

UNDER A DIFFERENT SKY

BY IFFAT NAWAZ



While we were waiting:

How fast does sound travel? Certainly not as fast as light. Under the bright sun, all sounds seem to dissolve into light, no residues, no gripes. But what about at night? Especially in those, where sounds of decay, destruction and discrimination travel fast through frothing mouths and seep into the homes of sleeping children dreaming of tomorrow? With no light to balance out the effect of these damages to their senses.

It's November 8, 2016. I am sitting cozy on my couch in Washington D.C. as America's fate is being decided. Polls are being announced one by one, and the man with the wig is still screaming while somewhere a child's brain is forming with the beat to that broken rhyme of Trump's voice. In the last year and a half, the children who were born in America, will have Donald's voice embedded in their first set of echoic memory, some research will reveal the consequences of this tragedy may be twenty years from now.

Sound is like that; it can creep up on you. It can blend in to an environment and slowly become a part, one can get used to the irritation that it may cause, and eventually even sleep with and through it.

I remember doing that, in a village at the border of India and Bangladesh. I slept in the home of a Garo-Christian family, in a village which were mixed with Hindus, Christians and Muslims. It was a Thursday night. The beginning of the weekend. We had gone to bed around 9 pm. There were sounds of insects and the leaves against the breeze. Children were whispering the day's

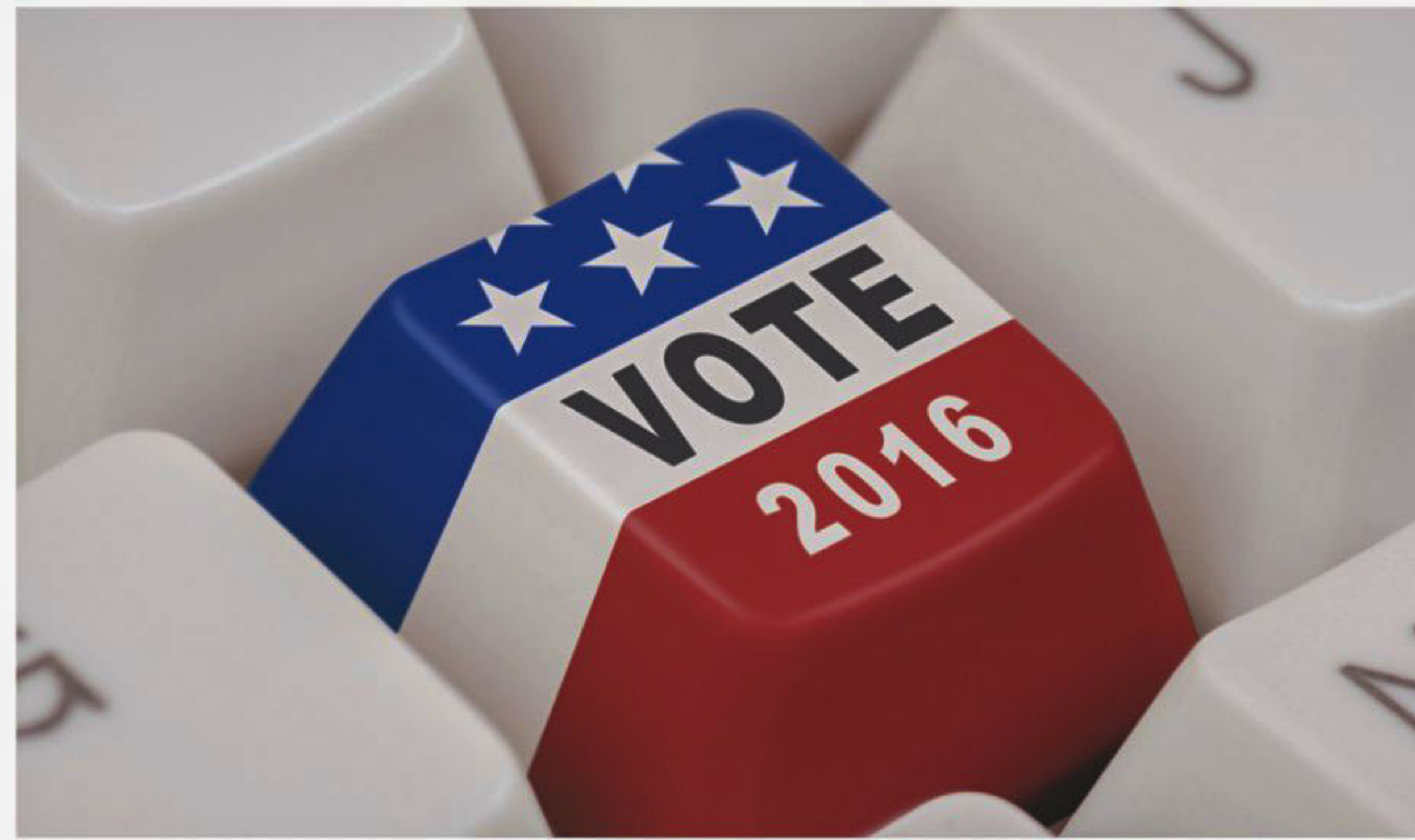
secrets to each other before they were made to close their eyes by their parents. But over it all, there was that sound which traveled sharp through the cracks of our windows – the sound of a Mullah's sermon. The religious discourse eventually started to sound like a half-baked rant piercing through the night. I figured they would stop around 10 pm but by the time they wrapped up it was 4 am. The sound became louder as the night progressed, the tone went from preachy to semi-angry, almost violent. The awfully-loud speakers were pointed towards our homes, the side of the village where the Hindus and Christians resided. I woke up feeling drunk on lunatic chatter the next morning.

