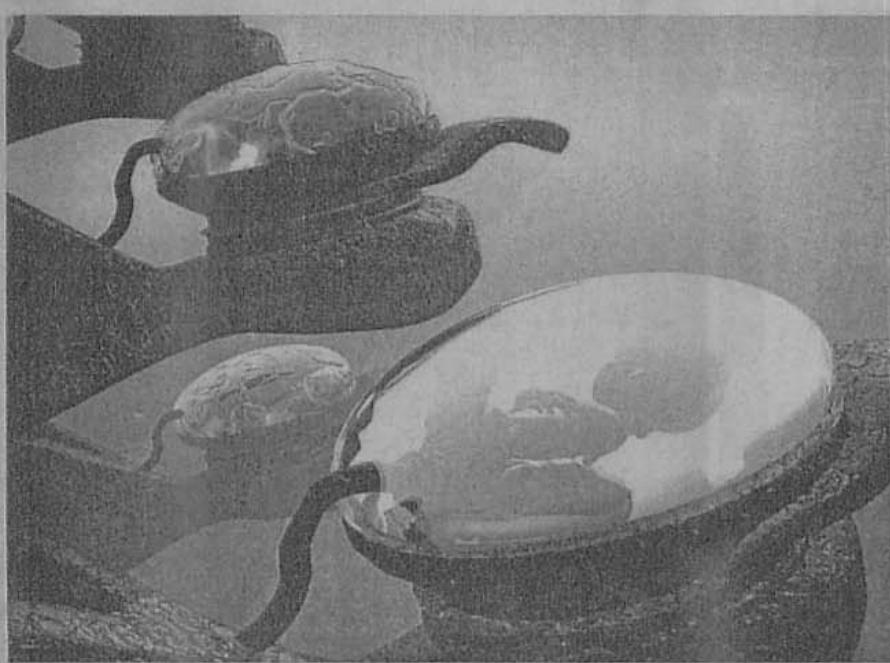


At the end of the road



HE was lying in the hospital bed, a white cotton cloth covering half his body, and pipes connected to his nose and arms. Apparently, that's how he took his food. It was the sorriest state that anybody had ever seen him in, but to say it was not his fault would be a total lie.

He was in his forties, a grown man, married twice with two beautiful children who adored him. He had lots of brothers and sisters who loved him and would have done anything to see their baby brother happy. He had friends. He had everything that people needed in their lives to be happy. But he wasn't. Like every other living soul in this world, he was miserable because no matter

how good a person's life is, they always find a reason to be miserable. A reason to pity themselves. Nobody is satisfied with what they have; they pity themselves because they don't have more. He was different only in the sense that he couldn't handle his misery. Nobody knows if it was his friends' influence or a personal choice, but he started taking drugs. Regularly, limitlessly, and through injections. Everybody knew it would kill him. He knew it would kill him. When and how were the missing facts.

And then, after two years of injecting poison into his body, he was lying in that hospital bed, a white cotton cloth covering his legs, and liquid food running through

those pipes connected to his nose and arms. Most of his family was in that room at that moment, and it is a given fact that the lives of all those people present in that stench filled room had been totally changed after being in there for a few hours. That day, they witnessed the death of a man whom they loved so dearly that they wanted to hold on to his soul somehow, somehow. But they couldn't. They were as helpless as the dying man. All they could do was cry in pain and frustration.

Death comes in many forms. Some people die in a second, others stay in a coma and then die. But a death that is stretched over more than 30 days...the pain in that can hardly be put in words. He had such a death. Due to all the injections he had taken, his skin had caught an infection that slowly, very slowly, ate away his body. His muscles had rotten, literally rotten, and were slowly falling off his body. And he had full sense, was fully aware, and could actually feel his skin, his muscles part from his body. And he cried. He screamed to God, sometimes for life, and sometimes for a quicker death. He got neither.

He finally did die, when there was much of nothing left on his bones to rot. Everybody cried for him, even people who hardly knew him but had heard of how he had died. But everybody was aware that to a certain extent, he had brought his own death to him. And there are lots of other people still alive who are bringing the same death onto them, but still don't know how painful it is going to be at the end of the road. Does anybody deserve such a death? Is taking drugs worth such a god damned painful end?

By Fahmina Rahman

Book review

George Orwell 1984

War is peace Freedom is slavery Ignorance is strength

AS I have confessed often enough all throughout my tenure as a writer here, I am a big fan of Stephen King. Now as most of you (wrongly!) categorize King as a horror writer, I must say that I have read my fair share of horror stories. But none of them have come even close to scaring me as much as George Orwell's '1984'.

1984 is a classic Dystopian novel. For those ill-informed Dystopia is the opposite of Utopia as in it is envisioning the worst possible outcome of a hypothetical situation. And it is intimidating what George Orwell's vivid imagination could come up with. Written in 1948 when Orwell was near his death and suffering heavily from tuberculosis, 1984 is a story depicting the year of 1984 in the city of London.

"Outside, even through the shut window pane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything except the posters that were plastered everywhere."

