

3 years of SHOUT

A Constant Work in Progress



Starting from Scratch

ARMAN R. KHAN

As SHOUT celebrates its 3rd anniversary, I can't help but feel a surge of nostalgia and pride. Having been with SHOUT from its humble first steps, I have seen the publication grow in quality and stature to become the definitive (English) youth publication in Bangladesh.

The first few months were the most difficult. Most of the writers in the team were new recruits who were still not sure where the publication was headed, but had the overwhelming responsibility of finding a readership. Fatimah Akhtar, who has been with SHOUT since its inception, reminisces, "We were anxious. We didn't have our own voices, or a readership, and to top that off, we were perceived to be the 'replacement' of a then-defunct beloved magazine for children and teenagers."

At that point, it was very easy for the supplement to spiral down and fail, but it didn't. Fatimah adds, "We had good people leading the team who founded the ground on which SHOUT could stand on its own."

Indeed it was the leadership of the editorial team that guided us writers, helping and nurturing us along each and every step – so much so that each of us found our own voices and developed our own styles. The writers grew in maturity gradually, and SHOUT grew with them as the quality of write-ups improved. Karim Waheed, editor of SHOUT, says, "SHOUT is a publication of, by and for the Bangladeshi youth. The main objective of SHOUT has always been to encourage and showcase the creativity of young Bangladeshis."

So how does a magazine that had such a rough start become a leading youth publication?

The editor of the publication shed some light on how this was done: "When we started SHOUT, we wanted to create a space for the 12-24 reader base – a space where they can be vocal about anything and everything they want, love, deeply care about or would like to change. We tried a holistic approach, including all kinds of content – from education to gaming to fiction." In any given issue of SHOUT, readers with varied interests can find something or the other that they would like to read.

However, generating ideas for enjoyable articles can get difficult at times, especially for young writers who are just starting out. When a new writer is recruited, the entire team does its best to make them feel at home and encourage them. That's one of the reasons why our group sessions every week are so effective. Not only do we help each other with ideas, we discuss on what angle the article can take to make it relevant for our readers, moulding the idea into something solid in the process.

Zoheb Mashiur, a SHOUT veteran who went on to become a sub-editor, remembers the journey of the publication thus far with fondness. "You really have to dig up some early issues to understand how wild that first year was," he says. "I won't say it was a great magazine back then, but it had the energy of people experimenting, learning just what they could and couldn't do."

When asked whether SHOUT has achieved what it had set out to do, Zoheb says, "SHOUT has hit a standard for quality and can be depended on to maintain it. And this is what we aimed to achieve. This is what I worked for when I was a writer, and when I became sub-editor." Rumman R Kalam, sub-editor of SHOUT who started as a writer, feels simi-

larly. "Catering to a young audience in the age of internet with paper is a challenge that would make the best of us hesitate. When I joined during SHOUT's early days, this was our biggest challenge," he says. "Looking back, now I can confidently say that we have achieved that goal. From my early days of running the 'Overclock' section (which has been handed to the very able Shahrukh Ikhtear) to 'Fable Factory' which I inherited from Zoheb Mashiur, I've always witnessed that creativity can outpace this generation's short attention span. A good story, regardless of

popular among young Bangladeshis," says Darshan Chakma, photographer of SHOUT who has the difficult job of turning ideas into relevant and attention-grabbing images. "Our team always tries to take our readers on an exciting and cheerful visual experience alongside the articles."

SHOUT is not just a product of our dedication; it's our readers that keep us going. Constant reader contributions, feedbacks and fan mails make us feel appreciated. These make us realise that our main achievement lies in the fact that

New Kid on the Block

MASHIYAT NAYEEM

I have been writing from a very young age, in broken English and horrible grammar, before I had ever known that I had a writing streak. While most kids my age had committed themselves to metamorphosing into Disney princesses, wacky cartoon

But ever since SHOUT came out three years ago, I became an avid follower of the publication. I wondered if I possessed the same talents as the writers of SHOUT, and dreamt of being a part of this platform. Fast forward to 2016, I was just learning to perfect non-fictional pieces at a journalism workshop in my school, when SHOUT announced that they are looking for writers. Inspired by the two American journal-

writers the opportunity to advocate an issue they feel strongly about. I felt that there was no better way than SHOUT to get your voice out.

I'm very excited about writing for SHOUT. The atmosphere is joyful and friendly, and the people are simply wonderful. Socialising is an important aspect of SHOUT, and the weekly meetings provide me with an effective way to break out of my shell and meet new people. The meetings are full of laughter and zeal, everyone frantically trying to contribute; it's an environment you want to keep returning too.

My fellow new recruit, Iqra L. Qamari says, "SHOUT used to be a treat for me every Thursday and now I'm part of the grand, eccentric and motivational family. To see my name in the publication among all the brilliant writers is an honour. As a newbie, it is exciting and overwhelming and I feel the need to push myself so I can do SHOUT justice. For me, it's a place where work becomes play and I feel my skills are being harnessed every day."

Writing for SHOUT is more than just publishing articles. It is giving me a chance to grow as a writer and an individual, dis-



the medium, will always earn its readership. After all, content is king."

But it's not just the quality of the write-ups that matters to us; the overall appearance of the publication is equally important. The jobs of the visual (photography and graphics) team is quite challenging, as it has to ensure that the issue looks visually appealing enough for you – the reader – to pick it up and keep reading. "The colours, visuals and graphical contents of SHOUT reflect the taste of and trends

you read SHOUT every week, and that in turn makes us strive harder.

As SHOUT steps into its fourth year, the SHOUT team is more excited than ever. SHOUT, according to Karim Waheed, "is a work in progress."

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villains and whatnot, I had picked up a pencil and attempted to create the greatest stories in the world. My mother had saved my first works. Years down the road, when my writing endeavours had evaporated, she brought up those dog-eared papers which I could barely decipher anymore. These tattered pieces were what kick-started my quest to become an actual writer."

Though I probably didn't understand much, I would read newspapers, including the youth supplement of The Daily Star.

ists who led the workshop, I applied right away with the project I did for the workshop.

The thing about SHOUT that lured me in is its casual approach to the writing style. It has refreshing content showcasing different styles and formats, and each writer has their own unique way of penning their thoughts. Then there are the light-heartedness and humour of the write-ups about seemingly mundane things. Moreover, I felt that the magazine gave its

Sure, I'm the youngest of the bunch, but age is not a parameter that the team of SHOUT considers while looking for a new recruit.

It's also a major learning opportunity for me; I have not only learned how to generate and fine-tune my ideas to make them presentable, but also to work under the pressure of deadlines. Furthermore, I get the chance to explore different subjects and writing styles and experiment with them. And it's not just me who feels this way.

covering my true potential and pushing past my boundaries. Here's to hoping that I bring you quality articles that genuinely reflect our youth – after all, that's what SHOUT has been doing over the last three years and will hopefully continue to for years to come.

Mashiyyat Nayeem has a mutual disliking for stupidity and paper-wasters alike. Be an anomaly and send her a paper free mail at mashiyyat.nayeem@gmail.com