

## Short Story

### The Case of The Lower Case Letter

By : Jack Delany

She breezed into my office one cold September morning. I'd been enjoying a hot cup of Starbucks' finest and surfing the web for local news. The famous lexical semanticist Professor Edgar Nettleston had been found dead, a gunshot wound to the head. The police verdict was suicide. She held out an elegant hand as she floated towards me and I glimpsed a wedding band with a stone the size of a peanut M&M. "I'm Edith Nettleston."

"Sorry about the old man."

"I'm not. He loved me, but he loved words more. I'll be brief. My husband was working on a paper that will rock the very foundation of lexical semantics. It's worth a fortune in lecture tours, but nobody can find it. I believe his suicide note is a clue to its whereabouts."

She removed a scrap of paper from her blouse.

*"edit, i'm not going to whine, i've had a good life, i've found wealth and happiness as a teacher, a seller of knowledge, but i find myself depressed beyond hope ... and so i'm choosing the hour and manner of my own demise, i have treated you badly, i demanded you dyed your brown curls blonde, i thought i could buy you when i should have won your love, i called you a witch, i'd complain: where's the woman i married? i said you ate too much, if i wanted change, i could have used a carrot rather than a stick, you probably wanted to wring my neck, forgive me, farewell."*

"It's all written in lower case. My husband was a stickler for correct grammar. I refuse to believe it doesn't mean something."

"Mrs. Nettleston, I think I can help you. There's a couple of odd things about this letter. Firstly, as you say, it's written entirely in lower case. Mr. Nettleston was a

world-renowned lexical semanticist, not a teenager texting his BFFs."

"Secondly, it has a more than usual number of homophones, words where there is another word with the same sound but different spelling and meaning. When dealing with a lexical semanticist, that's surely no accident."

"If we read those homophones in order, we have: whine, seller, hour, manner. And translating to their homophones: Wine cellar our manor."

Several hours later, we arrived at the Nettlestons' country house and immediately headed for the basement. A flip of a light switch revealed tunnels filled with rows of dark bottles.

"Where is it? It would take years to search this place."

"Not so fast, Mrs. Nettleston. First I have to ask you something: your wedding ring diamond, how large is it?"

"It's eight carats. Edgar wouldn't stop talking about it."

"That's what I feared." I pulled out my trusty revolver. "How you must have hated him and his lexical semantics! You figured you'd kill him and keep the money from the paper yourself. You forced him to write that suicide note, thinking you knew where it was. But he was suspicious and he'd already hidden it. And he had another surprise for you: the rest of the note, it doesn't reveal where the paper is, it reveals his killer. The final homophones: dyed buy won witch where's ate carrot wring. That is: died by one which wears eight carat ring."

As the cops left with Mrs. Nettleston I took a quick trip round the maze of tunnels. It didn't take me long to find it. Most of the wine lay unpacked on racks but in one corner two cases sat stacked, one on top of each other. Carefully, I opened the lower one.

#### PRESS RELEASE

Dated/ Imphal, the 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

It is hereby informed to all concerned that the old street lamp posts from Moirangkhom Bazar to MU Gate will be dismantled from 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 onwards. Therefore, all concerned cable providers/VIP lines using the posts in this section are requested to remove their wires/cables within a week's time to avoid any possible damage. Inconvenience caused is highly regretted.

Sd/-  
(Th. Jibonkumar Singh)  
Deputy General Manager  
Imphal Electrical Division No. III,  
MSPDCL

#### PUBLIC INFORMATION

5th March 2016, Khuman Lampak

It is notified for the general information of the public that 33/11 KV Mantripukhri Sub-Station will be shut down on 06/03/2016 from 8.00 A.M to 3.00 P.M for maintenance of 11 KV panels. So, there will be no electricity in the areas fed by Mantripukhri Feeder-II and STPI Feeder. Inconvenience caused is regretted.

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## Peddling simplistic ideas of nationalism

*The media is trying to redefine and appropriate definitions for concepts like nationalism under a propaganda-induced context. Ananthakrishnan says we should shut out the media and introspect*

For the past few weeks, India has been burning. The nation came to know through Arnab Goswami and Zee TV about the "traitors" that betrayed the nation by organising a meeting at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. Not a secret meeting, but a public one. Everywhere, there are protests condemning the actions of the students who organised the event. The JNU student union president, Kanhaiya Kumar, is in police custody on charges of sedition. We can see different instances in the media and on social networks like Facebook of numerous emotional posts on our jawans and army personnel being 'shared' and 'liked' as a gesture of solidarity towards the nation state and thereby condemning the 'anti-national' acts of the JNU students. So Goswami allies with his frequent studio guest, retired army officer GD Bakshi, to romanticize the idea of the army's sacrifice for their nation and express their disgust at how people like Kumar are disgracing the army by organising events that supposedly support a terrorist like Afzal Guru. It is very convenient and easy for any journalist or media house to portray the whole situation in JNU as a clear black and white demarcation of Sedition vs Nationalism. As rational citizens, if we try to question things more deeply, we understand that patriotism and nationalism are two different things that should not be confused as one. This is very important in the Indian context.

