

THE SUN was setting on the horizon. The birds were returning to their nests. A simple harmony seemed to cover everything. But one, the quarrelsome couple standing on the balcony of an exquisite white building. They were Rashid-ul Haque and Nazma Haque, the son-in-law and daughter of the Nayeem-ul-Ali.

Nazma and Rashid's quarrel always ended with Nazma stomping into the house accompanied by loud banging of doors and few crashing sounds of plates being broken.

Usually Rashid stayed silent and would light a cigarette and smoke for some time watching the scenery. But today was an exception. Rashid went into the house and after a while left the house on his Honda CBZ.

The reason for their quarrel was very simple. Nazma comes from a very exquisite category of people while Rashid was only an average employee who pleased the boss with his truthfulness and dependability and somehow ended up being married to his boss's daughter. Nazma could not accept the marriage forced upon her by her father. So she would always look at Rashid pessimistically, treat him like a piece of junk, and would always hurt Rashid with a snobbish attitude. But Rashid did not mind. He always believed that a day would come when Nazma would understand him and would love him. But today Nazma had tried Rashid's patience too much and after 5 years of their marriage Rashid had lost his temper for the first time.

Two weeks had passed Rashid had not returned yet. Meanwhile their company had suffered huge losses due to Rashid's absence. Nazma was not experienced and she was nearly going mad due to all the pressure of work. She began to wonder how Rashid coped with all the pressure? How he kept control over such large industries? How he kept calm? She realized how competent Rashid was? Why hadn't she realized this before? She began to feel that she had fallen in love with the calm personality of Rashid. She realized that she needed him more than her high social friends who were of no help during her troubles. She learned that a person who drives a Mercedes Benz around the streets can be useless while a person who never could afford to think about cars could be useful.

CRAZY LOVE



At last, she decided to go and search for him. He must have gone back to his one-room apartment where he used to live despite his high salaries, etc. He had bought it after they had married. He must have gone there. She walked out of the house, not in the mood to drive, towards the bus stoppage. It was a shack-like structure with closed walls on three sides. She sat on the bench oblivious of the surrounding.

She did not notice the four rugged looking men coming towards her. Suddenly as if being woken from a dream, she noticed them and tried to move away. One of the men took hold of her and pulled her towards them. A microbus came and stopped in the front of the stand. They were trying to pull her into the microbus when a man came running from nowhere and started fighting. Startled by this sudden attack the muggers let go of her and turned to face the intruder. She ran to the corner and stood there watching the person clobber the muggers one after one. One of the muggers pulled out a knife and was about to stick it in the stranger's back. Nazma screamed. The stranger alerted by the scream turned. The knife slit through his shirt and took a pinch of skin with it. The muggers turned and fled. Nazma turned to see the stranger. It was Rashid!

His back was bleeding profusely. With help of a few passersby Nazma took Rashid to a nearby clinic.

Two weeks later on one fine day Rashid entered a local coffee shop. The four muggers were sitting there. Rashid walked towards them. One of them saw him and shouted "Are Rashed Bhai, al Chotku arek kup cha de to! Rashed Bhai bashen! Bhai je herogiri jharlen. Amago sharir akerae fataala felsen. Toi bhabi kaman ase?" (Hey Rashed bhai, come sit with us. You made a big hero out of yourself and beaten the devils out of our bodies. So how's your wife?)

Rashed replied "Bhaloi ase" (she's well). He took out a parcel. "To go cluber laege kissu taka dilum. Kame lagaesh." (here's some money for your club!)

"Rashed bhai apner jhamela sharse to?" asked another. (Rashed bhai, are your problems all over?)

"Ho sharse." (Yes!) saying this a smiling Rashed walked out.

By Md. Rifaat Newaz

My Smashing Holiday in SHILLONG

Mohaymin Ahmed Arnab

It all happened suddenly in the month of November, last year, when we all decided to go together to Shillong in India. The capital place of Meghalaya state, Shillong meant to me all sky-kissing mountains and lots of great ups and downs. It is a wonderful place on all gorgeous hills, and of course a very cold place that shall freeze you indeed! We were prepared for that with sweaters, jackets and other warm clothes. While heading for Shillong we went via Sylhet and took a train to get there. So, my father and his friends bought five tickets for the whole company in one rail berth.

It is the only train that runs between Dhaka and Sylhet. We got into the train named 'Upaban'. To me, it felt like a small moving room on a train, having little experience of train travel. It had four bunk-beds in that. At 10:00 in the night the train started rolling toward Sylhet. Our berth sadly had lights that didn't work at all and we had to call a railway electrician to fix them, who repaired the lights all right but couldn't turn them off! So guess what, for the rest of our night journey the lights kept us all awake! The train ran as we watched the nature around us in quiet darkness. Since we all were very tired, after a while we pretended to be sleeping over. The train jerked and rolled all the way down to Sylhet.

