

HOW IS YOUR MOTHER DOING?

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ILLUSTRATION: YAFIZ SIDDIQUI

Depression can happen to anybody.

It knows no age. No social class. No sex.

And your mother, who stays at home, cooks your favourite meals and makes sure your uniform is perfectly clean and wrinkle free, is not immune to this. Yes, we are talking about your mother— who you criticise for enjoying the absurdity of Zee Bangla serials in her free time; laugh at her for being on the phone “all day” long and often refer to her profession of homemaker as doing “nothing.”

There are far too many misconceptions and myths about depression and other mental disorders. When it comes to the mental health of homemakers, especially, people can be very critical and inconsiderate. They will say: ‘But she looks fine. She never told us that she is depressed. She does not have to deal with the negativities that exist in the real world as she does not work outside— what’s the cause of her depression? She does not have an exam to fail or a deadline to meet, what would she feel anxious and stressed about?’ Especially when the role flips, and we see the person who takes care of us now needs to be taken care of, we shake our head in denial and disbelief.

But how many of us have really thought about our mothers’ cluttered schedules? The list of work that “needs” to be done before the rest of the family goes to sleep?

Sure, there is no direct link between being a homemaker and depression. The case might not be the same for every woman. There are some who find it very fulfilling to stay at home, take care of their family, and raise their children. On the other hand, while attempting to find the right balance between their family and work life, working mothers are also often inflicted with depression.

The problem is, as a society, we tend to put an incredible amount of pressure on women in general, and mothers in particular. However, female homemakers are perhaps more vulnerable to the sense of isolation, disconnection and worthlessness. Just like their day to day hard work, their depression often goes unrecognised and untreated, until it has taken a significant toll on the rest of the family’s wellbeing.

If you take a long look at their lives, you would find one common thread in the behaviour of most Bangladeshi mothers; they put their needs last and always feel guilty about doing anything solely for their pleasure or enjoyment. Even if they do something for themselves, like shopping, reading books, or visiting a beauty salon, they often have a hard time letting go of the guilt that comes with engaging in these small pleasures.

The society, on the other hand, even now, fails to recognise household chores as real work, no matter how physically demanding and mentally stressful they are. No matter how aware we have become in terms of women



empowerment, it is still a challenge to change our perspective about the status of a ‘housewife’ that has been embedded in our tradition for centuries.

“Think of the different pressures and expectations experienced by a homemaker,” says Sabrina Hasan, (name withheld upon request) a mother of two toddlers and a former banker. “And think of how in most cases, this contribution and hard work goes unappreciated and unrecognised. Whenever I go to my son’s school to pick him up, everyone refers to me as XYZ’s mother. Whenever we receive a wedding invitation, the letter says Mr and Mrs XYZ. For me, it is not about only the monotony of household chores or a lack of mental stimulation, it is also about lacking a sense of individuality, and how I am defined by only my role as

a wife and mother.”

Sabrina’s example of feeling disconnected and lonely— resonates in so many homemakers. Sometimes we are totally unaware of the fact that even though this person lacks motivation and energy to even perform her day to day tasks, she pushes herself to the limit to make the rest of her family happy. It’s important that you talk to your mother and find out about her mental health. If you see that she is suffering from depression, even before contacting a therapist, look at the solutions that just lie around you. For many homemaking mothers, having a healthy interaction with the family and spending quality time with their children work like magic. Check in with your mother on a regular basis. Show her that you care and offer her emotional

support. Have patience. Dealing with a depressed family member, especially when it’s the person who takes care of everyone’s wellbeing, is not that easy. Ask yourself— what are her needs and dreams? Help her reconnect with her friends (thanks to Facebook, this is not that difficult a job), and assist her in rediscovering themselves. It’s important to regain her sense of individuality— so find out what her interests and hobbies are. Take her out with you for coffee or a meal. When it comes to household issues, instead of taking the backseat, help her out in her day to day work so that she has some time for herself.

Be grateful. Appreciate her work. And most importantly, recognise her efforts and stop telling everyone that ‘my mother does not work.’

