

# "A Pleasant View"

By Taslima

"Sneer bliss" will possibly be the new words to describe the neither too rustic nor too western scenery which lies not far away from my house. I don't know if the other inhabitants of our residential area have noticed this humble appearance, because taste on a subject varies from one person to another.

Beauty and bliss are something which must be seen and felt, as words alone can't say it all. Hence, when I conclude the description of the Wild but Mild (WBM) for short which I named the view, I will merely create a somewhat vague idea in the readers' mind.

Our residence, which is in Sylhet, at Akhail, is basically located in the countryside. Therefore, as far as a slight can reach, one will find a cropped green-grass field all over the area. After a quarter of a mile straight from my house to "WBM", a variety of trees can be seen occupying most of the ample land.

In my leisure, I always stand before the window of our modern bedroom, from where the view is clearly seen, and with a zealous gaze stare at the glorious scenery ahead. Bewildered, I conjecture "how mother nature beautifies the environment so gracefully with mango-groves, banana trees, betelnut trees, palm trees, herbs and shrubs and other trees with dark green, broad leaves. These trees circle one another to center a pond repeated

with greenish water which is due to the trees' green shadow cast on it. Wild flowers bound the pond and a few water lilies float in one corner of the water. Everyday, four to five ducks pay a visit to the pond, which increases the luster even more.

The whole place looks so free from dust and pollution; maybe for the blue sky above that cleanses and purifies by showering the dust off the place.

This scene has a wonderful, magnificent hidden somewhere which I can't make out. But I surmise it is emitted all over the undivided price of land.

Rain, sunshine, strong wind or even slowed, no matter what arrives, the scene's green color remain spectacular and emerge simply gorgeous at the various seasons.

Each time I watch the view, the splendor seems to surpass the wonderful feeling I sense each day. May be, it is only my imagination that changes its hue all the time. But the reason why I admire and

praise it so much is because the scenery is simply wild, and mankind has turned not a single stone and nothing has been done to accommodate man's need. It is a through creation of Mother Nature and hope no one hampers it.

Finally, last but not the least, to my opinion, it is a perfect rendezvous, where the romantic atmosphere will always represent a pleasant view and refresh the mind no matter how miserable, vexed on tense it is.



# Time to be a Little Conscious

By Wara Karim



## Scene 1

Shezan dressed in heavy boots, a funky T-shirt, faded blue jeans, got out from a car and started walking towards Raimbow. There in front of the shop he lights up a cigarette and keeps on puffing the most undesired yet the most desired carbon monoxide. No, I'm not talking about his chance of catching lung cancer or bronchitis, which are for sure. I'm thinking of the ashes, he's spreading around, the suffocating smoke, which has already brought tears to the boy standing next to him who is waiting for a rickshaw and perhaps is a non-smoker.

Shezan waited for 10 and then for 15 minutes, by that time he finished three sticks of Benson & Hedges. But still no sign of the girl, who was supposed to come at 5 o'clock sharp in front of this Dhanmondal market. Poor kid! He decides to leave but look what's being before that - the 3<sup>rd</sup> cigarette butt is left off his yellow stained fingers and dropped at his own feet.

The other 2 cigarette ends, none of which was put out by him, already adorned the footpath. As this well educated (I Shezan leaves the place, a local (probably 10 years) comes out of the bus, and he picks up the butt and takes the last two puffs from the burning stick.

Not only is a well-bred, well educated young man polluting the atmosphere, he is indirectly forcing a passerby, to inhale this poison as well as allowing a poor, curious child to smoke.

## Scene 2

I'm relating this from my experience. A young man comes out of the gate of his house. He seems educated from his looks and clothes; he is probably going to his working place. A small brief case in one hand and in the other (any guesses!) a plastic bag full of household garbage. As he steps out of the gate, he takes a look around the place making sure nobody is watching him. He walks a few yards, a bit too agitated and embarrassed by his own condition but no worry, he throws the bag, aiming at the corner of the alley but it lands on the gate of a house opposite to him. He takes a second look around him and walks away as fast as he can.

