

অনুবাদ
বাংলা থেকে ইংরেজি
চিলেকোঠার সেন্সাই : তৃতীয় অধ্যায়
আখতারুজ্জামান ইলিয়াস
অনুবাদ: ম্যাথিউ ডি. রিচ



Translation
Bangla to English
Rooftop Soldier : Chapter 3
Akhtaruzzaman Elias
Translated by Matthew D. Rich

Abstract

Chilekothar Sepai is one of the best Bangla novels written by Akhtaruzzaman Elias. It is based on the political and historical consequences of the Agartala's Conspiracy Litigation in 1969. The following write up the English translation of 3rd Chapter of the novel, depicting the details psychological journey of Osman through the turbulent happenings during a strong spontaneous strike just prior to the Independence War of Bangladesh. The excellent narration of the novel makes the reader visualize and feel the pre-independence tension hung around in end of nineteen sixties in Dhaka, when the whole then East Pakistan fulminated against the then tyrannies Ayun Khan. The master novelist, Elias, in this chapter, did not leave the socio-religious aspects of Bengali life, such as, after-death ritual, pre-marriage formality, children playing, family life, personal romance and people observing Ramadan days. The chapter portrays the literally agitating socio-political moves – slogans, picketing, whispering, fire, force, fear, the political talks, the talks of the consequences of the movement against the oppressive rulers, anticipation of bringing out Army to cause massacre and so on at every spot of the then Dhaka.

All the shops are closed on Subhash Bose Avenue and Hemendra Das Road. In the other direction, there are no students at the maktab on the verandah of the mosque. An old man is praying one *rakat* after another all by himself on the verandah. The street is empty of traffic, but there are plenty of people moving about. Osman watches all this from the side of the roof on the front that has the raised wall; as he does, he feels a strain on the sole of his foot on the leg that he has raised slightly. At the end of Thakur Das Lane, there is a confused and tangled mess of electric wires wrapped around the iron post right next to Tota Miya Decorator's. If you get caught in those wires, they will come alive and wrap you up in such a way that you'll never escape their grip. Osman's entire body shivers with goose bumps. No, I need to quickly head to the office.

He runs into Ronju at the stairs, his sister with him; her face is very much like Ronju's. But the color of the girl's skin is more subdued. If it were a gleaming dark it would be better. A week and a half ago or so, one day in the evening over at their place, Osman got a good look at her. But that time he didn't think about all this stuff about the color of her skin. That day Osman left quickly once he heard that Taleb's *kulkbani*¹ was going to happen. Taleb's father, calling as he came down from the verandah above, came right out into the street and grabbed him. "There's a little something I needed to do"--even as these words were emerging from Osman's mouth, Mokbul Hossein grabbed hold of his arm, "You all did so much in my *absence*; take just a bit more trouble today if you could. After *asor*, the *milad*², after the *milad*, we'll see everyone off with

¹ A Muslim ceremony performed four days after a person's death, usually composed of a feast, ritual recitation of the Koran, and visits to the grave of the deceased.

² communal prayer gathering called on special occasions.

*iftar*³. I'm havin' the whole Koran recited, a few of ya'll stay on 'long with 'em *maulvis*. I put together a small arrangement."

When most of the people had left after *iftar*, there was a food arrangement for a few people along with the *maulvis*. Among them, Osman got a *chance* too. On this day, he has the opportunity to see not just Ronju's mother but everyone else too.

Ronju's eldest sister is quite fair, and mute. She came from Narsingdi the day before with her garrulous husband. But that husband of hers, he sure gave everyone some *sarvis* that day. It was because of his non-stop talking that nobody felt the weight of the *milad*--arranged for the *magferat*⁴ of Taleb's soul--pressing down on their chests. When it was time to eat, the two sisters laid out a green shawl on top of the *shatranji*⁵ on the floor and were bringing out from inside--a rice platter, beef curry serving bowl, *half-plate* of fried brinjal, drinking glasses and a jug--right out to the door of the room. The mute girl was not crying however; squinting her big and somewhat sharp eyes, she was looking at everyone in such a way that it was quite difficult to look back at her a second time. Her husband is a foreman at the EPRTC⁶ bus terminal. On the very day Taleb died, you can even say at the very same time, some villagers stopped a State Bus near Betka.⁷ During the strike, there was anyway no reason to let the State Bus run. The people broke the windows of the bus, also damaged the engine. The next day it was this foreman who was sent from the Narsingdi Depot. After fixing the engine and sending the bus back out, the foreman sat down for a few pulls of toddy.⁸ It took two days for the news to reach him. Who is it that knows all this about the ins and outs of the foreman's life? Alauddin. Just yesterday, some workers from Alauddin's party came back to Dhaka with the news about all this trouble over at the Narsingdi bus depot. Yesterday in the afternoon, Osman himself saw the foreman, along with his wife, coming in. As the girl was going up, she saw the landlord on the verandah,

³ breaking of the fast at sundown, usually a communal affair during the month of Ramadan.

