

BOOK REVIEW

A lover and dreamer

Reeshad is a dreamer and a believer as well. His faith is in the supremacy of the "Supreme", though people around him like to take him for a child who loves to float in the world of fantasy, writes S R Shaheed

Moments in Surreality (Ballad of the Soul)
by Reeshad Rabibany
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THE word 'Surrealist' has been defined by Andre Beton of France as 'Pure Psychic' "Automatism" by which it is intended to express through a medium either verbally, in writing or in any other way the true process of thought. The object of Surrealism is to free the artists from normal association or pictorial ideas and from all accepted means of expression to give freedom to the irrational dictates of their subconscious mind and vision. For the commoner like us surrealism aims at expressing what there is in the subconscious mind. Thus a painter or a poet may depict a number of unrelated objects as seen in a dream. Reeshad is a true surrealist who makes an attempt to present, what he dreams, through his poems by exploiting his natural gift, what one might like to call as poetic.

Prof. Serajul Islam has rightly said in his "Foreword" that the poems of Reeshad are about dreams, really dreams that will never come true but are necessary for those who have seen them. Reeshad himself has admitted in the "Introduction", he is constantly being driven by the simple two-word question 'what if' and he himself has worked out an answer that might satisfy his inner self only, and a reader joins Reeshad, consciously or unconsciously in his endless search for the ultimate. Thus in "Tomorrow" he takes the readers to

"witness the emergence of a surreal newday
Promising to lustre the world with its
Radiance of advancement"
but he prepares the reader to pay
"The price for killing nature
And exploiting the simple mind"
with the depiction of
"The future is
Probably scintillating
By the explosion of a
Nuclear device perhaps."

Reeshad continues his endless query in his "The ballad of a nymph", perhaps the best of the lot. Here he tells of a nymph who was seen by the poet "frolicking and dancing to some unearthy ballad inaudible to human ears"

She was a heavenly beauty
"As she closed her eyes
and lifted her head towards the clouds
she was smiling as the rain drops
fell softly
caressing her"

The reader becomes entranced and
"wishes they could stay here for ever
wished the moment would never end"
and ruefully muses with the poet
"wished she was still there
with him trying to shelter him
with her drenched saree"

Has Reeshad been influenced by the so-called suggestive indefiniteness blurring the distinction between the actual world and that of dream and reverie? But the dreams and sensitivity to colour, sound and image that accompanied him were never to leave him. Thus in "Predictably Unpredictable" we see Reeshad telling a story

"Trying to make colourful pattern
out of the ordinary
black and white frame"
but again sounds a note of caution
"Aren't we just creating holes in the loop
driving into certainties of uncertainties
making unpredictable predictions
who knows really?"

Reeshad is a dreamer and a believer as well. His faith is in the supremacy of the "Supreme", though people around him like to take him for a child who loves to float in the world of fantasy. Thus they pity him. Perhaps, his pathetic sentiments fail to move them. They try to get rid of him by giving him alms but Reeshad is unmoved. Because

"He has the most powerful
face on his side
he has faith"

In a "Ravenous Life" we come across a man who was once strong but now meanders here and there and follows a winding course and thereby

"discovered a world that's no less
than the heavens
described in the bible" ...
"that's a magical blend of darkness
and light
where all the colours bleed into one
in a fashion
that can never be comprehended
in the material world".

Here we see Reeshad's controlled use of metaphor

"He is in the song
that you see through
the night wind's harassment
of jitter leaves"

A surrealist Reeshad is not devoid of romantic feelings and we find his poem "Loves Wait" filled up with the air of romance as we find him taking recourse to the objects to express his feelings for a long wait when

"The hands slowly tickaway

as it reaches nearer
to the moment
of our reunion
my love and I
together again"

Can we expect a more poignant manifestation of a lover's "wait" for the beloved from a teen-aged poet? With the poet we let our tears roll down the cheeks when wait is over with the beloved failing to join the lover.

