

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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ONLINE CLASSES: ARE THEY
DOING IT RIGHT?

PG 3

MONSUR
PG 7



A NEW RAMADAN



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

EDITORIAL

A couple days from now and the holy month of Ramadan will be upon us. True, this month has a special meaning in our lives, no matter which faith we belong to. It goes without mention that this year Ramadan comes at a time when our lives have been structured differently already. We are home, and on top of our “stay home” regulations, the discipline of sehri, iftar and additional prayers will come into practice.

Sure, we will miss out on a lot. How Ramadan changes a city, the cries of vendors and aroma of fried goodness on the streets, the late-night Eid shopping trips, sehri outings and iftar parties — the list goes on. This time though, things will be different, and we will adapt. And through it all, perhaps, we will find a deeper meaning of life and be able to strengthen our faiths.

If nothing else, I invite you to an online iftaar party.

-- Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MOVIE REVIEW



Of *Extraction* and Yellow Filters

ADHORA AHMED

If you’ve been spending most of your days scrolling through Facebook, like most of us nowadays, chances are you have come across memes regarding the trailer of a Netflix movie called *Extraction*, which stars Chris Hemsworth and releases on April 24. Since it is partly set in Bangladesh, the action thriller has instantly gained a local audience. However, the trailer has also raised a question: *why does Dhaka look so yellow?*

One possible reason behind the use of a sickly shade of yellow to depict Dhaka is to increase discomfort and heighten tension. As *Extraction’s* trailer promises suspense, using yellow filters seems like a logical choice. Yet, there are plenty of action-packed, adrenaline-fuelling blockbusters that make do without relying on jaundiced hues. Then again, in *Breaking Bad*, the scenes shot in Mexico are doused in yellow. A similar trend can be seen in Hollywood films and TV shows set in the rest of Latin America, Middle East, Africa and the Indian subcontinent. These regions have one thing in common: “first-world” countries refer to these countries as “third-world” countries. Hence, yellow might be interpreted to represent poverty.

The movies set in these places, typically action-based, also follow other clichés. The protagonist, usually a white male, is sent on a mission to a foreign land to bust drug cartels or terrorist organisations, depending on his location. These movies always end with the hero defeating local delinquents and saving the general public, which is a fundamental

trait of the white saviour trope. *Extraction* is no different; Chris Hemsworth’s character is on a mission to rescue an Indian or Bangladeshi boy.

Furthermore, other colonial undertones enhance the foreignness of the protagonist’s overcrowded and squalid surroundings. He is only fluent in English, or at most knows common phrases in the local language. Much to the hero’s confusion, in some cases frustration because they don’t know his language, most of the natives jabber incomprehensibly in their own tongue. This implies that the locals possess less intellect than him, except a few one-dimensional characters who know English and are therefore more refined. The overall picture is not very flattering, and conveys that these places and people are uncouth and unwelcoming.

The portrayal of third-world countries in Hollywood has always been formulaic, thus helping perpetuate negative stereotypes in Western media. This narrow mindset overlooks the dynamics of these cultures and the complexities of the lives of these people. Even though these trends might not end soon, active conversation addressing such issues can help overcome stereotypes and debunk myths. Additionally, films and other visual media from developing countries can provide a more authentic portrayal of their cultures, thus aiding in broadening one’s perspective.

Adhora Ahmed daydreams too much. Send her reality checks at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com



ONLINE CLASSES: *Are they doing it right?*

MOMOTAZ RAHMAN MEGHA

Almost a month into the coronavirus pandemic and academic institutions are yet to find a consistent way to deal with the situation. While some universities have decided to suspend academic activities altogether, others have taken a more tech-based approach by conducting classes online through platforms like Google Meet, Zoom or Discord. However, the opinion regarding such measures is very scattered.

After talking to students from multiple institutions, it's clear that many are against the idea. Their main argument against online classes is also one of the biggest problems that most developing countries face — lack of a stable internet connection. Even if they are able to attend the classes, the experience is highly inefficient because they have difficulties following the lecture as the network breaks down every now and then and they are not able to properly communicate with the teachers. This problem gets worse when it comes to students who have gone to visit their families in rural areas. While the whole purpose of education is to close the class division and increasing accessibility, online classes may end up furthering that gap.

