

Times they are a changin'. And how. Things that are indispensable one day are relegated to the dustbins of history the next. Make no mistake. Human beings are made to idolise the things that they've lost to time. We have the tendency to glorify and venerate the deceased, and so these obsolete or almost-there things will forever remain in our memory as idealised concepts. However, because of the demands of time and the ever-changing needs of society, we've had to or will soon have to bid goodbye to the once-in-fashion commodities that sadly are now archaic.

Niyamatkhana – 'The Meatsafe'

If you were an 80's or even an early 90's kid, you are sure to have seen a small steel or wooden chest that kept all kinds of special food items hoarded away for special occasions or favourites of the household. My brother and I grew up abroad and whenever we visited our grandparents in Bangladesh, we would be delighted by this *niyamatkhana* that held the mouth watering delicacies for us. Over the next few visits, however, we learnt that with the demise of my grandmother, the *niyamatkhana* was also laid to rest. A sparkling new freezer took its place. Once a common sight in every household of Bangladesh, the 'meatsafe' has now become an extinct species.

Hurricane Lamps

Even around a decade ago, hurricane or kerosene lamps were the go-to device for most urban households in the country during blackouts. Thanks to more efficient generators, IPS systems and even battery charged lamps, this age-old method of lighting is in its death throes – at least in Dhaka city. Although villages where electric grids have not reached still use kerosene lamps, the advent of solar power has significantly reduced the need for these age-old contraptions.

Letters and other Snail Mail

Who writes letters anymore? And why would you? Thanks to smartphones and the internet, communication has become super easy and accessible. So much so that we can convey a message with the help of a few emojis. Letters and postcards, though, were so much more personal. As it always took a while to receive a letter, one could pour one's heart out and talk about every minute detail and the receiver would gulp down every word, reading and re-reading every line for any missed point. Only people who are romantic about a personal past write letters or send postcards now.

Fountain Pens

Remember dipping your first fountain pen in a pot filled with dark ink? Your shirt sleeves were bound to be stained with ink spots even as your mother yelled from the other room that she'd

break your legs if she found another stain on your white shirt. Fountain pens used to be the symbol of being a 'grown up'. It was something you were gifted on your 13th birthday, the coming-of-age year, by your grandparents or your parents and you would feel as if you could burst with pride. With writing by hand now almost reaching the state of being obsolete, it's little wonder that fountain pens have been relegated to a life of obscurity.

Photo Albums

Every household would have one huge photo album that stored the most important memories of each member of the family. Now even one's wedding pictures are saved and shared online, on social or digital media. There's obviously a plus side to this, as your friends and family, especially those living abroad, can take part in your special days from a distance. It comes at a cost, however – there's the loss of personal space, the need to share everything with everyone and the feeling that every picture shared needs to be perfect. The whole ritual of family and friends going over a cherished photo album together has also been lost.



Candy Floss Machines

This is an especially grave loss to human kind. Your childhood is more or less incomplete if you haven't experienced the thrill of buying cotton candy from the local *hawai mithai wala* – the man who would walk around the neighbourhood with that coveted tin box containing those sweet fluffy bundles of happiness. You might have access to all the gadgets and machines in the world but nothing beats the feeling of running down the stairs with a couple of coins clutched tightly in your hands, as you try to beat the other kids in the neighbourhood in the race to reach the candyfloss man before anyone else.

Kotkotiwala

Kotkotiwalas would give *kotkoti*, a sweet, caramelised, sometimes nutty treat in exchange of used milk tins, glass bottles, old books, and other such assorted household items. They would come to one's doors, crying out for old things in exchange for pieces of *kotkoti* that they would break from a big chunk of the caramelized sweet. The amount given might not be substantial but the very idea of getting a 'free' treat in return for old, unwanted things appealed to children from every stratum. Most youngsters today might regard this as yet another relic of the past but for kids and parents of that era, *kotkoti* represent a significant aspect of a lost culture.



