



## Where I work

It can be a simple desk – tidy, organised, uninspiring. Or it can be an intricate and complicated affair – paints and brushes everywhere, messy, crowded. What does your workspace look like?

The workstation of a person of course hints at the kind of profession he is in. Workstation of a photographer differs vastly from that of a scientist. Workstation of a 'jhaalmuriwala' differs a lot from the workstation of a painter.

Your workspace tells an awful lot about you, how you are as a person. Do you discover long-lost receipts from time to time? Or are you well-informed about the contents of all your drawers?

This week, Star Lifestyle has entered the workspace of people from different walks in life, from a photographer to the street vendors. Read on, as we unveil interesting workstations of people from various professions.



# Work Station Stories

I have always been fascinated by the yellow lights at tea stalls. I can't explain why to you if I tried. There's something about them that seems so romantic almost. You can see all the people huddling around it sipping tea or smoking a cigarette. Step into the light for a moment and you can almost feel the heavy air full of untold stories and secrets.

My favourite time of the month is when I have to go for my haircut. I call my barber and tell him I'm coming. Upon entering I am greeted by the guard a feeble older man who's gotten used to seeing me. The saloon is one big room usually occupied by a sullen kid forced to get a haircut by his dad. Each table comes equipped with sprays, combs of different kinds, different greasy bottles of oil and a giant hand mirror. The style does not need to be mentioned, he knows what to do and we spend the haircut sometimes in silence and sometimes with long conversations about cell phones or his life. He started out his job when he was 12, coming to Dhaka and sweeping the floors of salons. He would watch the haircuts out of the corner of his eye memorising the movements and the techniques. Before long he landed a good job and got settled. And the rest he says is history.

On the way back from a haircut I stop by a mudi dokan and ask for a cup of tea. Black or milk it doesn't matter I just like sitting on the wooden bench and enjoying a moment

of silence. The owner is an older man, almost always chewing on beetle leaf and talking with his mouth full of red juice. His hands shake while giving me the cup and he spends an eternity counting the change. But when he prepares a nice paan for five people at once he is timeless and masterful. He is almost on autopilot. Empty cans of chamanbahaar are now used for chun with long ice creams sticks or spoons sticking out. A steaming teapot with black stains is roasting on a gas stove and a small television is on the far corner. He has a Bengali cinema playing 24/7. To watch it properly though, you have to sit down because the packets of bread and cake dangle by threads attached to the ceiling.

As I get back on my bike I notice that all hell is about to break loose. It's exactly 2pm. That means the kids are getting out

of school and their fussy mums are blocking the roads insisting the driver opens her kids door and puts the backpack in the trunk. Perhaps it's the romantic writer inside of me but I enjoy watching students get out of school. The ice cream, jhaalmuri and fuchka vendors crowd around the school entrance counting down the seconds to the bell. The kids get down and rush to the stalls. Their faces of glee can only be matched by the vendors. This is both their happy hour. Like the tea stall vendor, the jhaalmuriwallah's hands move at lightning speed to keep up with the demands of the hundreds of hungry kids. They are the Bengali equivalent of bartenders; shaking the tin glasses and splashing the chilli on newspaper packets. This particular guy is famous all over the neighborhood. His hands are pure

magic and his jhaalmuri is highly sought after. The fuchkawallah who is for once not the centre of attention gives him a couple of disgruntled looks. But nevertheless there is always traffic. Imagine breaking those shells at a rate of two per second. We'd undoubtedly mess it up. Not this man though. He has this down to the letter. He hands everyone a plate full of perfectly broken shells and pours the tamarind juice into a plastic cup of what was previously vanilla ice cream. When the traffic ends, both vendors don't even wait a minute to take a breather. They immediately start refilling their empty supplies. They take out fresh eggs and chilli cutting them meticulously at a very impressive speed. Next they take out packets of shells and chanachur and pour them into tins. These are all kept at an arm's length for quick use.

I cycle back home with a smile on my face. Till next month for sure. I'm not giving you that "think of all the poor people who work so hard" shtick. This is more of an awe inspiring phenomenon rarely seen in developed countries. These men and women are such thorough professionals with a workspace out there for all to see. And it only requires a cup of tea to uncover the stories they hide behind dirty rags and dim fluttering yellow lights.

**By Daneesha Khan**  
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