

# TEEN S and TWENTIES

## ABUSE

### It is Your Turn to Straighten

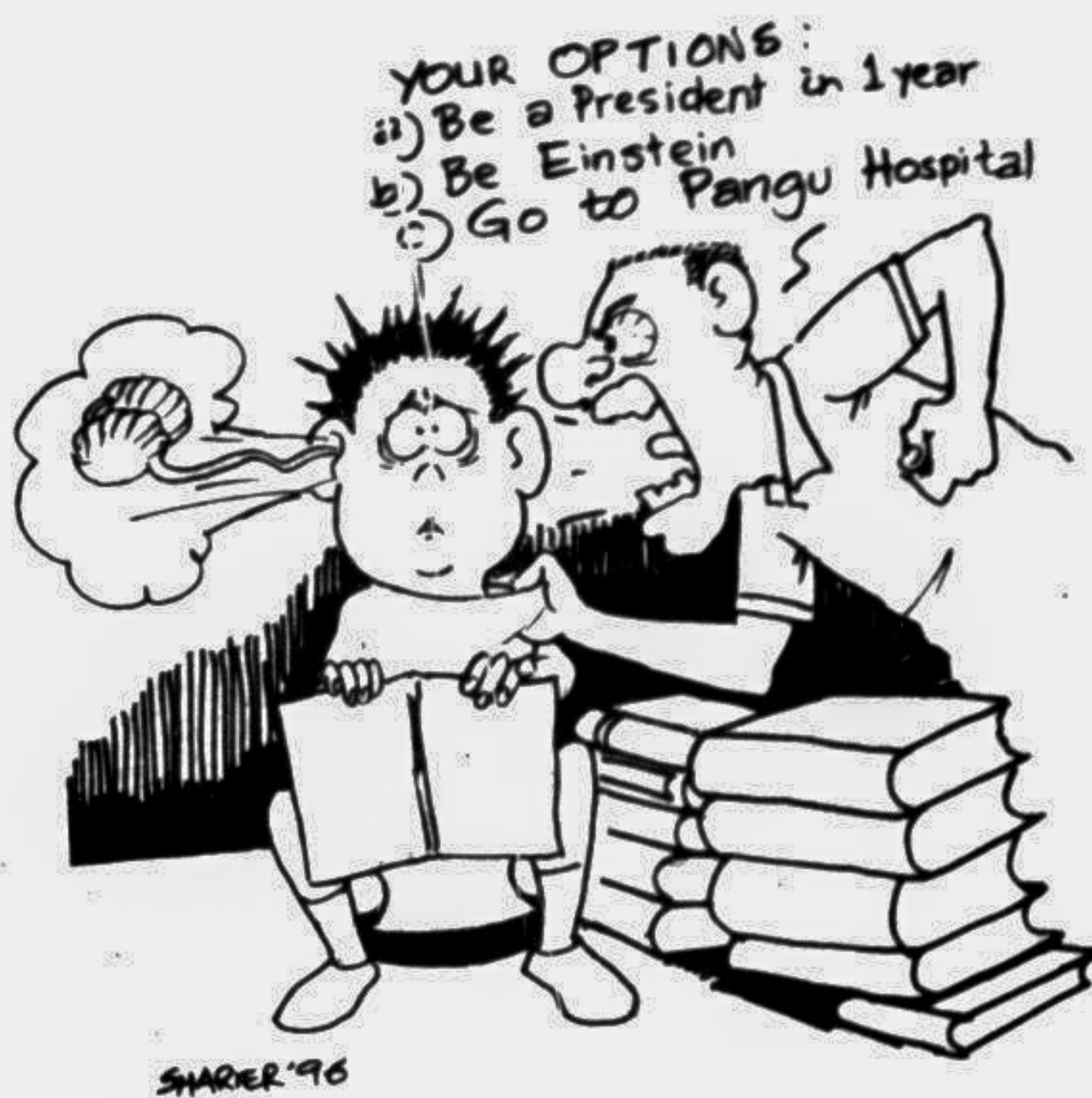
by Trishna

PARENTS typically resort to harsh and arbitrary physical punishment that reflects their own moods more than anything else. It's not rare for my ears to get filled by the high-pitched screaming of the lady upstairs at her six or seven year old son, a year and a half old turn daughter and of course the servants. That is followed by the brutal sounds of slaps, kicks and what not!

Then commences the pathetic cries — the sole way for children to reveal their agony. But those teardrops fail to wash away the brutality from her and, instead, she screams even louder, telling the victim to keep shut, inspite of having been beaten to almost unconsciousness. Any sane person would melt at the sight of those children. The boy has the innocent face of an angel, never bullying, or acting over smart or breaking things, as done by children of that age, and there's no need to say how well behaved the twins are. After all, what intentional crimes can the infants, who are a year old, commit? Yet they seem to have taken birth in an affluent family plagued by demons that must have lurked in dark crooks of the family tree for generations.

