

The many secrets to relationships

Mohsena Reza Shopna explores the nature of modern romance

Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man is a book where we get to know what men really think about love, relationships, intimacy and commitment. It has been described as 'a thorough, witty guide to the modern man'.

It is written in very simple language for anyone to understand and communicate. It is as if you are opening out your heart to your dearest friend. Going through it, one does not get bored. It is like an everyday happening with which you can identify yourself and hence makes pleasant reading.

Everything you need to know about men and relationships is right here. It never ceases to amaze us how much people talk about relationships, think about them, read about them and ask about them. Too many women are clueless about men who get away with a whole lot of stuff in relationships because women have never understood how men think. On the other hand, women have made it clear that they want their love to be reciprocated in the same way they give it. They want their romantic lives to be as rewarding as they make them for their potential mates; they want the emotions that they turn on full blast to be met with the same intensity. But there are basic things in men that are never going to change, no matter how good you are to them, until you understand what their makeup is, what drives them, what motivates them. But with this book you can get into a man's mindset and understand him better.

Men are simple. They are driven by who they are, what they do and how much they make. These three things make up the basic DNA of manhood. Until a man does these things, women only fit into the cracks of his life. But a woman's love stands the test of time, logic and all circumstances. A man's love is different and probably a little harder to come by. You will know a man loves you, when he professes, he is willing to tell anybody and everybody. The next step is to provide. Society has told men for millennia that their primary function is, to make sure that the family is set. Protective... when a man truly loves you, anybody who says, does, suggests or even thinks about doing something offensive to you stands the risk of being

obliterated!

There are tips from Steve Harvey who is a 'stand-up comedian, actor, philanthropist, host of the Steve Harvey Morning Show and the game show Family Feud.' He is also the international best selling author of Straight Talk, No Chaser. Steve continues to say, 'We need to talk' and other such words. How to tackle? He is there to teach you. In Part Two, Steve lets us know 'why men do what they do'. Part Three, The Playbook, speaks of how to win the game. He gives the most valuable tip, 'Men respect standards, get some'.

In his opinion, the answers to the questions every woman should ask before she gets into too deep a relationship depend on the nature of the questions: What are your long term goals, short term goals? What

are your views on relationships? What do you think about me? How do you feel about me? Then he puts up a ninety-day rule. To get the respect you deserve, find out how he reacts when you tell him you have some problems? How does he react under pressure? His reaction to bad news and when he is told 'no'? Then there are tips for strong, independent and lonely women. Finally, how to get the ring! There are all those quick answers to the questions you have always wanted to ask.

Steve Harvey cannot count the number of impressive women he has met over the years. Women who can run a business, keep a household with three kids in tiptop shape, and chair a church group all at the same time. So when it comes to relationships, he wonders why these women cannot figure out what makes men

tick. According to Harvey, it is because they are asking other women for advice when they should be going directly to the source. In this indispensable relationship guide, Act Like A Lady Think Like A Man, he lets women inside the male mindset. He introduces concepts such as the ninety-day rule and reveals the five questions women should ask to find out how serious he is.

Sometimes funny, sometimes direct, but always truthful, this book is a must read if one wants to understand how men think when it comes to relationships, intimacy and love.

MOHSENA REZA SHOPNA WRITES POETRY AND IS A SOCIAL ACTIVIST.

