

The Man with Her Heart

by AMM Aabad

What is 'mind,' and where does it reside? If heart is matter, where is the mind? Where feelings are located? What is imagination and how it is processed for memory retention and erasure? There are so many mysteries in life, at least for the lay persons.

THREE goes the man with a woman's heart! He did not win her heart, or steal it. He was carrying it physically with him, alone, and she was nowhere in sight. Not in a bag, but inside his own body, and the heart was very much alive and working. He ditched his own heart, and bought a woman's heart (paid heavily for it), and had his heart replaced inside him with the woman's heart he had purchased.

No horror fiction, or a figment of the imagination, but a heart transplantation miracle that was witnessed and recorded a few years back in New Delhi. This unknown donor was a young woman of 35, who had been declared 'brain-dead,' according to the news report. Let us wish him well, and thanks to the lady for her generosity, although she might have never known how her heart had saved another's life.

Such an unusual news item lingers in the mind for long. Various thoughts surface on this physical change, transplantation or replacement of the 'heart,' a term which has one meaning for the medical doctors, and another for the readers of romantic fiction, or persons in real life where the heart is emotionally involved between man and woman; or in situations where feelings are aroused. What is 'mind,' and where does it reside? If heart is matter, where is the mind? Where feelings are located? What is imagination and how it is processed for memory retention and erasure? There are so many mysteries in life, at least for the lay persons.

That reminds me of a rare piece of true information (real fact) in real life about a gentleman who is living today in

Bangladesh, very much hale and hearty. He is a senior executive, with an excellent track record, and personally known to me. The story goes like this: Years ago, when he went to Japan to spend a few months under a fellowship programme, he had to undergo the usual medical checkup in Tokyo. He completed the formalities, and was looking forward to his exciting programme of activities in Japan. After a couple of days of the medical test, the Japanese doctor telephoned him to report back without delay. He went, feeling vaguely uneasy.

He found a panel of doctors awaiting him. They checked and rechecked his heart, using specialised equipment he had not seen before; but the doctors would not tell him anything yet. The poor fellow was naturally unnerved. The doctors discussed amongst themselves for quite some time, while my good friend sipped ocha (green tea).

Then came the stunning announcement: the gentleman's heart was physically located on the right side (it is usually on the left side). The first X-ray had apparently revealed that the heart was 'missing' from its usual location! The doctors looked at the X-ray plate from the reverse side, and naturally got puzzled. They had not come across such an unusual case—that's a million to one chance.

The good news was that there was nothing wrong with the heart and its owner. The official was perfectly normal physically and mentally. He was cheerfully advised to carry on with life as usual. He left the building a bit shaken and bewildered, but relieved, but with the rare knowledge that his heart was in the wrong place, or the right side! He had never suspected that he had a misplaced

heart (never harmed anybody in life). How could he—he could not have done it himself willingly or unwillingly. But, (as I questioned him later), he should have noticed, during his romantic seasons, that his heart beats were coming from the wrong direction. Getting a bit confusing, isn't it?

I tease Bhabhi (his wife) that here was a girl in Bangladesh who can claim to have married a man with the right heart! Life has its quota of strange but true happenings. Then I turn to the husband and confront him with a teaser: Would you have married this charming lady knowingly, hypothetically speaking, if her heart were physically located on the wrong side? Anyway, the question was too late. They were a happy married couple.

Back to the Delhi gentleman with the lady's heart. Trying to imagine oneself in that situation is likely to generate a squirming feeling. Nobody else knows how this gentleman felt. As for his behaviour and change of nature, his old colleagues could perhaps notice some difference. For a married man the compatibility between the couple should improve, if guessing is allowed in such cases, with no precedence to go by. It is only to be hoped that the ex-husband would not suddenly start crying in the office or in a party. He may be strongly advised to carry with him, always, a small pot of glycerine, just as an alibi. On the other hand, how the male-female chemistry would work with two female hearts consorting together? A female heart with a male brain—what about the feedback system? Anyway, we all wish him well.

There is no greater sacrifice than giving away one's heart—at least physically.

