

TREKKING 101 A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

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PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA

There are two kinds of people in this world- those who have been on the daunting, yet incredibly beautiful journey to Nafakum or Keokradong, Bandarban and those who have it on their to-do list.

I belong to the second group. I have seen my friends posting sweeping vistas full of rugged peaks, splashed in rich sunshine. I heard their adventurous stories of night hauling with local residents and renting the *karbari* (home of the village head) in exchange for a nominal fee. I heard them saying how this experience helped to bring out the best in them and how they want to go back again and again.

So this year, I have added trekking to my bucket list. Since I do not have any prior experience, I have started surfing the internet and enquiring from experienced adventure enthusiasts about what to do and what not.

Here is a list of tips from the expert's end for beginners who are not opting for any death defying trekking trail in Bangladesh, but still want to experience this unscripted journey- to learn, to look inside and to be one with the nature.

Know your trail

"Two of the most popular trails that any beginner can go for are Keokradong and Nafakum," says Babar Ali, secretary, Vertical Dreamers- a trekking and mountaineering club formed by a group of adventure enthusiasts. A doctor by profession, Babar has been trekking for last seven years, and recently started mountaineering too. "To go to Keokradong, first you have to go to Bandarban, then Ruma and from there you need to hire a *chandergari* (a 4 wheeler) which will take you up to 11 km, and from there trekking begins."

The trail looks somewhat like this: 11 km-Boga lake-Chingri Jhorna-Darjeeling para-Keokradong (Which is, unofficially, the 5th highest peak of BD 3172 feet).

Another trail that many students go for is Nafakum, which is a waterfall situated in Thanchi Upzilla, Bandarban. The trail looks like Bandarban-Thanchi-Remakri-Nafakum.

"These days, another trail that is getting popular amongst young trekkers is the Paindu Saitar (a waterfall) and the trail is Bandarban-Ruwangchori-Paikkhong Para-Ronin Para-PainduSaitar," Babar comments.

Make your legs strong

Once you set your mind to it, it is time to bring some changes in your lifestyle. Start your day with brisk morning walks followed by jogging at-least a month before the start of your trek. If you are already a gym-goer, do more cardio exercises. I know people who carry backpacks as they walk that weighs similar to the weight they plan to carry during their trek.

Right shoes and light pack

Save money to buy the best pair of shoes that you can afford. There is no substitute for high-quality hiking boots which has great a grip, supports the ankles and takes the knocks. "Wear comfortable clothes, avoid wearing jeans and most importantly, pack light!" says Babar.

Who are you going with?

For beginners, clubs and guided walks could be a great way to start with, believes Babar. There are many Facebook based clubs like Travelers of Bangladesh, Hill Trekkers, Vertical Dreamers, Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club, Adventure club of Chittagong, Trekkers of Bangladesh, Vromin Bangladesh who conduct from exciting weekend treks to longer expeditions. They organise



camping, rock climbing, photo exhibitions, which anyone can join. If you think trudging through jungles with a bunch of stranger-trekking-enthusiasts is not your cup of tea, Babar suggests you can hire a local guide and go on your own in a group. There are plenty of research materials available online so the planning and study for the trek should be done very carefully.

Make a schedule

Trekking is an unscripted experience filled with endless surprises and unexpected incidents. Even then, making a comprehensive schedule when you are planning your trip is important and the schedule should be designed as per the climate and situation of the destination. Starting from car rental to food, everything gets expensive during high tourist seasons like Eid holidays or any other government holidays. "If you want to feel the lush greenery of the hills and see the clouds floating right before your eyes along with the swiftly cruising waterfalls in their fullest flow, go in the monsoon!" says Babar. The trails might be a bit slippery and expect lots of rain and mud- but after all, trekking is about coming out of your comfort zone and seeing the unseen. At

the end, all of these struggles is worth taking- and this is guaranteed.

Don't litter!

Don't leave your garbage on your wake. Make sure you don't throw your water bottle and plastic wraps everywhere. Also, if you find any wrappers, plastic or anything that should not be there, bring them back to the plains for proper disposal.

Know your reason

Coming out of your comfort zone, going through an arduous journey, meeting the unexpected and reaching your destination- the entire process could open your eyes. Don't go on trekking because you want to put up a status about it and show the world what you have achieved. Do it for yourself. And also, do not rush and don't make the journey look like a competition. You are here because you wanted to see, experience and be one with nature and not because you wanted to finish it before anyone else. It is good to find a pace you are comfortable with. Don't try to push yourself too much. The entire experience of walking in the glory of nature and getting a chance to embrace its serenity could be quite enlightening.

