

Then with every passing year the concept of 'trend' took over. This meant that one particular family would come up with an unconventional new theme that would get mirrored in the rest of the weddings to follow that year, soon to be established as a norm by the next year!

This is how now there are additional ceremonies such as shongheet and mehendi, adopted from cultures of our neighbouring countries to add more entertainment value to our wedding ceremonies. What belies these growing additions is the fact that there remains a bystander class that watches these shifts in traditions with increasing concern.

Concern over what their limitations in budget allows and the expectations of the society and even the children concerned. See when a new toy comes out in the market and you as parents are accompanied by a toddler, it unsettles you when your child longs to own it but your limited means does not allow you to purchase it.

It becomes then a question of success for you as a parent and your inability to provide for your children to your heart's content, despite the realisation that it may be a frivolous item in question. To top that off, the societal culture in Bangladesh is very prone to showcase the best of what you have and the ultimate goal of every individual seems to be this ghost dictator who sets the bar of your lifestyle and to match that standard around you seems to define happiness.

Returning to facts and figures, it seems rather astounding that merely falling prey into peer pressure exerted by almost a negligent section of the population, mostly initiating these trends, a family is expected to churn out anywhere between 5 to 10 million BDT for a wedding shenanigan, while you hear a cry of bloody murder on a daily basis from the overall population about a financial crisis with the most basics like housing, food, education and health expenses.

The families in reality undergoing a severe crisis situation bear the brunt and resort to long-term loans and any other desperate means to satisfy the need to conform to the societal norm only because a particular class with the available disposable income fancies arrangements, as a trend, bigger and better.

I often hear young married couples complain about how it is difficult to afford a place of their own in Dhaka city, when in reality, an average budget of a simple wedding in Bangladesh, inclusive of the cost of feeding hundreds and laden with gold and silver, can be more than sufficient capital for a startup business venture or rental deposit in advance and would serve the purpose of securing a practical future for the couple.

I am all for the colours, ceremonies, song and dance routine and rest of the hooahas that come

with a quintessential wedding in Bangladesh. More the merrier but only if you have the means to commit to such extravagance without losing sight of reality; and by no means should the affordability of some dictate the lifestyle of others.

A long time ago I had heard of a celebrity couple in Bangladesh who stood up against the excesses of a wedding that society imposed and opted for a

simple affair under their own roof, limited to close family and friends, with decoration and jewellery only made up of flowers. Their message was simple – our celebration of marriage is about the marriage alone, not the fanfare that comes with it. I hope to see some more rebels like that in the near future.

BY NAAZ FAHMIDA

MODEL: **KOBITA**

PHOTO: **SAZZAD IBNE SAYED**

MAKE-UP: **TILAT KHAYER**

WARDROBE: **MANICK BENARASI**

JEWELLERY: **GITANJALI LIFESTYLE**