But they are not the only ones whose childhood will be a relentless horror, indeed they are only a few of the millions. Such parents who shatter their children's childhood are proud to declare themselves as 'strict' and not 'abusive'. They are unaware of the fact that abusive parents are those who have a pattern of punishing their children by hurting or humiliating them, either mentally or physically. They vent their own frustrations of life on children and take it personally when an infant cries or a toddler misbehaves. They feel bound to administer severe punishment to help their child straighten up.

Many such parents have impossibly high expectations of their children and interpret a child's 'cannot' as 'will not'. When talking to such a 'strict' father, who requested his name to be changed as the rest, I gathered that he feels rather 'fatherly' for not punishing his five-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter.



This Mr. X informed, it is my responsibility to show my children the right way. Sometimes when their mischiefs go out of control, beating is necessary in order to prevent repetition. When asked if that really worked, he grinned and replied, 'Well... they are kids now; when they grow older, they won't make the same mistakes. So I want them to remember that such mistakes are followed by severe punishment.'

I tuition a girl, nine years of age. The other day, I asked her to write an essay on 'The Saddest Day of My Life'. She requested me to help her out and so I suggested that it could be about a disappointment, a mishap or a day when her parents had hurt her intensely. At this she responded, 'Miss, there have been so many days when my parents scolded and hit me, which one do I write about?'

Fragments of horror from the childhood litter their minds forever. Reba, an eight-year-old, still recoils in spending days with the fear of getting battered by her mother at every step. I don't remember when it all began but I still

shiver looking back to those days. I used to be locked up in rooms and even bathrooms and that too without food for hours. Reba remembers sleeping with pair all over her body and waking up with bluish swollen limbs. When asked if those — tortures still continue, she said, 'Now it's lighter like a slap or two, pulling of my hair or they use the leather belts...'. She paused as her eyes welled up. 'They don't do the right thing when they treat their children this way,' she ended.

Mrs. Y, mother of Reba's, hesitated to talk about it at first but later she revealed, although very little. She's not obedient. Sometimes you have to do this to make your children respect you and fear you. Otherwise, they don't listen to you!

Omar's father died when he was nineteen. The twenty-two year old still turns lugubrious when looking back at his childhood, every memory I have of my early childhood is gripped by overwhelming fear of my father. Omar confessed of being beaten practically every day. His prayer to God every

night was that he doesn't get beaten the next day. 'For a normal person, it's nearly impossible to understand how a parent can beat a child', he said. Omar has never been on drugs smoked for a couple of years only. It was forbidden for him to stay out after dusk. 'But I'm not what I am because of his beatings. I started smoking at the age of 15 and got caught doing so one day. A terrifying incident followed but it worked the other way round; I became determined to smoke more. There has been days when I even smoked over 30 cigarettes. I stopped because I gradually realised how hazardous it was.'

On the other hand, there are many parents who have 'straight' children without abusing them. If you love your child, your child loves you back. By hitting a child, a parent only teaches him/her to be hated. It is the most sadistic form of treating another being, said the mother of a ten-year-old girl.

Mr. Ahmed, the father of two teenage sons said, 'I've noticed that fair and meaningful ways always are more effective. Beating lowers you in the eyes of your children. You beat them today, they beat their own children and others tomorrow. Hence, at the point of every problem, hitting will be considered as the way out. Your child may still love you but they never respect you. And I believe, love, without respect, is worthless.'

Among physical, sexual and emotional abuse, the last is the hardest to spot. In its most obvious form, it can involve a parent who constantly shouts and curses at a child, or who is simply cold and unloving, or who calmly says very scary things such as, 'I wish you had never been born, or you are a good-for-nothing'. So after having read about the physical abuse above, if you have felt proud to be not one of them, then think twice!

The children who are abused today are infected with a monstrous violence as destructive as any genetic disease. When I went to talk to such abusers, many of them simply replied, 'I beat my child, that's my problem'. Yes it is a problem and now it's YOUR turn to 'straighten up' yourself.

The Bengali society in the forties and fifties is portrayed best in Sharat Chandra's works. Sharat Babu's literary pieces highlight the subtle complexities of the then Bengali society. His literary masterpieces clearly depict the social ethos of the middle 20th century Bengali society. Sharat Babu's works also capture the social awareness towards education that flourished in the pre liberation days.

Zahir Raihan's works amply depict and characterise the social condition of Bangladesh during the Pakistani period. His works describe the spirit of independence, the social anger which blossomed during the Pakistani period. The sixties was a period during which the society underwent certain changes. The people rose against the oppression and suppression of the then autocratic Pakistani government.

