

Sarwar Morshed, *In the Castle of My Mind: An Anthology of Articles*. Dhaka: Academic Press and Publishers Library, 2013. 126 pp. ISBN 978-984-90881-3-4.

In the Castle of My Mind by Sarwar Morshed is largely a collection of articles based on columns that the author wrote regularly for the *daily sun* under the same title, since the paper was first published. Some of the articles in the book were published in other journals/dailies. What strings them together is the passionate response of the author to events that affected Bangladesh in the last two decades. To quote from the text on the dust jacket, “The articles included in this book cover a broad spectrum of issues – from murder to migration, from politics to power games, from language to landscape.” For Morshed, writing is a cathartic process. When he sees something that makes him uneasy, whether it is corrupt politicians, doctors who are concerned only with making money, or some social malaise, he gives voice to it through his writings.

Often the content is political as in “Marie, Marie, Don’t Hold on Tight,” which was written before the non-inclusive 5th January 2014 parliamentary elections. The savage tone used for politicians and their determination to cling to power, seems to be born from the sense of agony about the people of Bangladesh and the state they have been reduced to. Here is one scathing remark on the Bangladeshi political gangland: “As flies are to wanton boys, are the people to the politicians of Bangladesh. The more the suffering for the people, the more sadistic pleasure they reap out of it” (20). In a number of essays in the book, the author attacks Bangladeshi politicians viciously, calling them, “garrulous, querulous and congenially unlovable... like suicide bombers, they seldom see their victims” (14). Strong words which could be used for a number of politicians on this side of the border as well!

The problem of the Rohingyas, who have been living in Arakan for a long time, but are now being hounded by the Government of Mynamar which considers them illegal settlers in their country, has been highlighted by the media all over the world. Morshed’s essay in support of the Rohingyas, gives their problem an international context, comparing them to indentured labourers of Indian origin in countries like Mauritius, Fiji and the West Indies, who have been given full citizenship status in those countries and have often been part of the Government there. This reviewer is not aware of any media (electronic or print) report that has come out in such strong support of the Rohingyas or has given any of these arguments.

What makes *In the Castle of My Mind* an interesting read is that every essay is not serious or has a political axe to grind. Essays like “Confessions of a Ramji-stuff Eater” are delightful. Note books by Ramji Lal are very popular among Indian students. It seems that they are equally popular in Bangladesh,

bringing “incomprehensible English texts” (102) closer to the student, by simplifying them. In a light-hearted manner, the author says that Ramji Lal is “a man imbued with Promethean spirit who had the magnanimity to steal fire for us from the Olympian world of English literature” (102).

One of the essays which this reviewer could particularly relate to, is “My Maiden Overseas Eid.” One can feel very lonely if one is away from home and country during a festival even if one is among friends. Whether it is Eid or Diwali, it does not matter; the context remains the same. The emotional overtone that characterises many of the essays, is part of the subcontinental ethos and should be considered from that angle. *In the Castle of My Mind* is a collection of readable articles, journalistic with a literary flavour. The reader becomes aware of the socio-political situation in Bangladesh through the writings of a sensitive writer, something that does not happen if one only reads the newspapers or watches television.

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