

SPOTLIGHT

WORKING IN SOLITUDE

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PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

For artists and creators, night time is the best time to think, imagine and design. This is true for musicians, writers, chefs in many Old Dhaka restaurants and also graphic designers.

Sarwar Pritom is just another university student, in a superman tee shirt and bright orange trousers. Along with studying for a BBA degree at a private university in the capital, Pritom runs his very own design company with a group of friends. "I earn between one lakh and one lakh fifty takas on a regular month," he says. "The company sees an increase in work and also profit in winter and spring and that's when we earn a lot more. We are a team of three designers and we make logos, notebook covers and much more. Recently, my friends from university came up with an idea to make their own mobile phone covers. I am involved in the project and am very excited! It won't bring me much financially but I'd love to take up the challenge."

To an outsider, it is sitting in front of the PC for hours together and moving the cursor to complete a design work. For Pritom, its endless hours of brainstorming, sleepless nights generating ideas and doing lots of research on YouTube and other social platforms. But that's how life is for a graphic designer, says Pritom. "I am sometimes rushed to finish projects," he says. "Even if I am swamped with assignments, papers to complete and midterms, I end up in my room with my computer, working on the design the whole night. Yes my parents are worried and I know that maybe this is not helping my health in any way. But designers need complete peace and solitude to create and establish. I guess the after hours are the best hours for me, work wise at least!"

If the regular people follow Routine A, musicians would follow Routine B. "I think I have created my own hours and time table and they are completely opposite to the regular norm that people around me follow," says Khayam Sanu Sandhi. "I sleep during the day and work at nights. I find the solitude or rather 'loneliness' very appealing, therefore music, words and compositions come naturally to me. I find afternoons in Dhaka extremely dull and that's when I watch TV or sleep or meet up with friends. Very recently I was working on a sound track for a telefilm. The theme was close to my heart and I could connect to it so well. I wrote the lyrics, composed the tune and mixed it -- all between 2 - 5 am. I think that's the way I work best!"

Many of the late night workers on the streets of Dhaka are either food vendors or night guards -- two of the most happening after-hour jobs that would not be a cup of tea for anybody and everybody! Bashu Miyah does not create. His night duty does not require him to spend hours in front of the computer. But

he does require several cups of tea and enough battery charge to spend the night listening to music and comedy shows on the mobile radio. "I usually work from 8 pm at night to 8 am in the morning," he says. A night guard at one of the ATM booths located on Gulshan Avenue, 27-year-old Bashu miyah is

definitely witness to many of the night time activities in the city. "Even though I am supposed to work from 8 to 8 6 days a week, I end up doing double shifts to earn extra. I don't get enough sleep when I do double shifts and it affects my health. But otherwise, I like the night job. There is a cha



wallah (a tea vendor) who roams about in the middle of the night. I along with other night guards have conversations and adda-sessions with the cha-wallah over cups of tea. Yes there are times when we see muggings happening on the streets and we cannot do anything about it. One night, a terrible accident occurred in front of my booth. The night guard across the street and I helped the young driver out of the car. He was badly hurt and so were the other boys in the car. Oh it was a huge drama! With the police, family members and other people around, the whole saga went on for hours."

The night in Dhaka does have life. We have just got to switch on our Routine B and maybe mingle with some of these night birds once in a while. They live in a world different from ours and would share stories -- special, yet sometimes sad. Let's spread our wings and experience the beautiful darkness of Dhaka City!