His appearance makes it obvious that this man received education and is established in the society but look at the way he behaves. A slogan such as "Keep your city clean" is meant for people like him though they are useless to a great extent. If this man could come out of his house with the trash-filled bag he could also walk a few more yards and throw it in the proper place, mean in the dustbin. But no, he won't do that instead he would build heaps of plastic bags in front of Mr. Raimmondal's house and curse the bus, who left the house after his wife rammed at her.

## Scene 3

Tina, 18 years old, is coming from a renowned college to her house. In the mid-way, she stops the car and gets an ice cream from a nearby shop. As she gets inside the car, she peels off the paper, lowers the window and throws it outside. The wind blows it on the front glass of another passing car!

## Scene 4

City Corporation's trash collecting lorries is roaming the streets of Dhaka at 11 a.m. As the engine roars, from the green vehicle, strips of rubbish fly out and land on the street. What a sight! And if you are, by any chance, on a hood kholo rickshaw, expropriation is not very far away.

## Scene 5

31<sup>st</sup> night celebration! Scores of cars in push and semi push areas of the capital. Ear-splitting loud music is awakening the sleeping residents. Firecrackers go off every second or maybe even two every second. The streets are filled up with empty cans of liquor, cigarettes, food and what not.

The above scenes are common for a Dhaka dweller, where people are gradually losing their consciousness, awareness or common sense as a whole, as every single day is being subcontracted about our environment or society at large. A little awareness can solve these minute problems. When the world is heading towards a new millennium, such trifles are only building obstacles in the enhancement of the country's economic and social welfare. Government also has a significant role to play. But it's also our duty to maintain peace and cleanliness. Your little consciousness will help in making this country a much better place to live. So, let's now join hands together to fight the unwarranted.

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progressed science advanced accordingly and so did our understanding of the universe. Observation of the distant stars & planets through the lens of the telescope widened a new horizon before the human mind; the dream of reaching the alien lands was just a short, inevitable step.

## Space Exploration: The Early Days

Modern day space exploration had its genesis in the work of Verne but the real breakthrough came with the invention of the first propeller plane by the Wright brothers. From then on, as the field of aeronautics took giant leaps, the realms of astronautics took small shaky steps. The Bolshevik revolution saw the emergence of the Soviet Union - a new power on the face of the earth. The ideological differences gradually separated the Soviets from almost the rest of the world and consequently took the shape of a cold war with the United States. No matter what we think, it wasn't for the cold war, science could never reach the height that it has achieved today. Space exploration itself had its initiation as a result of this international rivalry between the two superpowers of the world.

On October 5, 1957 the Soviets launched the first man made object to defy the laws of gravity and go beyond the confines of the earth: Sputnik 1, was an aluminum sphere measuring 58 cm in diameter and weighing 84 kg. Not only did this achievement thrust a scientific challenge upon the United States; it also brought great political pressure to bear. On November 3, 1957 Sputnik 2 was launched with a dog named Laika, the first terrestrial life form in space. Laika survived seven long days in orbit and proved that life was possible in weightless environments for an extended period of time. The mission also bore a clear indication that the Soviets were embarking on a space program that would eventually include manned space flights.

The Soviet success generated even greater domestic pressure for a strong U.S. space program. On November 8, the Army Ballistic Missile Agency (ABMA) was asked to hastily provide a backup for the launching of the first American satellite. Explorer 1 was launched on January 1, 1958. It carried instruments designed to measure cosmic rays, temperature, and micrometeorite collisions. France became the third nation with an independent space flight capability when it orbited its first satellite named, A-1, in November 1965 from Hammaguir, a French military base located in the Algerian Desert. Other countries like Japan (1970), China (1970), Great Britain (1971), India (1980) and Israel (1988) soon followed with their own launching programs. Numerous other countries have so far extended their effort in space exploration by the use of U.S. and Russian launch vehicles.

## Manned Flights

The most challenging and exciting aspect of space exploration has been manned space flights. Soviet and the first satellites were launched, both Soviet and American design teams began work on manned space vehicles. The Soviet team was able to make use of a launch vehicle three times as powerful as the one available to NASA, so the USSR was able to choose familiar systems known to be reliable. NASA's need to venture into new technological disciplines on the other hand, later proved crucial to the success of manned lunar flight - a challenge that the Soviet design teams were unable to meet.

