

TEEN and TWENTIES

The Idiot Box Indeed!

Entertainment Thy name is Hindi

by Nazia Hussain

DECEMBER comes only once a year; and for students like me, it's the one and only month which we get to enjoy totally. So, working hard the whole year we make plans for December. But when it finally arrived this year, there was a rude awakening waiting for us. Here's a typical weekly routine of a normal teenager.

songs on channel [V] or films on Star Movies. Tuesday are the same as Mondays. Only that there is the X-Files at 12:30 pm which makes may day. But here also, I'm too worried about what happens when school starts to enjoy any of it completely, because the other timing of 10:30 pm Thursday night is definitely not a

NAMASTEY BOULDER... MAI YE
ROHOSHO SAMADHAN KORTA HAI...
-THE SUDDEN DEATH OF BANGLADESHI
VIEWERS WERE CAUSED BY THE
HINDI VIRUS!



On a fine Saturday morning I wake up as usual around 10:00 am and then you may find me at the breakfast table, fighting with my kid sister over what to watch on the TV. She always insists on the Cartoon network, whereas I am more inclined towards channel [V]. The fight usually ends up with my sister crying and the remote in my hand. However, as luck would have it, these days on Saturday mornings there is nothing much for me to watch. The Star TV people have made sure that our days are ruined by rescheduling every programme to make room for Hindi programmes on all the channels.

Somedays I really do get confused as to what my own language is, seeing and hearing so much Hindi everyday and of course unintentionally! Star movies is still unscathed by the Hindi-for-all movement, because here they have stopped short of dubbing all the movies in Hindi and settled for sub titles instead (isn't that a much safer choice?) but I am sure it's only a matter of time till Keanu Reeves starts speaking in Hindi to Sandra Bullock as the 2525 speeds along the highways.

As I was saying, on Saturdays, if the star movies channel is kind enough to air a decent film in the afternoon, I get to enjoy myself. Otherwise, it's Hindi or nothing as far as TV is concerned. Ultimately at night just because of the Hindi *karyakrams*, I have to watch the super cool Baywatch with a rather warm mind in Hindi! Because the English version is aired at 10:30 pm, which is way too late for most of us. By the time the show reaches the second break, I am usually sound asleep and dreaming about David Duchovny.

Then dawn the next day, Sunday. Naturally there is nothing to do the whole day through because Sundays are extra special on Star Plus. It's Hindi programmes all day with exceptions of dusty old Star Trek and Dynasty (is it?). I don't even remember what. It's so disgusting! But there is some fun to be had here — in the afternoon, if you surf the channels you will find Hindi movies on every channel (except sports and movies), isn't that revolutionary? Can you imagine that somewhere, a group of people have managed to short change the people of... 158 or 138 countries; as they say in that STAR TV NETWORK ad (I forget exactly how many as I am too furious), into watching Hindi flicks. It's like compulsory education. But even with Thai movies channel you are not entirely left unmanipulated — they have given that afternoon slot to Pee Wee's play house (yes!) which is like... never mind! And then there are Hindi *karyakrams* for all to enjoy. At night the Star Movies has premier shows and Baby's Day Out was a real treat last month. Apart from that there isn't much to say.

Monday! I can at least enjoy the weekday morning by watching what little programmes are left on TV that are not dubbed or tampered with. Oprah Winfrey, our favorite midday show has been shifted to 11:30 am, so I don't yet know what I'll do once school reopens. Even at night there's not much to watch but

realistic one for kids who have school the next day. Star movies shows musicals at 3:30 pm so I am left with nothing to watch once again. At night, we have, God knows whose, favourite Hindi *karyakrams*. But for music lovers there's the Vibe on [V].

Wednesday is my favourite. At 12:30 pm, there's one hour of intense drama at Chicago Hope. And can you believe it? It's in English! We should be so lucky!

Thursday. Another weekday. So the programmes are also the same. It depends on Star Movies whether you will be disappointed or not. And for those who can stay up late — there's Fox Mulder with that silly, lopsided smile, giving Scully groovy looks at 10:30 pm; lucky late nighters!

Fridays you can tune in to Spell Binders on good ol' MTV. If you are a Girl from Tomorrow fan, that is.

