

WEDDING IN THE TIME OF CORONA

ADHORA AHMED

Imagine this: it's your wedding day. You expected to be in a hall decorated with fairy lights, smelling of *kacchi biriyani*, and surrounded by your family and friends. However, you find yourself in your living room, signing documents and exchanging rings with your spouse in the presence of an officiant and the immediate family members from both parties.

Unfortunately, this is the reality for those who planned to tie the knot this year. Like everything else, Covid-19 has impacted wedding plans of the youth. Despite the odds against them, some are going ahead with their plans, albeit at a much smaller scale.

In 2020, Shakeer* intended to have a grand wedding, with events taking place throughout the whole year. However, his plans have been abruptly cut short, leading him to compromise with a small wedding during the first weeks of lockdown, "The wedding took place on the rooftop of my wife's apartment. In order to limit the spread of disease, we maintained social distancing by inviting only twelve guests. The whole affair was small and quick."

Although Shakeer missed his extended family and friends on his special day, he consoles himself with the fact that they were present at his engagement ceremony back in January. "All of my close relatives were there. Food was ordered from outside. We had hired a photographer and a videographer to record the whole event. It was much grander than my wedding," he says.

Tarek* had a different experience. He

surprised his family in the beginning of Ramadan when he announced his wish to get hitched. As he lives and works far away from his parents, he wanted to go through the proceedings as soon as possible given the difficulties of travelling during lockdown.

As a result, he had a small wedding right after Eid, in the presence of only fifteen guests. "It actually takes very little to organise a wedding. My wife's family had booked a *kazi* and my family had fixed the *mohor*. Three of our mutual relatives acted as witnesses. We said *kobul* when the *kazi* asked if we accepted each other in holy matrimony. Then, I was a married man."

Tarek had accepted the fact that he was not going to have a traditional wedding with all its grandeur. Yet, he wistfully daydreams of what could have been if not for Covid-19, "It all happened so fast. My parents met my wife in person for the first time at my wedding. If it wasn't for coronavirus, I certainly would have taken the time to let our two families get acquainted before fixing dates for our *holud*, wedding and reception. And of course I'd invite all of my relatives and friends."

As no one knows for sure when things will return to normal, it might be ages until the next time we wolf down *biriyani* dressed to the nines while two people begin a new chapter in their lives. Let's hope that the "next time" comes soon.

*Names changed per interviewee's request.

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



The marketing of charity: *Selfish or necessary?*

MOMOTAZ RAHMAN MEGHA

As the human race is threatened by a virus, people are still divided in their opinion regarding effective charity. We cannot decide if we support a charity, be it institutional or individual effort that is unrecognised or acts of charity that is loud and proud on social media.

Now, people from both sides of the aisle have some valid arguments as to why they support or reject the idea of the modern take on marketing charitable giving. One argument is that charities should come from the heart. It is not in the spirit of charity to market one's charitable actions, because charity revolves around the idea of not being selfish and helping the needy.

Moreover, people who are wealthy or have the ability to do the most amount of charity, are the ones who benefit the most from the misfortune of the 99 percent. Poor working conditions not being improved, paying workers less than the minimum wage to maintain the cheap cost of labour, discriminating against people on the basis of their gender or race -- the list goes on if we try to find ways in which the ruling class maintain their position by exploiting the less fortunate. Thus, helping the needy should not be something to advertise because the charities deserve every bit of what they are given in the name of donations, if not more.

However, if a lot of people give to charities silently, others won't be able to connect the dots of how the lives of people have changed because of charitable action. However minute the charity is, the marginal benefit it gives people is a lot. Hence, it's crucial that people advertise their charity and what good their actions lead to, so that others can see that charity works, making sure they provide charity as well.

One of the biggest driving factors of charity is the self-satisfaction that comes with it. Inherently, charity is associated with "good" and therefore most individuals derive a strong self-satisfaction from the act of charity itself. It makes them feel they have a superior moral ground and therefore makes them feel like a better human being. Although that judgement might not necessarily be true, individuals deserve the right to appreciate themselves for their actions which have resulted in having a positive net utility.

This uplifted sense of self on a pedestal might seem to be problematic and there are problems deeply entrenched in this incentive structure. However, the world and its marginalized people as it stands to need the maximum amount of assistance to make their ends meet. Even if the intent at its core isn't just pure will to help people in need, nevertheless the help still reaches these people and that seems to be the only metric that can be used to make a value judgement on these forms of charity.

So here is the burning question, does the intent of your charity matter? Or is the net social benefit caused by it the most important thing?

Megha has run out of ways to take care of herself while in quarantine. You can reach her at megharahman26@gmail.com