⁴ "To beseech Allah for forgiveness"

⁵ A large throw rug or shawl, of varied colors, used to spread on the floor for serving food to many guests.

⁶ East Pakistan Road Transport Corporation

⁷ A union in Munshiganj district, near Dhaka.

⁸ A homemade palm wine.

aimed her eyes in his direction, and threw a bangle at him from her own arm. But the girl's aim was not so good. The gold bangle glanced off the railing and fell into the street, nudging its way close to the gutter's edge. When the *shala*-grief afflicted foreman took a quick break from his weeping to go run below to scoop up the bangle, the mute girl pressed her fair, round-cheeked face firmly into her weeping and wailing mother's chest. After that, Osman saw her again that night when he sat down to eat at their place. Still her anger had not diminished, she kept right on blasting them all with her gaze.

Ronju's dark little sister, by contrast, is safe. On the evening of the *kulkhani*, the eggplant color was prominent on her thin lips. That day Osman had not noticed the difference between her lips and Ronju's. After the *milad* and the Koranic recitation, Alauddin was animatedly telling the tale of the police shooting when that girl came right up to the door with a few plates in her hands; she stopped suddenly to listen to Alauddin's words. Osman was looking at her out of the corner of his eye; in the murky light of the 40 watt bulbs hanging from the room's DC line, the eggplant color of the girl's lips becomes deeper; the girl's sable cheeks quivered faintly from the force of the torrent of words tumbling from Alauddin's mouth in that gravelly voice of his. It could be that some sentence was taking shape inside her mouth. But before that sentence could be expressed, Mokbul Hossein called out, "Ranu, serve the plates."

Today though, Ranu's appearance is not grave in the slightest. Ronju asks, "Do you go to the office when there's a strike?"

Osman replies, "Depends, it depends on what it's like outside. Where are you all going?"

"Just to Baniyanagar. It's her friend's wedding."

"It's not the wedding." Ranu corrects him, "It's the *gaye halud*. We're just gonna go an' meet 'em and come right back."

There's not even a bicycle out in the street. In both directions on the broken and irregular sidewalk, the regular flow of people in Lokkhibazar has stopped, pedestrians are walking in the middle of the street. In the open space at the mouth of the gulley at the entrance of Quaid-e-Azam⁹

⁹ An Urdu-language epithet meaning "leader of the nation" used to show deference to the colonial-era Muslim League leader and first Governor General of independent Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

College, the young kids of the neighborhood have built a wicket out of bricks and are playing cricket with a tennis ball. Everyone is quite focused on the game, but if they catch a whiff of a bicycle or rickshaw in either direction, that's it--right away the bat is pulled back from the approaching ball, and they are off running to let the air out of its tires. The street urchins are the ones responsible for letting them know. The urchins just roam about anyhow--in some places, a group of seven or eight; elsewhere, twenty to twenty-five marching to the orders of five or six students. They shout slogans while they march: "Ayub's rule, Monem's rule--tear it down, tear it down"; " Ayub, Monem, brother, brother--hang 'em high, hang 'em high"; "burn, burn--burn 'em down". Then again, sometimes they mix up the slogans. For example, "Ayub's rule, a tyrant's rule"--and in answer they say, "do not waste, do not waste." Or, "a martyr's blood"--and in reply, they say, "burn 'em down, burn 'em down."

Nearby, if anyone opens their shop, each of those little groups will come running to give the news, "Tall Salam's *jilapi* shop, 'idn't it? 'er's a cycle pa'ts shop right next to it, idn't it? Idn't it? 'at *shala* Boltu 'as opened 'is shop 'e did."

Another says, "'e opened it, 'e did!"