In-between, sometimes the Star Sports shows exciting cricket matches that can take up whole days and you don't have to worry about boredom. And there is channel [V] but if you unlucky you'll tune in to find Javed Jaffrey hosting a show on... guess what? Old Hindi movie songs on Videcon Flash back. The ultimate in entertainment if you ask them... problem is — nobody is asking!

And last I forget — ZEE cinema is also a part of all the fun. So if you are patient enough to sit through a whole 2.5 hours of old Hindi movie, then by all means, freak out, why don't you? Now for my one question — Do you know anybody at all who looks forward to the Hindi *karyakrams* on Star Plus more than the previous English programmes? I'm afraid I've yet to come across someone like that in my little circle of acquaintances. So wouldn't you agree with me that all these programmes are just frustrating impositions? They've taken Third Rock from the Sun off the air. They have dubbed Simpsons and Adam's family in Hindi — what do they think that the children of the World speak in Hindi or rather, should? How can we in Bangladesh, even if we are the only non-Hindi speaking race in this sub continent — which we are not anyway — sit quietly as a handful of people somewhere decide for us what we get to see on TV?

And it's positively side-splitting when they themselves dub their own English interviews in Hindi to air it in their Hindi *karyakram* time slot. And who can forget Pranoy Roy who covers Our World on star plus every night. "Presumptuous" is an understatement for the TV news crew who cover India and refer to that as Our World.

Thank you for clarifying Star TV people! All the history and geography would have ruined our minds had it not been for you, pointing out our world to us. And last but not least, thank to whoever is pulling the strings for providing 24 hour family entertainment(!) on TV for all of us in South Asia. Until we find a backbone to stand up and a voice to speak out, we'll just sit tight and pay for whatever you feel like dishing out.

Promises without Words

Over the last couple of months, something very intense has been telling me that I was trying to make the impossible, possible. As it was like steering against the tide, my inner verbalisation browsed for answers and came up with worded questions like — "What is impossible?" and "If so, is that truly impossible?" These are the times my Laksmi leaves me "alone". Being one from the angel family herself she goes to chitchat with other angles. I know she has to be cruel only to be kind, for she says: "Trust me, I will be back." I believe her. Though, this, she doesn't say it in words — I get the blazing message in her eyes. It happens every time she goes away to give an opportunity to contemplate on my "possibilities" and "impossibilities". And like always, she leaves a note. This time from Frost — "I'm going out to clear the pasture spring. I'll only stop to rake the leaves away! (And wait to watch the water dear, I may) / I shan't be gone long. — You come too."

"Though my heart was coated with sadness over her absence and fragilities of life without her, yet I smiled for her to smile. She understood and was happy, for she says: "Make no promises, my modern-day Cupid, I already knew what's there in your heart's chest. Better never speak it out, you'll be eating up your own words."

At this state, my old man, whom I've never been able to think as my childhood hero, butts in, and tells me not to pretend about anything: "What you feel deep, deep inside — however old fashioned it may be — do not hesitate to express it; else, you'll be living a life outside the 'human' and 'humane' society. That's beast, in a word, my son." I wonder if he had done so when he was making promises and breaking them.

So, where am I left in the time-tunnel? The mid-'60s, or the '90s? The former was a time, my friend, when people made promises "only" to break them, and during the latter, nobody (wants) to believe that your words, which essentially follow your honest feelings, are true. After all, my friend, doing good and feeling good are two different things these days. Or, did the difference exist all along down the history lane? Well, this sometimes make me confused.

By the way, the other day I was discussing with one of my young friends about love and war. Happily enough, being much younger than me, he seemed ideally to support my thoughts on these, though he has some of his own on the topic.

One score, and five years ago, there were promises followed by pangs of war. They kept those with their lives. But at that time, many — the generation who are now leading the country — could not put faith upon them, and the warriors were hurt. Still, they did what they had to do. And interestingly, they were not promising to any individual, rather every one of them was making promises to a "lot" — a nation called Bangladesh. There's one that comes very close to a mythical bird which kept on singing until it died. Now, what did they feel after being shot in the chest — a physical pain, or a promises well kept?

