SOUTH DELHI MURDER

Tabish Khair

TABISH KHAIR, a poet, novelist, reviewer, and journalist, is associate professor at the University of Arhus, Denmark. He received his education

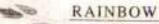
up to MA in Gaya, Bihar. A Ph.D in English from Copenhagen University, he has won the All India Poetry Prize and was made honorary fellow of creative writing of the Baptist University of Hong Kong in 2004. His works include Where Parallel Lines Meet (2000.) Babu Fictions (2001). The Bus Stopped (2004) and Filming (2007). The Bus Stopped was short-listed for the Encore Award. The poem 'South Delhi Murder', from Where Parallel Lines Meet, is an attempt to explore the depths of a common story, of the sort often featured in Indian newspapers. It is 'an attempt to dig under the surface of the mundane and the ordinary'.



- Work in small groups and answer these questions:
- Why are old people compelled to live alone nowadays?
- Do old people feel safe to live in big cities? Why or why not? 2.
- What would you do if you happen to be the first person to have some 3. to know about the occurrence of any accident or crime?

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For three days she took it for spilled red ink Or nail-polish. Then a scab of flies Peeled to hint at the wounds shut Behind that door. Her head buzzed



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As she called the police. Such a sweet boy,

She later gasped to Mrs Guha, a little dense
But smiling and so-sweet, to think he bottle up
In himself the range of 26 stabs, twen – tee – six,
You never can tell with these people, no, not ever.
To which Mrs Guha sadly shook her gold earrings.

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The officer who turned up with two policemen
Also shook his head when told of the old couple
Who had lived in that flat with one serving by y
And presents from guilt-stricken sons in the US.
Having broken the door and located the crime,
He came out holding a large hanky to his nose,
Spat and asked, Nepali boy, no? Bihari Chokkra?

B.1. Answer the following questions briefly:

- 1. Who is 'she' referred to in the poem?
- 2. What did 'she' think for three days?
- 3. Whom did 'she' call and why?
- 4. What did 'she' tell Mrs Guha?
- 5. Who lived with the old couple?

Some clues are so obvious they don't have to be pinned:
The incision of murder is always the outsider's choice.
Someone on the edge of life, driven by ghostly scalpels.

Sometime in the morphia of night when the roads of Delhi
Were white swatches of loneliness and smog, sometime
Three or more nights ago when the occasional truck's
Back lights faded to wavering bandages of yellow,
Sometime in a gauzed silence broken by yapping

Street dogs so-sweet Shyam had crept to the locked
Front door and let his accomplices in Steel rods
Had been used, and knives; the old man clubbed in bed.
His wife surgically stabbed later. A cousin was asked
By the officer to make an inventory of missing items.

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Which was long two TV sets, radio, Banarasi saris



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All the **inherited** silver, jewellery, cash in fact everything Of value except the laptop, which had been left behind In panic or ignorance of its value. *Bihari chokkras*. Scoffed the officer, what do they know of computers. Or alphabets for that matter. It turned out that this time The *chokkra* in question had been filmed, holding Loaded trays in parties, and his address noted. Justice was clinical, sweet Shyam **nabbed** in his village With fifty rupees on him and a sari for his mother.

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B.2. Answer the following questions briefly:

- When was the murder committed?
- 2. Who was accused of committing the murder?
- What were the weapons used for the murder?
- 4. Who made the inventory of missing items?
- Which items were found missing?
- Why did the killers not take away the laptop?
- How was Shyam identified by the police?
- 8. How and when was Shyam nabbed?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

spilled (v): spread to the other areas

scab: a hard layer of dry blood that forms when a cut on your skin is getting better

peeled (v): to suggest about

buzzed (v): humming sound made

gasped (v): taken short breath

incision (n): a cut made into the body with a knife

morphia (n): in a drugged state; powerful drug used for reducing pain

scalpels (n): small sharp knives used by doctors

swatches (n): a small piece of cloth used as an example of a larger piece

smog (n): polluted air, that is a mixture of smoke and fog

gauged (v): measured with accuracy

accomplices (n): who helped in the murder

inventory (n): a list giving the details of all the things in a place

inherited (v): received as heir, got from ancestors

C. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

How could 'she' make out that the murder was committed?

2. What was her opinion about Shyam? Which words or phrases suggest this? Does her opinion change after the murder of the old couple?

3. Whom did the police suspect to have committed the crime? How did they come to the conclusion?

4. How did the police investigate the murder? Was it a proper investigation?

5. How does the poem bring out the predicament of the old people living alone in big cities?

Narrate the poem in your own words.

7. The moment the police officer comes out of the room he asks, Nepali boy, no? Bihari Chokkra?' (lines 16-17). What light does it throw on his attitude?

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups or pairs:

a. Should the old parents be left alone?

b. Law and order should be the priority of the government

C. 3. COMPOSITION

Ex.1. Despite the fact that people from Bihar have excelled in all fields, a negative attitude towards Bihar and Biharis seems to prevail in several other parts of the country. What could be the possible reasons? Write an article in

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about 200 words to be published in your school magazine, suggesting ways to overcome such negative attitude towards Bihar and Biharis.

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D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

Smilling inventory

incison

ghostily alphabates

Ex. 2. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words
 the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

head

present lock

polish

gasp

lock.

D.2. Word-meaning

Ex. 1. Find from the lesson words the meanings of which have been given on the left hand side. The last part of each word is given on the right hand side:

moved along a surface companion or helper through surgical method received as heir sharp barkingept
....lices
....cally

.....ping

Ex. 2. Fill in the blanks with suitable words from the list given below:

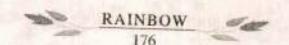
a. The Of the accused man was in doubt.

b. He had knife with a sharp

c. She is a distant of mine.

d. He complately his teacher's suggestions.

e. is an easily portable computer.



D. 4. Phrases

Ex.1. Use the following phrases in sentences of your own, making their meanings clear:

take for turn up turn out come out know of bottle up tell of

E. GRAMMAR

Read the following line from the poem:

For three days she took it for spilled red ink Mark the use of preposition in the given line.

Ex. 1. Fill in the blanks with appropriate prepositions

- He has been working here three years.
- 2. They fell love.
- We met him station.
- The criminals were nabbed the police.
- Gulu has been living here February.

F. Activity

Ex.1. Registers

Choose from the options, given on the right side, the field to which the words listed on the left side are related to:

Words	Options Agriculture Painting Singing	
(i) Wounds bandage gauzed clinical Hospital Incision scalpels morphia surgically		
(ii) accomplice inventory clues murder knives clubbed stabbed nabbed officer	Crime Worship Library Fishing	
(iii) nail polish earrings saris jewellery	Cricket Cookery Court Woman fashion	
(iv) computers radio sets film television sets laptop	Electronics Agriculture Library Film	