

MUSING

Monsoon and memories

The English rain feels obligatory, like paperwork. It dampens already damp days and slicks the stones already smoothed by the ravages of a thousand seasons.

Reiterating the words of American writer Maureen Johnson, this is what Dr Haseen Mahubub Cherry, an expat living in Ipswich, has to say about the English weather.



“The weather here is unpredictable. It drizzles at least couple of times a week, and seldom downpours, but when it does, it is accompanied with chills and windswept.”

“I’m blessed to live in Suffolk, an area well known for some of the finest climate in Britain. But even here, on a typical British rainy day, an air of melancholy surrounds me. The tone of British rain is somehow different from the season I grew up experiencing in Chattogram. Here, I hardly get a chance to soak and enjoy the romantic touch of falling rain.”

For Cherry, rain in a land seven seas away, makes her nostalgic and reminds her of some of the most beautiful moments in her life — stills in her memory album that perhaps will never come back. She reminisces moments that involves three generations of her family, all connected by the torrential monsoons of Bangladesh.

“Once, my family were visiting my father while he was working as Vice Chancellor of IIUC and was given an apartment on O R Nizam Road. It was a beautiful apartment with a veranda, which was half-converted to a garden. My daughter was only 1-year-old. We spent the most beautiful time with my father, sipping coffee, and my daughter loving the time she spent with her nana bhai. My father passed away in 2012, and somehow, rain brings back that loving time.”

Sara Hossain, 36, and a mother of a 4-year-old, shares a similar feeling about rain in a foreign land. Sara has two homes and manages a dual life in between Dhaka and Toronto.

“There is something about rain in Canada



that does not seem right,” says Sara, with a smile on her face.

“Monsoon is my favourite, and as clichéd as it may sound, I love the rumble of the clouds, I love the sound of rainfall, and that smell of fresh rain seeping from the ground longing for water — petrichor — I love it. And there is something about the rain in Toronto where all this is missing — the kodom phool; the *beli* blossoms,” she adds.

Sara continues, “Rain in Dhaka can be a menace, I will give you that. But not when you have the luxury of staying indoors, having goey khichuri with a fried omelette and then a mug full of tea, sitting on the comfy sofa with a good book!”

Cherry shares her own words of wisdom on deshi rain, albeit in a different city.

“Chattogram is beautiful as it is and during monsoon, it goes one notch higher. I watched heavy rains from the top of Batali Hill, where you get a bird’s eye view of the city. When I was younger, I used to cherish the drive during windy weathers and downpours through the Naval Beach with my friends during the evening. I can still hear Yanni’s Santorini playing in the background,” she says.

Sara too expresses a special bond, but with her 4-year-old son, Sufi, hinged on monsoon and music. She says, “I consider my musical taste to be varied but whenever it rains outside my home, the theatre echoes the sounds of Bengali tunes. Over the years, my son has started to like this phase of musical transformation in me. He is completely his father’s son when it comes to music, but every time there is a downpour outside and I am listening to a new track, he comes rushing towards me, eagerly wanting to hear the new track.”

“Now, you may ask, does he love Bangla music? Perhaps, maybe it has started to grow on him.”

For the two mothers interviewed, rain fosters emotions that go back and forth in time, taking them places, bringing them closer to their reality. For most urbanites



like myself, I cannot help but wonder when was the last time I stopped to see the rain. When was the last time I got drenched in the monsoon rain, just because I wanted to. Maybe it’s high time I do. We do. For it may take us places in time, too.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
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