

Dormitory life: Bliss or bane?

MAHBUBA ZANNAT
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In a country where family tie is very strong and most young adults stay with parents it is interesting to know about those living in the dorms.
Is freedom propelling them to a more productive world or are they just being carried away?
Some students were seen busy adorning a gate for a birthday anniversary, while this correspondent approached them at Shahnewaz Bhaban, extension of Muhsin Hall for Fine Arts students.
Busy with fixing glues on foam and sticks they told about their lifestyle, career, hobbies and philosophy about life, sex and friendship.
"Obviously it is true that we are enjoying more freedom at the university that was not possible by living with parents," said Palash, a second year student of Fine Arts Institute.
He said that this freedom extends the sphere of their work and make them confident and self-reliant.
"After I left my family gradually I found out my inner self that was suppressed earlier," said Tuhin, a third year student of Drawing and Painting.
"I dreamt to be a great artist and in the very beginning of my hall life I was moved to think that great artists like Rafiqun Nabi and Shishir Bhattacharya stayed in this hall. But our dreams change due to social and economical pressure," he said.
Liton, a second year student of Crafts, said that it would not have been possible for him to draw nude figures while living with his family because it would hurt their values.
"Even they would not let me go out at midnight, whatever the reason is. Parents do it out of their caring attitude towards us," he said.
Liton became puzzled when he first came to the hall where every room was crammed with clothes, drawing and painting paraphernalia and books piled up in a corner.
While talking about friendship with girls the students said that if a healthy relationship builds among boys and girls then teasing and curiosity would decrease.
Admitting the trend of free sex they said that many of their friends go to brothels and media has a role in it.
The students can share their problems and thoughts with their

teachers who are deemed as idols.
"They could help us in many ways if they had been friendly with us. But at present the teacher-student relationship is in such a state that their being indifferent is far better," said one student seeking anonymity
He was busy with his commercial art work like most fine arts students to support their studies.
Most said that they have not read any book except text books in the last few months. It clearly indicates a declining tendency of reading habit among the young generation even though they are smart, practical and workaholics.
The situation at the female dormitory is totally different as most said that they love their hall lives because they have more friends here.
Chances of doing a challenging job are also less for them as they have to return to the hall by 9:30 at night.



"As the boys can stay outside late they can work more. Being a student of the department of Drama and Music, I find it difficult to do well in my examinations because night is the best time to practice 'light fixing'. My male friends do better than us in the exam because they can practice it," said Farah, a second year student at of Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib Hall.
"I have learnt cooking after coming to hall," said Shoma with her chanting voice while cutting vegetables.
Surovi was sewing colourful flowers in a shawl sitting on her bed.
"The evening is the most beautiful, at that time we sit in front of the dormitory and have a nice chat," she said.
But what are the topics of their chats? No, they do not like politics, economy or philosophy that much.
"To be frank, most of the time we talk about our loneliness, love affairs, boy friends, shopping and other light issues," said Marufa, an Honours fourth year student.
"We really enjoy life, as we are not under the custody of our parents and can take decisions on our own. There are issues that we can never share with our parents because they would react or might feel scandalised," she said.
But Sara, a first year student of Drama is not interested about silly issues like boy friends, mobile friends or shopping. Rather she finds it boring and thinks university students should think in a different way.
Boys are restricted to enter the female dormitories. However, they have no complaint against this. But they objected on their returning to the hall at 9:30pm while the gates of the boys' dormitories remain open all night.
Sharmin Haque, Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER) and house tutor of the dormitory said that the students usually live under strong protection of their parents so when they suddenly get the taste of independence many cannot handle the responsibilities properly.
"Sometimes they may take wrong decisions because there is nobody to suggest," she added.
"The problem lies in our culture. Parents are not much friendly with their wards and do not share much. For this reason when the girls come to the dormitory, they cannot understand first with whom to make friendship," she said.