Vostok, the first manned spacecraft, participated in six manned space flights from 1961 to 1963, including that of the first woman in space and the first simultaneous flight of two manned spacecrafts. The Russian word "vostok" is translated as "east" but actually connotes "upwards", making it an appropriate name for a manned space flight.

The Vostok program was developed under the direction of chief Soviet space engineer Sergei Korolev. A series of unmanned test flights in 1960 and early 1961 overcame technical problems, paving the way for the first flight of a human being into outer space on April 12, 1961. A young Air Force pilot named Yuri Gagarin rode the remote controlled Vostok 1 once around the earth and landed by parachute near the river Volga. The success of the mission brought worldwide fame to Gagarin and laurels to the Soviet Union. The humans dream to behold the spectacle that lay beyond the sky above was no longer a fantasy but a hard-earned reality.

## Man on the Moon

The Soviets had won a battle in the space race by

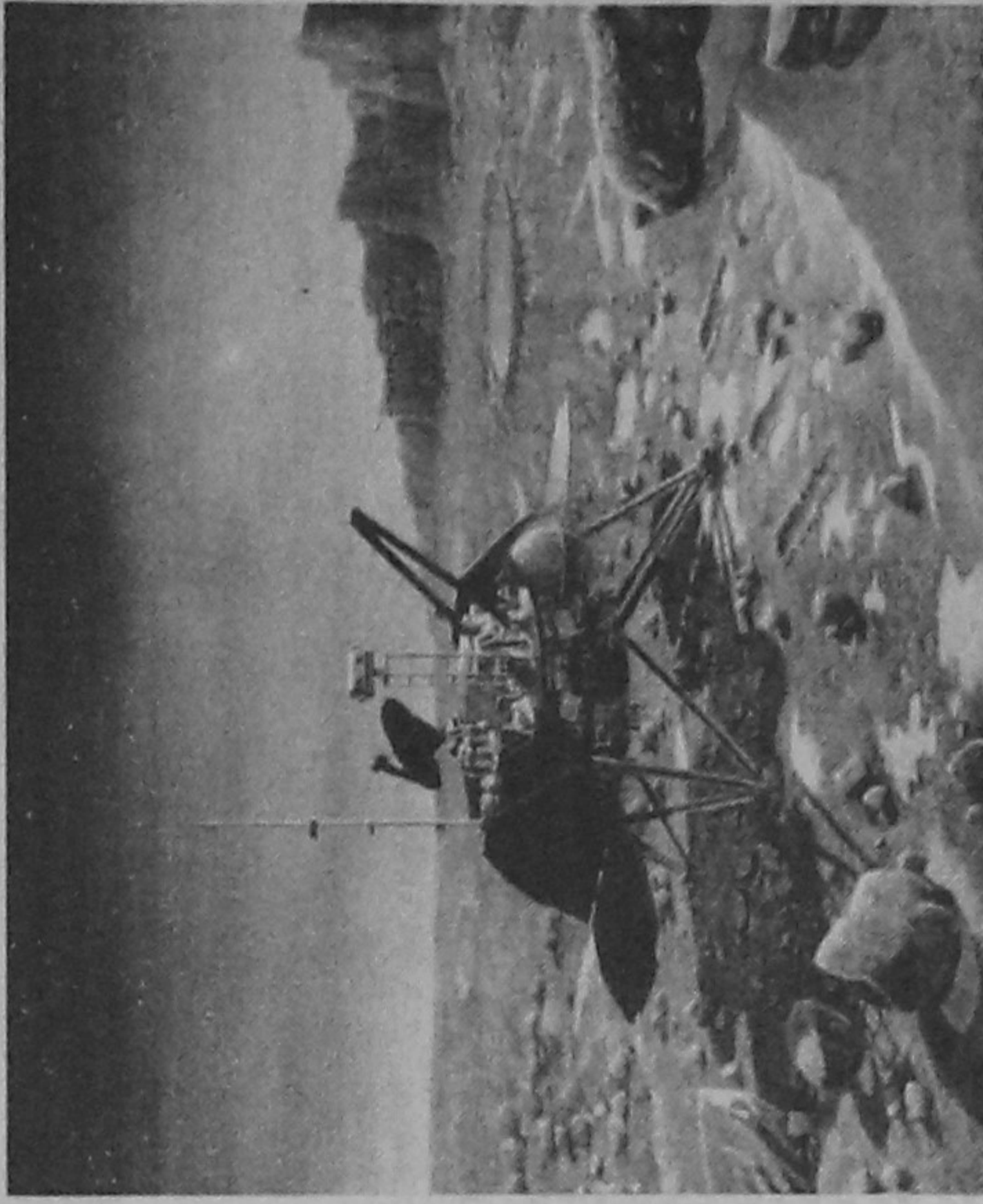
Among the giant outer planets, the first missions to Jupiter were NASA's Pioneer 10 and Pioneer 11 launched in 1972-73. They each took more than two years to reach their destination before continuing on toward the outer solar system. Their measurements of the environment of Jupiter and particularly of its severe radiation belts paved the way for the Voyager probes launched in 1977. Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 discovered new features of the Jupiter system, such as active volcanism on Jupiter's satellite 10. In 1989 the U.S. Galileo probe was sent toward Jupiter after being launched from a Space Shuttle.