Reeshad is anecdotal and thus in his another poem we are brought face to face with a "Street Child"

"who wakes up to the
harsh coldness of the wintry night...
his vision blurred".

Vision is Reeshad's natural habitat and that made him use the word 'bleared' and not 'blurred'. The former expresses too much whereas the later is a commonplace. Our heart bleeds to see the street child scrambling for orts, not with human beings in the person of waifs and strays, but with the dogs who

"...don't seem like too
challenging an issue
just throw of a stone
should dissipate them."

The reader is confronted with a big question from the street child

"why can't they not show me
a little love not hate?

why can't they not just treat me
like a human being"

But the question remains unanswered as the answer is not known to the reader and the child as well.

"He still does not know the answers
and I don't think he ever will"

and with the struggle for an answer the child sinks into deep slumber and starts dreaming the dreams of a new and different vision of the world.

The Street Child dreams and the reader heaves a sigh!

The anthology of twelve poems end with a "Crying Country", a country that once enjoyed peace and tranquility, fell prey to the marauding colonists. She was freed by her children, only to be molested, to be a witness to

"The piercing intonation
of a distant bomp
that engulfed the lives
of hundreds of her children".

Capable of deeper and wider insight Reeshad ceases to be any more surrealist as the vague suggestiveness that dominate his other poems is conspicuous by its absence and the dream imagery has yielded its place to a contemporaneous reality that is equally crude and cruel. The poem is an outburst a crying for solace of the frustrated soul, be it land or the people inhabiting it.

Reeshad is only 19 and as Aly Zaker has said that he has a long way to travel. But he has already made a bold step and time is not far when he will be greeted with both hands by luminaries now shining in the field of literature. I wish him all success.

Finally, the review will be incomplete if it is not mentioned that the book is well got up. Barring few printing errors the book has come to us with a print that will not strain our eyes is an achievement of the publisher and is sure to commend itself to the reader.

FICTION

Richard Flanagan wins Commonwealth prize

AUSTRALIAN writer Richard Flanagan has won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for his wildly inventive and complex novel *Gould's Book of Fish*.

Inspired by the fish paintings of 19th century convict William Bleuel Gould, it tells of Gould's 1828 love affair with a young black woman. It was chosen from a shortlist of four, which included Ian McEwan's *Atonement*; Alice Munro's *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*; and Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*.

The Edinburgh-based judging panel declared Flanagan's work to be "the most controversially difficult and demanding of the four books that were before us, because we detected in it a touch of genius that, we believe, will give it enduring significance."

The chairman of the panel, the Right Reverend Bishop Holloway, added that "some of the judges used adjectives like Dantane, Joycean, even grotesque."

Flanagan has said that his book,

which is lavishly printed in six different colours, is designed to be much

more than a simple love story. As

well as a stab at the heart of contemporary Australia, it is also an anti-

to Bill Gates's comment that his

ultimate aim is to put an end to paper

and books.

"I conceived of this book being

about the wonder and glory of books," Flanagan has written.

"I wanted to prove Bill Gates and his

leprosy ilk wrong. I wanted to show

the cant of technology for the thin lie

it is. I wanted to prove that far from

being finished creatively and com-

mercially, books still remained

pregnant with an infinity of possi-

bilities, that implicit in every book is

the universe."

In a boost for the flagging ebook

industry, the winner of the Best First

Book Award was the South African

writer Manu Herbstein for his ebook

Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave

Trade. Described by the judges as a

"book written with tremendous

moral passion about a monstrous

episode in human history," it is the

first time an ebook-on-demand title

has won a major literary award.