A bit of positivity

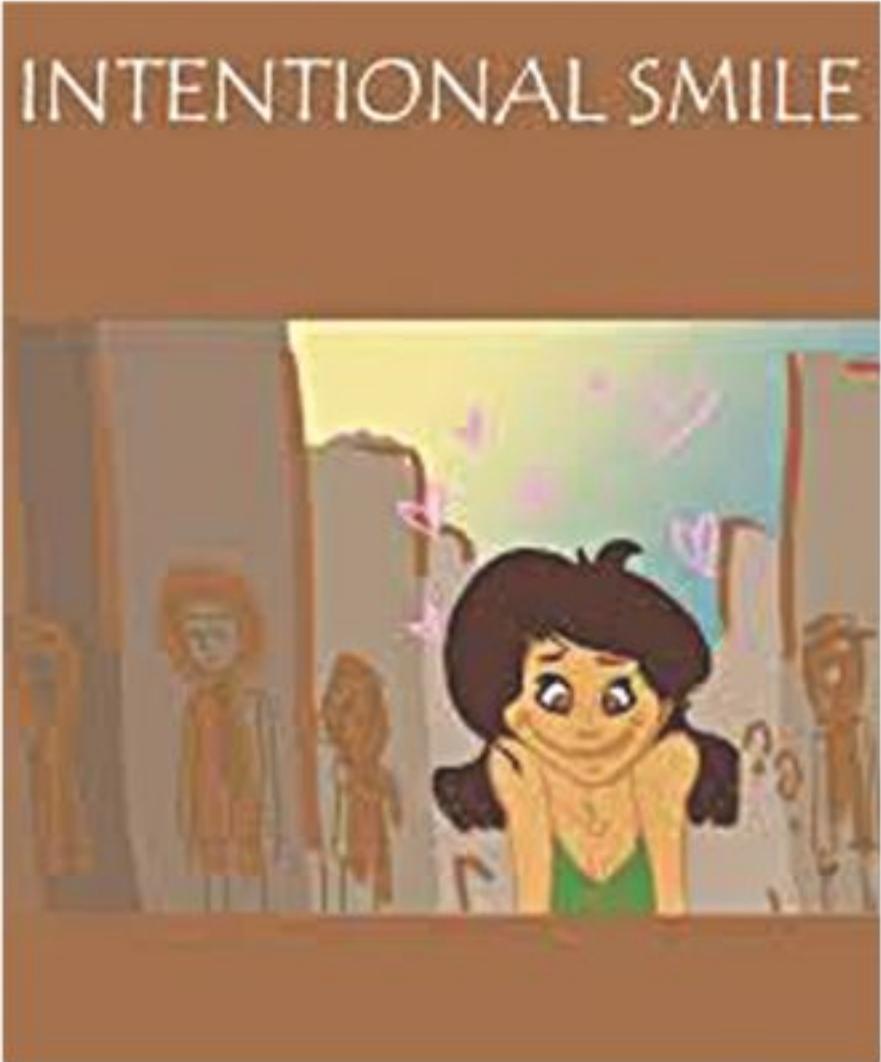
MR wants to believe

A little bit of positivity never hurt people in their busy lives trying to juggle work, family, friendships and exercise. But often it is easy to get lost in daily demands, to harness that energy and really use it for maximum benefit, and that is exactly what Intentional Smile is about.

Dhaka's first self help book written by two Dhakaites, Shazia and Merrill, who talk about their challenges in life, and how they got together to find that thing that's around the corner but eludes you sometimes—happiness.

The book is a combination of exercises, informational real life examples, and anecdotes in a bit of a helter skelter way, which just adds to its charm. They are centered around themes of loving yourself, energy, gratitude, breathing, beliefs, intentions, feelings, chakras and the blues. The exercises range from simple to more complex ones: one of them is a blank page where you list your blessings; people you love, places you love, experiences you enjoyed, and favourite foods. Another is when you visualize a ball of light travelling through your system, and it releases energy as it travels through you. The result is that at the end of that exercise, you feel energized all over.

It has certain practical tips for every day, such as rewording your problems. So instead of saying 'Our relationship sucks', a positive way to reword that is to say, 'I choose to cultivate a rewarding relationship with you'; and instead of saying, 'I am



Intentional Smile
Merrill Khan & Shazia Omar
Bengal Publications

fat', you can turn it around to say, 'I choose to live a healthy life.' It talks about the need to write down daily intentions. The writers say: 'Every night, before I go to bed, I cuddle up in my couch, with my notebook and cup of tea. I write out a flow of intentions and affirmations for the following day. I intend to gain positive energy from my morning routine. I intend to eat a delicious breakfast. I intend to travel safely and peacefully throughout the day...the more details I go into the night before, the more successful I am in programming the day

that follows.' Sounds simple enough, but how many of us actually end up doing it, and reaping the surprising changes that it may bring to our lives?