A few days ago I wrote in these columns about the unsatisfactory amount of food available to the many thousands of people who have been seriously affected by the unprecedented floods this year, have little or no work, and little or no money with which to buy food. I have now done some research into the situation and received, via the magic of email, advice from many of the world's nutrition experts, some of whom are based in Dhaka.

The many administrative problems being encountered in the implementation of the VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) and other food-related schemes are, hopefully, being sorted out, but, as I pointed out in my earlier article, 16 kgs of grain per month per family is simply not enough from the nutritional point of view unless it is regarded as a supplementary amount only which, for most of the beneficiaries, it is not. In addition, it has to be remembered that if the grain provided is wheat, then about 10 per cent of the weight is usually used as payment for the grinding of the grain into flour. It is difficult to understand why, when all-weather 30 kgs is provided per family per month under the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) scheme, which is a long term arrangement, only 16 kgs has been allocated per family under the temporary VGF scheme related to the needs of individual families affected by the floods. With plentiful supplies of foodgrains in the country and on the way through the World Food Programme (WFP), it is bewildering as to why the figure of only 16 kgs per family per month is being used. It therefore follows that other organisations such as the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and many NGOs are under considerable pressure to plug the food and nutrition gaps in the worst affected areas. However, the main thing to realise

After the Floods... How Much Food do People Need, and What Kind?

by Julian Francis

I believe it to be most important that all the different kinds of nutritional rehabilitation feeding schemes currently being undertaken in Bangladesh are properly documented while still fresh in our minds so that lessons are indeed learnt from this disaster and people in need can be assisted in a better and more appropriate way in the future.

is that most people who are currently short of food do not want to receive relief hand-outs. They want work, to be paid for in cash or grain, so it is imperative that all the bottlenecks to the implementation of these works are removed immediately.

While discussing the overall nutritional situation, it is important to take note of the other additional foodstuffs, such as pulses, vegetables, cooking oil etc., which are needed to make the diet into a nutritionally balanced one? These items can only be procured by selling some of the grain which, in turn, makes the situation even more precarious. Whichever way you look at it, the nutritional picture is quite bleak, but it is important, at these early stages of recovery after the disaster, to be as realistic as possible so that everyone can face up to the challenges that lie ahead and be better prepared.

While some relief workers with NGOs in Bangladesh have suggested that 1200 kcal should be enough for an adult per day, and 800 kcal for a child, international aid agencies such as WFP and UNHCR, after years of discussions and lobbying, finally agreed last year that the average caloric intake per capita per day should never be less than 2100 kcal/day. Nutrition experts also advise that caloric requirements should be worked out per capita and that there should not be a separate calcu-

lation for children as the family food basket is shared out according to need, manual workers needing and receiving more food than people in more sedentary situations.

Food availability: Statistics show that the actual average per capita intake in Bangladesh in normal times is 1800 kcal/day. It is therefore of further concern, to note that in Bangladesh, the per capita availability of pulses, vegetables, oilseeds and fruits is not really satisfactory, and for many they are out of reach or not available. People with a rich indigenous knowledge know which roots and leaves of plants and trees can be used in time of need and they use these to help ward off hunger and provide valuable vitamins and minerals. According to research available locally, daily per capita availability of pulses has gone down from 8 grams in 1973-74 to about 5.5 grams in 1994-95.

The per capita availability of vegetables also dropped from 58 grams per day in 1969 to 36 grams in 1993. A similar picture is with oilseeds. (Source: Bangladesh Rural Reconstruction Association) It follows that aid organisations, in addition to giving high priority to the growing of nutritious quick-growing indigenous vegetable species, should be looking to provide protein/calorie supplements to enhance the food value of the VGF allocation of foodgrain, whether wheat or rice. Some international ex-

perts in the field of nutrition have suggested that if 1200 kcal/day only is available, weight losses of at least 10% should be expected over a 2-3 month period, while others have pointed out that this level of nutrition is totally unacceptable. Everyone should be encouraged to grow as many nutritious vegetables as possible, as soon as possible, to alleviate the overall nutritional situation.

Do we learn from mistakes?