"Ya know, we told 'im to shut it, eh? We told 'im to shut it, we told 'im to..." In his excitement, this hard-laboring servant lady's boy cannot complete his sentence. Another waif saves him, "That shala Boltu, 'e say, 'What strike? I motherfuck this strike!" Hearing this, the boys--bigger in age and by who their fathers are--set off running, bats in hand, to close down the shop. In the meantime, a jeep with its top down arrives from Gobindo Dutta Lane. A few Punjabi, Baluchi, and Bengali soldiers stand in their deep grass-green colored helmets, with their matching machine guns resting on the jeep's railing, their fingers on the trigger; if they pull, they'll wipe these dirty, black urchins out in a second. But these urchins, and the cricket players, disappear in the blink of an eye, into Nandalal Datta Lane. Even further, all the way to Panchbhaighat Lane. They will keep watch over an area that includes the open space used for sports at the intersection of those two alleys, and from there all the way to the Narinda bridge.

When Osman gets to the edge of Victoria Park, he sees EPR¹⁰ jawans outside the park railing on the sidewalk, as well as inside. Helmeted men are jumping down from the lorry parked just next to the park. They are taking their positions the moment they reach the ground. What *heavy preparation!* Osman is itching to plant a nice kick on each one of the *shalas'* faces. His gait though is not straight. He sways. But those palm trees, maybe the offspring of those palm trees, that they had Nawab Abdul Goni plant, from which to hang the mutinous soldiers more than a hundred years ago, perhaps because they could not sleep well with all the people shouting slogans, slowly they yawn. Osman's anger or desire is not able even to cause a small tear in the trees' leaves now fallen amidst the dust in the street. After taking a right and heading up a ways, Osman exchanges glances with a few helmeted EPRs, with their cold, iron faces, standing in front of the Azad Cinema where they have taken up positions. He quickly lowers his eyes. How terrifically cold all of their faces are! Is there anything they cannot do? Wiping all marks of anger and frustration from his own eyes, face, cheeks, lips, even ears, he walks on as though lost in thought. Because of the strike, he didn't go yesterday either. How long will it continue like this? Osman gets along well with his boss. But the boss of his boss, that guy is a sincere devotee of *law, order and discipline*. When he gets close with anyone over there, he whispers, "Those Punjabis have completely destroyed everything. *Bastard race*, they have not even a *minimum consideration* for anyone." But he is not a man to suffer disorder. "What's the point of dancing to the politicians' tune? Were they not in *power*? Was the *quota* for Bengali ministers ever not filled? Nazimuddin, Mohammad Ali, Sohrawardy--Were they not Prime Minister? *Result? Everybody knows.*" After that, he takes a couple drags on his cigarette, and along with the smoke releases a deep sigh and a solution, "*You need proper place in the policy making.* Aside from the officers, who are going to do this? All of those *demagogue politicians*?" Osman's boss hears all of this from his boss, and comes back to his own office and spews it all in Osman's ear. Osman's boss is anyway a Bengali through-and-through. Even though he has his daughter study in an English-medium school, he still teaches her *Rabindra-songeet* at Chayanat. And also, he is not all that upset with the Bengali politicians; rather, whenever he gets the chance, he talks about his long familiarity with

10 East Pakistan Rifles

them. But in order to keep good relations with his *law and order*-devoted boss, he may send a *show cause* order for any employee who is absent. Many of the pedestrians in traffic-free Nobabpur are on their way to the office. Every now and then, suddenly one or another car will juke back and forth with the weight of their “Red Cross” or “Press” credentials. To the left, on the road to Bongshal there is a small crowd; one of the students is giving a speech in front of Manosi Cinema. It is the month of Ramadan, people are spitting so much. Because there are no vehicles out, the spit is spread all over the entire street like great big raindrops. At the end of the potato bazaar, the street kids are playing *dang-guli*, betting with cards made of torn cigarette packets; whenever they see a small procession, they start shouting slogans and join the procession. To the right, at the end of Bamacharon Chakrabarty Road, the shutter on the *paan*¹¹ shop is partly open. The old *paanwala*,¹² pursing his thin lips, applies the *chun*,¹³ the catechu, to the paan, then sprinkles a little *zarda*¹⁴ on it. Because it is the month of Ramadan, a small canopy hangs out front. Seeing spit all over the road, Osman’s body revolts mildly; he thought how nice it would be to go to one of those restaurants covered with a sheet to grab a cup of tea, and then pop that flavored *paan* from the old man’s hand into his mouth. But just as he was starting to the right, the old man pulled down the shutter of his shop with a sliding bang. What happened? A procession is coming from the direction of Bongram.¹⁵ If he waits just a little, he can catch the procession, but he will be very late to the office.

