

The husband has a new thing where he invites everyone to the house. We recently had the audacity to believe we could survive a move in Dhaka, and since we sort of didn't die (except on the inside), he has developed a sense of pride about it.

I find this ironic given that he went to work one morning from the old house and returned in the evening to the new one—with zero involvement in between—but for now, I am smiling through his new-found spirit of

**Thou shall not be caught well-prepared; neither alive nor dead**

Have you ever believed you could hire someone to uninstall your fans and they would arrive with the right screwdriver (or any screwdriver)? Or that someone responsible for measuring drapes would actually have tape in their pocket? Have you, because oh sweet ignorance, it will never happen. The guy for the drapes will not have the tape just as the guy for

the paint will not have the brush. And the guy for the drilling may have the drill, but will he have the bolts? Hashtag kill me now.

**Thou shall do more damage than repair; without an iota of care**

In a phenomenon more curious than crop circles, it is with startling precision that a leak in your kitchen tap will emerge every time the furniture in your

bedroom is varnished or a light in your hallway will shatter whenever the tiles in your bathroom are cleaned. For reasons entirely unknown, an elusive correlation exists between the repairing of one fixture and the ruining of another. Suffice to say, when you bring in the plumber, expect the carpenter to follow.

**Thou shall charge more than thou quoted; always, forever**

Thankfully, and to great sadistic relief, elusive correlations end with repair/ruin ratios and the relationship between the quoted price for a service and the final bill is far more predictable. With mathematical certainty, I now safely budget Tk. 17,000 for every 700 that I was told I would spend and to save myself some misery (since I can't save myself some money), I don't want to know why. You shouldn't either. But if you must, I can save you some time (again, because I can't save you any

Eid-ul-Fitr used to rate the highest as festival of the year in our childhood, followed closely by Eid-ul-Azha and Shab-e-Barat. There were no fashion events or Eid special magazines, no concerts, no Fantasy Kingdoms, and sadly the Pahela Baishakh celebration was very small compared to the Pahela Baishakh of today.

Activities for the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr would start around the middle of Ramadan when we would visit New Market to pick out fabrics for our Eid attire. Amma would look up the trends of the day. Though we were a very middle-class family, her fashion sense was high-brow. She had a flair for clothes and fashion. Of all the clothes made for us in a year, the Eid dress was the most special. So she would flip through *Women's Own* and *Women Only* and decide what to make for the girls, i.e. my sister and me.

There was a lot of going back and forth to New Market, as window shopping was the order of the day, especially before any major purchase was made. It was fun as we, the kids, would accompany our mothers and *khalas* in Eid shopping. We would be treated with "mishiti laal supari" as compensation for our aching legs as we went from store to store. Cola or chips were not on the list of treats, as fizzy drinks were considered to be far too expensive and packaged chips were nonexistent at the time. Once in a while, when it was well past the lunch hour, we would get a treat of cream roll from the Olympia Bakery. The fat, chunky, fried farm chicken that is readily available at every corner of the market was not even in the dictionary of the stores in our childhood.

The other major Eid activity apart from shopping was spring cleaning. Curtains and bedcovers were washed and ironed, and every nook and cranny of our abode was cleaned during the last week of Ramadan. The night before Eid there was a mad rush to de-clutter the house—the tops of the chest of drawers, meat safes, and sideboards had to be made spotless. Polishing the silver "atar dan" was also a last minute activity. The *shemai*—"deemer jorda shemai" and the "dudh shemai"—was cooked well past midnight. Back then, there was no trend of *dahi bara* and *chotpoti*. Only Nana Bhaiya very creatively introduced "Murgir Nonta Shemai" to bring a change of palate in the treats for the stream of guests who visited on Eid day. In my grandfather's house, there would be fried meat slices as a variation. We would call it "goshi bhaji" Now I know they were strips of sirloin steaks.

The morning started with a lot of activity. Everyone had to take a bath before the Eid *namaz*. On a regular day, we would take a bath in the afternoon with Lifebuoy. I think this was partly because it was more economical and partly because my parents believed the carbolic element of Lifebuoy would treat the germs better. However, on this particular day of Eid, we were given a fragrant soap such as Yardley or Cussons.