We have to ask if we learn from past experiences, and do we document them? For instance, long ago, at the time of the Bihar Famine of 1966-67, when I worked with Oxfam, we were able to work closely with a small businessman in Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, India, to manufacture a high protein food supplement derived largely from groundnut. It was a challenge to overcome the risk of the deadly bacteria, aflatoxin, which had often been encountered in the process of making groundnut by-products and thereby making it poisonous. The food supplement powder was used in the Bihar feeding schemes, mixed in with imported wheat flour, dal or other curries-like preparations. Supplies were used again in the 1971 Refugee Relief Camps in West Bengal, when organisations like Oxfam and Save the Children Fund-UK set up nutrition rehabilitation centres for the Under-5s. When the Sitapur factory was not able to supply

enough, Oxfam discovered, to its great surprise, that the Calcutta Municipal Corporation had a similar plant which was hardly used on a regular basis. Instead of ordering expensive food supplements from abroad, Oxfam was able to galvanise the local facility into action and for many months purchased the entire production.

After so many years have passed, it is a great concern to many of us that food supplements are still imported into Bangladesh, whereas there are a number of under-used local facilities making more appropriate food supplements from groundnuts and soybeans which are still easily available. These local industries have been in operation for a number of years with proven success, so it is difficult to understand why these products are not used and the local industries are not supported. Chira and gur are indigenous foodstuffs and used very effectively as emergency rations where dry food only can be distributed. For longer term feeding schemes, indigenous foodstuffs can surely be used as well.

I believe it to be most important that all the different kinds of nutritional rehabilitation feeding schemes currently being undertaken in Bangladesh are properly documented while still fresh in our minds so that lessons are indeed learnt from this disaster and people in need can be assisted in a better and more appropriate way in the future. It is not being suggested that more and more children's schemes are presently required, but if action is not taken on a large scale to grow more nutritious food, it might be.

The writer, a Disaster Preparedness Delegate, IFRCs, has worked in many relief and development situations in South Asia during the last 30 years.

Spain Tackles Spousal Abuse

THERE were 91 reported cases of women's deaths at the hands of their husbands in 1997 as compared to 64 in 1996, in Spain. What really exposed the problem was a case in which a 60-year-old woman was burnt to death by her husband for revealing on television the abuse she suffered from him. The government was jolted into introducing measures to deal with spousal violence.

The measures range from forcible separation of wife-abusers from their spouse, to automatic legal proceedings against abusers. Police stations will have special cells dealing with women's affairs. The objective being 'for all forms of abuse to be reported, and for no more women to die.' About 19,000 abuse complaints were received last year compared to 13,000 in 1996. Women activists say that only one in 10 cases is reported.

Seeing the magnitude of the problem, the government is also looking at possibilities of opening more shelters for battered women as well as a campaign against domestic violence.

—WFS/News Network

Turkish Body Advocates Male-female Equality

A Turkish state commission has recommended changes in law which if implemented, could have a far-reaching impact on social relations. It has urged that Turkish law be changed to remove all legal recognition of male dominance in the family. It has stressed equal rights and duties for both husband and wife, indicating that the husband should no longer be designated head of the family; nor should he have the sole right to decide on significant

issues like the upbringing of children.

And a woman should not have to seek permission for a job, from her husband... To become law, the recommendations must be approved by the Parliament. In a country where the male dominated family is an entrenched tradition, and in the existing climate of finely stretched political tension between the Islamists and the secularists, turbulent times seem likely.

—WFS/News Network

Nepalese Women Defy Husbands to Make a Living

A group of women in Nepal have defied their husbands and begun to produce and market ancient art forms to make a living. As Gemini News Service reports, the Janakpur's Women's Development Centre has given these women newly found confidence and financial security, and inspired other women across Nepal. Katharine Ainger writes from Janakpur, Nepal.

New life with old art

Adult literacy:	
Female: 14.0%	
Male: 40.9%	
Life expectancy:	
Female: 55.6	
Male: 56.3	
Share of earned income:	
Female: 33.4	
Male: 66.6	

In a ceramics room off the main courtyard, 15 mothers and daughters sit and expertly shape animal-shaped candlesticks of clay. Set in a mango-shaded compound and decorated with traditional mud murals, 66 Maithili women from the plains of south-eastern Nepal gather to make a living from ancient art forms.