Independence became a necessity. This necessity is reflected in Zahir Raihan's works. His works are a major source of information regarding the social sentiment of the pre independent days. The social ethos, stratification of that period is captured in his immortal works. The literary works of Moinul Ahsan Saber, Showkat Osman, Humayun Ahmed, Imdadul Huq Milon characterise the evolution and modernisation of the post liberation Bangladesh society.

Equal rights for women, mandatory child education, discouragement of gender discrimination, these aspects along with fast changing social habits are described in the works of modern day literatures. Literature will continue to work as a mirror reflecting the history of a particular time and society. Hundred years from now we will not be here but our literary pieces will inform the generation to come about the gradual evolutionary process that took place in late 20th century.

## For Their Love Of Us..... And Mine For Them

by Muneera Parbeen

THERE are so many things in life that we take for granted. Little things, some material, some not. Among all this we mostly take our parents for granted. We just know that they love us and normally, will keep on doing so, no matter what happens.

This is only natural. They do so many things for us that we know that we can always count on them for almost everything. Have to get up early in the morning? Who needs an alarm-clock. Just tell mom; she will call you. Need a new book or stationary supplies? Just mention it to dad and he will pick it up on his way back home. Need some money? Just ask them for so (provided, it's not too soon after your last weekly allowance, of course!). Small things, small incidents that we don't even notice, that we don't even spare a second thought for.

But if we just stop for a second and reflect back, to think of life without all these, perhaps we will notice it all. Imagine a life without all that. Getting up early in the morning and fixing

your own breakfast every day certainly is enough to set many thinking. After a long day at school/work, just stop again to pick up the groceries, post a few letters and call on 3 different not-so-likable sick aunts for a change. On holidays, go and stand in the sweating, crowding queue to pay your telephone (which you use so often) bill for a change as well. Oh Boy, does it wake one start wondering.

Whether we want to have a party at home or a just get-together, we just pick up our friends, the rest (from food to accommodation to entertainment) is just done for us! How really simple it is to simply get on with life for us. As youngsters when we have exams, it's still our parents who stay up nights to make sure we get enough nourishment & rest in-between, in return we hardly even notice them and think that we have it all done as if by magic.

So much there is still left to see and notice. Have you ever spent a season without the fruits of the season NOT mak-

ing there way into your house? We don't even have to ask but someone makes SURE that they get there for us. Life is just made far too easy for us at times. We ultimately get so used to living with all these things at our eternal SERVICE that we don't even spare a second thought for them. Yeah, ultimately at a certain time in our lives we do understand & appreciate their efforts a bit. But that's never on time. Our parents do the world for their kids — that is US. Only we never even bother to notice & appreciate it because we are so preoccupied with so many other things.

So many of us complain about our parents... on my mum — she's so OLD FASHIONED, we confide to an apparent best friend. 'My dad, he is just a dead bore...' we relate so easily.

Yeah, we ARE so blind to it all. A 'bua' (house made) man go hungry for a meal to instead feed her starving child, another father may buy a CD player to make up with his moody teenage daughter but the mean-

ing is all the same. In fact, there is nothing that our parents wouldn't do if in their capacity, to make us happy.

These days when I see tired old men carrying a bag full of pineapples, standing at some crowded bus stand, I feel this over whelming love (& respect) for them. Elderly women picking up trinkets, hairpins & other things at stalls in Gausia also hold a new meaning for me. I want to love them all and at least show my appreciation to them. I want to open doors for them and hail a rickshaw for them perhaps, if they are waiting in the scorching sun, or simply let them ahead of me in a queue anywhere. I want them to know that we, as a younger generation are not really too bad. We too love them, if only in our own individual ways.

Life is but short. One messes out of so many things and so many different aspects it. We still have so many things to open our eyes too. With — little effort and understanding, don't you think WE CAN?

## Get A Life

by Shenaz Rahim

RECENTLY a friend visiting Bangladesh asked me, 'So where do you go for fun? How's the social scene here?' to which I replied, 'WHAT social scene?' I realized, and not for the first time, that there is absolutely nothing to do here. Yes, this is a third world country, and there are certain priorities that come before amusing our youth, but that doesn't mean much to a bunch of middle-to-upper-class teenagers who have seen every episode of Baywatch and have watched the bouncing bums in the 'Macarena' video just one time too many. We need some entertainment.

This is more than just a gripe. After a hard week at school, kids need a break. If all our energy goes unvented, we may find negative ways to use it. Some people turn to gangs and wind up with a variety of injuries. A less harmful pastime is pranking calling random people at all hours of the night. If you have a phone, you have definitely received at least one.

Admitted, we are not completely devoid of activity. Friends can go to each other's houses to watch movies or play video games, and parents are always dragging them along to visit relatives (who invariably comment on our too-thinness). I don't know the rest of you, but that is not my idea of a rollicking good time. The wealthier ones can afford to go out to restaurants with their friends, but even Saina and Sawadee can get tedious after a while. The few foreign passport holders can go to the International Club, the American Club, the BAGHA, the Australian Club, or

the Dutch Club. However, not many people have access to these clubs.