The scene on the street changes where Nobabpur ends. The street suddenly expands, taking on the uncertain and dangerous appearance of a river as it meets the sea. In front of the EPRTC bus terminal, and nudging up against the traffic island, there is a government bus smoldering. It’s very crowded there, but also, many there are walking briskly; at any moment the EPR might come and start firing.

In the office though, there are a lot of people. Did everyone come yesterday too? The elevator is out. Climbing the stairs to the fifth floor,

11 betel leaf

12 paan seller

13 edible lime

14 flavored chewing tobacco

15 Meaning, “forest village”.

in the big room to the right, everyone is sitting in their own chairs, each in front of a silent typewriter, chatting. Some walked here from far away, but from the excitement and exhilaration with which they are describing the street, one would not think that anyone had had any difficulty at all. The mid- to small *sahibs* are heading to their own offices through the middle of this big room. When they watch their shuffling gait--or imagine it--perhaps the clerks sometimes feel excitement, sometimes fond affection for them. But for the big *sahib* today, everyone's hearts are pouring out: big *sahib* did not even wear a suit today! His long-sleeved white shirt, even in this cold, looks a bit grimy, if not from sweat then from moisture. His forehead and cheeks are oily. There is a gap opening up in those great disjointed teeth of his. The big *sahib* stays far inside Dhanmondi. He walked all that way, oh my! He's likely to get really sick!

To come up the stairs and to his office, the *sahib* had to take ten or eleven steps. The small- to mid-range *sahibs* don't want to give up this chance to spend so much time with him. Standing next to the stairs, everyone says, "*slamalekum saar*," practically in chorus.

One of the mid-range *sahibs* comes up to the big room and says, "None of the *fourth class employees* came? We can't get any tea and snacks?"

"Nobody has come *saar*. No one from this section has come."

After the mid-range *sahib* goes off to his office, one of the young clerks says, "Loose pants!" Hearing this, everyone laughs for a long time. Only one person gets annoyed, "These *shalas*, they've gone too far!"

"Who's that?"

"You're asking 'who'? Elevator's down, on top of that, they's run off wit' the key! It's not good, these *peons* and *chaprashis* going so over the top!"

This comment alone was enough to change their topic of conversation. One person says, "Why you only talking about the peons? The rickshaw wallahs, bus conductors, drivers, coolies--Have you seen their sass? (Addressing the absent laborers crudely using *tui*) Come on, what's the benefit to you all if Ayub Khan leaves? You all going to be ministers? Or are you going to come to the office and sit in chairs at the table?"

"No, no, listen. Four, five days ago this *shala* rickshaw wallah, I'm going from the Nobabpur Railgate to Sadarghat. You know how much

he hollered out? He won't go for less than one taka. The fare is not even eight annas; alright *tui*, then take ten annas, or ask for twelve annas. No, you must give a full taka!"¹⁶

"The fare from Railgate to Sadarghat cannot be more than six annas." Getting support from his co-worker, the guy angry about the rickshaw wallah's behavior gets more excited, "Sitting on the seat, foot up resting on the handlebars, this son-of-a-nawab says, 'Not for less than a taka'. These are rough times; otherwise, I'd give him a boot in the ass!"

Sitting on one side of the table in the boss's office, the sound of the clerks talking about wanting to beat the rickshaw wallah can be heard over the hardboard and glass partition. The slight beads of sweat in Osman's boss's mustache glitter like dewdrops in lawn-cut grass. The boss says, "Their *fall* is *inevitable*!" The clerks' or the rickshaw wallahs' (before Osman can be sure about whose downfall is inevitable) the boss says, "You see how *spontaneously* the *pablik*¹⁷ is *reacting*?"

Osman is happy with the boss's comment. To give more force to the boss's words, he says, "*Exactly saar!* But the people are not so much *reacting*. The people have taken *action* this time; the government rather are the ones *reacting--rather cowardly!*" Osman feels good having been able to release this brilliant bit of dialogue. The words of course were Anwar's. Anwar's *political analysis* is very good. The boss however continues with the same line of thought, "This time Ayub Khan must *iyeeeld*. *Things are out of their grip*. Now my fear is of only one thing-- that they bring out the army, and the scoundrels conduct a massacre! There are a few *hawks* in the *cabinet*, and there is a *trigger-happy army*."

Osman shivers with trepidation at the thought of the army being brought out and committing atrocities. He needs to talk with Anwar about this. Even though he is involved with politics, that kid can keep his head cool and talk. His *analysis* is so *convincing*! "But you know something? This time West Pakistan is *involved* too. If something is to be done, it has to be done over there too! Will they be able to carry out *repression* of their own brothers and sisters?" As he is talking, the boss's voice is getting

¹⁶ Taka, the Bengali word for the Indian rupee, was divided into sixteen anna.