STRANGE PROFESSION



SELLING LUCK ON THE STREETS

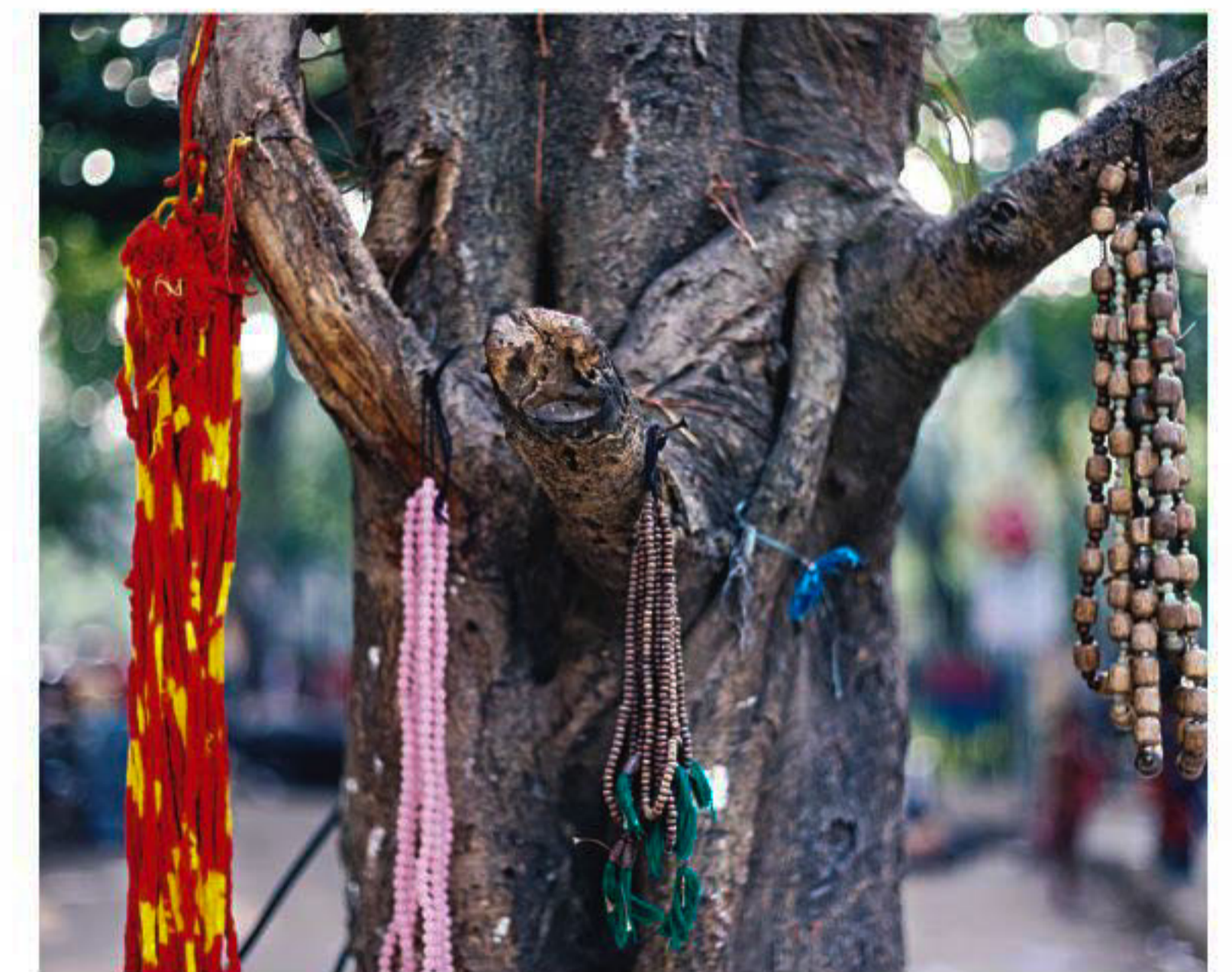
APURBA JAHANGIR

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

It takes a lot of courage to live in a city, especially when it is a city like Dhaka. As our beloved congested and noisy Dhaka grows, so does the hassles of the good people who live here. To tackle the daily hustles and bustles of our lives, a little luck always helps in this big city. In front of the Supreme Court gate Rezaul Karim provides just that. An Astrologer by profession, he sits under the banyan tree in front of the premises from noon to evening, with his box full of rings and prayer beads to — in his own words — “help the city with a little luck”.

Karim’s business idea of astrological stones came to him as a revelation. “This ‘blessing’ came to me when I was in Ajmer Sharif,” says Hakim. Before his pilgrimage Karim used to be a job holder in the Motijheel commercial area. “I had my share of bad blood in this city, but it was in Ajmer that I realised that holding these grudges was useless.” Since his disclosure, Karim devoted his life to helping people with the stones alongside advising his clients on how to devour the rahu and bad luck that are after them. “The common misconception is that one can cure everything with these stones, but it is not all that simple,” says Karim. “These stones grant a boost of good luck and will prevent the bad aura from connecting with one’s soul.” Karim’s basket of stones include Suleiman stones, sapphires, rubies etc. He also sells prayer beads, small copies of the Quran and other good luck charms. “This is my way of returning my gratitude towards people. I don’t know anything else and if people can find a little bit of hope from my side, I would be blessed,” says Karim.

As we sink into our troubled city life, it is quite interesting to see people like Karim, trying to give people a boost on luck.



BULLETIN

‘NAWABI’ FOOD AT DHANMONDI!

PHOTOS: COURTESY



Dhanmondi dwellers are now getting the opportunity of tasting the delicious Chittagonian. On November 7, the popular Chittagonian restaurant Nawab Chatga launched its second branch at Anam Rangs Plaza of Dhanmondi. The day before the official launching, the Nawab Chatga team conducted a free of cost food tasting session with the people of Dhanmondi area, shop owners and staff members, and few friends and family members.

“We are basically serving Mezbani Gosht, Kaala Bhuna, Chonar Daal, Loitta fry, Rupchanda fry and Akhnii Biriyani at the Dhanmondi branch,” says Shahidul Islam, Managing Partner of Nawab Chatga. “Also, considering the massive student groups in the nearby areas, we are providing two popular smart menus—Jhura mangsher roll at 150 takas and mezbani gosht, chonar daal, salad and plain rice at only 180 takas”, he adds.

Within a very short period of time, the branch has successfully attracted the university students and working classes in around the area. For the people who want to experience the authentic taste of Chittagonian food at home, deliveries are also made through Foodpanda, Hungrynaki and the own delivery crew of Nawab Chatga. So, what are you waiting for? Go and grab a meal, or make an order online!