Reaching Sylhet early morning, we hurriedly had breakfast in a hotel there. The cunning hotelier was quick to cheat us a little with prices. We then rented a microbus and started for the Sylhet border called Tamabil. On the other side of this border lies the sleepy Indian township called Dawki.

On the way we paid the travel taxes to our government at the bank at Joyntiapur. Our travel law is, if you go to any place outside the country you have to pay certain travel tax to the government. When we reached the Bangladesh border we had to fill-in some passport information and sign here and there at the immigration and so forth. After having finished all these, we hand-carried our luggage to the other side of the border called Dawki in India. It's a busy border for our coal importers from India, the place is full of coal-laden trucks coming in from India and leaving back again. We all over again went through the same thing as before on the Indian side, that is filling-in forms etc. After all these formalities at Dawki our gang took an Indian taxi from the border to go to Shillong. On the way we took many pictures of the high mountains while passing. At last, after about 2-1/2 hours we reached Shillong. It was a chilly December night and we had to spend a lot of time to find a suitable hotel. Some hotels had accommodation but at high charges of course. Lastly, we found out a lovely space at the Shillong Club residential quarters.

You can't imagine what a big club it was both inside and outside. On one side, the club had a huge tennis court. We often watched games there and rested anytime we crossed that court on our way to downtown. Everyday before going out for the local sightseeing we used to go for a boat ride in the Wards Lake adjacent to the Club. We normally went out for shopping or roaming around after our regular sightseeing. It was fun once watching a movie in the local cinema hall as well! The whole town itself is on all hills, winding roads, but no honks, see the difference! Dotted with countless churches on hilltops around, as the place had been so designed long ago by the Scottish Missionaries.

On our first visit to places of interest, we went to Lady Hydari Park. It is a beautiful park full of local exotic flowers and trees. Inside the park was a zoo, where I saw some rare creatures like the Clouded Leopard, different types of Birds, Himalayan Black Bear, Owl, Chinese Geese, Pelican, etc.

Then we went to the very old Scottish Church, it indeed was a very big and beautiful church on the

hills which had a rich history from Shillong's colonial past. It is magnificent inside and out. Some dedicated Scottish Missionary people built that in the 18th century.

After this we went to see The Elephants Fall. It is a great waterfall full of rushing cold water from a great height, freezing water shall numb your feet if you dip. The view here is spectacular, though the name is sort of a peculiar one, isn't it? Next we went to see The Shillong Peak. The highest hill point from where one can have the whole view of Shillong City. On the way we saw a plane of the Air Force, as the location was within their Air-Force area.

Lastly we went to see The Golf Link, a huge field with a good landscaping. Nothing much to do there though. So we turned around, had our lunch and came back to the Club and went out for shopping as usual. While shopping in small malls there we bought some souvenir for our dear ones.

The visit to the local museum was quite an experience, though quite small yet, had good many stuff to tell you on its varied culture, geography and historical past. Such was my experience when visited a local plant nursery, what a great many beautiful varieties of plants that place still has. Pine and such other trees virtually cover the whole of Shillong.

The next day we went to Cherrapunji, the wettest place on Earth at an amazing height and 53 km from Shillong town. My mother and Mehruba auntie were little startled by that idea, as the road to that place is not always very safe, especially when it rains. This place I read about in my geography book only and now a reality what a great view of waterfalls and hills. The clouds around you and the jungles are captivating. On our way to Cherrapunji we saw hills of minerals like coal, limestone along with huge stones lying beside the road. There we took some pictures of ourselves in front of the mountains and waterfalls. After seeing the local tourist spots of Cherrapunji, we went to a cave named 'Mawsmal Cave', inside the cave there are two narrow paths to where none knows. One turns to the left and other one to the right. We took some pictures there. Then we came back to Shillong again. Almost the same routine for the next three days that is, buying things for my cousins and ourselves and going round the town markets etc. My father bought a small toy car and me a G.IJOE set for my birthday, which incidentally fell on the 8th December, the day we returned to Bangladesh.

My father asked the same driver Mr. Binod of the cab who drove us to Shillong from Dawki on 1st December, to pick us up on 7th on December from the Shillong Club again. So, he did his job as was told and dropped us at the border ever smilingly. This time the immigration was easy and we had to sign our names on the papers only. At last we came over to Bangladesh side that means Sylhet. At border luckily a rent-a-car could be managed and we took that to come to the town hotel. After taking rest in that hotel till evening, we set off for the rail station to catch the night train after a great trouble. The last problem waiting for us was, we didn't have tickets for this train beforehand. With little luck that too, was managed!

It was night time and we tried best to get some sleep in the train but failed to have any, because the train jerked and rattled while people inside were going and coming through the corridor aimlessly all the time. We endured all these till we reached Dhaka on 8th December early morning. In the morning on the train my mother gave me a chocolate to wish me, as it was my birthday on that day! Dear Shillong, I remember you always and sure shall see you again!

Getting scared! Enjoy it, or fear it?

by Rakin K.

