

STAR YOUTH MEETS | EPISODE 1 |



Brahmo Samaj



Beauty Boarding



Northbrook Hall and Library

Strolling around in OLD DHAKA

WRITERS: MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE, SADIA TAHSIN, RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA AND SHABABA IQBAL



Sadarghat

PHOTOS: PIYAS BISWAS & SHAMS ASIF

The team of *Star Youth*, *The Daily Star*, recently went on a tour to Old Dhaka, as a part of our monthly initiative, 'Star Youth Meets'. Here, some of us recount our experiences.

Even with all the hustle and bustle, Old Dhaka is majestic and unique in its own way. You can come across ancient architecture in the most unlikely of places in the area. Being in places that are hundreds of years old, gives one a sense of our history and our cultural heritage.

After meeting at the famous Bahadur Shah Park, we began our day tour in Brahmo Samaj, where the inhabitants are not bound by any one religion. No wonder, everything about the place was imbued with peace. Our guide informed us how this place calls for its visitors to leave their religions and beliefs outside the gate and pay respect to everyone's values during their stay in the area. This society which Raja Ram Mohan Roy established centuries ago with the hope to end religious barriers, is still a part of people's lives.

Next, we headed for breakfast at the iconic Café Corner, which is believed to be the first coffee shop of Old Dhaka. For Sadia, this

turned out to be a hilarious experience. She spent a great deal of time giving unsolicited advice to a busy server, explaining the differences between mumlet, omelet, and poached eggs, which he happily listened to. While she was busy prattling with her colleagues, the server took away her plate, full of unfinished food as she helplessly screeched, demanding her plate back, after which our whole team burst out laughing because he took it only to give her more *luchi* and *daal*.

After a light breakfast and some tea, we walked onto our next destination, the Northbrook Hall and Library, but unfortunately, we were not allowed to enter the building due to poor infrastructural support.

While walking around, we came across a temple preparing for the Saraswati Puja. Directly after, we went to another temple, which once had a school for the mute, right next to it.

Next, we went to Sadarghat through Shyambazar, experiencing

through Shyambazar, experiencing the chaos amidst the shops of vegetables and fruits. Sadargat is known to be built during the Mughal Em-

pire in the 17th century. Sadly, we couldn't fully appreciate the aura of the place, as the Buriganga River is in a disastrous state due to plastic pollution. Ignoring the rotten smell and the sight of water-bottles flashing up, we took a brief boat ride, which was quite fun.

Our next stop was Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts (BAFA), the renowned cultural institute dated back to 1955. The colourful paintings on the walls of the building and the intricate stained wooden staircase imparted a splendour to the separate place. The historian's architectural truly ic

enthralled us. With such grand architecture, the school keeps on its legacy. We used the school's musical instruments and had a mini-concert of our own during our visit, as the students had not arrived yet.

Later, we covered Ahsan Manzil, the official residence of the *Nawabs* of Dhaka. A walk through the museum inside the palace provides a sneak peek into the glorious life of the *Nawabs*. The majestic museum and the building itself portrays the age-old legacy of Dhaka's founding fathers and their ways of life.

Our last stop, Beauty Boarding, was a place we had all read and heard about many times. Located close to Bangla Bazar, the book hub of Dhaka, it is known that

poets, writers, often come to Beauty Boarding for *adda*. The boarding house is open for lodgers and the place is famous for the food they serve. This tour served as a condensed course in discovering

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the customs, people and places of Old Dhaka for us and it will stay with us for a long time.

There is a sense of antiquity in the air which gives Old Dhaka its special vibe. Be it the lively atmosphere, vivacious people or streets dotted with food corners, it is definitely a place to fall in love with.



The Star Youth team at Ahsan Manzil.