The next week, a similar village like the one I was staying in, of Hindus and Christians, was burnt to

ashes. A procession was led by a sermon leader of a mosque. He had worked on his audience all night, provoking them with a poisonous destructive rant. He

had managed to spread his hatred amongst enough individuals who then partook on the burning and killing of their Hindu neighbors.

This week, BDtimes24.com reported, 632 Hindus are leaving Bangladesh every day on an average. This is 49 years after Bangladesh's independence- a liberation war fought to gain the identity of Bengal, its culture, with the dream of a secular nation. Many of these displaced Hindu families have their ancestors' blood mixed into the Bangladeshi soil, they had fought for freedom and they thought the time for sacrifice was over.



Last week, a hate attack on a Hindu village in Brahmanbaria burnt more homes. In the hopes of grabbing land, a group attacked Hindu families over a dispute on a Facebook post. According to the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, since October 30, more than 100 Hindu houses and 17 temples have been vandalised and looted.

I wonder how many of these attacks started with the sound of a preacher's voice. How many people who participated in these attacks were conditioned year-after-year, night-after-night, for that final day when they would finally become monsters, and kill and destroy for greed and power, in the name of religion.

What is the long term effect of these hateful sounds on our brains? If Trump wins the election how many people are closer to being brainwashed into participating in active destruction in America? How many children will grow up to think of this man-made-madness as a normal state of business? How many immigrants or naturalised