Due to the nature of this article and what students had to say, the names have been changed to protect the students' identities, and marked with asterisks.

Urmila Das*, a third-year Architecture student at Brac University (BRACU) says, "While we had online classes the first few days, our university understood that it is not really feasible and accessible to many students and since the purpose of these classes is for all of us to learn, we do not have online classes anymore and I think this is something that other institutions should do as well."

Students have also argued that conducting online classes discourages class participation because doing class work becomes a privilege that only people who have laptops or computers can afford. In the current situation, people are neither able to access cyber cafes or are able to get their computers fixed if there is a malfunction. Not to

mention that a lot of the students might not even own personal computers. A lot of them also argue that they shouldn't have to worry about such things given these are facilities that they paid for when they paid their tuition fees.

Alvi Ananya*, a final-year Marketing student at BRACU says, "I do not think that the quality of online classes are the same as in-person classes. They are less engaging than normal classes. Moreover, given the fact that we are not using a lot of the services that we paid for like electricity,



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

students deserve partial refund on their tuition fees."

The topic that probably generates the most amount of outrage among students is conducting online exams, quizzes, presentations or any sort of graded activity through online platforms.

Anika Ahmed*, a third-year Marketing student at North South University (NSU) says, "I sat for a midterm last week. Our faculty gave us exactly an hour to turn in our scripts via Google Classroom. I constantly kept thinking what if my internet stops working? What if there is no electricity? And I am one of the more privileged ones

who have access to Wi-Fi and a laptop. I am also very confused as to what will happen to my grades this semester. One day we see that there is a notice regarding the cancellation of all online exams and the next day we find another email asking us to sit for a quiz or presentation."

Some students, especially from the engineering background, have concerns regarding the way in which they are being taught in the online classes.

Priyom Khan*, a third-year Computer Science and Engineering student from NSU

for presentations when people are dying every day. I find it to be mentally pressurising and unnecessary to have classes and presentations at this time."

However, it is not all that bad. Many students also show support for online classes but with some added changes. Tabassum Rahman*, a third-year student from Management from NSU says that online classes should most definitely continue because she does not want her semester to be extended for a long time but she argues that the classes should always be recorded and teachers should avoid taking exams.

Faculty members, on the other hand, find the idea of online classes to be one that is a step in the positive direction. When asked about this, Omar Nasif Abdullah, Lecturer and Assistant Proctor at NSU said, "While there are bad aspects of online classes, the good aspect of online connectivity is that it doesn't require much logistics. It has the effect where concerned parties can communicate right away, provided they have means to do so — a smartphone with functioning internet. It has been proven great at a time when physical distancing is must. Online classes have a 'democratic' aspect where students who otherwise wouldn't participate in a conversation because of their introverted nature are willing to chip in because the anxiety associated with embarrassments is much less in an online environment."

Many institutions like Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) have responded to some of the concerns in creative ways. Yasin Shafi, Lecturer at BUP, told us that the university has been helping students by buying mobile internet packages for them so they do not have to go outside.

In practical terms, online classes may actually become a regular thing given how the situation has been unfolding. It's important to get it right, and make sure no group of students are being left behind in the process.

Megha Rahman has considered giving up on education. Let her know your thoughts at megharahman26@gmail.com



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A NEW RAMADAN

The most significant month on the Muslim calendar is upon us, but it comes at a time when the entire world is having to fight through the Covid-19 pandemic. Since social distancing and other necessary restrictions are being governed all across the globe to prevent the spread of the disease, we must come up with ways through which we can observe Ramadan safely. We must also bring certain changes to some of our existing Ramadan habits in order to make the most of this time, help ourselves, as well as those around us.

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ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAH

HIYA ISLAM & FAISAL BIN IQBAL

Covid-19 continues to haunt our daily lives. Different events and mass gatherings are either cancelled or have been postponed indefinitely due to the high risk posed by the coronavirus. The same, however, cannot be done in the case of the month of Ramadan, which is why we must take necessary measures and precautions as we enter the holy month.

But where do we start, and just how do we bring ourselves into accepting that Ramadan will not be the same this year?

A RATHER SILENT SEHRI?

