

A MEMORABLE JOURNEY

By Quazi Zulquarnain Islam

Going through the Guide Book my excitement reached fever pitch. I could already picture the steep mountains and spectacular views. We were heading towards an area where nature and man lived in perfect harmony- the enchanting mountains of Gangtok and Darjelling. A puff of smoke though brought me back to reality. At the moment we were in the busy district town of Shiliguri where we would spend the night.

At about ten 'o' clock the next morning we started for Gangtok. We were delayed by a few hours because of a political murder and rally. Though a strike was imminent luckily it was scheduled for the next day. Putting all our worries behind us we geared up for the eight-hour trip. Nearly five hours and several spectacular views later we started our ascent towards Gangtok, which was, located some ten thousand feet above sea level. The winding roads though provided thrill at every corner. By late evening we reached the small town and got a breathtaking view of the sunset. By eight o'clock we had settled ourselves into the comfortable blankets provided by the hotel. The hotel "THE GOLDEN PAGODA" was wonderful and provided stunning views of the picturesque Kanchenjanga. Despite the comfortable rooms we did not sleep well that night as we were unaccustomed to the bitter cold.

The next morning we decided to visit Tsangue Lake (pronounced SAN-GOO), a very popular tourist location, some two thousand feet above us. Tsangue Lake was just 25km's off the Tibetan border and tourists visited it in great numbers. Boarding a Jeep, we started on our way. The steep cliffs, sheer drops and dangerous terrain made sure that we were always on the edge of our seats. Our driver Kallu Bhai (though his complexion was quite fair) though handled the treacherous roads with amazing dexterity. All around us the sunshine reflecting of the green trees was a sight for sore eyes.



enjoyed looking at the vast tea resorts. Our stay here was cut short due to another political disturbance.

Finally after a week in the mountains we descended onto sea level. We did have our fair share of problems but on a whole it was a very fulfilling trip. The steep hills deep gorges and staggering views will forever be vivid in my memory.

Suddenly the world around us was enveloped in absolute whiteness. As far as the eye could see the mountaintops were covered in snow. Oh!!!! What a sight it was! It will forever be etched in my memory. Day dreaming about the raw beauty of this place I nearly forgot about our destination. As we reached the

Lake the locals greeted us by hurling snowballs at our faces. Surprisingly the area around the lake was quite heavily populated. Local shops and stalls were forever ready to sell a sovereign to interested tourists.

Thrilled to see the snow my brother and I indulged in a game of snowball fighting. Some local boys got in and we all had quite good fun. Dressed in jackets, gloves, snow caps and heavy boots we were easily beaten by the barefoot locals. The lake itself was crystal clear as no swimming or fishing was allowed there. We spent the best part of two hours in this dazzling and magnificent location. When we left - it was with a heavy heart. We had to head back early because darkness comes early in the mountains. We reached our hotel just as the sun set on the western sky. The next day we visited some more tourist points including Buddhist monasteries. Honestly speaking though, none provided as much entertainment as the trip to Tsangue lake.

The next day we left Gangtok for the more popular Darjeeling. Truly speaking though Darjeeling was a bitter disappointment after Gangtok. It never lived up to its billing as Gangtok's more illustrious twin. Still we

It is last Monday. A hot and sunny day. We were studying a chapter about Kings and Queens in the medieval Times. It was a boring and long chapter. It might have been interesting if it hadn't been so hot and irritating. Anyway, nobody was paying much attention to the teacher's continuous droning. He seemed to keep on droning about who killed whom to become what. I looked around. Sara and Zane were talking about the latest fashion in the mall. Sean was sleeping on his desk. Rob as usual was boasting about his new CD Player. Alan was passing around a note about something. Jean was doing her physics homework. The others were either talking or reading. The only person who was listening to the teacher was Tara, the first girl of the class. I opened my bag to see if I had any storybook to read. I didn't find any, so I decided to sit and wait for the bell to ring.

'Hey! You! Come here.' I turned around and found myself face to face with a man wearing an armor and had a sword in hand. He looked like a soldier. Confused I looked around my surroundings. Instead of a classroom, I saw myself standing in an old-fashioned village with strangely dressed people. I seemed to be standing in the middle of a market place. Around me the people were either selling or buying something. Everyone was busy with his or her own work. A poorly dressed man was selling some kind of food to a woman. Another woman was carrying a child in her lap and was hurrying off to someplace. A poor man was sitting on a rag and begging. On another side some dirty children were playing. The whole place was buzzing with different kinds of voices.