Source: The Guardian

Attacking juvenile delinquency

The author dealt with the theoretical concepts of causation of juvenile offence, nature of offence, treatment pattern in the family, family background and living conditions, influence of informal companionship and mass media factors influencing juveniles behaviour. He also recorded the opinions of the subjects regarding the factors which influences their anti-social behaviour. Boys identified companionship of informal groups, unsatisfactory family life as major causative factors, writes Najmir Nur Begum

Juvenile Delinquency: Dhaka City Experience

By Abdul Hakim Sarker, published by the Human Nursery for Development (HND), Price 450, Pages 297

In the context of present day

situation, a publication based on empirical study on the socio-economic conditions of the juvenile delinquents of Dhaka City is most welcome. To-day's juvenile delinquents are future criminals. Even nature of crimes participated by the juveniles have changed to a great extent. Now a large number of juveniles are actively involved in violent crimes like rape, extortion, kidnapping and murder. The increased rate of violent crimes committed by juveniles have generated anxiety and tension among the people about the future of our society.

Parents often are disillusioned and helpless to control their children. The book serves an important role by throwing light on the causative factors of delinquency and collecting the views of people dealing with juvenile delinquents in their various capacities. I congratulate the author for showing his sensitivity about the problem of our society by rightly selecting the topic for the Ph.D dissertation and finally, for giving it a book shape.

The study was conducted in 1980's with a view to examine the various manifestations of the problem. Data were collected from a sample of boys undergoing correctional treatment having been judged as offenders together with some of their parents and guardians. The book also examines the effectiveness of justice system in controlling juvenile delinquency, reviews recent legislations and court ruling on the rights of youth offenders.

Families played an important role towards the behaviour of the juvenile delinquents. Dysfunctional families which could not set a definite role for their children or standard of behaviour in front of them, could not meet children's increased social and economic needs and above all, could not control their behaviour were the factors primarily responsible for their children's delinquent behaviour. The author also indicated the existence of a "deviant sub-culture" which influenced boys to a great extent for drifting to deviant pattern of behaviour.

The author dealt with the theoretical concepts of causation of juvenile offence, nature of offence, treatment pattern in the family, family background and living conditions, influence of informal companionship and mass media factors influencing juveniles behaviour. He also recorded the opinions of the subjects regarding the factors which influences their anti-social behaviour. Boys identified companionship of informal groups, unsatisfactory family life as major causative factors.

The study was primarily conducted by social survey method. The "deviant sub-culture" pointed out by the author which surrounds the problem could not be studied as such. This "sub-culture" is very important and interesting area in understanding delinquent and criminal behaviour in a society.

Future researchers might concentrate in studying this "deviant sub-culture" by adopting ethnographic method of study.

The author has indicated in different chapters some measures to be taken to curb the growth of this problem. What was expected that on the basis of his in-depth understanding of the situation, he should have provided in his book a separate chapter dealing with his learned recommendations for the parents, families peer-group, school, correctional authorities and society as whole to deal with the problem.

Saying goes: knowing the cause, solves half of the problem. The author has empirically digged out the causes, which would help

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understanding of the situation, which in turn, would help controlling it at its onset.

This book is a valuable addition to the present knowledge in this field. Academicians, researchers, planners and policy-makers, social workers and students will find this book very useful and informative. I wish its wide circulation. I again, thank the author for his initiative.

Najmir Nur Begum is Professor Institute of Social Welfare & Research at Dhaka University

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America: A melting pot

This book is a result of hard work of many years but has fallen ten years behind as the references show, writes Kazi Iththam

America, and 12) Is America a "Melting Pot"?

The book is by far about the inhabitants of America starting from the early settlements to the last, that covers Red Indians, White Europeans and Black Africans, and finally all people from all races, colours and creeds.

Race is a mischievous term and it creates many misgivings including superiority of race, colour conflicts and many other contours within the American society.

If the chronology is maintained in the book Native Americans should have got precedence than others.

In that sequence the migration of the Europeans should follow it which ranked 8th in the book. But the author has her prerogative to arrange them, and I accept it with good grace.

All theories regarding how the name America came into being were meticulously analysed. Some

of these theories are funny and fallacious but they still linger on. And it is rightly put by the author that Columbus never knew that he discovered a new land unheard by the Europeans. Today Columbus is not taken as a great hero, and the Columbus Day parade is denounced by native Americans.

This book is a result of hard