Saturn was first visited by the Pioneer 11 spacecraft in 1979, and in the following year both Voyager probes passed the planet, measuring its environment and observing its atmosphere, satellites, and impressive system of rings. Voyager 2 went on to become the first probe to reach the plants Uranus, in 1986, and Neptune, in 1989.

## NEXT STOP: PLANET RED

The conquest of the moon opened up new frontiers. The success of attaining mankind's long cherished dream of landing on the moon gave birth to the hope of reaching the realms beyond the moon and into the neighboring planets and then, further away - into the darkest corners of the universe. Human interest with outer planets, Mars' in particular dates long back into time, just like the obsession for the moon. Its resemblance to earth and the presence of oxygen in its atmosphere had made it the blue-eyed boy of the sci-fi genre. Early science fiction novelists like H.G. Wells have written on Mars and its presumed inhabitants - the Martians.

In 1960 the Soviets became the first country to aim rockets towards the "red neighbor" of the Earth. All of the three probes failed; the last one caused great loss of life when it exploded during a launchpad checkout. The first successful Mars probe was the U.S. Mariner 4,



In 1964, two more fly-by missions and an orbital photographic flight followed before paving the way for the famous Viking probes.

Viking 1, consisting of a landing craft attached to a separate vehicle that would orbit the planet, was launched on August 20, 1975, and entered orbit on June 19, 1976. On July 20 the lander touched down on the slope of a dry basin in a region known as Chryse Planitia. Viking 2, with an identical pair of coupled spacecraft, was launched on September 9, 1975 and reached Martian orbit on August 7, 1976, and released its lander on Sept. 3, 1976. Among their surface instruments, the landers carried the first experiments ever sent from Earth with the specific intent of seeking life on another planet.

Strangely the scientific interest in Mars waned after the successful much-anticipated Viking probes. The scientific world's interest on Mars was rekindled in 1989, when President George Bush, celebrating 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Moon landing, called for a human mission to Mars. NASA required no further encouragement and an elaborate program at an estimated cost of 20 billion dollars to send yet another historic manned mission. The Pathfinder probe sent in 1997 laid the foundation to the mammoth task. NASA, which waited 21 years after the 1976 Viking mission to get back to the surface of Mars with Pathfinder, has now set up a Mars assembly line. While Pathfinder's rover was scurrying over the Martian surface, engineers were already planning for the Mars 2001 and 2003 missions. The upcoming missions will gather data that will help NASA decide what technologies it needs to send humans to frozen red sands of Mars.

## Interplanetary probes

The scientific efforts to study the planets in the cosmic neighborhood had begun at the same time the first satellites were put into orbit and after the success of the Apollo program, interplanetary programs gained new momentum.

The U.S.S.R. was the first country to look into the potentials of sending probes to planets of the solar system as early as the beginning of the sixties. Unfortunately, most of the pioneering missions failed. The first probe to reach a planet, the U.S. Mariner 2 launched on August 27, 1962, passed within 34,758 km of Venus on December 14 of the same year, transmitting about 65 million bits of data about the planet back to Earth. This knowledge was vital to our primary scientific evaluation of Venus and the other planets. Mercury, the planet closest to the sun have not been studied to a great detail as only one mission, Mariner 10 has so far been sent to the hot planet.