

READER'S CHIT

HUMBLE FOREBODINGS ON THE 'biye' season

I do not pen this piece with my usual feisty fervour simply because it is not an attack to those earning a decent livelihood in Bangladesh due to this propagating, mammoth of an industry called the wedding industry. It is rather very aligned with how I generally think, foregoing benefits that might seem attractive in the short run, but detrimental to the wellbeing of a society in the long run.

Trends, this ever-evolving word can be such a paradox. A privileged section of us comfortably practice and flaunt it while the other half in Bangladesh, the 'under' achievers gape, behold and compete. Be it the new trend in fashion, shoes, hairstyle or the most popular category of mobile phones.

Interestingly I am strictly referring to the working class here. The underprivileged majority in this country has bigger issues to deal with like – survival. So the concept of trends mostly exists amongst this working class, with the meager disposable income generators vs the ones with unlimited resources.

It is a ghost bar of standards that this class is constantly in competition with and the 'under' achievers in tow, only achieve it to realise the bar has shifted and relocated to a higher spot out of reach.

My first wedding season in Bangladesh last year exposed me to the seriousness of the situation when trends spin out of control. I would not lie and say it is unpleasant looking at beautiful brides and grooms and the accompanying bridal party in celebration, an extravagance blown completely out of proportion. The five or six string of events forms a quintessential Bangladeshi wedding of the 2000s and oh the glorified indulgence! However, leaving the eye candy particulars aside, let us talk about the practicalities involved. The average cost of a high end wedding is anywhere between 5 to 10 million BDT. Even the most basic function with limited guests would not cost any less than 3 million BDT. According to a survey done by a leading newspaper, in 2012, approximately 108 couples were married in a single day! I am not that great with numbers but I am sure you can do the math.

Traditionally a wedding in Bangladesh consisted of four functions: gaye holud in the individual bride and groom's households respectively, the main wedding ceremony followed by the reception or bou bhaat.

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