Although the art forms have been handed from mother to daughter for 3000 years, these women have battled with their husbands for the right to use their skills to create an income. They solicited international funding and formed a cooperative by dividing the income from their craft among themselves. It is called the Janakpur Women's Development Centre (JWDC).

Symbolic and highly stylised, Maithili art is connected to the cycles of nature and Hindu mythology. Fresh murals cover the mud and thatched village houses during Hindu festivals and weddings. Like the cycle of seasons and festivals, the paintings are never static and permanent: the mud erodes or is covered over by fresh layers of mud at Nepal New Year.

The JWDC was created in 1989 when seven female artists transferred traditional wall mud murals to paper. In 1989, despite their husbands' disapproval, the difficulty of working around chil-

dren and artistic problems of scaling down their imagery from window and door frame designs to rough handmade Nepali paper, the women produced samples of their designs. The group enlisted other women in the community to produce designs with them and the JWDC was created.

By 1991, with funding from the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women, and Save the Children Japan, they began training in record-keeping, management and marketing skills, team building, gender awareness, planning and evaluation so they could run the centre themselves.

Today the JWDC, which provides a model women's empowerment programme, liaises with seven other handicraft groups around Nepal for support and cooperation.

The JWDC also provides a creche and health-care advice geared towards reducing infant mortality. Although a teacher is assigned to the children, there is a great deal of communal child-care among the women.

As a result the children here appear to be healthier and happier than many in the community.

In an attempt to make Maithili art a self-financing initiative and provide the women with a living, the Centre is branching out to include

printing, ceramics, sewing, and weaving. It sent 12 women to the capital, Kathmandu, to train in these new skills.

Among them is 35-year-old Shurmi, a traditional Nepalese mud-muralist who, defying her husband, has just returned from a month of further training in Kathmandu along with 11 other members of the Centre.

While he was away from home, she took up the offer from the Janakpur Women's Development Centre to increase her skills.

"I was afraid but also happy," she recalls. "My husband was angry when he first found out, but later he didn't mind so much."

Shurmi's husband, an out of work labourer, also objected to her leaving her home and household chores to make a living at the JWDC.

His response was typical and is a problem for many of the 66 village women being helped by the Centre.

Maithili paintings use traditional images of deities and symbols, but the Centre encourages women to portray their lives through their art with paintings ranging from childbirth to literacy classes.

Shurmi describes an exhibition they held at the American Embassy: "My pictures reflect my difficult life. My husband, a labourer, does not have

steady work. I have to get up at 4 am, clean the house, cook and look after the children before coming here."

Many women at the Centre believe that by working they are opening up possibilities for their daughters, whose options are limited within the context of a life of rural poverty in an orthodox Hindu society.

There is a great sense of pride and achievement in the success of the Centre, which divides its profits equally among the women. Many have gained respect from their community and confidence by generating their own income.

The JWDC has adopted the design of a pregnant elephant with its baby visible inside it as its logo. Indu Hamal, a staff member, explained: "All these images are related to Hindu culture, but we chose the female elephant because to us it also symbolises women's strength."

Shurmi says: "My life used to be very hard. So much pain. Now, I own a house. Here we women have a feeling of togetherness. We work, laugh, gossip, argue and make art together. If there is a problem, we have a meeting and sort it out together. Now my life is good."

The other women nod in agreement.

—Gemini News
The writer is a freelance journalist based in Britain.

A Thorn in Beauty

by Dr. Sabrina Rashid

COUPLE of months back we went out of town for sight-seeing and to visit a friend. The moment we came out of the hustle and bustle of Dhaka city, there lay before us, miles upon miles of serene beauty of our countryside.

As the lush green landscape sped by, I wondered how beautiful our country was, with its vast paddy fields, evergreen trees donning their attire of innumerable shades of green. Some adorned with jewelaries of purple and yellow flowers. The 'krishnachura tree' aflame with its red flowers. Innumerable pounds with its rippling water reflecting a clear sky, which was painted a beautiful shade of blue. Then I also remembered how enchanted we were with the beauty of the tea gardens in Syhet. How fascinating the small, sturdy trees looked clinging to the sides of the hills and hillocks as we went in and out of those curves of the road wounding round and round the hills. The place was so cool and so lush green that it not only soothed our eyes but also our minds.

