

Hangouts Before and After School

FATIUL HUQ SUJOY

From the day we started complaining about our studies back in school, we were promised that our lives would change after we leave college and enter university. While "You don't have to study anymore" was an outright lie, many aspects of our lives did change and one of those was hanging out with friends. Whether the change was good is up for debate. Here, I rant about the differences I've personally experienced.

Disclaimer 1: Some of the points may not match with your own experiences, please don't hurt me. Disclaimer 2: Sometimes I may blabber too much about the past. Nostalgia goggles are to be blamed.

Thugness

Hanging out before graduation was all about the thug life, bunking classes and coachings, and making up false errands. Those hangouts included days of intense planning, getting into the same coachings at the start of the year, and if not, analysing the timetables of different coachings and getting into the ones with similar timing. It required a lot of communication beforehand on the internet or over the phone (free SMS packets were lifesavers). During hangouts, there was a lot of scanning the perimeter in case of any known, but unwanted, faces turning up. And if they did, there was the dilemma between hiding and taking that 2 km sprint. And most importantly, parents could never know about any of it, and that called for producing an extensive plot that excuses you, setting up alibis (usually by bribing the friendly nerd kid) and clearing up any proof of absence by taking notes afterwards (usually, again, from the friendly nerd kid).

After graduation, hangouts became just another regularity of life. Not saying that they seized to be fun, there's just no more excitement about it, especially when parents themselves encourage you to go out.

Monetary Support

While there were certainly those who were gifted with rich parents and extra allowance money, there were others who got tired of receiving a mercy fuchka from their well-off friends. This required months of saving up allowance money, walking instead of taking the rickshaw/bus regardless of heat or downpour and not buying breakfast/lunch by telling yourself 1 cheeseburger > 15 khichuri dims.

Now that we're grownups most of us have tuitions, some have part-time jobs and others have pampering significant others. But that doesn't really stop us from getting totally broke every other week.

Range

Since hangouts before graduation mostly depended on classes and coachings, there was just a limited time for escapades. And with limited time there was little scope for distant plans. Now there are opportunities for us to go anywhere we want at any time. And with that range and financial backup there's more scope to taste new food and explore the



different *chipa golis* of the city.

The Spymaster

One of the most feared upon aspects of hangouts before graduation was the spymasters, the aunties. Since hangouts were regarded as taboo, allegedly over-concerned aunties of the community always kept a keen eye on the potentially rotten kids. If they ever spotted anyone hanging out or heard a kid's name associated with something non-academic in the

same sentence, they'd scream their battle cry, "Bhaaabi!" and tell that kid's parent all about the atrocities their child and then some more.

It got worse if they found you with a friend of the other gender. They would never consider that you had studied in a co-ed school and it's normal to have such friendships. They'd conclude that the kids were either searching for a *Kazi Office* or fleeing the country.

Thankfully those aunties' grasp over the little kids' lives dissolve after graduation. But sometimes they fail to fully let go of their past life and befriend the parents, terrorizing us further with their remarks of our fallen CGPAs and fashion statement during *bhaabi* meetups.

Most aunties are actually good folks who genuinely care about her kid and his/her friends. Future aunties, be like these aunties.

Company

Growing up is a tedious task and comes with deadly consequences, one of them being the change of friend circles. Before graduation, your gang normally consisted of school or college friends. Similarity of institutions and curriculums made it possible for staying in constant non-virtual connection. University life brought with it diversity. Some friends had to leave the city and some, the country. The universities in the same cities can be located at opposite parts and traffic jams never help. Then there come the new friends, and new circles are built. And let's not forget the minor/major squabbles that destroy old friendships, irreparably breaking up circles.

But even after all that, some friendships stand the test of time. Obligatory iftar parties, reunion football matches and uno sessions always do the trick. And those hangouts are bliss.

Fatiul Huq Sujoy is a tired soul (mostly because of his frail body) who's patiently waiting for Hagrid to appear and tell him, "Ye're a saiyan, lord commander." Suggest him places to travel and food-ventures to take at fb.com/SyedSujoy.