My personal favourite is when you press the tip of each finger (I actually learnt this at Shazia's pilates class) and associate it with one favourite memory. So the first finger can be a beach holiday you took with your husband, the second can be when you got a kitten, the third your wedding day, and so on. Simple, happy memories that always make you feel good. If you do it often enough, every time you press those fingers, you associate with a good memory, and your mind becomes conditioned to feel happy. I have tried it, and vouch for it!

With beautiful, colourful, feel good illustrations by Lara, the book ends with meditation cards with words such as 'healthy', 'safe', 'grounded', 'calm'. The idea is to hold those cards to whatever chakra they synchronize with, and try to imbibe yourself with all the positivity the cards hold. Chakras have a chapter on its own, so read it before you get into this last activity. This is a book you should get if you are trying to find a systematic way to infuse happiness and gratitude in your lifestyle, are struggling a little bit, and want to believe. As it says,

'Smile with your lips, smile with your eyes, and smile with your heart.'

MR LOVES READING AND REFLECTING ON READING

BOOK NEWS

Philip Hensher wins Royal Society Prize ...for novel set in Bangladesh

ANSAR AHMED ULLAH writes from London

Philip Hensher has been awarded the 2013 Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize for his novel, Scenes from Early Life, set in Bangladesh.

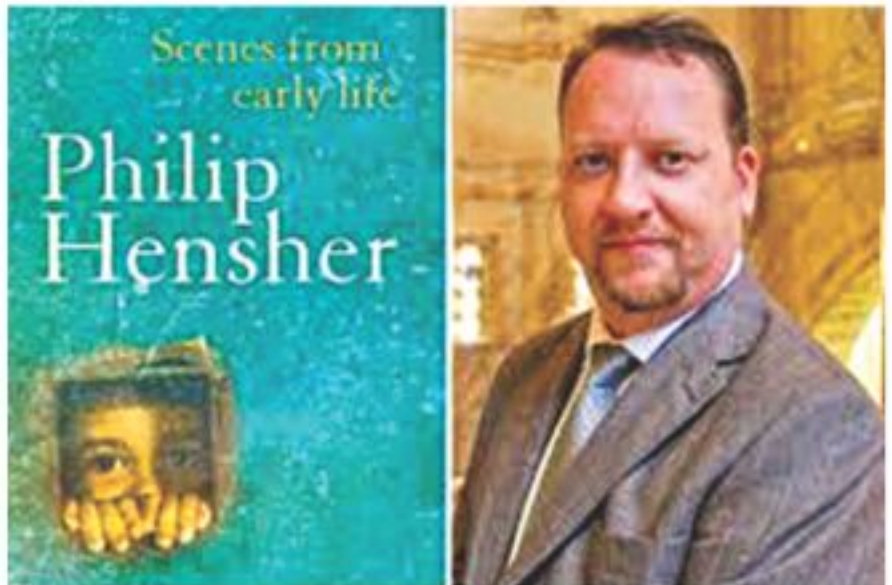
In Scenes from Early Life, Hensher assumes the voice of his Bengali partner, Zaved Mahmood, who was born in Dhaka in 1970 prior to Bangladesh's birth. The book is a semi-fictional account of Zaved Mahmood's childhood, just before the Bangladesh War of Independence from Pakistan.

Margaret Drabble, one of the judges, praised the book as "an unostentatious tour de force". Author Julia Blackburn,

another judge, said: "Maybe it is the fact of being an outsider, while at the same time being intimately connected with his narrator, that enabled Hensher to describe the hubbub of a country's political transition with such immediacy; we enter an unfamiliar world with him and smell and taste and hear it on all sides."