Children's day at book fair

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN
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February 24 was a special day at Ekushey book fair. It was a special day for children since the book fair authorities dedicated this day to them -- from 9:00am till 2:00pm.
The crowd was very thin during the first few hours after the gates were opened. The atmosphere inside the fair lightened up as the little happy faces started to show up along with their guardians at around 11 in the morning.
Akash, a class two student from AK School at Jatrabari, was looking for books about Dinosaurs. He came all the way from Jurain with his mother. "I heard it in the news on TV yesterday that today's book fair would be dedicated to children and then I asked my mother to bring me here."
A class one student, Zarin, from Vikarunnesa Noon School, Bashundhara was accompanied by her uncle. She bought books of rhymes and was very happy with her latest acquisition as she had found what she was looking for.
"I had no idea that today is especially dedicated to children. My son made me to come here. I am glad that he did. There should be more days like this", said Faisal Ahmed from Shantinagar who brought his 10-year-old son to the fair.
Publishers however said the crowd was not any exceptional compared to other regular days. Bishwa Shahitya Kendra and Sheba Prokashani attracted the largest crowd.
"There was not enough publicity about the arrangement. Bangla Academy should have taken special effort to announce the day", said a salesperson at Bishwa Shahitya Kendra bookstall.
A salesperson from Imon Prokashani said children's books sold very well all through the month.
Most of them however are reprints of old classics.
Less than one percent of the books published this year were children's books and the new arrivals did not sell that well.
Thukurmar Jhuli, Fables of Aesop, Gopal Bhaas Shamogro, Minar Golpo Shamogro and Chhotoder Gyankosh were some of the best sellers through the whole month.
The stage for cultural programmes on the Bangla Academy premises was also taken over by the children that day. The academy organised a cultural show for children followed by an award giving ceremony.

Grave problem

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"It's really dreadful for all the family members to go through something like this -- especially during terrible times like these," he added.
According to a report released by DCC, the authorities are capable to allocate only 25,000 graves each year against the soaring demand for burial grounds in the city.
The cost for reserving a grave at the five existing cemeteries are Tk 35,000 at Azimpur, Tk 25,000 at Mirpur, Tk 60,000 at Banani, Tk 25,000 at Jurain and Tk 1,00,000 at Uttara.
According to a source from the welfare department of DCC, DCC policies allow reservation of the general areas within the public cemeteries, but at a cost of 10 times the regular price of the regular reserved area.
"The high expenses are there to discourage people from acquiring lands at general areas as it would deprive people who are in immediate need of a grave," said a magistrate from welfare department of DCC seeking anonymity.
With the acute shortage of graves, majority of the city habitants are left with a disgraceful alternative of 'Chala Graves' -- where multiple dead bodies are buried in the same grave at different levels. These graves are temporary as new bodies are buried in these within less than a year.
Although DCC recommends waiting at least two years before burial in an existing grave, the official concerned believes this rule is flagrantly violated -- an allegation that cemetery managements deny.
"We have to wait at least 18 months before making a 'Chala Grave'," said Manik, an official at Azimpur cemetery. "But due to an enormous demand, we are compelled to violate the rules to make room for another 'Chala Grave' -- which is obviously unhygienic."
Many of the city habitants are also being compelled to find private cemeteries where owners charge outrageous amounts of money ranging from Tk 60,000 to Tk 70,000 for each grave.
"The rate of death in the city has increased due to sharp rise in population and the need for accommodations for the dead is strongly felt," said Nurul Alam, a first class magistrate at welfare department of DCC.
The 65-acre cemetery at Mirpur is the largest among the five DCC administered cemeteries followed by Azimpur (17.5 acres), Jurain (10.1 acres), Banani (4.5 acres) and Uttara (0.5 acres).

Journalism

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It happens because the owners are yet to achieve professionalism. For this reason, journalism has long ways to go before being considered an industry [to build careers] in this country," said Alamgir.
About journalists working for media houses where alleged black money holders are involved, he said, "They are working for those houses because it is their job. But, there are also some people [in this industry] who are driven by ethics. It is one's personal matter to join that particular media house."
"We have to admit that in many sectors including the media, we see the influence of black money. But we have given the opportunity to whiten black money at the state level. By doing so, we have encouraged those who hold black money. I cannot say that all newspapers and TV channel owners are honest. They might have ulterior motives," said Alamgir.
Munni Saha, chief reporter at private satellite channel ATN Bangla, said the nuances of journalism are being redefined as TV stations and dailies started giving away cars to their reporters. "Two Bangla and English dailies under the same group took a big step by giving away cars to their reporters. Later on, other media houses started to follow their example. That media group has created new grounds in professionalism by providing this facility to encourage those who are doing well. This has added an extra prestige to the job."

