

# NEGOTIATING CULTURE AND IDENTITY

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PHOTO: COURTESY



On January 1988, an apprehensive woman boarded her first flight all alone, not knowing what to expect as she crossed the waters into the unknown. The journey took around a day, taking into account getting through airport security and baggage claims. And then at dawn the doors opened, and the woman was met by the burst of hot dusty winds of Saudi Arabia slicing into her face and drying her pores. Unlike Bangladesh, she knew she would not be able to smell the wet earth after the rains. She did not know when she would ever see it rain again.

That woman was my mother, and on October 18th that year, I was born.

All TCKs (third culture kids) more or less have the same origin story. No matter where we come from, it all starts the same way--through that first flight across oceans, our roots begin with dislocation. From then on what follows is continuous process of reclaiming ourselves, through the consolidation and repudiation of cultures between our country of origin and where we grow up. For children of migrants, knowing where we are "from" is a long-standing dilemma. For their parents, it is the constant struggle of trying to instill within them a patriotic pride whilst also enabling us to utilise the facilities and resources we would not have access to "back home." Home away from home in this instance is our parents, where we come home to our mother tongue, and the table laden with *bhaat*, *daal* and other accompaniments. The outside domain however, remains a space where we must reject our culture of origin in order to blend in at school and work. What inevitably follows is a feeling of ambiguity as we try to govern our desires through the abstraction of cultural borders laid down by the country of origin and abroad. This in turn manifests in the way we interact with parents and the decisions we make throughout our lives.

In the Post-Colonial world, migration results in the formation of diasporas abroad with distinct national identities. It is not unusual to take a walk through Manhattan or Queens and stumble upon Chinatown or Jackson Heights, suddenly finding yourself in a world vastly different from the one it is contained in. The tourist would find himself doubly dislocated, a strong presence of an ethnic culture within a Western domain. These diasporas are a phenomenon created and subjected

to the collective human consciousness, much like the national borders they seek to mimic. Benedict Anderson highlights this best in his book "Imaginary Communities," where he describes the occurrence of a nation state as cultural artifacts that "command such profound emotional legitimacy," giving rise to "imagined communities." Therefore for a child born away from its nation of origin, national identity becomes a birthright along with gender where his or her actions are subjected to gendered roles presiding within the nationalistic culture.

If migration is the relocation of families from one place to another,

marriage plays a crucial role enabling women to move abroad. The woman also becomes the cultural center both at home and abroad, as the home becomes the cultural space she must preserve through motherhood. However culture is dynamic and heterogenous, and therefore as shifting ideals result in changes within our social spaces, so does the position of women. The mother would find herself in the dual position as both free from the traditional demands in her national society where she does not have to cater to the presence of in-laws at home, as well as confined within the performative gendered role of a wife and mother,

responsible for passing down the cultural heritage.

As a daughter I often found myself within the conflicted position of rejecting what my mother has stood for, as well as finding bits of her within my image. The lives of migrant daughters further reshape the myth of women as they venture forth into undefined spaces, and cultural changes within national territories and crossing borders lead to our plurality, which cannot be controlled and therefore rejects any efforts towards our subjugation. And although I will never know where I am from, I will always know who I want to be. ■

## TRENDING THIS WEEK

### Trump Vs Women

Recently CNN has published photos and identities of seven women and another unnamed woman who accused Donald Trump, the US presidential candidate from the Republican ticket, of sexual harassment. Trump has already been heavily criticised even by his party leaders and workers for gross and abusive remarks on women. However, Trump denied most of these allegations and stated that nobody respects women more than Donald Trump, albeit calling them names for accusing him. Will Trump stand a chance against Hilary at the upcoming elections after this? We'll find out soon!



### Xi Visits Bangladesh

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Dhaka on October 14, 2016 on an historic visit to Bangladesh. His 22-hour stay in Dhaka opens the door of 40 billion US\$ loan for Bangladesh. Twenty five assistance deals worth of 20 billion US\$ were also signed between Bangladesh and China during his short visit. However, stringent security measures and traffic restriction in some of the most important districts of Dhaka created traffic gridlocks resulting intense sufferings of Dhakaites for two days. While some are excited about the brand new developmental projects, others are still fuming having to spend hours on the gridlocked roads while going to work!



### WHEN SAMSUNG MAKES BETTER BOMBS THAN ISIS



### Note 7 No More

Galaxy Note 7, one of the latest smart phones from Samsung became a failure as the device has reportedly been involved in a series of fire related incidents. Samsung has also admitted the device's exploding battery problem. International flights all over the world also banned use of Galaxy Note 7 on board. Samsung also suspended further production and marketing of the device and assured the customers that it would take the phone back and compensate with a new one. The internet has been bombarded with memes that are still making fun of this 'accident' by Samsung!



## ABOUT TOWN

**THE WESTIN**  
Wedding Festival 2016  
Presented by **CAMPBELL**

19-21 October (Grand Ballroom, The Westin Dhaka)

**WEDDING FESTIVAL 2016**  
Date & Time: October 21, 2016 from 10 am to 12 am  
Venue: The Westin Dhaka, Main Gulshan Avenue, Plot-01, Road 45, 1212 Dhaka  
Hosted by: The Westin Dhaka

For more information, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/126142367844820/>

**DIGITAL WORLD 2016**  
Date & Time: October 19-21, 2016, from 9 am to 12 am  
Venue: International Convention City Bashundhara – ICCB, Kuril Bishwa Road, Next to 300 ft. Purbachal Express Highway, Dhaka  
Hosted by: Wispop

For Query, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/625182817653412/>

**WPPB INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, COMPETITION, AND EXPO 2016**  
Date and Time: October 20-22, 2016 from 10 am to 10 pm  
Venue: Krishibid Institution of Bangladesh – KIB, Khamar Bari, 1215 Dhaka  
Hosted By: Wispop

For more information, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1598919583752377/>

## QUIRKY SCIENCE

### BLOCKING HIV FOR MONKEYS

An international research team has developed an effective treatment strategy against the HIV-like Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV) in rhesus macaques. According to the WHO, around 36 million people are infected with HIV and a cure for the deadly virus infection has not yet been found. An international research team that includes scientists from the German Primate Center (DPZ), Leibniz Institute for Primate Research in Göttingen, has developed a new treatment strategy against the HIV-related Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV). SIV viruses infect different primate species and are regarded as the origin of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. In

the study, SIV-infected rhesus macaques were treated with an antiretroviral drug for 90 days and in addition they were treated with a specific antibody for 23 weeks. After finishing this therapy, all macaques showed sustained control of the infection as almost no SIV viruses could be detected in the blood and gastro-intestinal tissues. The CD4+ T cells that are essential for the immune system were present in sufficient numbers in these tissues. Two years after finishing the treatment the viral load remained low, the immune system intact, and the rhesus macaques healthy. The treatment strategy thus offers a new and promising approach to the therapy of HIV infections in humans (Science).

Source: Sciencedaily.com

