

POETRY

Cliché

BIPASHA HAQUE

In poetry's kaleidoscope the clichés are sentiments, philosophy.

Bokulphul, the lamppost pole of the *moholla*, these are susceptible too!

Closed doors or *pukurghat*—be it *shan badhano* or dilapidated —the poets seem to feast on them.

But I see that the land of poetry is quite similar to the land of humans, similar to their petty little life.

In poetry Joydhan's Ma has to make her cautious way after an elongated bath at the pond, the eternal seedling has to penetrate the topsoil to pronounce its rise also peeks in the open sore of remittance,

the floating swollen bull has to get ashore after the cyclone and here the Muse has to make space for the cooked up refugee's plights.

In this kaleidoscope the hawkler has to pack up quickly his handpicked Dhakai saree after an unsuccessful merchandise; while his jawbones grit unto the motion of tying knots of the sack.

The Budhiya Chong and Moinamoti have to become the Bihar of the monks, Ibn Botuta and Xinxiang has to keep



writing travelogue of their walk, at Shaj Jalal's makam pigeons have to peck imported wheat, and an epitaph is to be written in a white-framed black plaque.

Probably the ultimate cliché in poetry's land is its final stanza—where there is no such thing as beginning or end.

Bipasha Haque is a diaspora writer with particular interest in life-the way it is. By profession she is a university teacher.

Overtime

ANANDA AHSAN

The universe is an hourglass
The stars its sand
I stared at it with a smile
The stars glared at me all the while

When the time was over
I tilted it over
And it began all over
As I watched it over

Ananda Ahsan writes poetry. Currently, he is pursuing an MA in English at the University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh.



An Affluent Seagull

JEFFREY BIN ZAID

In an abyss devoid of rules,
You'd find the ultimate chaos
What you'd find is no one's fool,
What it is and will unfold,
Are: affluent seagulls.

Imagine the link
Between money
And the sphinx
It is strength and wisdom
But also cruel and deceit

Why does the bird maintain affluence?
And how does it crave the freedom?
Has the seagull lost its preference?
Or does it require a conference?

The affluent seagull must not fly
The affluent seagull must not spy
The affluent seagull must not buy
The affluent seagull must not lie

The affluent seagull can only cry
And hope that one day it would dry
To dry on the land that it could buy
But too seagull-y to ever try.

Jeffrey Bin Zaid is an aspiring spreader of joy, though his work often speaks differently.

FICTION

A Pair of Red Shoes

MD. SEFATULLAH SAARJIL

The bus was scheduled to depart at 2 pm. It was already ten past two! Everywhere there is a competition of breaking schedule. Sitting on a standstill bus is one of the most boring things. Moreover, the sun was beating down cruelly. One cannot but lose one's temper at this situation. Suddenly I heard some squabbles from the front. A man was arguing with the bus helper over something and tried to get on the bus pushing the helper. He got on the bus saying, "Why won't you take me? I will travel in exchange of money."

The helper retorted, "This is not a local bus. We don't take local passengers!"

"You won't take me? Your father will take me!" said the man angrily. At this, the helper got furious and was locked into a brawl. The Bengalis are experts in calling names. Both of them seemed worthy competitor in that! Suddenly, an elderly man stood up and tried to calm them down. Then I saw the man walking toward me and I realized that the war was over. The man was allowed to travel. And the bus also started moving.

"Is anyone here on this seat?" he said pointing at the empty seat beside me.

I looked at the man. He was dressed shabbily. He wore a faded coloured shirt. I found no interest in talking to him. There were still a lot of unoccupied seats. Why had he chosen to sit beside me?

"If someone takes this seat, I'll go to another seat." He continued. I understood that he was going to spoil my journey. I am laconic in my habits. So it is out of my personality to talk to an unknown man like him. Again, if I started talking to him, he would certainly go on chattering.

"Bhai, I've come to Khulna only for shopping," he started anew. Did I ask him why he had come to Khulna? I was convinced that he was a chatter-box!

"I came here only for buying a pair of shoes- a pair of red shoes," he said.

"Well," I answered for the first time. And it seemed that he had got the key to open his box of stories.

"I live at Faltitaa, Bagerhat. It's about thirty minutes from here. My son, Babul is waiting for me. He has been crying for one month for a pair of red shoes. He stopped eating since this morning. He has warned me that he will never take food if I don't buy a pair of red shoes today. Ha ha ha!"

I looked at him. He had three shopping bags in his hand. So, he had bought many other things besides buying shoes.

"I am a carpenter. Although I am poor, I cannot turn down my son's request." "Well," I said again. I felt no interest to carry on the conversation. Then I said, "Bhai, I will sleep now as I am tired"

Without waiting for his reply, I put my earphones into my ear. Music is the best solution to get away from unwanted conversation.

But soon I actually fell asleep. When I woke up at 4 pm, the bus was at



Bhatiapara. I looked at the seat beside me. It was empty which meant that the man had got down. But to my utter surprise, I found that one of his shopping bags was lying right by my feet. I lifted the bag and found that there was a pair of red shoes. Oh my God! The man had left the shoes! Now how would he pacify his son who was waiting for the shoes? Should I cancel my trip and go to Bagerhat where the man got down? Then I laughed at my foolish earnestness. There are many other things to consider and here I was worrying over a pair of shoes? I was half-way to Dhaka and I was thinking of cancelling my trip for a pair of shoes? How ridiculous! When I got a chance to go to Khulna again, I would search for the man and return the shoes.

Two months later.

I needed to go to my hometown

Khulna to see my ailing grandfather. I took that shopping bag thinking that I would get down in Bagerhat and deliver the bag to the man. I reached Faltitaa, Bagerhat in the afternoon. But I found that it was not easy to find a man without knowing his name. I only knew that he was a carpenter and he had bought a pair of red shoes. If I ask someone if he/she knows a carpenter who bought a pair of red shoes from Khulna, it would surely be considered a silly question. Nevertheless, I found an old man sitting by himself and thought of asking him.

"Uncle, do you know a carpenter living in this village?" I asked.

"There are as many as five carpenters in our village. How can I know who you are looking for?" he retorted.

"Actually, I don't know his name. All I know about him is that he bought a

pair of red shoes from Khulna about two months ago."

"Oh, Faruk misty! Turn left and you will find a pond. His home is right there."

I was really surprised that an unknown person can be found by a pair of shoes! Undoubtedly, there is great camaraderie among the villagers.

I found Faruk's house. But there was no one in the yard. I yelled on top of my voice whether Faruk Bhai was at home. Faruk came out of home. I told him with a smile, "Can you not recognize me? You dropped this bag on the bus two months ago." Then a strange thing happened. A lanky woman came to me running and snatched the bag from me. Taking out the shoes, she began to bawl. I could not understand what was happening. She chided me crying, "Why didn't you bring this bag earlier? O my Babul,

my Babul."

Faruk said, "Bhai, that day I left the bag on bus by mistake. So, I could not show the shoes to my son. I could not make him understand that I had actually bought the shoes, but lost the bag. He grew angry and began to run away from us. We also ran after him to pacify him. But when he was running on the highway, a truck ran over him. I lost my Babul."

Only for a pair of shoes? It was beyond my ability to console the parents who had lost their only child because of a pair of red shoes. What seems trivial to one could be of enormous importance to somebody else. I just stood there, stunned.

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