Sometimes when I think back to my 16-year-old life, I wonder, which were the most memorable or significant moments of my life yet. Turning the memories over is like a feeling of looking at the leaves of an old album and one of the questions I asked myself was, "When was I happiest? When did I enjoy myself most?" And after some philosophical thoughts, I came to an unexpected answer: I had actually enjoyed myself most when I had been at my best (which is obvious), and I had been most often at my best when I had been badly scared (which is not!). By "enjoying myself" I mean feeling that I've done a good job or reacted to some challenge in a way that makes it possible for me, in the face of difficulty or danger, to trust myself. These occasions stand out in my memory as mountain peaks, bathed in reassuring brightness.

When I was young I had a little unorthodox upbringing. We were settled in Chittagong city and I was allowed to socialize with different sorts of people. Even at a tender (yeah right!) age of 5 or 6, I was able to throw myself on my own resources and even travel extensively alone in most part of the port city. I used to roam around on a borrowed bi-cycle from one of my older brothers (My parents didn't like the idea of a bike for me at that age) and go hiking on the hills behind our house. It has to be mentioned here that no one except me of my age in my neighborhood played with the lower class children who lived beside the hills. Sometimes they even labeled me as "Basti Pola" as I went on doing that! But the kind of thrill and a sense of adventure that they had to offer me by taking me to the alien areas over the mountains and jungles was totally unmatched by other contemporary things. It never occurred to me to distrust my own capacity to deal with any situation or be afraid of anything or anybody. But very interestingly, now it has become obvious to me that, when I had just crossed the boundaries of the limitations that were imposed on me by my parents on those things, I had a deep fear in me that was telling me that I am doing something which is not considered as a right thing, but still I would move on with those friends of mine to venture into unknown, or rather, unexplored places which were obviously prohibited for a kid like me.

I was never a very active guy who would do things to attract attention amongst others but I am also not very shy type too. Somewhere in between I always had been scared or hesitant to do new things. For example when our school got a sudden call from the BTV (they always do that!) that they have set a date next week for the recording of our Television's English Parliamentary Debate and in less than 6 days the teachers will have to prepare the Debaters and their speeches on the given topic. My teachers always regarded me as a good orator (that I completely oppose), and asked me to fill up the third speaker's place. I told them that I could never be ready to be the camera let alone delivering a speech! But since they couldn't find anyone else at such short notice there were no other options for either them or me. I knew about my memorizing capabilities (which is BOGUS!) therefore I emphasized more on

trying to understand the topic, which later paid off. Eventually the day came when we went to the BTV studios to record. Obviously I was very nervous but tried my best not to show it. The other two girls who were debating with me were mumbling all sorts of different things to relieve their nervousness although that was no their first occasion. But for me it was like my trying to stay cool when your heart is beating at over 25 beats per minute extra, than normal! And then the recording started...my knees were shaking like an 7 point Richter-scale earthquake...

The speaker turned to me and said that it's your floor now. "Thank you honorable speaker..." and I started off. In the first few moments my throat was going dry and it seemed that I was short of breath. But to my great amazement, from the next moment on, the fear that had gripped me to drag me down is now giving me more impetus and my voice is loud and confident, as it was never before. In the middle of my speech a member of the opposition raise a "point of information" against me to dismantle me (Honestly speaking, it really scared the hell out of me). But again to my great surprise, I was automatically answering him so loudly that his voice could not be heard and the speaker had to tell me to lower my voice for the microphone! Later we won the debate and I cannot express the sense of joy and achievement that prevailed amongst my teachers and classmates. The win itself was not all that delightful for me without the greatest feeling that I was part of something that made some significance for a number of people, at least for a moment.

An English writer once wrote somewhere "Fear rightly used is the father of courage". And there is an interesting story too. A journalist was on a ship to Singapore and its few passengers were so surly, bored and unfriendly that the journey threatened to be a disagreeable one for him. The captain of the ship, meeting the journalist on the deck stopped him. "You might drop a hint some of those gloomy gushes that tomorrow we shall be in a hurricane," he said with a sly grin. "It may cheer them up," he said.

The journalist dropped the hint. And from that moment his fellow passengers developed a high-spirits and a good temper that helped them carry through the following days of peril!

But it need not necessarily be always like that. One cannot always enjoy fear all the times, especially when it is not physical. For example, when you have that sudden fear of losing someone very close, or knowing that something very bad is waiting to happen and you can't do anything about it, a kind of felling which cannot be exactly interpreted as fear rather like a nagging, persistent ache compared to a sharp pain and cannot be overcome easily.

But all the same, the bottom line to me is that, I believe fear, out in the open, is one of our most valuable assets- a sort of key to our reserves, a means to call into action of our latent capabilities. We do not, therefore, need to fear fear, much less be ashamed of it. We need only to handle it rightly, knowing that it can reveal our own strength to us and thus help us to the highest enjoyment of ourselves.