In addition to Margaret Drabble and Julia Blackburn who were joined on the judging panel by former Granta editor, Ian Jack. They wrote: "A place, whether it is a small room, a forest floor, or an entire continent, is defined by the limitations and freedoms it offers and by the layers of emotion and history it contains."

"For this prize we are trying to see where



and how this elusive spirit has been best captured in a book of poetry, fiction, biography or personal memoir."

Last year's prize went to a Bengali Rahul Bhattacharya for his debut novel *The Sly Company of People Who Care*.

A contemplative bard reflects

Shahid Alam studies dreams in terms of reality

That indefatigable writer, Muhammad Zamir, has come up with another volume of poetry. Although the publication has not been dated (a grave publishing oversight), it was probably first published around the same time as his anthology of English poems, Dreams and Reality. Ontorer Chhando is a slim volume, containing 100 poems, which have been composed in Bengali. Having gone through both volumes, my purely personal feeling is that the overall quality of his English poems is higher than those in Bengali. Somehow, I felt that the intensity of feeling expressed in the English poems has not come through in commensurate degree in the Bengali pieces. However, there is much similarity between the two anthologies in his preference for subject matters and principal theme. Not being a translator, I will restrict myself to reproducing excerpts from several of his poems through their phonetic rendering in English as composed by yours truly.

Zamir concentrates much on contemporary issues. However, as with his English poems, he is inordinately drawn towards finding the meaning of existence. Linked with this quest are lessons from life as it reaches the beginning of the end of its existential arc: its harsh reality, regrets, and lamentations, and a trepidation of the Great Unknown called Death. Snippets from different poems attest to his search that, at times, appears obsessive or frustrating: tobe atma mrittur pore thhakbe kothae, ta jana nei. ("Porokal") mone pore shudhu babake, ar tar ukti --- "shobar majhe achhe shikor, rakhbe dhore toke shobar bondhone."

..... kintu aj, kahini sheshe, bidae logne, kori prosno nijeke, baba ki korechhilen bhoor? ("Prosthan") And, tobe jiboner ei mohakabbe shob odhdhoy hoy shesh, shudhu romonthone. ("Romonthon") Furthermore, bhalobashar ortho ki, ta bujhite dilo na ei natok, jar opor nam jibon. ("Bhalobasha") However, Zamir also focuses on a number of social issues. He takes issue with lost values: amra korechhilam andolon bhashar mukti o shadhinotar jonnyo --- okatore, proyojone jonogon diyechhe pran.

tobe keno hobe aj mullobodher ei bikriti keno ei obonoti? ("Hochcheta ki") The poem "Mullobodher proyojonita" reinforces his conviction.

And, the abuse of spoken Bengali: banijjer lalsha korechhe horon, niyechhe kere shuddho uchcharon o promito Bangla byakaron. ("Bhashar proti oudashho") Then, korte hobe bhashake jogakichuri mukto, korte hobe bhashake 'Benglish' theke uddhar. ("Shuddho bhashar byabohar")

The poet alludes to much more than the 'Arab Spring' in this poem: hajar konther milito dhoni oroktokkhoy korechhe proman akankhito bondhon--- mukti shombhob khomota akre thaka ek nayok tontro hote. ("Boshonter chhoa")

On a contemporary issue in Bangladesh:

jara juddhaporadhi jara korechhilo manobadhikarke londobhondo, tader dite hobe uchit shasti--- jate tader pododdhoni ar jae na shona ei prithibir buke--- tobei hobe protishodher shopner shomapti o nyae bicharer prapti. ("Juddhaporadhi der bichar")

He does not forget border killings:

achhe bondhutter protisruti, achhe shohojogitar itihash, kintu shimantoborti elakae cholchhe guli.

