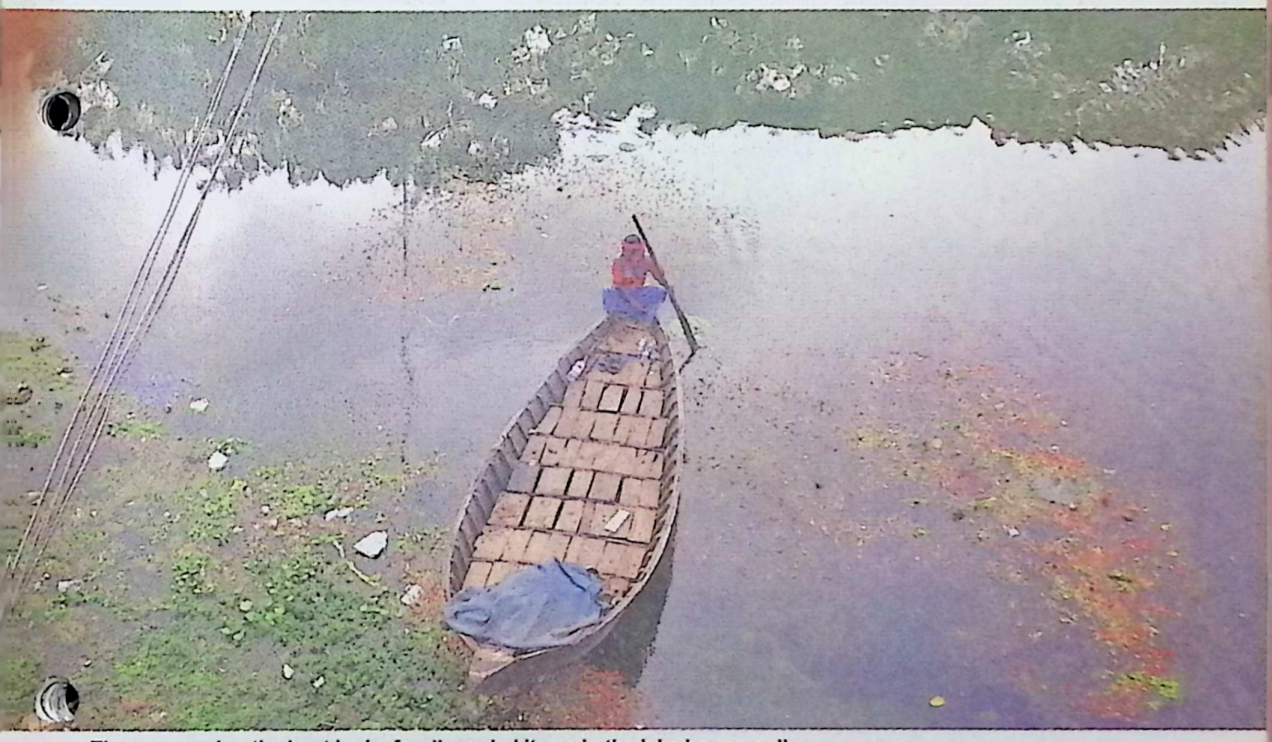
amicable and tells me, he is a retired banker turned consultant and likes to tend to the garden because he feels it needs attention. He points at a nearby loud group of men engaged in a heated political debate while working out. "They always complain about the government, the politicians and life in general, but don't realise that they can do something constructive instead," he observes. I nod agreeing with what he is saying, but feel guilty as I too, fall under that group of nonchalant morning walkers. I mind my own business – just walk, then go home and I am ashamed to admit, without a care about making a difference like this man. We wish each other well and I move on.

I walk a short distance and am face to face with a recent development. In front of me is a huge Dhaka art of making the popular caffeinated beverage. As I sip the perfect *cha*, I notice huge boiling vessels of milk in one corner. I ask the *cha walah* casually where he gets his milk from. He immediately replies, from Karwan Bazaar, "We have our own factory and we get the powdered milk mixed with chemicals from there," he boasts. I almost choke on my *cha*, thinking how naïve I am to think that *cha* is probably the safest 'street food' I could have. After all, it's boiled and served in a disposable cup, right? Of course, like the fruits we eat, the fish and veggies and everything else, the *cha* too, has to be 'chemically enhanced'. I am my cynical old self again and wonder exactly what toxic ingredients they mix in the milk, and really just how much of it is actually *milk*?



The man rowing the boat looks for discarded items in the lake he can sell.

municipal water supply lorry claiming to deliver clean, pure water to the lake visitors. A woman in crutches is helping her two daughters fill up their school water bottles. This woman is also one of the regular faces at the lakeside. I see her almost every morning with her daughters, getting them ready for school. The girls wear the red uniform of the nearby Shurovi School, an institution that provides education to low income urban dwellers. I find it touching to see a caring mum getting her girls ready for school by the lake. The scene reminds me of my own daily routine getting my little girl ready for school in the United States.

Now comes the last but best part of my walk. I always finish my walk with a cup of steaming *doodh cha* (milk tea). I stop by at my usual *cha* place, where the young *cha walah* (tea vendor) has perfected the

After my dubious cha break, I buy some quail eggs from a vendor near the *Rabindro Shorobor*. The *deem walah* (egg vendor) insists quail eggs are best for making *biriyani*. I refrain myself from telling him that cooking *biriyani* at home is a waste of time, with numerous restaurants like Star and Fakhruddin catering to the biriyani lovers in the city.

I walk back home, listening to Pharrell's "Happy" on my ipod. This song can put even the most crotchety person in an exuberant mood - if only for five minutes! I feel blessed for life's simple pleasures and my world feels just fine after my early morning adventure on this *krishnochura*-filled gorgeous morning. Perhaps I won't feel so great later in the day - when the heat is stifling and the traffic horrendous. But at this moment, life is good and I am happy to be home in Dhaka.