Then I remembered how we had climbed up the rugged, green hills through a narrow twisting path and suddenly when we took a sharp turn our breath was taken away by the sheer beauty of crystal clear water cascading down from a great height and crashing on the ground below, throwing out a spray of white foamy water.

This was at Madhab Kunda. After enjoying the beauty of the water falls when we started down the hills, the hill top suddenly got covered with dark clouds, floating all around us like a thick gray blanket. Then suddenly it started pouring heavily, drenching us all to our very skins—but it was fun! We put big banana leaves on our heads as umbrellas and carefully picked our steps down the narrow muddy path, with small rivulets of water chasing us down the hill. The tread down the hill slope was very slippery and dangerous. It therefore added adventure to our trip of sight seeing! But after a while, by the time we reached the bottom of the hill, it was all sunny again—bright and clear.

Unbelievable! Such a heavy downpour followed at its heel by such a clear sunshine. This was a Bangladesh weather trick. Often seen here. I also recollected how at 'Foy's lake', we had climbed up the hill and looked down into the valley filled with water so that the lake looked like a river in appearance as it wound round and round the hillocks. We were all charmed by its serenity and beauty.

Then another time we had gone up and up the mountain by a narrow ever twisting road. Still up and up we went surrounded by tall trees, shrubs and bushes of the mountain sides. Still up we went passing through and leaving the floating clouds behind us. It felt like passing through thick and dense fog—quite a thrilling experience it was. Finally high above the clouds we reached the top of the highest mountain in Bangladesh—'Chimbuk' in Banderban. Oh, the beauty of the scene from that height, when you look down is enough to make you gasp! The clouds swirling at your feet, the lush green valley below and the shimmering Bay of Bengal far away near the horizon. All give you a feeling of floating in the endless, beauteous nature.

Another time, when we visited 'Patanga' beach and tried to wade into the rolling waves, we couldn't! For each and every step into the water was so unexpectedly painful! You know why? It was the razor sharp broken shells and pebbles which made our every step ever so painful. But it was still fun to feel both the prick and the rushing water on our feet at the same time.

Cox's Bazar beach of our country bears another kind of serene and peaceful beauty. The endless stretch of the land and the sea meeting each other goes far beyond the eyes do. You can spend endless hours there watching the sparkling sea, wearing its diamonds and with boats far away in the horizon swaying leisurely on it. Walking on the shifting sand with water playing around your feet are also a blissful joy.

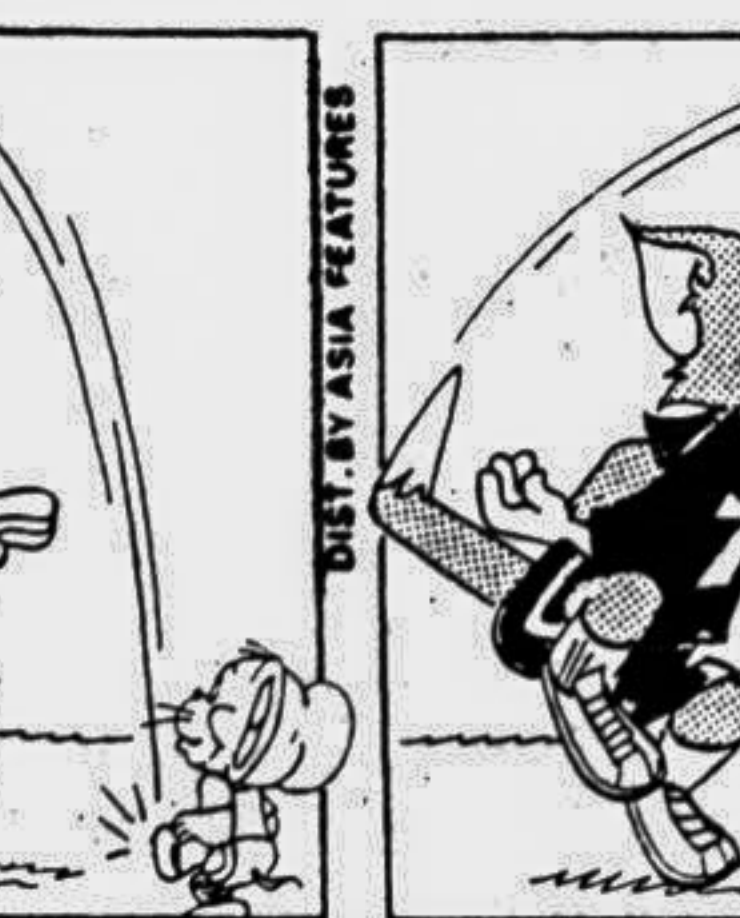
Then a cloud of gloom overcast all these beautiful memories, when I remembered that this very land of Bengal once produced a treacherous traitor like Mir Jaffer, who for his own personal gains and advancements had sold his country to foreigners, who for two hundred years suck the blood out of it. Enriched themselves while leaving it in abject poverty.

