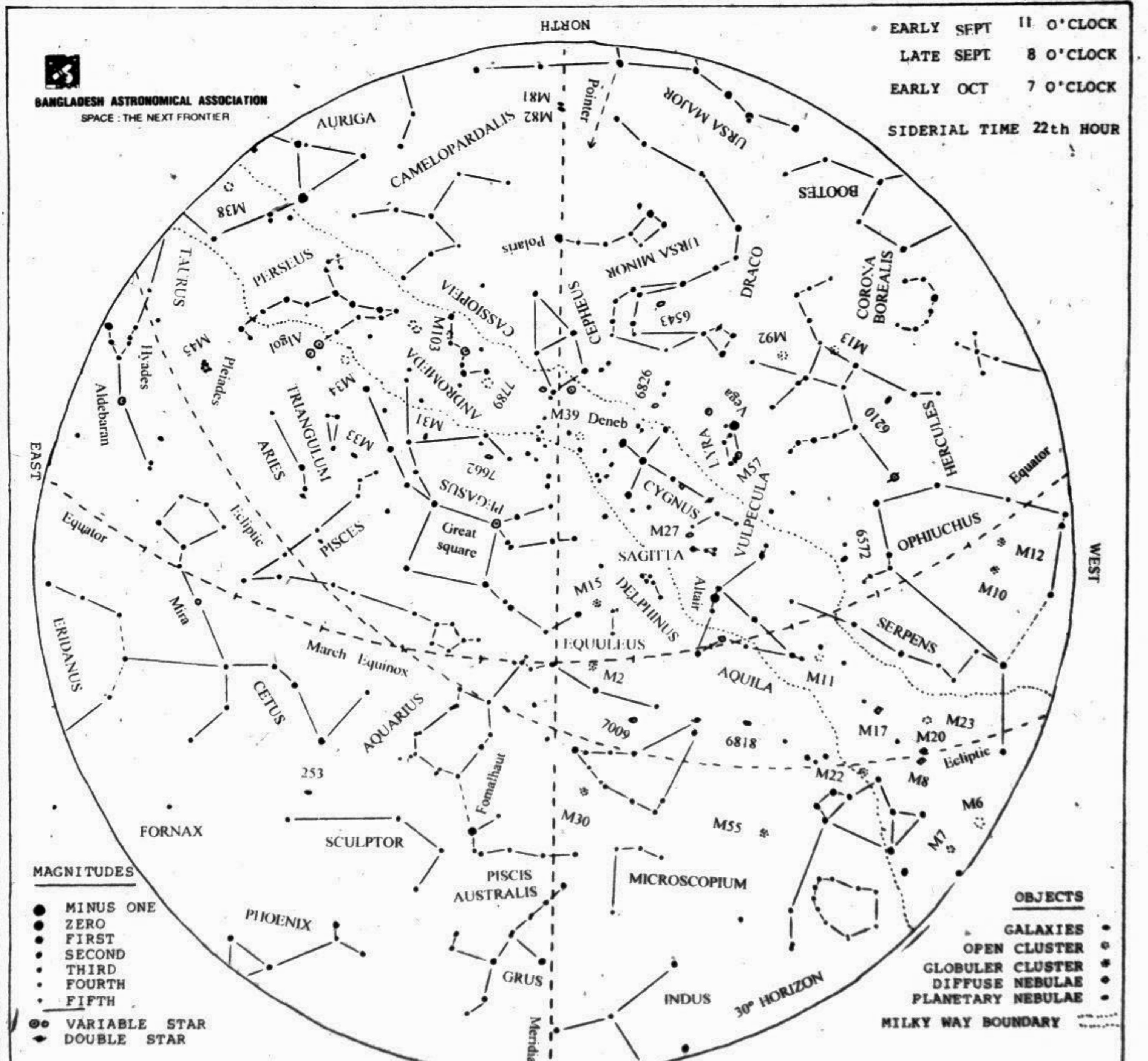
DEAR skygazers, we think you have learned the major constellations by this time. This time the constellations of summer sky are drifting towards West and those of the Autumn's and of course new ones are rising from the East. As usual hold the sky chart up your head so that the North-South and East-West are in proper direction. Let us start with the Northern sky. The big question mark of the sky — Ursa Major is not visible this time, so to find the pole star you have another way. The W-shaped constellation Cassiopeia is rising from the north-east sky, advance with the perpendicular bisector of the joining line of the 3rd and 4th star of Cassiopeia and you will reach the 2nd magnitude polaris.

The new constellations are at east and southern sky. At north-east horizon a yellowish star with high brilliancy will catch your sight, this is 'Capella' — the brightest star of Auriga constellation. Now east of Perseus you will notice another bright star at the horizon but this is reddish it is Alderbaran — the 14th brightest star of the sky and also the brightest star of constellation Taurus. West of Cassiopeia at meridian the king of the sky Cepheus stands. At your zenith or just over our head is the constellation Pegasus. In the North-east

of Pegasus the famous constellation Andromeda lies. It holds a spiral galaxy 'M31' and you can easily notice it from the dark side of East of Andromeda Triam Gulom and Aries. At the southern sky you will get a bright star, this is Fomalhaut — the brightest star of constellation Piscis Australis. Above this constellation or zodiacal constellation 'Aquarius' is hanging. This constellation is described as a water-bearer watering Piscis Australis. Three stars near Pegasus forms the cap of water jar. Some stars go west in straight line forming

waterlike image. Just west of the meridian at south is the capricornus — the sea got. It is hard to construct a structure like sea-got, but you can easily make a structure like 'Napoleon's Cap'. This constellation hold a globular cluster M30 and can be found and seen by binoculars, Below Capricornus and Aquarius lies the minor constellation. This is also the time for Planetary observation. The bright 'Jupiter' is at south-west sky at Sagittarius. Four moons of it can be seen through binocular or small telescopes. At constellation cetus the 'Saturn' is shining and you can watch its ring-through small telescopes.

Courtesy: Bangladesh Astronomical Association.



## Wow! So Many Angles Scandal

Triangular Love

The first sight of model Sabrina killed Inspector Gani who was simply entering the Taltu Bank's vault at 3 am yesterday. He knew without her he would die. But ex Minister M Mia stood in his way in the vault — he was ferocious because Gani looked at his girl friend. Who is better? Gani or Mia? Confused Sabrina was taking her choice with a bag of gold when 10 rounds of bullets rained the vault! M Mia was shooting to kill Gani, not for fun, but for jealousy. Gani, a trained Inspector, however was not meant to be defeated. He charged M Mia with 3 constables as if he was in a hurry to get Sabrina ALONE. But luck would have it! The gun fire drew the attention of peaky jou rnalists, therefore Gani framed false robbery cases against M Mia and Sabrina — again, to take them to thana and get Sabrina. But no sooner they were taken to the thana had the Police IG