Nationalism is when we, as citizens of our nation, share a common feeling of belonging and an organized sense of imagined community through the definition of a geographical and cultural space. In India, which has a hundred different cultures and languages, the common perspective of nationalism can't be applied that easily, simply because we are all different in our approach towards nationalism. First, we have a layer of regional identity which is in itself a sort of nationalism - a Bengali, a Marathi, a Keralite, a Rajasthani etc. Then, as we peel this off, we move closer towards the idea of being 'Indian'. But peripherally we might deny this fact and say that we are all Indians. Then why do we have so many parties in our country? Then they have sub parties. And then we have religious political parties. If we are so united in our allegiance towards our nation, the nation should come first for us, even before our religion. But that is not the case in India. So why are we fooling ourselves by labelling ourselves "nationalists"? We are not. We are a dispersed group of identities struggling to survive together in a geographical space that we call India. We are desperately trying to make sense of what we really are and so, when there are sharp and uncomfortable questions on these popular concepts of nationalism that we foster, why should we become so intolerant, violent or abusive about it? It's high time for us to turn away

from the media, sit down and think hard. What have these students from JNU really done? Why would they want to speak against India? Why would they go to such an extent? Is it really something against India? Or is just one side of the argument that we haven't heard through the media or popular culture? Why have we forgotten the north east? Why have we forgotten Kashmir? Why have we forgotten Babri? Why have we forgotten the Bombay riots? Why have we forgotten Godhra? "Both these elements of armed resistance and academic discourse are equally important to the well-being of a nation. They should not be compared and if we do compare them, we are doing injustice to the purpose of their existence." Are all these the glowing souvenirs of a nationalistic nation? How can we call ourselves nationalists when we divide ourselves and murder each other on the basis of caste and religion? Comparing the army with the students of JNU or anyone who questions the working of a nation (as two TV channels have done) is not the right way. The army has nothing to do with this. They are safeguarding our nation because we have to protect our geographical space and the army is always driven by a feeling of patriotism (a strong admiration for one's nation and its socio-cultural spaces). This is entirely different from students organising an event inside a campus, which is an academic space created for multi-faceted debates and discussions, to discuss

the issues of judicial killings or AFSPA or any such laws which are against basic human rights. Both these elements of armed resistance and academic discourse are equally important to the well-being of a nation. They should not be compared and if we do compare them, we are doing injustice to the purpose of their existence. If some citizens of India don't feel as though they are being treated like Indian citizens, why can't they question it? Why can't they raise their voice against it? And if they do raise their voice, why will they become anti-national? Kashmir is part of our nation. So is Manipur and all the north eastern states. When we really start to accept that fact and treat them with mutual respect and love and provide them with equal human rights, only then we can call ourselves nationalists. Until then we are a dispersed group living in sheer chaos, trying to make sense of our identity by creating "the other". The media is trying to redefine and appropriate definitions for concepts like nationalism under a propaganda-induced context. This tendency is highly repressive for a country seeking to be the largest democracy in the world. So, next time when we see a prime time news debate on any channel, be sure to introspect and initiate a rational line of thought rather than fall into the dark pits of reductionism and intolerance. (Ananthakrishnan is a PhD Scholar at Pondicherry University.) Courtesy The Hoot

### National & International News

#### Know why Jhanvi Behal challenged Kanhaiya Kumar to debate on PM Modi

**Agency**  
**New Delhi, March 6:** A teenaged girl from Punjab, who was honoured on Republic Day for her contribution to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, has publicly challenged Jawaharlal Nehru University student union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar for an open debate on Prime Minister Modi and his government. According to Jhanvi Behal, she was inspired to challenge the JNUSU president as she felt that the speech Kanhaiya gave after his release from the jail, targeting PM Modi and his government, was completely wrong and untrue.