Sehri during this Ramadan might feel empty to us as the *musaharati* (individual/s who walk around a community and call to wake the residents up in time for sehri) will be confined to their homes due to the lockdown. We, therefore, have to rely on our alarm clocks or family members to wake us up on time for sehri. Or, if the *musaharati* wants, and people allow it and even decide to join in, they can get a bit innovative and wake us up by calling aloud from their windows and balconies. Each of them will do their part from the safety of their own houses, and the localities will echo with their voices calling out to us for sehri, just like any other Ramadan.

QUARANTINE DOES NOT JUSTIFY IDLING

Just because you'll be spending your Ramadan indoors doesn't mean that you can wake up late, and stay in bed all day. We should not let free time and leisure ruin the essence of Ramadan. Watching television series and sleeping away the day until Maghrib is not the way to go. Instead, you could read religious texts, practice supplications, and say your prayers. Encourage others to do the same. It is the one time of the year we have a chance to form a deeper bond with our faith, so make the best use of it. Step out of the room once in a while and spend some time with the family. Engage yourself in some new recipes and lend a hand in the kitchen. If it were an ordinary Ramadan, perhaps you'd still be



Improvise. Adapt. Overcome. Who's to say you can't have an online iftar party?

at work or busy in some other way. Do whatever you can to help, and remember, idleness is not part of the Ramadan spirit.

GOING OUTSIDE ONLY IF YOU MUST

Step outdoors only for supplies or emergencies. If you are going out for supplies, you should consider purchasing in such quantities that would last you a week or more. The idea is to limit the number of trips you make outside your house. Be sure to put on your face mask, gloves, and any other form of personal protection gear you might have when you go outside.

EID SHOPPING ON HOLD

Shopping malls are all closed till further notice, and there's no way for you to go outside on a shopping spree till midnight. Hence, you're going to have to skip the usual Eid shopping for the time being. If you're really in need of something, you could consider getting it delivered to your place, depending on the availability of the item as well as delivery personnel. In addition, why not get in touch with your tailor? Their profession has been knocked hard in this pandemic, and so this Eid will count as a season of loss for them. Maybe you could lend a helping hand out for charity, and bring a smile to their faces. With the way things are looking, this Eid too will be very different than others.

IFTAR AND SEHRI DEALS ARE OFF THE TABLE

Iftar bazaars, such as those in Purnan Dhaka are totally out of the scene. Thus, many won't be feasting exactly in the way they are used to. No jilapi or haleem for that matter, unless you know

how to make them at home. This brings us to the fun iftar parties at our favourite restaurants and the super-combo-mega-awesome-all you can eat deals that follow. Sadly, this won't be possible by any means. Perhaps this time, you can try an online iftar party instead where you and your friends sit in front of the computer and have iftar together virtually on Discord, Messenger, or Zoom — a safe yet social gathering. Similarly, sehri will also be restricted to the confines of our home. Yes, we all will be missing the popular Nando's sehri offers and the crowds at biryani places of the old town. Nonetheless, we can still stick to fancy food made at home. A little effort will go a long way. If you plan on ordering something from any restaurant, make an inquiry at least a day before to see if they can fit your order into their schedule.

A LACK OF NEW PRE-IFTAR TV SHOWS

Newly produced television shows are likely to be scarce. If we're lucky, we might be able to binge on a handful of shows that met completion before the closure. As we sit to watch special iftar cooking shows with the family in the hours before Maghrib, these might ring a bell; expect a lot of reruns, probably from last year or the years before.

PRAYING INDOORS

As far as *taraweeh* prayers go, there's really no way these prayers can be performed in congregation at mosques while maintaining social distancing. The most plausible idea may just be to do this at home. It's possible that religious leaders might opt for digital delivery

of live prayers or such sessions via live broadcasting. This way we all get to pray safely alone yet together.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR FAMILY

It has been over a month since we adopted the "stay home" lifestyle, and ever since then, people are having to spend more time with their family members and loved ones than ever before. Hence, it can be assumed that you are already working on your inter-family bonding skills. In case you are not, or think you can do better at it, Ramadan is the perfect time to do so. Have sehri and iftar together, help them out with the chores, and just talk to them about everything and more. Take this opportunity to connect with them in a way perhaps you usually don't in your busy lives.