¹⁷ An English loan-word used in Bengali with many of the unruly connotations of the word "crowd".



টেলিফোন লেপাই উপন্যাসের রচয়িতা আবদুল আজিজ ইলিয়াস

quieter, he is probably preparing to reveal some state secret; just then the phone rings.

Picking up the receiver, the boss says, "Yea *sar*. *Shamshakun sar*. Then the operators have come *sar*? Good! I am coming *sar*, just a *minute sar*!"

Osman and the others' office is right next to the boss's office. Four of the low-level officers sit there. Among them, Khalilur Rahman is senior. The poor chap—coming up from a clerk to where he is now has taken so long that it's painful-time for him. The telephone in the room sits on his table. Osman picks up the receiver as he is getting up. No, there's no reply, the operators probably came in and immediately

started chitchatting. Annoyed, Osman is about to give up when he hears a woman's voice, "*Number please.*" But he can't remember Anwar's number. Underneath the glass on Khalilur Rahman's table are a whole bunch of visiting cards, a map of East Pakistan, all the different EPIDC factories are marked on the map, and the office PBX telephone extension number. What use is it to look for Anwar's number there? Unbelievable! He calls Anwar practically every day at least once, and look, what is this nonsense today! From the other end comes a thin voice gently urging, "Hello?" Still, nothing comes to mind. Just a few days ago, he had to call the Secretariat for work, the number was written right there in front of him, and yet Osman somehow blurted out their house number, "23 by 2." When the female operator laughed, he realized his mistake, gave her the number and he was saved. But today, nothing the least bit numeric comes within the province of his memory. Without keeping the operator waiting any longer, Osman sets down the receiver. There is a loud clanging noise from the phone, and suddenly Osman is very frightened: What if Ayub Khan does a *crack down*! It is urgent that he talk with Anwar. Who knows what is going to happen! If Khalilur Rahman were here, they could hear news about their village. It was hearing some-or-the-other news about the village that made Khalilur Rahman go home, so it's said. Yeah, there is a terrible disturbance throughout a large area in Jamalpur. The status of Khalilur Rahman's home is good: with his land, livestock, and laborers he is a solvent householder. With what we are hearing, they too might run into trouble. Or if he could have talked to Momtazuddin from the neighboring table, that too would have worked. But that guy, he didn't come today. That leaves Kamal. And Kamal is *so* busy; he is hunched right over writing a letter. Still, Osman says to him, "What's the deal, Kamal-saheb, why do you need to write a letter today? Just go yourself! Is there really going to be any work today?"

After completing the sentence he was writing, Kamal touches his golden-colored pen to his exquisitely trimmed cheek tinged blue by the midnight color of his beard, and says, "That was my *plan* as well. But that area of theirs *is no good*. It is better simply to *avoid* all those *troubled spots*."

"In Dhanmondi, what's the *trouble* there?"

In the meantime, Kamal returned to reading his letter. In one place, he crossed out one word; above it, he put an arrow and wrote something at the top, then, without raising his head said, "In Malibag."



চিলেকোঠার সেশাই উপন্যাসের ইংরেজি অনুবাদক যাবিউ ডি রিচ

Osman is surprised. "Doesn't your, ya know, stay in Dhanmondi?"

"No, that one *collapsed*."

"Meaning?"

"That one is no longer *continuing*. This is another one. Their house is in Malibag. Once you cross the Malibag intersection and go forward

a bit, there is a wide road going towards Khilgaon, it's on that road. It's their own home, *all mosaic*. There is a college there, every day the boys from the college *create* one or another kind of *trouble*. That place is *risky*."

Ah, so this is a new *pick-up* for Kamal. This guy can't live without romance. His loves at the beginning fell away by themselves. Some took off once they got a guy with good *prospects*; some got married. And Kamal too brushed off one of them when he found a more suitable girl. But the problem now is not exactly with the heart but with the lungs. Kamal has slight asthma; in the winter when his lungs get sluggish, and he can't move around freely, the poor guy has a really hard time. Recently, that's why his lovers, once winter arrives, they softly slip away. Yet Kamal can really write a good, pleading love letter, his handwriting is nice. He presses them a bit, takes them out for Chinese. That's why there's not a gap for very long for him. But, before choosing the Malibag girl, he should have thought it through.

