years from now these doodles will be scaled on the same level to the only proto-Arabic inscriptions found on rocks in the deserts of Southern Syria, parts of Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia or Viking graffiti located in Rome and Ireland, which help historians decipher ancient culture and lifestyles. Wouldn't it be something if scholars in the future tried to figure out about you and me based on scribbles that are neither aesthetic, nor deep in meaning? Wouldn't these meaningless scratches with dull colours just spell out "civilis ation" from down under? The "dying progress" would be celebrated.

Then again, like many graffiti around the world, this too could be suppressed anger combined with endless boredom that get these artists to throw their minds to further sabotage an otherwise already polluted city. In the States it was the 1960s when streets of Philadelphia and later on New York had been literally drowned in colours of political debates. Graffiti had been used as a form of expression by political activists or gangs such as Savage Skulls and La Familia to mark their territory. Graffiti clearly meant political vandalism. Graffiti meant minorities in their hidden world could voice their state of mind through hip-hop songs, breakdance and art.

But it is the art on the Berlin Wall, a product of the 80s, when the wall was rebuilt to concrete slabs of 14 feet high, that Graffiti, or art on walls, had become an icon expression of difference and identity. It was both rivalry and a proof of celebrating the self between West Berlin and East Berlin. The messages and art complied on the 27 mile long wall consists of colourful expressions on the West side that has a sharp contrast to the East's sterile parapet. It symbolises the concrete differences of the separate societies, where one represents free expression of the open society (West) compared to the blank walls of the repressed society (East). Dhaka is neither too conservative, nor rocking hip. The amusing droops of cheap dye can then only mean one thing: Desperation for attention and a need to fit into some group. Any group. This point is clear simply because there are only names squirted on the walls.

To combat the graffiti vandals in New York, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in 1995 set up an Anti-Graffiti Task Force, the largest campaigns known in the American history. It reduced crime rates, and less people had access to these paints because sales of aerosol spray paint can to anyone under 18-years-old was banned, along with that he made sure the merchants who sell these paints have them inside cases and displayed behind counters to prevent shoplifting.

Dhaka is not New York, and these young artists are pretty harmless. But it still doesn't justify such childish escapade. Perhaps the authority in Bangladesh should take note of this abuse on private properties. ■