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Don't let the shutdown come between your friendships, especially during Ramadan. As the emergency period keeps getting extended, it's easy to get frustrated. Under such circumstances, talking to your friends will help you get over this frustration, even if it's to a minimum extent. Give them a call, chat with them, or as suggested, have an online iftar party with them. Encourage each other to get through these difficult times, and whatever you do, don't lose your patience. After all, that's one of the many teachings of Ramadan.

HELPING THE LESS FORTUNATE

The Covid-19 crisis has taken a huge toll on the country's economy, and the people living below the poverty line are the ones who've been hit the hardest. As if life hadn't already been difficult

for them, the pandemic has made it unbearable. The responsibility now falls on those with the means to help them get through these difficult times, and what better time to do so than Ramadan, where giving to the poor, and helping those in need is a sacred duty. Help whoever you can with money or ration. Avoid giving items like clothes, unless it is a specific requirement. Give, and encourage others to do the same. Given the food crisis the pandemic has brought about in the country among impoverished communities, we should make sure that donations reach those in need without causing any trouble or mismanagement in the way.

As we continue to fight and contain the coronavirus, we must simultaneously give our best effort to adjust to this new normal. This means we need to let go of certain habits and make room for new ones, keeping safety as our first priority. We must also engage in humanitarian work, now more than ever, if we're to have any chance of surviving this pandemic as a population.

Ramadan will be different this year — there is no doubt about it. However, if we can take the lessons of this holy month and realise the spirit of it, we might start to see the better of days to come.

Hiya is currently struggling to reach her book-reading goals. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com

Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To survive university is his real test, to graduate is his cause. Send him memes and motivation at abir.afc@gmail.com

Facebook's "coronavirus problem"



Like



Love



Haha



OMG!



Wow



Sad



Angry

OSAMAN BIN AHMED

Facebook, instead of being the great connector of humans across borders and distances, is more often a hub of controversies. With a "misinformation outbreak" accompanying the Covid-19 pandemic, Facebook has now become a perfect mish-mash of facts and misinformation. The way Facebook tackles this problem should be dissected and examined to see what it gets wrong.

How Facebook's digital inspectors failed
 With such a large flow of data through its servers, Facebook uses artificial intelligence (AI) to flag posts as spam, inappropriate, etc. Suffice it to say, AI is not perfect. The problem becomes even worse as Facebook's human moderators are on home lockdown and cannot work at their usual efficiency.

The spread of misinformation has been so widespread and the data traffic being so much that even Facebook's tech has failed. The result was the activation of a kill-switch that deleted most Covid-19 posts- factual and misleading. This created an information vacuum.

The problem was supposedly "fixed", yet I found a couple of posts on my news feed regarding Covid-19 hoaxes. Many private Facebook groups have been formed with an invite-only entry where Facebook puts little to no inspection. The problem has certainly gone out of control and to a point where leaders and experts are urging Facebook's users to stop sharing false information.

Facebook's WhatsApp — a trend continued
 WhatsApp, one of Facebook's acquired ventures, does not have a good track record

either. In this scenario, one of WhatsApp's strengths becomes its weakness. WhatsApp boasts its end-to-end message encryption between users where a third party cannot view the messages. Facebook brings this up as one of the reasons for not being able to filter messages. The problem becomes even more difficult as some messages (hoaxes) are not shared from pages, but are rather organic and composed from the user itself. WhatsApp has appointed employees for policing within large groups and also has a dedicated chat to provide correct information to its users. Its effectiveness is yet to be seen.

Conspiracy theorists on Facebook
 Facebook has done little on moderating posts from "online Sherlocks". You will see one-page long analyses almost every day on your news feed. Whether this is fake news

or not is just another discussion but it is something based on pure speculation and lack of evidence.

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Osaman loves thinking about psychology, tech, and loves playing games. To provide feedback and have a small discussion over a hypothetical cup of tea, mail him at osamanbinahmed@gmail.com

The Pressure to be Productive

AAHIR MRITTIKA

Recently, a post went viral on Facebook that claimed something along the lines of "If you aren't learning something new right now, time was never the problem, you are."