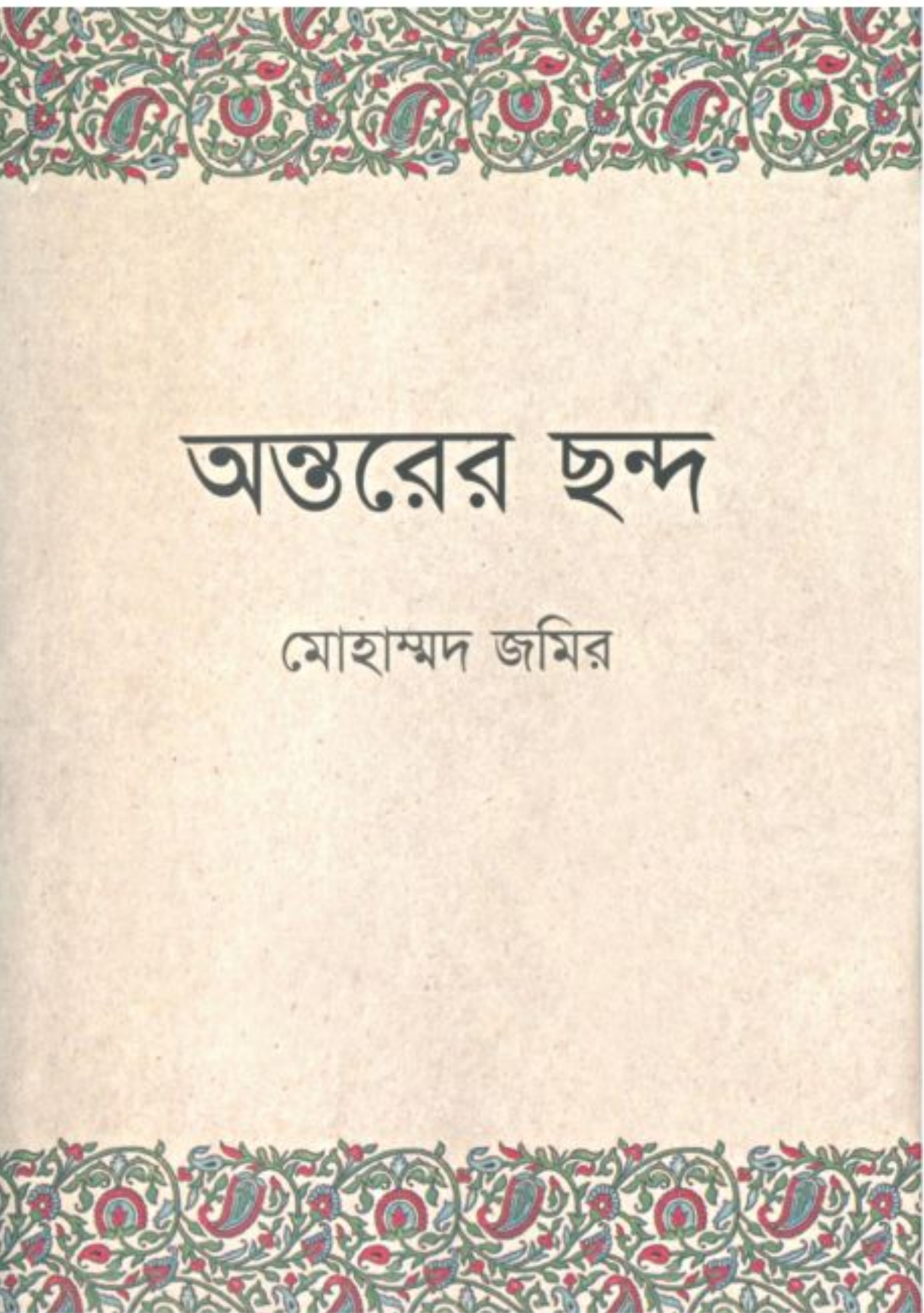
..... jara jouthobhabe korechhe shodesher matike shotrumukto, keno tader ei oporinoto osthirota? keno ei moddho jugio borborota o atonko? keno tader nei shongjom? ("Ei hottajoggo bondho hobe kobe?")