Weddings and those wild parties they have down in Gulshan on the weekends, those are the only two places we can go to have fun and meet new people, claims Shoroni Ahmed, 17. 'But parties don't come around very often. I'm not exaggerating when I complain, because we really do need a hangout. There are so many rich businessmen. How come they don't do anything about it?'

Rich businessmen take note! Entertainment is a huge industry, one not fully taken advantage of here. Some braver entrepreneurs started Wonderland, which consists of a few rides and a lot of arcade games, leading to the disappointment of

many.

'I went to Wonderland, it sucks,' complains Nazir Khan, 18. 'Sometimes the parties at Park Garden and the RAOWA Club are okay, but those are expensive to go to. Thank God I'm going away to college next year. I can't wait to leave and go back to the real world!'

The less fortunate of us will stay here and suffer until someone comes up with something better. 'At least you're allowed to go to those parties,' Tammi Shahid smirks as she hears Nazir's comment. 'Bengali young men' generally do whatever they want. My brother comes home at 3:00 am and my mom doesn't even care! Guys can go out at night without ten other people, and not have to worry about being attacked. Be-

sides the fact the culture gives them all the freedom in the world.' Her sister Hawa agrees. 'It really ticks me off. But it's not like I can do anything about it.'

'That is not true,' says Muhammad Rahman when I tell him how most girls feel about how much more independence men (actually, boys) get. 'My parents don't let me do anything. They are so strict. The only time I can go out, no questions asked, is to play football. Anyway, where would I go?'

Everyone has the same complaint on his/her lips. The message is clear. We all need to get a life. So next time the phone rings at five at night from a lonely sounding teenager, don't judge him too harshly.

## Before Her Sickness

by Bikash Singh Sutradhar



to serve others.

Q. Mother, why did you choose Calcutta as your permanent residence?

Ans. We must have a centre. You have a family to live with. This is just like that. We have 557 places all over the world. And this is our centre. This is our mother house, I have been here from 1929. But there is no

Q. What is your message for the people of Bangladesh?

Ans. Love one another as God loves each one of you and learn to pray, because, the fruit of prayer is the greeting of faith and the fruit of faith is love and the fruit of love is service and the fruit of service is peace. So, the family that pray together stay together. If we stay together we will love each other as God loves each one of us. So we are all to pray.

Q. Mother, there are some people who want to join your work. What should they do?

Ans. They should come and open themselves where ever they want to work. We have about 50 homes in Bangladesh, we have medical work, let them go in and talk to the sisters and save the dying people.

Then I wished mother happy birthday for her coming 86th birthday and requested her to say something in Bengali. She, offering an innocent smile said a 'happy birthday to you also' and then coming closer to my tape recorder uttered in one part of her message in clear Bengali.

such reason to choose Calcutta.

Q. Some people protest your view on abortion?

Ans. Abortion is the greatest destroyer of peace of love and of unity. Anybody who does not want a child, please give it to me. I want a child.

Q. Mother, what should be the single aim of a man?

Ans. A clean heart and love for each other. Clean heart can speak to God. And prayer gives a clean heart.

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## The Path Of Life

Fardeen Ahmed Firoze

We are traveling always,  
The thing which everyone says,

We are always traveling,  
Only one thing —

The path of life,  
Where we have to survive,  
All throughout the time.

The valuable thing God has presented,  
It is 'Life' which is said.

We have to take care of it,  
There is only one way to quit.  
The path is long enough,  
Not so easy but tough,  
It is tougher than you can think,  
Any second you can sink.

The path is long but short the time is,  
You don't have a chance to miss.

If you want to be prosperous,  
Don't see the life as a circus,  
Try to take it seriously,  
You will be happy.

In the wrong path the Devil leads,  
The Devils are nothing but some weeds,  
In the right path you have to stay,  
The path to prosperity, you can say.

## Quotations

And thou shall take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Exodus 23:8

A gift in secret pacifieth anger; and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

Proverbs 21:14

Chance  
A chance may win what by mischance was lost.

Robert Southwell

Chance and valour are blended in one.

Virgil

An ounce of luck is better than a pound of wisdom.

Latin Proverb

It looks as though blind chance ruled all things. Our smallest actions may affect profoundly the whole lives of people who have nothing to do with us.

Somerest Maugham

Change  
Only the ox is consistent in that it always chews grass.

Bismarck

But that world has gone and another takes its place. Eyes see differently, emotions react to other themes. Men weep at jazz, and violence has become sexual.

Charles Chaplin

Charm  
It's a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have charm, you don't need to have anything else; if you don't have it, if doesn't much matter what else you have.

James Barrie