Love, to many, can also be like war — war in terms of freedom. As in a freedom struggle, you don't fix a 'day' on which you want to be free; neither it is that someone tells you to be free. It is you who "feel" to be free; and that can ignite a freedom struggle. Then before going to fight the war, you promise your folks (it doesn't necessarily has to be promising "aloud") that there is a class that controls the country that is stupid and does not realise anything and never can.

Similarly as I was telling my "friend" (remember, I told you about my new well-wisher who doesn't like rickshaw-ride with me?) that you don't choose somebody and plan to love. Love can always free your caged heart. But there is difference: you cannot — and should not — play truant with somebody's heart. Like my Laksmi says: "As if comes from 'within', you must show a "little" respect to it."

I didn't quite understand what she really meant by "little", for I've never felt about love this way. But I do understand, unlike being free, that there's a clear link to love with death. The more you love your lover-that-be, the more you take one step forward to death.

Again, don't mistake me to be obsessed with death, but I heard somebody singing: "Death alone can save from death/ Love is death and so is brave/ Love can fill the deepest grave/ Love loves on beneath the wave."

If death is the price of a promise (love and war alike) and if there is peace hereafter, I wouldn't hesitate to die. Listening to this, Laksmi gets scared, and like always, draws me to her affectionate bosom. She slows down my heartbeat with celestial kisses. And then I feel her soul very much knotted to my soul, never to be separated.

And then I sense her "unspoken" promise — the encyclopedic rub of life.

—EK

Inspirations of '71

by Raihan Jamil

AS I was returning home from the Notre Dame College in an euphoric mood, after completing my SAT exams, on the 7th of Dec, I saw a poster on a street side wall. Shwapon Chowdhury's was holding a painting exhibition. Instantly I made up mind about going to the Shilpakala Academy, where the exhibition was taking place, the thing that encouraged me to decide instantly was something that Shwapon Chowdhury himself told us earlier.

Most of the English medium students know that. Teenage

the arts faculty of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Shamsuzzaman Khan — the director of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Waheedul Haque — one of the brightest stars of our cultural arena.

Shahid Chowdhury and Shamsuzzaman, both, in their speeches expressed their emotions about organising the show and the perfect timing of the exhibitions, as it is the Silver Jubilee of our Independence, and the paintings are on '71 and drawn during the '71 period.

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Shwapon Chowdhury in his speech said about the things which influenced him and his paintings. Love and pain, the emotions of youth, his involvements in the war and mostly his solitude came again and again in his speech, and as he said, in his paintings. He told us how he has nurtured and cared for his paintings, and in his words, "... like my own children I have taken care of them and kept them in my safest place — under my bed where I sleep, so that they can always be near me. He also announced that, if someday the government takes up initiatives of a publicly supervised Liberation Arts Museum, he would be happy to 'donate' his paintings there.

Awareness Group (TAG) organised a show on 'Muktir Gaan' at the Russian Cultural Centre some months earlier. Shwapon Chowdhury, being one of the cast members of the film took part in the lively discussion which followed the film show. There were scenes in the film, where it was shown that, Shwapon Chowdhury was making sketches. During the discussion session, I asked him about the whereabouts of those pictures. He, then, told us that, there will be an exhibition of these paintings, drawn during the '71 period, in December '96 and he cordially invited us all there. And so, when I saw Shwapon Chowdhury's announcement, I didn't even think twice.

When I went there, at the Shilpakala Academy, in the afternoon I was in for a surprise. The exhibition was not yet opened for public viewing and there was to be an opening ceremony. It was about to begin. Like other guests I was welcomed with flowers and I went inside the auditorium and took a seat.

The programme was chaired by the renowned poet, Shamsur Rahman, who took Begum Sufia Kamal's place because of her absence due to illness. Among others present were, Shahid Chowdhury — the incharge of

which influenced him and his paintings. Love and pain, the emotions of youth, his involvements in the war and mostly his solitude came again and again in his speech, and as he said, in his paintings. He told us how he has nurtured and cared for his paintings, and in his words, "... like my own children I have taken care of them and kept them in my safest place — under my bed where I sleep, so that they can always be near me. He also announced that, if someday the government takes up initiatives of a publicly supervised Liberation Arts Museum, he would be happy to 'donate' his paintings there.