Zamir does not miss out on the racism that the Bengalis indulge in within themselves, and age-old male domination:

...shobai chai mey hobe forsha, shudhu ta holei shey shundori. patripokkho kintu chai na forsha chhele, tader belae patro ujjol shyamborno holei cholbe. tai mone hoy biyer bajar onekta jeno machher bajar, jekhane bikri hoy manush. ("Biggyapon")

The poet has several poems devoted to the acute ills that afflict Bangladesh's society and political culture. "Kalo biral" is intriguing, suggestive as well as indicative, of the generic corrupt persons in Bangladesh, as well as some specific individual he seems to have in mind:

syndicate networker antae, chadabaji o niyog banijje shongothito holo bhumikompo ---



Ontorer Chhando
Muhammad Zamir
Nympha Publication

people to follow her ideals:

hote hobe notun diner dishari. tate hobe atma shanto ashbe poriborton, iti hobe hangama o kolahol. ("Mother Teresake sroddhabhore shwaran") The poet also pays tribute to his self-confessed spiritual soulmates, the departed pop music icons Whitney Houston and Michael Jackson in "Attik shonghider oshomoyik chole jaoa". The Greta Garbo-esque Shuchitra Sen is eulogized in "Shuchitra Sener shoron utshobe". He laments the killing of the journalist couple Shagor Sarwar and Mehrun Runi and their still unsolved murder in "Anujprotimder hottakander todonto".

Zamir talks rarely about human love in the Biblical sense, but hints at one instance of unrequited love in "Khujchhi tomae": tai aj, ei muhurte, rater sheshe, khujchhi tomae, ei atmar bikolpo jogote, jekhane naki shobai baash kore chirodin, poro kale.

"Narindar harano dinguli" is pure nostalgia, and will probably evoke a deep sigh from those who remember Dhaka as essentially a large town of wide-open spaces, sprawling greenery, and manageable population, a long way back in distant memory from the present reality of it having become essentially a glitzy mega-slum, and being

easily for several years running among the top three most unlivable cities in the world. A similar emotion is aroused in "Kaler biborton", where he builds his thoughts around the death of an old lady.

Zamir is a humanist and pacifist, as several of his poems testify: "Opomrittu" and "Shagoto noboborsho" are two. He unburdens himself in "Manobota":

shob motobader urdhe manobota thhakte pare shamajik ba dhormo bidhi bidhan, thhakte pare bhinno achar-protha shobar upore manush, amader shroshta ek --- tai srishitoy okhondito.

jabo fire, rongomocher pat shesh kore, eki aloke prapto obosthane. In "Pranbonto shonali diner prottasha" he expresses:

ashuk bhalobasha, ashuk shanti. And, repeats in "Atmabishwash": ami chai shanti.

In "Eid-i-Miladunnabi" he extols the Prophet: ei dine, ujibito hoye peyechhi mora shanti, peyechhi tar porosh chhoae, shundor pothher dorshon.

The poet lets his heart out on the agony of Palestine and the Palestinians in "Halimar laal ball o khat ta kothae?" and "Gaza ekhon gorosthan":

aj ma-shontan ekotre hochhe dafon shei mrittipurite. Filistine kankhito shadhinotar shopno hoechhi ki shesh? ("Gaza ekhon gorosthan")

Zamir is very perceptive about things around him. In "Panthopath --- ononto cholar path" he provides a graphic account of the varied people and various fixtures of that busy thoroughfare. He must have taken several long walks along it. He ends the poem with this observation:

eti Bangladesher boishommer protik, sharokchinno, nidorshon.

His fixation with the evening of life and social and political awareness is expressed in "Nite hobe shopoth abar":

bidae belae, aj mora abar udbigno, ki kore deshe mukto kora jae, oporajiniti, dushito nitihinota, durniti, oposhongskriti, shoshingshota o manobadhikar longhon thheke.

The reader can do much worse than go through Ontorer Chhando.

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Notice
Star Literature will appear every Saturday.

--Editor, Literature and Books Review