"That place is *risky*."

Osman approves Kamal's fear, "Khilgaon, Malibag, Shantinagar-- That *belt* is very *sensitive*. Pretty much every day there's shooting there."

"*Specially slum area*. The rascals have no work to do so daily they bring out their *processions*. As soon as they see a police vehicle, they throw rocks. They going to hold off automatic weapons with rocks? *Stupid!*"

From the other side of the partition, Osman Goni's boss calls out, "Osman Goni-saheb!" It is obvious that his boss has come from his boss's office *charged* with something.

"Oh, sit down. What work is there to do today? Sit." His boss's boss must have greeted him just like this.

"You know something?"

"What?" Osman tries as much as he can to feel interested. Suddenly fear of an attack by the army overtakes him, "Is the army going to do a *crack down*, *saar?*"

"Tsk, no, no! You're talking like a crazy person!" This time the boss shifts in his chair and sits more like a normal person, "Ayub Khan wants to *form a national government*; *after all*, *talented* individual. He can *appreciate the situation*."

“*National government?* Who said?” The matter remained beyond Osman’s grasp. Those who are in power now, are they non-national? Or, *multi-national?*”

“I heard.” The boss will not divulge the source of this top-secret news, “*National government is a must. Even...*”—the boss looks back and forth, then he whispers, “*Even Sheikh Mujib is likely to be included.* If not for the Sheikh, who else will *stop* all this *anarchy?* Haven’t you seen how *rowdy the people* have become from Maulana Bhasani’s *provocations?*” He is forced to stop because of the brief ringing of the telephone. When the boss begins talking to his wife, Osman enters his own office.

The clerks crowd around their superintendents’ tables. The slightly frightened ones whine, “Can we go *saar?* Who knows what’s going to happen when!” Everyone has got endless problems.

“My house *saar*, it’s a full-on hospital. The wife’s throat is swollen, the daughter’s got blood dysentery.”

“Can I go *saar?* There’s a big *gathering* at Bayatul Mukarram, the student *leaders* will speak there. If I don’t get to hear them at the meeting, the rice in my belly sits like a rock, *saar.*” The superintendents each go to their own officers’ rooms.

“Nobody wants to work today *saar*. What should we do?”

“How are we going to work today *saar?* The peons are *practically* all *absent.*”

“*Saar*, what to do with all of ‘em, a big mess i’ tis! [Using *tui* to address the absent peons] Oh yeah, what’s ya’all got to worry ‘bout? If’n you’s die catchin’ a bullet today, tomorrow you’s wife ‘n kids’ll go to the village, grind the rice paddy, work the fields. What’s ya’all got to worry ‘bout?”

“The problem *saar* is for us. The middle class, we get it coming and going.”

“Can I go *saar?* In our *area*, there are some rascal *khocchors*.¹⁸ If they see the police, they’ll stab them. Once the EPR enter, getting into the neighborhood is gonna’ be tough. Can I go *saar?*”

“This problem for the officers is a very complicated one. Telling each of their bosses of their own difficulties, each of them hunches over with the effort.”

¹⁸ A term of abuse meaning “mule”, indicates stupidity.

“My *sister-in-law* is going to London, flight on the *twenty-third*. Still the *formalities* are *incomplete*. But is it possible to get anyone on the phone!”

“My *third* son, *he has become a problem child*. If I’m not at home, he will go out. He got *star marks* in HSC, he got admission in Physics, but the university...”

Another one’s problem is with his wife’s singing-genius, “Married a singer, now I’ve got me a *problem--so sensitive*, at any *noise* she *reacts*, has a *nervous breakdown*.”

The bosses along with their overseers--with the overseers casting their luminousness about the massive table located in office number 1--express their deep consternation with the future of the country and the state.

“If the *chaos, confusion* continues, the *future is very bleak*. Whatever the *politics* may be, *nothing succeeds without discipline*.”

“The *chaos* is even worse in the *remote corners*.”

“Everybody must be *reasonable*. *Anarchy should never be allowed to continue for infinite period*.”

“Now it is necessary for the *government* to look at who can *control* these *unreasonable people*. *He and he should be taken into confidence*.”

When the *sabeb*s return to their own offices, their feet nervously dance beneath their desks. They call the low-level officers and send the word down: there is no need to press anyone, but make sure they all sign the attendance notebook before leaving. Even before this unwritten order reaches the concerned individuals, practically the entire office cleared out. Yet before leaving, every one of them left their signature in the office attendance notebook.