Not that this land didn't produce any heroes, it sure did, and hundreds of them who were willing shed their blood and laid down their lives for it. But the sad part is what hundreds of patriots do for their motherland a single traitor can undo it all, single-handedly! So a silent prayer rose from my heart that may God Almighty never let this land produce another of such kind who will sell his country's interests to foreigners, so that they will suck out all its wealth for another hundred years and leave it poorer than ever. Amin.

TOM & JERRY



DIET BY ASIA FEATURES



WHERE DOES IT SAY I CAN'T USE THE END OF MY TAIL?



JAMES BOND



SENDING THE DIVING SAUCER DOWN AGAIN, MILIT?



HAPPY HUNTING!



Flower Power Pays Off for Indian Couple

Radhika R. Shankar writes from Houston (Texas)

PUTTING their faith in flower power has paid off for Panna and Dhiren Bhatia, who will be one of four business owners to receive the Asian-American Entrepreneurs Award for 1998 at the annual Asian Charity Gala. The Bhatias, who are of Indian descent, opened one of the first Asian-owned flower shops here. Being in the running with businesses like Levan Corporation, the biggest high-fashion fabric store in Houston, made the victory especially sweet for Panna.

"I just couldn't believe it. I kept asking if they were sure because we are a small business," she told the California newspaper India-West. "That's because she feels like any Asian woman who finds it difficult to accept that they deserve success," commented Diana Ruhtenberg, president of the Asian Chamber of Commerce. Each year, the chamber

looks for Asian American business owners who have had at least 20 per cent business growth a year and have been active in community service. The Bhatias stand out in the Indian business community because they are the only full florists in Houston's South Asian expatriates. Panna was a contented homemaker doing volunteer work while her husband was busy working in a textile business in Mumbai when her brother persuaded them to immigrate to the United States. With her brother's help, the Bhatias moved initially to California and began training to handle their newly-acquired floral franchise. The franchise offered them their first shop in Texas and, within three years, the Bhatias fully owned their business when the franchise failed to ex-

and there. With suppliers in South America, Europe and Mexico, the Bhatias have been trying to find Indian exporters they can work with. While India is a major exporter of flowers, it has been successful only in getting the product as far as Europe, she said wistfully. Panna feels her native land needs to develop a more refined approach to flowers. "Though Valentine's Day and Mother's Day have become big days for giving flowers, India is a long way from considering flowers for everyday gift giving." That sentiment is what keeps the Bhatias going each morning as the doors of the Corner Florist open at 8:00 and stay open until 8:00 in the evening. "At first we worked almost round-the-clock because we were conscious that we were new to the country, new to the city, new to the business, and a new Asian to be in this business," explained Panna. Although their clientele is mostly non-Indian, Panna hopes to conduct workshops in the Indian community to help change its perception of flowers. Even though the Bhatias have been making a profit in their \$250,000 a year business and have managed to grow each year, Panna admitted that "there have been days when we have asked ourselves if we did the right thing because we are in a very competitive and seasonal business, but in the end we always get up and carry on to the next day; I don't know why, maybe it's the nature of the product which cannot be kept waiting." A life threatening robbery at the shop eight years ago, however, changed Panna's outlook on life.

—India Abroad News Service