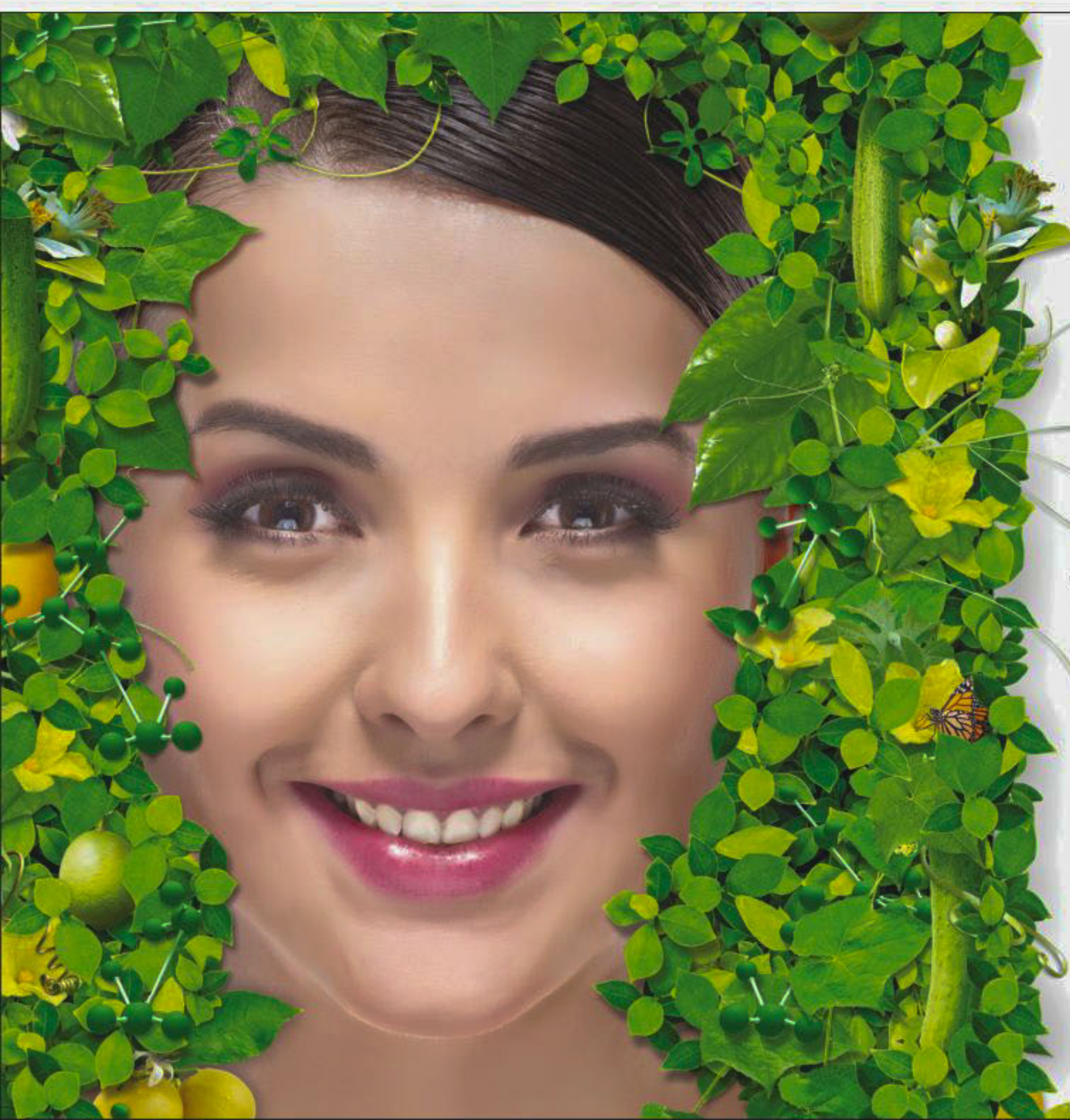
citizens will look to relocate? Migrating again to run away from the fast traveling sounds of night?

These sounds- they sneak up so easily, through the cracks of our walls and windows, and then they spread like fire, they burn our ears, then they take other forms in our dreams. In this night of November 8, as I deliberately sit in an almost soundless room, I wish for light at night, light for the tortured homes of Bangladesh, and for the fear-filled homes in America. When sounds betray all our senses, common, foreign and forgotten, we need more light, tonight the half-moon is simply not enough.

After we awoke:

P.S. It's the morning after and it rained all night in DC. The sun is shining from behind the clouds. Even if we can't see it. Raindrops make for a good healing sound, blending in with the tears rolling down on faces. Suddenly everything is very quiet, we have chosen silence over language today.

Photo: Collected



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