



PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

# THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES

NUREN IFTEKHAR

*University can be considered an inexplicable place exempt from the traditional rules of time and space. One moment you walk in as a freshman with eyes full of wonder and a heart full of optimism, and in the next second you walk out as a person -- years older with slumped shoulders carrying the wisdom you wish you had before. In between there is a blur of moments that are impossible to distinguish from one another.*

In all seriousness, university is indeed one of the most challenging stages of life. The tremendous workload coupled with all the stress that comes with it leaves little space for second thoughts and elaborate plans. You're thrust into an unfamiliar world with little to guide you along the way. The

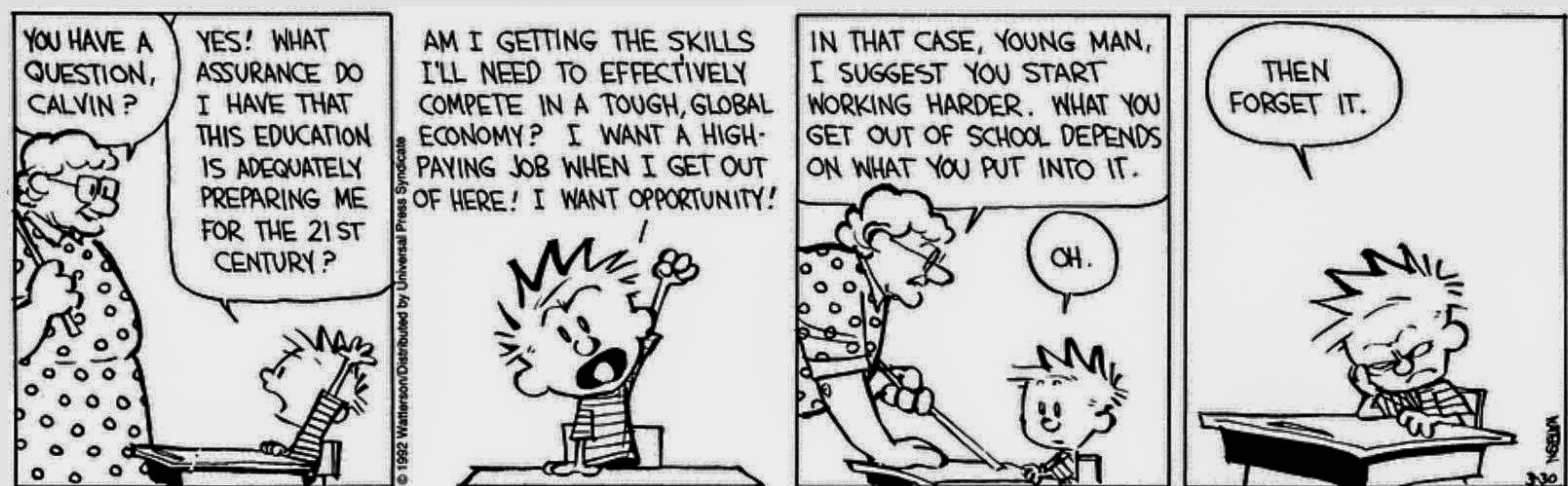
faces full of expectations and enthusiasm often fade within a span of days. At the same time, some find their calling and shine like they never thought they would.

While many consider university life to be “make or break,” it is mostly an exaggeration. It can be said with due respect to its importance that university will not break you. What frustration it might bring is mostly down to the discrepancy in expectations and results. The point of this article, however, is not to regurgitate the clichéd motivational talk regarding university life in general. It is to look at the many aspects of the life through the eyes of people in its different stages.

One of the biggest things to catch people off guard about university is the workload. This is more of a shock to people because they are led to believe that you have more freedom in university. However, freedom and free time is not the same thing. By the time you realise this you already have assignments and projects approaching their deadlines while the finals announce their arrival. The point is no matter what subject you might major in, university will never fail to fill your platter with deadlines and routines.

From a personal account, when I see a googly-eyed freshman, the one thing that is sure to catch my eye is his/her enthusiasm. This infectious enthusiasm along with a “can do, will do” attitude is fairly abundant among many others. There are a lot of reasons to be enthusiastic: a wide array of things to learn, activities to be part of, and friends to make are some of those. It is the first day of the rest of their lives.

Moupia Tajrin Oyshi, a first-year student from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), sums up the main reasons for



this. “I had kept to my studies all my life. University is a blank new slate. This time I want to have other activities and achievements beside my name as well,” insists Oyshi. Regarding what she expects from the arduous times ahead of her, she states “Judging from the first few months, I can honestly say that it won't be easy. But I believe this is something I can overcome with proper time management and planning ahead.”

Whether the expectations are to be met or not, one thing does remain a fact. University is a new canvas and you have to paint the picture. Learning to be less restrictive and more proactive with various things is something that does go a long way because if you take all other aspects out, the academics alone are sure to leave you exhausted.

While the freshman year starts off with rainbows and sunny days, it is quite common to see that replaced with doom and gloom as the sophomore year rolls by. But that is something which varies from one person to another. What is common is the reality check. By the time second year comes to an end, one stops being the rookie soldier. They are now skilled fighters rising up the ranks with many scars.

For many, the first-year experience drives them to make a number of important decisions: the sort of

higher education they should pursue, the courses they need to take to get a better grip of their future careers, and so on. Some decide to change their major altogether in light of the experience they gather.

Roshni Islam from Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) happens to be one of them. “I was told to expect an overwhelming amount of work and assignments. It wasn't so in my first semester. However, by the end of the year, it was of mammoth proportions,” says Roshni about her experience. On what drove her to change her major, she says, “My results were not up to par with my expectations and it made me unwell and resentful. With the help of my friends, I finally changed to a different major that I was more interested in.”

The results from the first few exams play a pivotal role in setting the mindset for the following years. While a good result can give a solid head start, a disappointing one leads to an uphill battle in a war.

What is required during this particular phase is an honest assessment. Was the effort in your part lacking? Is the subject something you really have to struggle with? Or is the problem in the method of your study? Only by coming to terms with the problems at hand can the major decisions be made.



As the years roll by and the end to the university life is around the corner, one is left to reflect on what they are taking away from this entire experience — a tone of seriousness and preparation for what's to come become prevalent in everyone, coupled with a fair share of regrets and worries of course.

“As I got close to my graduation, I got to understand what real life is. Nothing is ever as easy as you might think it to be,” says Mashrafi Mobarak Ashik, on the verge of graduating from University of Dhaka. “For a start, you should dig out what's in your subject and what you can make out of it. What do you want to do when you graduate? Are you happy with your subject, or do you just want to get it over with? Once you get those answers you need to build on them and stay honest to yourself.”

People don't come out of university the same person they started off as. A lot can change, and for better or worse. It is about coming in terms with the changes and adapting according to them. “I didn't know myself 100 percent until I was a university student and made friends who would go on to be a big part of my life. That's the time I found my life to be truly beautiful,” added Ashik.

Looking back at university life should not be disheartening. The things that did not go according to plan ultimately play the biggest role in helping to become a complete individual. As stressful and intimidating the whole journey can be, it is also one of revelation and self-discovery. The destiny that it leads to is not something to shrug off. However, making that journey out to be full of dread does not help. So, when you do look back at that roller-coaster ride, you should be able to say to yourself that you had your head held high and arms stretched wide. And nothing can take that away from you.

Nuren Iftekhhar is your local stray cat in disguise; he interacts with people for food and hates bright light. He got Hufflepuff 3 times straight in Pottermore so no walking around that one. Send him obscure memes at [n.iftekhhar18@gmail.com](mailto:n.iftekhhar18@gmail.com)