Waheedul Haque, who besides being a brilliant artist, proved himself to be an eloquent speaker also. He was the organizer and coordinator of Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Shangstha, some of whom we have all seen in the film 'Muktir Gaan'. His emotional and pragmatic speech almost mesmerized the whole Academy audience. Some people from the audience were seen standing up from their respective seats and applauding his speech.

Poet Shamsur Rahman was at his best when he said that, he was, and will always be loyal to the conscience of our libera-

tion movement and to the freedom fighters, as long as he lives. After his tremendous speech, he went to the Academy gallery and inaugurated the exhibition.

Shwapon Chowdhury was showing and describing his paintings to the Poet. I had the opportunity of being close to them. The description of the painter made me realize, not only that, I know a little about painting art, but also how deeply an artist can imagine things. Most of the paintings in their abstract form succeeded in showing the conditions of '71. The subhuman activities of the Pakistani forces were the main theme of the paintings. It is beyond general imagination how a artist's imagination can run.

All of the paintings had a title, both in Bengali and in English. Some of them were: "Bikkhubdo (Aggrieved Bangla)", "Biponno Aastito (Endangered Existence)", "Dookher Sathe Bashobash (Living with distress)", "Birohi Banshibadok (Estranged Flutist)", "Aahoto Nadir Kanna", etc. It can be easily seen from the names, that the titles themselves carry some message. Another huge attraction was the big frame of people's signatures and their feelings. Poet Sufia Kamal inaugurated (4/11/96) by expressing her feelings and signature and our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina put an end to it (25/11/96) by giving her's. This piece was the central attraction of the first floor of the Academy Gallery.

We have all heard about the things an artist can create or express in their own ways, which the general people can not. Same was in my case, until I saw Shwapan exhibition. Although I have no intention of being a painting artist, I must admit that, this exhibition helped me build a more optimistic view towards paintings and painters than any of the things so far, has.

The artists of the Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Shangstha performed a couple of songs before the opening speeches of the guests, and their film, 'Muktir Gaan' — the Song of Freedom — was also screened for the audience after the opening ceremony was over. Anyone, who has been there that day, must admit that the programme — from the opening ceremony to the conclusion of the film — was a tremendous success.

A Student's Ultimate Dream

by Anita Alam

WHAT does every student aim for? A sound education at a sound institution, to turn his dream into reality. The United World College (UWC) of the Atlantic is one such place.

Atlantic College is situated in the United Kingdom and is the oldest of other nine UWCs scattered all over the world.

One of the most important aims of the College is 'international understanding' and to promote this ideal, an interna-

tional body of students from 73 countries is selected every year. For students who cannot make both ends meet, an intensive scholarship programme is available.

At present, five Bangladeshi students are pursuing a 2-year Diploma course of the International Baccalaureate, a broad and academically rigorous pre-university qualification which is more extensive than the Advanced level or the HSC. Usually six subject are studied, fol-

