

BETWEEN 2 WORLDS

ANUPOMA JOYEETA JOYEE

“Living the American Dream” — they often say to glorify the experience. It's hard not to find at least one person you know who has immigrated abroad. The United Kingdom, United States, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, whatever the country may be, undoubtedly the struggle is daunting for our parents and guardians, who take the decision to leave their familiar world of comfort to an outlandish territory full of unknown faces and cultures. Irrespective of how adaptive to newer things teenagers are, the struggle is all too real for them as well. One day you are frustrated in the terrible traffic jam from Mirpur to Dhanmondi, next day you find yourself in a picture-perfect world where it's not abnormal for your Bangladeshi self to feel out-of-place.

We know a lot about foreign cultures, thanks to their film industries and the internet. It is one thing to appreciate a different culture, but embracing it is not that easy. Immigrant teenagers' struggles start with the language. We Bangladeshis are used to speaking our mother-tongue in every possible situation and hence suddenly not being able to speak Bangla is sure to upset one. Though you may manage to speak English fairly well, there remains a pressure of having to “fit in” with the rest of the crowd after you've joined a new school in the new country and you can't spontaneously fit in just by speaking their language. There's every chance that you will end up being the socially anxious Rajesh Koothrappali of your newfound friend circle, with the label of “the Asian kid” or even worse, “the Indian kid” (even though you are every bit as Bangladeshi as *Panta Bhaat*), always dangling above your head like a halo. Jokes aside, the cultural gap is hard to fill. We've been mostly brought up with conservative Bangladeshi values. Try not to have a heart attack when you see your foreigner friends talking back at their parents and survive whereas you would have faced an elaborate punishment ending in your extended family knowing how *beyadob* you have

turned after spending too much timer with your American friends.

There exist other numerous customs close to your heart that you'll have to give up overnight no matter

every single time you see them and it'll soon feel normal that way. It'll take a lot of time to familiarise yourself with their festivals and cultural norms. Don't beat yourself up if you feel like an odd crea-

ture standing between two worlds when none of them is fully yours. Apart from these, there will always be pressure on you to do well in academics and literally everything you attempt. You may feel burdened with the uncountable things you'll have to juggle at once – school/college, social gatherings, never-ending struggle to fit in, getting your driver's license, sometimes part-time jobs, extracurricular activities and so on. Finally, you'll see your mom's warning sink in

your extended family in Bangladesh, which you should do, to be honest. Though getting a call from them once in a while will lift your mood, they'll hardly ever call you first. Among other various hurdles that you'll face is the one of guilt-trips you will go through every time you complain about something to your parents. You'll be pinned down with shame if you ever make the mistake of complaining because let's face it, your parents gave up everything to secure a better