My eyes fell on the person in front of me. He was of medium height with a strong athletic build. He was wearing a steel armor like that of a soldier's. His helmet was pulled over his

head. As he pulled his helmet off revealing his face, I got the shock of my life. It was Mr Dave, our history teacher. I was never ever so shocked or puzzled in my life. What was Mr Dave doing here, moreover, what was I doing here? 'Mr Dave, what are you doing here? Where are we?' I questioned, 'What are you doing in that dress? Mr Dave gave me a strange look, 'I don't know no Mr Dave, child and you're coming with me. Thought you could get away stealing those vegetables. No, no, you're coming with me to the Duke.'

'Duke? What duke? Who's Duke?' I asked clearly puzzled, 'Are you playing a joke on me Mr Dave?' 'I told you I know of no Mr Dave and you are coming with me,' answered Mr Dave. 'But you are Mr Dave and where are you taking me?' The man took hold of my hand tightly and started pulling across the place. Now I was beginning to have doubts that if this was man was actually Mr Dave. I looked at the man. He was talking to another man and was paying no attention to me through he kept a strong hold on at the same time. I suddenly had an idea; I pulled away my arm violently and gave a dash for it. Mr Dave or who ever he was so surprised that he didn't know what to do for a moment. He just stood there gaping for a few moments. That little time was enough for me. I ran as fast as I could without turning back for a moment. I could hear the men running and shouting behind me.

After running for what seemed like miles, I turned around. There was no one in sight. They must have lost me. I sat down on the grass. I wondered how did I even come to this place? A shout broke into my thoughts, 'There she is. The girl who stool the vegetables and ran away.' I turned and saw it was one of the men who were chasing me. I was on my feet the next moment and before I could spell run I was running. I ran and ran, but

A DAYDREAM

By Prathama Komal Nabi



they seemed to be catching up on me. Suddenly, my foot hit something hard and the next moment I was flat on the ground. I tried to get up but my whole body was numb with pain. Out of nowhere, I could hear a bell ringing. I raised my head and saw the smiling face of Sara looking down at me. Get up! The class is over, she told me. I raised my head and looking around. All my classmates were getting up and leaving the room. There was no market place, no soldiers, and no strangely dressed people. The realizations hit me after a few seconds. The class had been so boring that I fell asleep on my desk and all those that I saw were a dream. The ringing was our class bell ringing. I picked up my books and laughed as I remembered the dream where our history teacher had become a soldier who was chasing after me. It was only a daydream.

channels explored

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Those who have lost Star World a few months back will be glad to watch Friends once again here. There are some popular international TV shows like Late Show with David Letterman, The Roseanne Show & there are serials like E.R., The Twilight Zone, Candid Camera, etc.

Sony Ent. TV: Sony is another top listed Hindi channel. There are musical programs, Hindi Film songs, TV serials, game shows, daily soaps, Hindi films etc. Some popular serials include Heena, Just Mohabbat, X Zone, Kanyadan, C.I.D. files etc. Popular other presentation include Boogie Woogie, Movers & Shakers, hosted by Shekhar Suman (an imitation of the David Letterman Show), where almost all the Indian celebrities have at least come for once, Good Home Show, The Poppadam Show, Star Yaar Kalakaar & Archana Talkies. Then there is Chartbusters & Music Mantra, showing clippings of the new Hindi and English Albums & film numbers.

Set Max: This channel is popular for Hindi Movies. Besides, there are other programs like Harmony, Lehren Features, Music Mania, Pop Puri etc. Set Max also covers LIVE cricket matches nowadays.

There are a whole lot of other Hindi channels like DD-1 (National), DD Metro & DD International. Often very bad reception, with no glamorous presentation, low quality programs make these channels unpopular. The films that are often shown have performances of actors, who depict nothing other than there is always a famine continually striking India (*shob artists kemon mora moral*). Most of the films shown seem to have been dug from the grave of Hindi films. The actors & actresses only represent that all the Indians are *dukkhobadi*, with no hopes for the future. Like other channels they have daily soaps, serials, musical programs, news too, which very few watch. Besides these, in a few particular areas one can also get unknown channels like SAB TV, Jain TV, Mega and so on.

