St. Gregory's High School- a reflection

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IT was during one of my recent trips to Bangladesh that I visited Saint Gregory's High School. It has been 35 years now that I had walked out through the gates of my school for the last time. Only once, since then, do I remember having returned to the warm embrace of my alma mater for the 100th anniversary celebrations. I therefore, and quite rightly, considered myself as guilty as anyone who ignores his very roots and quite wantonly forgets where he rose from. This trip to Saint Gregory's was thus an attempt at redeeming me of that guilt. Equally important perhaps, was an innate desire to relive those moments of childhood lost to the fathomless well of Time.

Shabbir Ahmed Imtiaz, my childhood friend from our days at St Gregory's was quick to offer to accompany me, and to arrange for the transport. Here, perhaps, was another Gregorian suffering from guilt similar to mine and looking for atonement himself.

With the car snaking its way through the snarl of Old Dhaka traffic at the pace of a snail, I had all the time in the world to soak in the familiar sights of yesteryear. In the



blink of an eye I am transported into a packed rickety "Town 2A Service" bus incessantly blowing its familiar foghorn as it makes its way to Victoria Park (later renamed Bahadur Shah Park).

I am suddenly shaken out of my blissful reminiscence as Shabbir asks, "Remember Victoria Park?"...How could I forget Victoria Park? How could I *ever* forget getting off the bus at Victoria Park every morning on way to school and the instinctive glance at the clock of the Armenian Church... will I be able to squeeze in a quick game of basketball or handball before assembly?

Luxmi Bazaar Road in front of the school is not quite the same anymore. More people and more rickshaws make everything look so much more crowded - so different. Gone also is the very familiar and traditional-looking Municipal Corporation building right across from the school a landmark we had come to accept as universal.

My eyes are instinctively drawn to a corner right outside the school gates...my heart seems to know what I am looking for...but I don't see the old bearded *jhaalmuri-wala* standing there, selling his mouth-watering spicy puffed rice. Thirty five years later, he is not expected to be there. But I do believe that if I could turn the clock back that many years, he would immediately reappear at that corner and sell me his *jhaalmuri* with a lot of *kashondi* (mustard) (the way I always liked it). I feel a strange