Parents are raising hell as their kids run on different time zones, teachers are urging students to finish up inhumane amounts of assignments, and the internet is filling up with more "things to do during quarantine" articles than the fake WhatsApp news that our parents thrive on.

Seeing our social media feeds filled with dalгона coffee and song covers might feel like we aren't doing anything worthwhile. But more importantly, there's also the pressure of not being able to do enough to help. We sit helplessly at home while healthcare workers and public servants put their lives on the line.

During the first week of quarantine, I made a list of all the writing and reading I was going to get done, now that I had so much "extra time". For a while I put a lot of pressure on myself to get all the things done. Then I'd slack off for a day or two, only to be weighed down by my unfulfilled expectations.

This idea of basing our self-worth on how many things we cross off our to-do list can be incredibly toxic. The anxiety



about "wasting our time" that accompanies the need to be productive is valid. It's an inherent instinct to define ourselves by our accomplishments because that's what we've been taught as children. However, the narrative is neither right nor reasonable.

The crisis is scary and unusual. We are going through each day with fear for our loved ones, and worries about the more vulnerable and less privileged ones. For many, the future is uncertain, with exams cancelled and workplaces shut down. Every

day is a long navigation through morbid news and an evolving deathly virus. A global pandemic isn't something to make the most out of, so it's fine if you don't finish writing a novel or learn the violin.

As for doing our shares, we need to focus on the things we can do: making donations wherever possible, calling up close ones to check up on them, or just keeping ourselves hydrated.

While we are happy for the ones who are able to utilise this time to learn new skills and enthusiastically partake in comment wars (finally!), the habit of setting those same expectations for yourself is unrealistic. If using this time to get things done isn't escapism for you, or if it stresses you out, you aren't lazy to want to slow down. The time calls for us to be kinder to ourselves, to take breaks and practice gratitude. Some days the little things we're able to do will have to be enough.

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Mohammadpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com

MONSUR

NABIHA NUSAIBA

“Only three today, Monsur *Bhai*.”

Three? The number of orders had decreased from eleven to three overnight, the highest decrease he had faced today, or ever. *Ostaad will not be happy*, worries Monsur, as he climbs down his time-worn bicycle and walks towards the bearer of bad news. Supreme gatekeeper of the finest of apartments, Imam stands between Monsur and all of the world’s finest luxuries with a toothbrush in one hand and a list of newspaper subscriptions in the other. His shirt is untucked, with a white t-shirt peeking out from under his asymmetric collars. *He must’ve spent all night at the gate*, Monsur sympathises as he takes the list and returns to his cycle to sort out the ordered papers. He hands Imam the order before ticking it off his list, the last for the day.

Monsur absentmindedly pedals back to the distribution house while calculating the total number of newspapers sold today, a disappointing 2384 out of 7200. He knows that it is not his fault and yet he is afraid of what *Ostaad* might say. *Ostaad* is usually a man of mild temperament but he does get very angry at times. When he gets angry, he is difficult to look at – his pupils slide a little to the sides and his nostrils flare, making him look like an unfocused, angry bull. Monsur laughs at the illustration he creates in his head before colliding tire-first into the trunk of a mahogany tree on the side of the street. He falls, with the cycle and all the leftover newspapers atop and around him. Thankfully, there’s no one to see him in this embarrassing state in the early hours of the morning. Monsur pushes the cycle from on top of him and clambers to his feet. He brushes the dirt from his clothes, starts collecting the papers. Unfortunately, the newspapers did not make it out as unscathed as Monsur. Most of them fell on the mud, making them filthy and the writing on them illegible. Now, he was scared. The angry bull he imagined might as well chase him around town today. Scraping up whatever unscathed paper there was left and piling them on his backseat, Monsur climbs up and rides on. This time, a little more carefully.

Upon reaching the house, Monsur tip toes in carefully, his mind buzzing with a bucket load of excuses, all of them containing great danger in the form of transportation. Turns out, he does not have to use them at all, *Ostaad* hadn’t come in yet, he wouldn’t be the one taking the updates today. Relieved, Monsur sits on a bench, calculating his calculations of the day.

After finishing his calculations, Monsur usually picks at the damp, green wall on his left to curb his boredom. Today however, Habib *Ostaad*, *Ostaad Ostaad’s* second-in-line has called them all to his desk, as if just to help break the monotony.