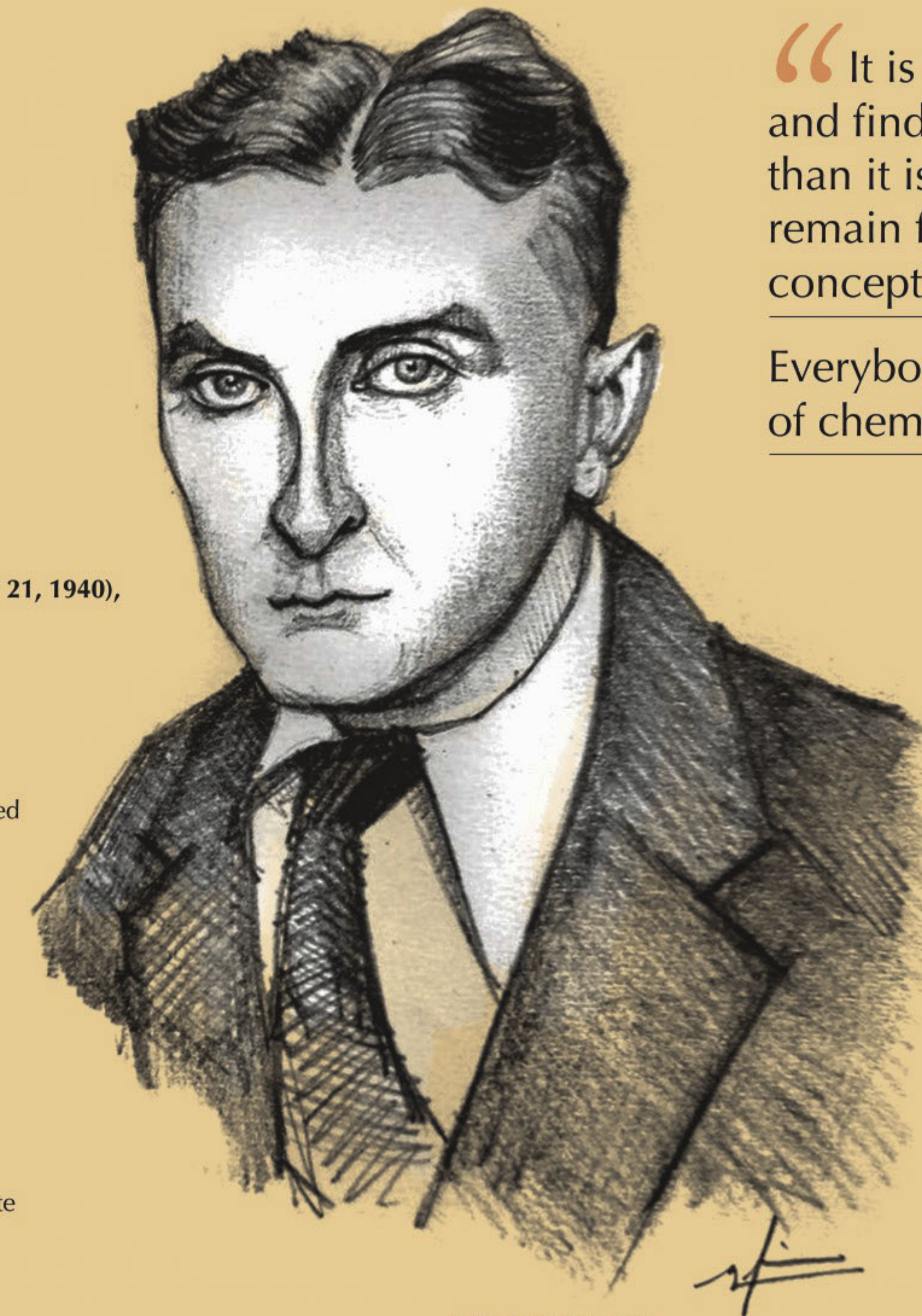
Let it enlighten you! ■

MAD GENIUS

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY FITZGERALD

(September 24, 1896 – December 21, 1940),

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, known professionally as F. Scott Fitzgerald, was an American novelist and short story writer, whose works illustrate the Jazz Age. While he achieved limited success in his lifetime, he is now widely regarded as one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century. Fitzgerald is considered a member of the "Lost Generation" of the 1920s. He finished four novels: *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Tender Is the Night*. A fifth, unfinished novel, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, was published posthumously. Fitzgerald also wrote numerous short stories, many of which treat themes of youth and promise, and age and despair.



SKETCH: YAFIZ SIDDIQUI

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA AND BRAINY QUOTES

“It is sadder to find the past again and find it inadequate to the present than it is to have it elude you and remain forever a harmonious conception of memory.

Everybody's youth is a dream, a form of chemical madness.

You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say.

Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rules. They're not like aches or wounds, they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material.”

THE AWKWARD RIDE

The other day something funny happened. One of my friends and I were in the elevator of his house where we saw his neighbour loudly talking on phone. The elevator was going to the 14th floor and it was one of those long, awkward rides for him. While he was talking on phone suddenly the phone started ringing making the guy look very embarrassed for getting caught that he was actually faking the call. Knowing how to properly fake a phone call may come in handy in certain situations. If you want to look busy or get out of an unpleasant social situation, faking a conversation may give you the excuse you're looking for. But instead of screaming in a fake call, can we not just keep silent for a few seconds? It's worthwhile to know that some people might be annoyed by your behaviour. If you cannot handle 53 seconds of silence and you have to talk in the elevator, be prepared with some easy general-interest subjects.

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STARDIARY

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

RESPECT EVERYONE

The other day my friend Iqbal and I were returning home from the sports ground in the evening. Iqbal was in a very joyous mood. He was making jokes. A few moments later we saw a blind beggar sitting beside the road. Suddenly, Iqbal went to him and picked a few coins from his pot which were kept in front of him. He showed me the coins and asked me if I can do the same thing. For a few moments I was absolutely stunned to see what he had done. I asked him to give back the coins. Iqbal denied. I don't know what happened to me and I screamed at him. Seeing the anger in my eyes he went back and gave back the coins. On our way back home we did not talk to each other. I did not know what was going through his mind but I was really angry thinking that how could he do that. First of all, that person was a beggar and moreover he was blind. I really did not find any answer. Many people around us make fun of the unfortunate people which I do not appreciate at all. We should have a minimum respect for every human being.

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