Jhanvi not only asked Kanhaiya Kumar to meet her 'whenever' and 'wherever' for an open debate on issue but at the same time, also gave him a piece of advice. "Whatever Kanhaiya ji said against PM Modi is completely wrong and unacceptable. It would have been better if he had spoken against those 'Deshdrohis' who raised anti-national slogans rather than PM Modi," ANI quoted Behal as saying. This is not the first time the girl has made a headline. Jhanvi Behal, currently trending on Twitter, is a 15-year-old girl from Ludhiana, Punjab. She has been known not

just in her hometown but in the entire country, for her involvement in social work since 2010. In the past, she has worked to raise awareness about several issues, including female foeticide and has also been involved with Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, for which she received a letter of appreciation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She was involved in conducting a sting operation on a liquor and tobacco store, which had been selling alcohol and tobacco products to under age kids. Her effort led to filing of an FIR against several such stores. Recently, she had filed a writ in

Punjab and Haryana High Court against adult movies and porn content on social networking sites. Interestingly, she had appeared in the court in her school uniform during the hearing. The court had pronounced the verdict in the case in her favour. She has also taken the matter of road blockage by various organisations and the traffic snarls that they result in, to court. She considers Mother Teresa as her source of inspiration for working for the betterment of society. She is also an active member of an NGO Raksha Jyoti Foundation.

#### Four more banks get Myanmar licence

**AFP**  
**Yangon, March 6:** Four more foreign banks have been given preliminary approval to operate in Myanmar, state media reported Sunday (Mar 6), the latest government attempt to attract overseas investment to the emergent nation. Myanmar's banking system was closed for decades to outside competition under junta rule, leaving the country laden with a creaking financial infrastructure and a populace deeply suspicious of banks. But that has slowly begun to change since outright military rule gave way to a reformist government in 2011 that paved the way for last November's landmark elections. The four new banks that have been given initial approval are Vietnam's Bank for Investment and Development, Taiwan's E.SUN Commercial Bank, South Korea's Shinhan Bank and the State Bank of India, the Global New Light of Myanmar said, quoting the Central Bank of Myanmar. A total of 13 foreign banks have now been given permission to operate inside the Southeast Asian nation. Most are still in the process of meeting regulations before opening branches but some are already up and running. In April last year, Japan's Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ (BTMU) became the

first foreign bank in decades to open a branch inside Myanmar. Among other banks that have opened branches are Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) as well as Singapore's Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC). Most of the foreign banks who have applied for licences hail from the Asia-Pacific region. Myanmar's military rulers nationalised all banks when they seized power in 1962 as they embarked on socialist policies that would send the economy into precipitous decline for nearly half a century. Local people remain

reluctant to embrace the banking system and many deal only in cash. Authorities have implemented sweeping political and economic changes in recent years that have seen most Western sanctions lifted, opening up the country to new streams of international investment. Both the outgoing military-backed government and Aung San Suu Kyi's incoming National League for Democracy have vowed to increase capital flows to local businesses and to spur investment. The World Bank has said firms cite access to finance as the main obstacle to doing business in Myanmar.

#### Security stepped up at Kolkata airport after threat mail

**PTI**  
**Kolkata, March 6:** Kolkata's NSC Bose International Airport was put under heightened security on Sunday after an email threat that it will be blown up within 24 hours, officials said. The mail came in the airport manager's email ID and it was claimed to have been sent from Germany. While the cyber crime team of the airport is checking the veracity of the content of the mail, security agencies have stepped up vigil in and around the airport. Luggages and cars of passengers are being thoroughly checked while various parts of the airport are being scanned.

#### Ex CBI Director, Joginder Singh Interacts with the Students of Aryans

**Mohali, March 6:** Former CBI director and Retired IPS officer Joginder Singh spends his whole day with the Students of Aryans at Aryans Group of Colleges, Chandigarh. On this occasion Joginder Singh interacted with the students on various topics of Society, Education, and Political System of India. Dr. Anshu Kataria, Chairman, Aryans Group of Colleges was also present at the moment. While sharing his life experiences with Students, Joginder Singh told students that when he joined as director CBI, lots of challenges were there in front him. He said, "I

investigated each case with honesty and intelligence without any fear." He shared his sorrow with students, that during his tenure some leaders of present ruling party of India were not happy with him. Talking students in light mood he says, "I was also not that much brilliant student during my early days of study. But later on I scored highest marks with my determination and courage to become something in life." He gave references to the students of Aryans Group of Colleges from his various books. He urged Students to Join Service like CBI and Intelligence.

"Today's youth have broad vision and having great understanding about the political system and politicians." He added. While addressing the students Dr. Anshu Kataria, Chairman, Aryans Group of Colleges informed that Sh. Joginder Singh visited many times before also in Aryans Campus. He appealed the students to take advantage from the life experiences from this great personality. It is pertinent that Retired IPS officer Joginder Singh was very famous during his term as CBI Director for his Hardcore Investigations.