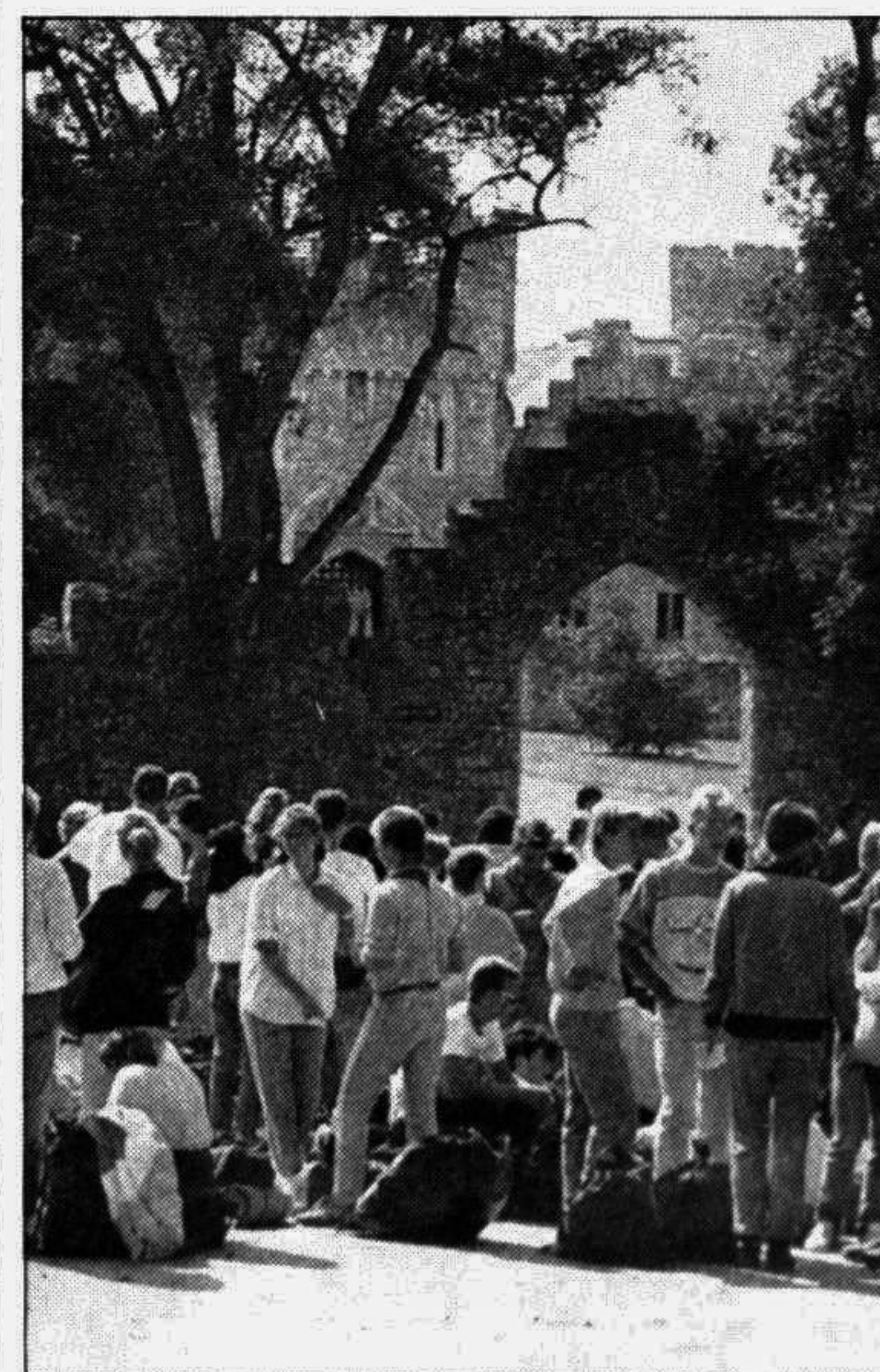
lowed by a course in Theory of Knowledge and an in-depth extended essay in a subject of their own choosing. Each year two students are given the Nobel Award for the best extended essay in the science and arts respectively.

Apart from that, all students spend a minimum of four hours a week giving service to the local community through one or more of eleven different services: 1) Coast guards, 2) In-shore Lifeboats, 3) Lifeguards, 4) Social Services, 5) Extramural, 6) Arts Centre, 7) Photographic, 8) Video, 9) Estate, 10) Craft and Design, and 11) Environmental. Students are also required to be involved in activities outside the classroom and this is intended to encourage the development of the 'whole person'.

Atlantic College affects to draw out of students a greater range of skills and talents than they knew they possessed. In other words, the college believes in challenges. The also attempts to make their students aware of the modes and thought and characteristics of other nations and races in order to build friendship and understanding of a diversity of value systems through camping, living in a room with students of three different nationalities, global concerns programme and such. As an explicit example of "internationalism," the patrons of the UWC Movement are President Nelson Mandela and Queen Noor of Jordan.

What benefits one from studying at Atlantic College? Students graduating from the college get to study in some of the most prestigious universities in the world. It is much easier for Atlantic College students to get admission to Ivy League Universities because of the extensive study programme. Not only that, but university applicants do not have to worry about having a job or extracurricular activities, because that's all part of the Atlantic College programme.

At the moment, I am a first year student at the College studying on a full scholarship. I have been selected by the National Committee of Bangladesh, which will be choosing five eligible candidates, from both English and Bengali Mediums to study in the United Kingdom, Norway, Hong Kong and India next year.



