

HOW is it possible that a flight from London to Dhaka could cause such soul searching and inner turmoil? Okay, maybe I'm exaggerating a little, but it did have me wondering whether I had turned into an unsociable, aloof and uncaring person or whether it was a culmination of the fact that I was sitting in a confined space with a few hundred people for over ten hours. The children were as excited as ever at the prospect of going to Bangladesh and I was looking forward to a month of being home with family and friends. Once I had herded my children onto the plane, we discovered that someone had already made themselves comfortable in one of our seats and I had to point out that it was necessary for us to be seated together as I was travelling with three young children. Luckily, she was rather sweet and asked if she could sit in the aisle seat where my elder daughter was supposed to sit. Before I could intervene my daughter offered her seat and sat in the middle with the lady on one side and another elderly gentleman on her other side. Finally we were settled into our seats and, armed with paper and colouring pencils, the children immersed themselves into creating unique works of art.

A few hours into the flight and I realised that my carefully laid plan was starting to unravel. The kids had not, as I had hoped, fallen fast asleep after lunch and were, on the contrary, wide-eyed and loquacious. So I resorted to plan B, which was for all of us to put our headphones on and do something as mindless as watching a movie to help us get through the next couple of hours. However, even Pierce Brosnan and Julianne Moore could not hold my attention for too long. I was distracted by a child sitting one row away from me cuddling a plastic doll that looked like it should have been in a horror film and talking to it in a voice loud enough for half the plane to hear. "Appu, tumi khabey?" "Appu tumi onek sweet." Yes she was having a conversation with her doll and squeezing its cheeks and turning to her fellow passengers and insisting that they give the rather grubby and sinister looking doll a kiss. I looked on in a mixture of fascination and horror. It was sweet that she was attached to her doll but her behaviour started taking on an obsessiveness that was rather scary! I sank deeper into my seat praying that I was not going to be the next victim and made to cuddle or kiss "Appu"!

# The Fear of Flying

**NADIA KABIR BARB**

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Later when the credits were being shown on the screen I noticed that two of my children looked like they were about to have the long awaited nap. But even with the lights dimmed, it was like sitting in the middle of New Market. People were walking up and down the aisles, bumping into the seats, having long conversations with passengers sitting a few rows away and children were being passed from one parent to another to be pacified. I could feel my air of calm slipping away and falling far below us and landing somewhere in the Middle East with a crash. Even a few years ago I would answer as politely as I could the rather personal questions being directed at me and make small talk with my fellow passengers. But now all I wanted to do was ask them to sit in their seats and keep the noise down like some neurotic teacher.

The kids then decided that it was too noisy to sleep and my little one wanted to visit the bathroom. She took one look inside and commented on its lack of cleanliness, to put it mildly. Why is it that some people can't even use the toilets properly? Plus the fact that the majority of the passengers on this flight were mainly Bangladeshis wasn't helping.