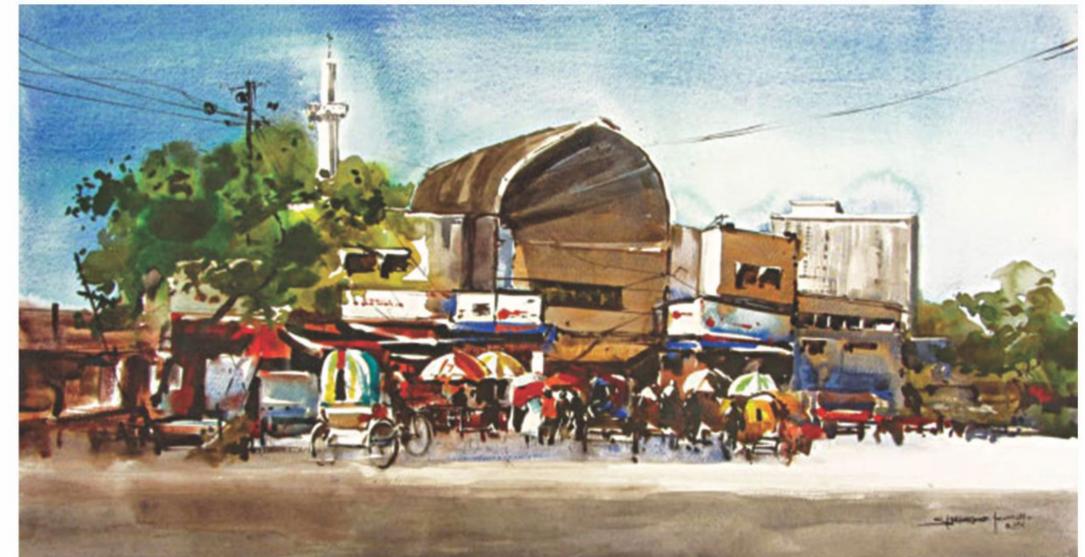
Of course, there were one or two members in the family who were rebels. In our case, it was Abba. He, in my opinion, was the party-poopier. Walking

# EID OF MY CHILDHOOD

CROSSROAD



SARA ZAKER



Shahanoor Mamun, Dhaka New Market, watercolour.

In our childhood, there was not even "Ramzoner oi Rojar Sheshey elo Khushir Eid" on the television. Even though television came to Bangladesh around '65, it took some 20 years for it to become a part of the regular household. We ran up to the roof to see a sliver of "Eid er chand" in the sky.

have his pocket filled with one rupee notes. He would offer it to the first one who hit the floor to do the salam. Soon all the cousins would line up to take turns to earn the *Eidi*. With the prized note, we bought bittersweet milk lollies from the *boxwallah* ice cream man. We were usually not allowed to have those ice creams, but on this particular occasion, the adults made an exception; they looked the other way.

In those days the cooking oil of choice was *ghee* and *dalda*. So by the end of two meals and many snacks, we were so tired and our tummies were so full of rich food, we would suffer bouts of acidity. We would be given *ajwain* to put down the reflux.

As we returned home from Dada Bari, the youngest sibling was usually fast asleep, and the rebel father would carry her on his shoulder. With droopy eyes, I would crash on the bed. Drifting in and out of sleep, I was made to change my much admired sequenced or laced Eid dress and had to get into the worn-out, old bedclothes. There were no fancy pajamas or nighties for us back then.

On the night of Eid, I was Cinderella who was changed back into her worn-out clothes when the clock struck 12. In my dreams, I dreamt of the fun I had dancing away the hours away during Eid day.

Ah, childhood!

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SUBHI SHAMA

## THOU SHALL NOT STRESS OVER MOVING HOUSES

hospitality. So much so that when his colleagues from abroad casually tell me that they ALL use our address when clearing immigration in Dhaka, I smile and nod as if the possibility of getting arrested for illegal sub-letting doesn't bother me. At all.

International travel violations aside, my solo experience maneuvering a move has led me to an important conclusion: sitting at the back of a truck smashed between one's possessions surrounded by *lungi-genji* clad men may not be ideal, but it does have its benefits. Take for example my unreasonable yet not irregular cravings for red velvet cake. I now have no qualms asking said husband to make dessert runs at ungodly hours because remember honey when I shifted house all by myself? That's right, I would get walking too if I were you.

More importantly, and this might have to do with my consistently replenished dessert belly, I find myself becoming something of a sage in all things related to house shifting. A one-stop solution for solicited and unsolicited advice for everyone and their grandmother. In fact, so deep is my insight on dealing with movers, shakers, electricians and carpenters i.e. my current speed dial, that I have taken the liberty to put down in words some commandments I swear they swear by.

**Thou shall not be on time; not once, not ever**

No matter what time your person of interest says he will arrive, it is fair to assume he will be delayed. I could comfort you and tell you that these delays are usually restricted to less than 60 minutes, but exit utopia, they aren't. In fact, they are usually so far beyond the T+60 range that you may find yourself climbing into your bathroom's false ceiling to install your own hot water geyser. To avoid disappointment, add 36-48 hours to your expected time of arrival and you should have a realistic guesstimate on your hands—except when they leave the city unannounced, in which case, bring out your toolbox.



CARTOON: E R RONNY

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money) and tell you that robust reasoning, including allegations that the work took longer than ever conceived and the equipment cost more than ever believable, will always be provided.

Seems like a terribly unfair deal, orchestrating a move all by oneself, but should you ever find yourself in this situation—and I recommend that you do, given the leverage in the marriage—do not be surprised to be left with a sense of nostalgia about the squabbles with the servicemen and the tussles with the tailor. Squad goals, they say.

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