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In Quest of Happiness

by NR Hore

SINCE after creation of the universe man has laboured hard, fought against cruelty of nature and worked relentlessly against all odds to survive, to have an easeful life and to be happy. No doubt mankind by his superiority, skill and arduous labour changed the universe, turned it habitable and made a civilized atmosphere.

Till today man has achieved success in every sphere — art, science literature, philosophy, religion and so on. In spite of success in every field mankind is still striving hard to achieve a very precious and classic possession — a peaceful and happy life.

Happiness is not any concrete embodiment, rather it is a conceptual term better to be enjoyed and felt. It is fairness of the conscience, content of the heart, solace of the mind and tranquillity of the soul for which it is so dear and precious to us.

Possibly in the whole universe hardly a single man can be found who does not want to

become peaceful and happy. But the great surprise is that you ask any man other than a few rare divinely blessed superman whether he is happy, answer will either get a negative answer or an answer in the form of deep sigh for not getting it.

But why the scenario is such? Simply because we desire it but don't know how to approach it. The very term happiness is so wide and vast and its interpretation is so varied, it is so fickle yet stable, so remote but near, so faint but distinct that our faulty manner and attitude, erroneous care and effort and egoistic and defective way of living has made it beyond our reach.

To most men peace and happiness is ever increasing wealth, power, pelf and position. But can all these attribute to lasting happiness? Possibly not. Because success to any such endeavour is an ever increasing demand for more and more. Since all these have an end point to achieve are not possible to gain in infinite level. Only vain restless pursuit re-

sults in grief and heartache, regret and sadness, misery and worry. Such relentless effort for more and more material gain at best can bestow a happy feeling for the time being and then again an unhappy state of mind. Such transitory happy state of mind is somewhat like the pendulum of a clock which oscillates to and fro and never in steady position till the clock runs. Similarly so long the heart beats happiness like the pendulum moves alternately in opposite extreme direction and never in steady position.

The most common phenomenon in almost all of us is a happy feeling for the time being. We get such transitory happy and pleasant feeling in multiple way. We gain in oblique way, we take revenge, we grab forcefully, we crush the opponent, we achieve through hypocrisy, we destroy in the pretext of justice, we wrongly punish in the name of judgment, we deprive through coercion, we cause heartache through might, we suppress

other's will forcefully. We commit all these our being's end and aim and feel pleasure but what next?

Does the feeling lasts long? No subsequently we repent, feel guilty, get sick of conscience. It fills our mind with remorse, regret, anguish and self-reproach. Even if sometimes we compensate still past misdeeds haunts us, pricks us, burns us inwardly and make the inner organs weep.

We lodge war and destroy, we degrade other's spirit and soul, we cause ruin and destruction, we cause agony of the maimed, we destroy and disrupt bonds of love, we spoil other's dignity and self esteem for our own selfish end to gain and get pleasure. We ignore moral values, prick our conscience, forget rational views and resort to pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony and envy to be benefited, privileged and to be happy. But alas! gains, benefits and happy state of mind derived out of these set on us heavily in the long run through sense of guilt, remorse and feelings of being accused.

Happiness will never beckon us, rather we are to wish it and invite it carefully and consciously. Because happiness is the consequence of how we live. A person with life time clear conscience, inner calm and holy heart possibly attain this precious thing uninterruptedly. But are all these phenomenon easy to achieve? No-never. A slow, gradual and steady practice rather prolong devotion and dedication is essential.

Nothing can better appease you than a clear conscience. Conscience is like a silent sentinel inside every body. It speaks out to any crime, misdeed and injustice. So if we can work and act as per dictation of our good conscience we are sure to be prized with lasting peace and tranquillity. A clear, still and quite conscience is a peace above all earthly dignities and he is so much bare and hollow though in earthly pomp and grandeur whose conscience with injustice is corrupted. Moreover if a man betrays his conscience, hell fills with him if he goes to heaven.

So, let us all have a heart that never hardens, a conscience that is not pricked, a soul that is not corroded and a tongue that is not venomous. Such noble gesture shall fill our mind with serene and tranquil feelings and lasting bliss and happiness.