The entire office is one open hall with a booth at the farthest end, reserved for

Ostaad. Everyone else, including Habib *Ostaad* sits outside, on desks divided into two columns. Sitting in front of a universe of his own calculations, Habib *Ostaad* adjusts his spectacles further down his nose before looking up at his employees. Having spent all of his youth and middle ages working at the house, Habib *Ostaad* had never gotten the chance to get married and start his own family. To him, the boys were his family. Sadly, this is what made the current

scared of. This is only temporary, just until the lockdown is lifted and the orders go back to normal. Here, take these,” Habib *Ostaad* hands envelopes to four of the seven boys; Monsur is part of the unlucky majority. “This is your salary for the month. I’ll call you once the situation subsides. Why don’t you go home now?”

Monsur doesn’t know what to think. He’s hopeless. He wanted to protest and stay, instead he said nothing. Not a word.

tell his family? He is the sole bread earner in his house of five. If this virus situation persists for longer than a month, how were they going to afford all the bills? There was *Abba’s* medicine to think of, and—*oh no!* In a swift second, his focus was brought down to the present as he steps on soft, round ground. He looks down and recoils immediately. Wincing and barking in pain is a little, white puppy. Soaked in guilt in seconds, Monsur kneels down to help take



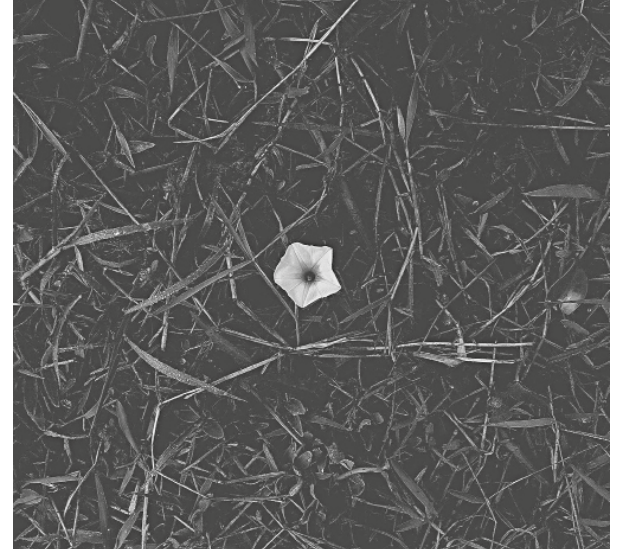
ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

situation worse. He clears his throat before saying, “Listen, over the last few years, our house has only taken hits when people preferred to get their news from phones instead of newspapers. But now, times are really bad. I never thought I would have to see such a day. To be honest with you boys, I don’t see how we can even manage to stay open but, we must. For as long as we can.” He stops, lifts the lid on his glass of water, takes a sip and then continues, “We have to let some of you go.” His face softens as he acknowledges the looks of shock on the others faces. “No, no, there’s nothing to be

What use will words be against reality? He takes his envelope and returns to his area to pack his belongings. He looks at his *dibba* and feels melancholy. There’s nothing quite as sad as packing food for a long day and then having to take it back home.

Walking as slowly as is humanly possible, Monsur reaches the spot where all the cycles are parked before realising that they are work cycles. Work cycle. Work. He sighs and begins walking on the sidewalk in the direction of his house, determined to make the walk as long as possible. A new worry now surrounds Monsur. What was he to

away its pain, but he doesn’t know how. He sticks to patting it, probably more for his consolation than the poor animal’s. He sits there for a few minutes, hoping for time to heal the mutt’s wounds like they say it does. Taking out his *dibba*, Monsur pours its humble contents onto the ground. This seems to do the job; the little puppy was no longer focused on its pain and dives headfirst into the mound of rice and curry. Monsur smiles and stands before dusting the dirt off his hands and pants. With one last look, he walks on. This time, a little more carefully.



WHO AM I?

Who am I?
Am I inside this world?
Am I one with it?
Am I out of this world?
Or am I not?
I am not who you think I am.
I claim, I am not the same,
I would love to know my true self,
And be sure of who I am to myself.

PHOTOS & TEXT
MUSHFIQUR MASUM