Saree and 'Lace Fita' Wala

My aunt still tells stories about how she used to trade her old utensils for cotton sarees to the local *saree wala* that frequented her neighbourhood. Adults growing up in the 80's and early 90's will be able to recollect the joy of greeting the friendly vendor whose wares enticed women of all ages. While young girls would plead with their mothers for a set of bangles or hair clips, older women would comb through the collections of sarees and other merchandise he sold. The *saree wala* is another remnant of history now.

Bioscope Shows – The Travelling Theatre

No fair in the country was considered a success without the customary bioscope show. The basic pictures of different cities of the world would be enough to delight children of all ages who would flock to the bioscope stall, leaving aside more entertaining possibilities. Bioscope shows lost their appeal with the increasing use of the digital media but still manage to hold their charm for collectors of nostalgia and vintage items.

Roller Skates

Every 80's and 90's child can relate to the loss of roller skates. If you remember the joy of whizzing past slow pedestrians, you are bound to feel a tinge of sadness at the thought that younger generations will never experience this feeling. Roller skates were the 'in-thing' for almost a decade and then suddenly they were gone except for the occasional roller skating traveller trying to zigzag through the traffic.

Encyclopaedia

Whether they used it or not, every family owned at least one set of Britannica Encyclopaedia. Readers now have traded encyclopaedia on the bookshelf for the more accessible, user-friendly, online-only Wikipedia.

Yellow Pages

Then: Want to know the address or phone number of a person? Open a phone book. Now: Want to know the address or phone number of a person? Type in a search query. Phone books and Yellow Pages have been made obsolete, as their primary duty of saving contact details is now fulfilled by smartphones and the internet.

Folding Maps

There's little chance that you'll get lost in this digital world. Many cars and most phones have GPS systems installed in them. We use mobile phone to track down restaurants and apps like Google Maps help us with customized routes. As a last resort, people prefer to ask for directions rather than carry maps with them.

Landlines and Analogue Phones

You could prank call your friends, teachers or your crush and nobody, and I mean NOBODY



could catch on to you! People who remember the good old days of landlines and analogue phones also recollect with sadness the loss of privacy and missed connections. You don't want to talk to someone? Just mouth to your house help that you are not home and the message will be conveyed to the caller. There was also a kind of romance attached to the days of landlines; you needed to be patient and your patience would more often than not be rewarded. Once you got hold of the person, you could talk from dusk till sunrise without having to worry about talk-time and other such nuisances. The days of landlines are more or less over but until their last breath, landlines continue to serve us much better than their more modern counterparts.

Film Cameras

Digital cameras are responsible for the overthrow of cameras that use films or reels and polaroid camera. Digital cameras and the in-built ones on your phones and computers are much cheaper and can instantly capture your memories, as you don't have to wait weeks for your pictures to materialise. We still do miss the dark room days, though. The surprise, excitement and the inability to 'delete' any picture is missing from present day photo capture.

VCR and VHS Players and Cassettes

VHS (Video Home System) and VCR (Video Cassette Recorder) players were responsible for popularizing the video tape rental services of the 1980's and 1990's. With the introduction of the DVD in the late 1990's, things started looking glum for this industry. The sale of DVDs has also been declining, as people can easily download movies online and without any hassle. But people who are still clinging onto the glory of the past (like yours truly) still have a VCR player and have saved some of their favourite cassettes that they play every now and then when no one's around to tell them that they are old-fashioned and passé.

All Sorts of Audio Players

Boom boxes, cassette players, stereo players, even CD players, gone, gone, gone, almost gone. Vinyl records and cassettes may be collected as novelty items but they are definitely obsolete as daily sources of music playing. You can now download songs onto computers, mobile phones or flash drives, thus making audio players more or less redundant. You can now download or listen to songs on YouTube from eras as early as the 1960s. These bulky devices don't really have much to do in this modern world.

Floppy Disks

They were omnipresent in the time. You might still find one in some corner of your house or your office. Some people hope they'll be regarded as collectibles in the future (but I doubt it). But they are definitely as obsolete as the dodo and the dodo.