The year is 1984; the scene is London, largest population centre of Airstrip One.

Orwell tried to depict a totalitarian state, where the truth didn't exist as such, but was merely what the "Big Brother" said it was. Freedom was only total obedience to the Party, and love an alien concept, unless it was love for the Party. The story is told from the point of view of Winston Smith, a functionary of the Ministry of Truth whose work involved the "correction" of all records each time the "Big Brother" decided that the truth had changed. The Party slogan said that "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past",

and they applied it constantly by "bringing up to date" the past so as to make it coincide with whatever the Party wanted.

From Winston Smith's point of view, many things that scare us are normal. For example, the omnipresence of the "Big Brother", always watching you, and the "Thought Police" that punishes treacherous thoughts against the Party. The reader feels



the inevitability of doom that pervades the book many times, in phrases like "Thoughtcrime was not a thing that could be concealed forever. You might dodge successfully for a while, even for years, but sooner or later they were bound to get you".

Little by little, Winston begins to realize that things are not right, and that they should change. We accompany him in his

attempt at subversion, and are unwilling witnesses of what that attempt brings about. This book is marked by hopelessness, but at the same time it is the kind of distressing book we all NEED to read...

Newspeak, doublethink, thoughtcrime--in 1984, George Orwell created a whole vocabulary of words concerning totalitarian control that have since passed into our common vocabulary.

Orwell's classic continues to deliver its horrible vision of totalitarian society. Once considered futuristic, it now conjures fear because of how closely it fits the reality of contemporary times. That is the scariest part of the novel.

Orwell was a magnificent writer of satirical stories. 1984 is no different. It is the expression of a mood and it is also a warning. The mood that it expresses is one of near despair about the future of man and the warning it tries to convey is that if the course of history does not change man all over the world will lose all their human qualities and disintegrate into soulless automations without even being aware of it.

1984 is also a love story and seldom has a book provided a greater wealth of symbols for its age and for the generations to follow. The features that Orwell outlined may have seemed outlandish to the people of his time but what will shock you even more is how familiar it will all sound.

It should without doubt be a must read for everyone.

I came about this book quite by chance and thank God for small favours. Not sure where you can get it but you should definitely check out Etcetera or Words n Pages!

By Quazi Zulquarnain Islam

A sophisticated house

WE can certainly compare the world to a colossal house comprising a complex of countless dissimilar compartments, impenetrable walls, unique partitions and stylishly complicated interior designs.

This metaphor becomes explicable when we consider the fact that in this world we are divided in numerous races, nationalities and cultural groups. We have divided the world by erecting limitless boundaries of disparity.

The randomly spontaneous evolution of the human civilization and the obstacles inherent in the geographical remoteness gradually alienated us from each other throughout the history. We have learned to distrust each other due to the inharmonious inventions of different ideological and cultural doctrines. As a result, we now live in a world where we all have distinct identities and where every national community lives in a particular fragment of the disjointed world. The existing global arrangements entitle each of us to specific national and social identities, despite the fact that as human beings we are not born as citizens of any particular country.

In fact, each of us comes into the world as a liberal life of the Mother Earth as our creator doesn't mark us with a sign of nationality. A new born baby doesn't know whether he is an American or an Afghan. It's only when he begins to grow up, the world around him gradually confines him between narrow boundaries of individual and universal categorization. Observing this evident truth French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau said, 'Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains'.

Even within our own national frontiers we are divided in ethical creeds, social classes, and political groups. It seems as though the human civilization will not cease to classify humans till the end of its own downfall due to the magnitude of self-destructive complexity that it is planning to construct. This process of separation, which triggers the motives of racial and national divergences, is the prime factor behind the lack of equilibrium and unity in the world.

It can be argued that throughout the history the national supremacy and territorial annexations have been the foremost reasons behind atrocious wars and deadly combats between nations and classes.

If we analyze modern history we will be able to perceive the fact that radical nationalism is the father of all varieties of global antagonisms. The feeling of hostility augments the lack of equilibrium when the members of the mightier nations yearn to annex territories beyond their national boundary and crave for extensive powers and national supremacy.

Consequently, we face irresistible global catastrophes. From the Napoleonic Wars to the dark days of the Second World War, radical nationalism and ideological discords between nations, religious groups, and even individuals have been the prime factors behind almost every conflict of the previous centuries.

To a great extent extremist nationalism encourages global fundamentalism which can be disastrous for all in a multicultural world. So the key point is that in this world no one should ever forget the fact that diehard chauvinism can take us to inevitable cataclysms.

It's undeniable that all of us cannot be the same. Diversity is one of the central elements of our civilization. Nevertheless, we must remember the fact that the foundation of the global house, where we all live in, is not well-built as it has not been laid through a unanimous planning by all the members of the house. If a single wall of this house collapsed it would be disastrous for the entire edifice.

Moreover, some of these walls are linked to each other (as sometimes some ideologies, races and nations form alliances against some others.) Any member of this universal house should never forget that the impact of the downfall of even a single phase of it would be destructive for all of us.

By Kh. Asef Safa Kabir