

I spent this Eid watching hours of advertisements on television in between minutes of programming. Colourful, musical, exciting ads that made me want to dance with the dream models on screen...

I vaguely remembered those days, some six years ago even, when life was somewhat more drab but a lot simpler in many ways. I only used to receive phone calls (and prank calls and wrong numbers) on my landline at decent hours of the day. That ended as soon as I started using my parents' cell phone (the sole one in the house at the time -- now we have four for our family of three). After that, the timing, number and duration of calls slowly began to spiral out of control.

Over the years, along with my infamous "T&T" (which has only recently stopped going out of order every two months) I have done away with my alarm clock, my calculator, my calendar, my camera, video camera, radio and music player. Why have all this cluttering up my room when I can have it all in the palm of my hand, wherever I go, whenever I want? Wherever I go is right. Add to that, even when I don't want.

The tragedy of the cell phone is that it or its attached strings are everywhere, whether we want them or not. I'm not even talking about times when we'd rather our parents didn't call, ask where we are and tell us to come home right away. I'm talking about the whole cell phone invasion -- there really is no other word for it.

When was the last time you turned on the television or radio or turned the pages of a newspaper or magazine and didn't find an advertisement for a cell phone operator or set? And is it just me, or are the ads really

getting longer, more elaborate, more colourful and just... "filmy" in general? The whole song-and-dance routine, family drama, fighting the odds and coming out the winner. Only, the new hero/heroine is the cell phone (and even that is a lot more gender sensitive these days, with "ladies" also finding success at home and at work with the help of packages tailored to their very needs).

But it does get somewhat confusing, does it not, when one after the other, every ad, or every other ad at the least, is for a different operator offering unbeatable rates? Backed, of course, by top models, success stories and jingles you can't get out of your head. They play on values of love, friendship, family, professionalism, success, even patriotism in February, March and December. And, if one goes by the ads, they even beat the traditional clothes and shoes as Eid gifts!

Some of the ads are quite innovative, or at least, catchy. So much so, that some parents even use them to glue their hyperactive toddlers to their seats while they feed them. I'm sure even the ones somewhat in low taste using vernacular and God knows what else type of mixed language, make their mark on their target audience. There were 32.7 million cell phone subscribers in Bangladesh -- according to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) -- in July of this year, before everyone had to re-register

# The Cell-vasion of Our Souls

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