Let's talk about the Bangla Channels for a change. From a time when BTV was the only resort, we have at least half a dozen now. There is now Channel I, ATN Bangla (favorite of all), ATN World, ETV Bangla, Alpha, DD-7. Most of these exhibit programs of both Bangladesh & West Bengal except Channel I. In this crowd of Bangla Channels sometimes ETV seems to be the only relief. Worst of all these channels seem to be ATN Bangla, especially known for Dhaliwood numbers. With some *atar bosta heruins & nadus nudus hiru*, these Bangla film songs are the prime attraction of this channel! Dhaliwood films are shown every day, which only uphold the *karmokando* of some mentally unstable directors. The serials that go on air are equally worthless except for one or two. The never-seen-before performers, who often star these in drama serials can be called anything but artists. There are countdown shows of Dhaliwood numbers. Other musical programs that are shown bear everything but quality. Programs include Shustho Thakun, Dhaliwood Bichitra, Khondo Natok, Hit Best Hit, dharabahik natok etc. Most of the new drama

performers of this channel are completely unconscious about their looks, dress up, and make up & even the ways to throw dialogue. Channel I, with a better quality than ATN Bangla, has some conscious, educated (!), smart hosts, thus, making the presentation of the programs a little better. There are drama serials, musical programs, magazine anushthan, Bangla films, Dhaliwood based programs, business programs, social awareness programs, and Bangla dubbed English serials & lots more. There is this program called *Prekhhkhopot*, which upholds the social unjust & unrest, covers actual picture of some true & gruesome incidents, which take place in the society. Amar Channel I is an attempt made for the first time in Bangladesh to meet the local stars face to face by the viewers & fans. Musical programs include Audio Bazar, I music, Music Horizon & many more. Channel I after a long time playing a one time top favourite TV serial of Lee Major- Six Million Dollar Man. May be they can also try to bring back Manimal, Macgyver, Voyager, Night Rider, V & other such popular serials for the viewers one more time. At least some like us will be glad to watch them on TV screen encore. Some other regular programs include I Focus, I Street Show, Religious Programs, Business File, Job Line, Ekush Shatok, Your Choice Ole Ole & many more. Channel I may take a step to ameliorate the quality of the program Star Night. With a funny appearance of the host, who has problem speaking clearly & is often bowled out by the invited guests & stars. It's funny how we, the native citizens fall for the copied programs so easily. Amazing! The best example is ETV (*Ekushey TV*). With such a nationalistic name all it does is present shows, which are mostly made under the influences of the famous Hindi channel programs. But hey we are the ones who are accepting them. We don't see anybody else but us dissenting it. Then again when the channel airs Football matches at night (the time when most of us sit in front of the TV for a little recreation) there is no other choice left for the viewers but to switch the channel and go to the good (or bad) old Hindi channels. But sometimes copying makes people learn something good too. Like for instance before these Bangla channels, we never had an idea about how these beauty contests and award shows in our country actually turned out to be. But now we see they are not as bad as we always assumed them to be!

For sports lovers there are ESPN and Star Sports. But Star Sports has also become a pay channel now. And for news worshippers there are BBC and CNN. And last but not the least for those who are always looking for some benefit or the other from these channels there is the one and only Discovery Channel! Even when you are just flipping the channels, in between those 2/3 second you stay with this particular station you are bound to learn something new! Nice, huh? This is the only channel that is never going to be forbidden by your parents. The popular shows here are Wild discovery, Animal Survivors, Medical Detectives, Discover Magazine, etc. And those who get HBO & Cinemax don't need Star Movies anymore. These two channels will entertain you with superb movies like You've Got Mail, Deep Impact, Dance With Me, I Still Know What You Did Last Summer and many more.

As the most popular means of entertainment these channels hold a very important place in our lives. We here hope that they will start making more constructive programs and will help the TV freaks to be known not as people who don't have anything to do, but as those who prefer expanding their horizon of knowledge with books first, and then complete it with the visual media.