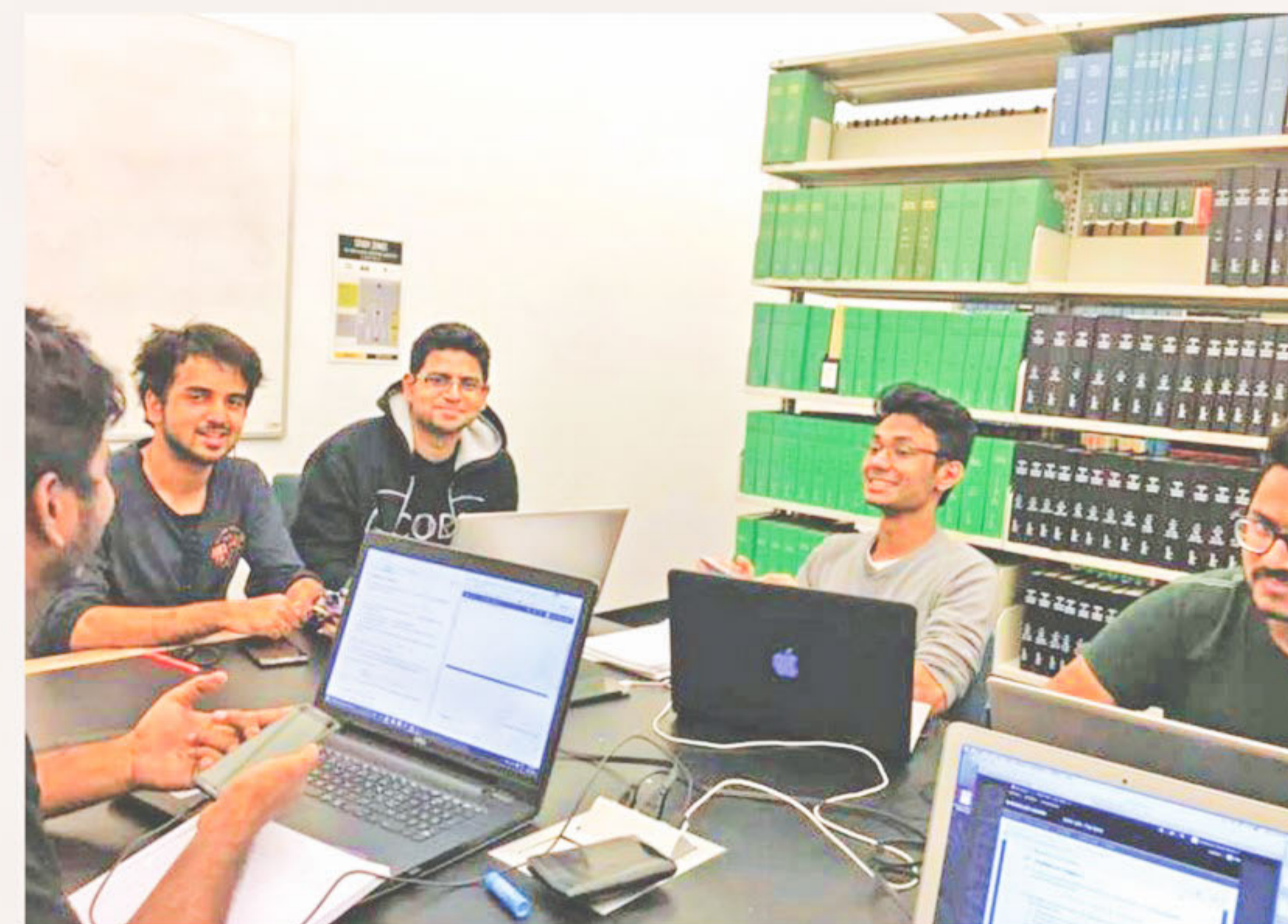
future for you and you'd be a horrible person to not give them enough credit for their efforts. That said, you're only human; feeling frustrated is normal but you'll have to deal with your parents like a sensible person, without throwing hissy fits and point out to them what problems you're facing while adjusting to the new environment. The saddest struggle of all is having to leave your friends. It takes years to build friendships, to find that one person who won't mind even going to a dumpster if it's with you. Leaving your friends is like leaving a piece of your soul back in Bangladesh. Skyping or Facebooking with your best-friend won't come close to sleepovers accompanied by Bombay

Sweets Chanachur and Coca-Cola, but that's life. In your new hometown you'll make new friends, although at times some banter will get lost in translation. They will neither get your #JustDeshiThings nor understand why despite being a guy you wear some skirt called *lungi* at home. In a developed country, you'll surely have a shot at achieving great things, but what about Nanna'r Biriyani? Are there outlets of Nanna'r Biriyani, Star Kabab or Puran Dhaka'r Iftar anywhere else in the world except Bangladesh? Nope. My heart goes out to you when all you crave is *fuchka* but you can't get any; when you see your neighbour whom you hated back in Bangladesh post a #ClubHouseSelfie during Bangladesh-India cricket match while you're trying to figure out the differences between football and soccer. Feeling heartbroken and hollow when you miss out on the vibrant Pehela Baishakh celebration is legit too.

Despite everything, Bangladeshis are all over this planet. We are full of life and we create our own community everywhere we go. This is why you will never be completely alone. Whether you are in Malaysia, Australia, Canada, USA or UK, you will find your own people to celebrate Eid, Puja, Pehela Falgun or Pehela Baishakh with. It may not be the same but you will still be a part of the culture you were afraid you were drifting apart from.

It's okay if you feel homesick and miss the wonderful road-trips to your ancestral village as you used to have when Eid was around the corner. As extreme as it sounds, sometimes you may even feel empty in the alien, peculiarly traffic-free streets and miss your disorganised, overcrowded Dhaka and all its nooks and crannies. After all, your country may be a big old mess, but it's your own mess and no matter how far you fly off to, this chaotic kin will stay in your heart.

Anupoma Joyeeta Joyee is a perpetually sleepy law student who emotionally identifies with duck and occasionally sets out on writing spree. Find more of her needless banter on www.facebook.com/joyee.anupoma



"I don't know if it's because of the time (last year of high school) I shifted to Canada, it was really hard for me to make friends. It took me a few months to find people I actually liked and who liked me back and wanted to be friends,"
says Moneesha R Kalamder, who immigrated to Canada in her teens.

how much you want to hold on to them. You'll have to stop calling every single being passable as human “mama” and it won't feel good. It'll feel like the one celestial connection you had with the people of Bangladesh irrespective of their age, religion and profession is slowly fading away. Calling your new teachers “Miss Omuk” and “Mr Tomuk” will feel blasphemous and downright unfaithful to the ones you've left behind in Bangladesh. However you'll get used to not throwing your teachers a *salam*

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