

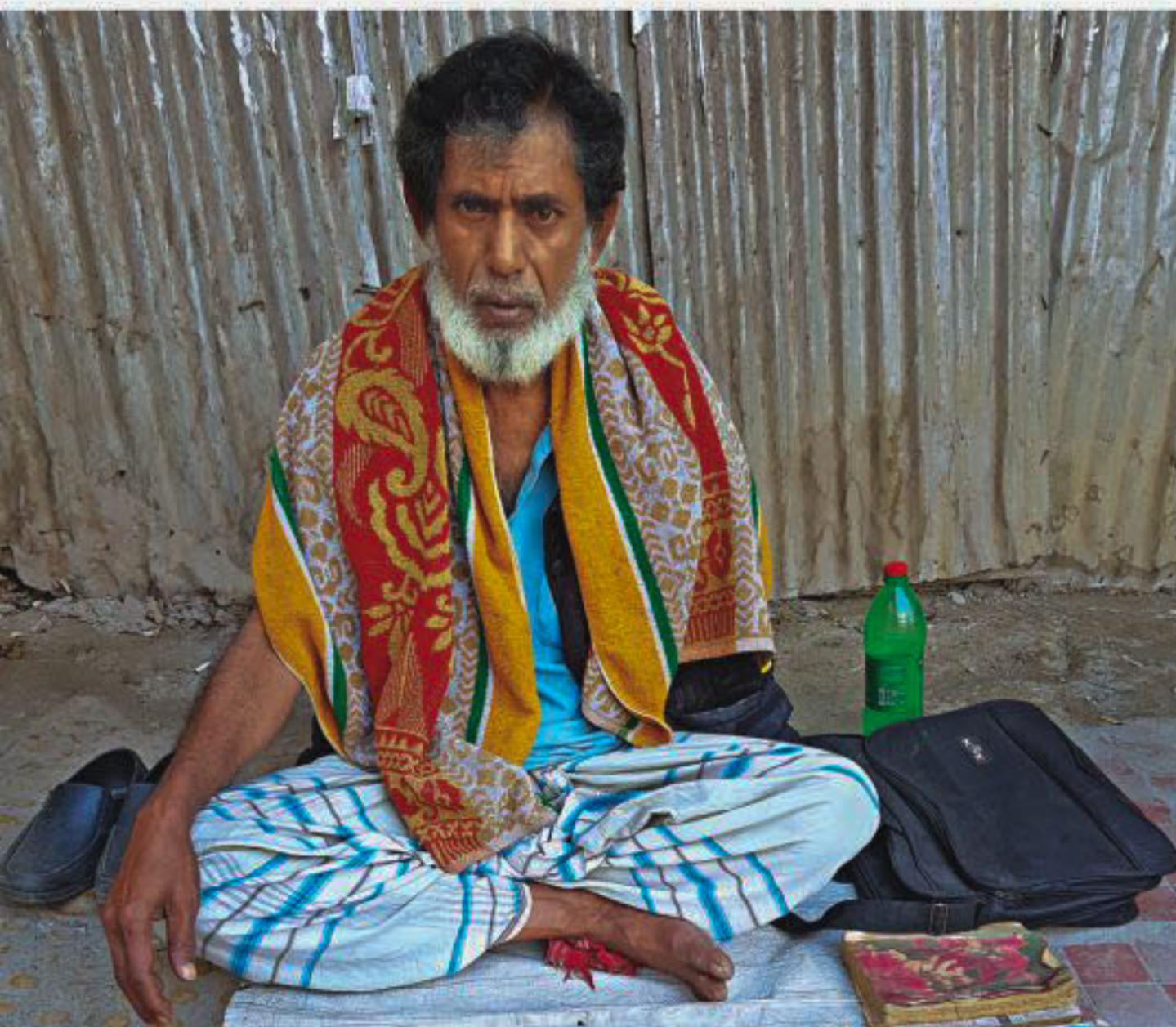
THE LIFESTYLE PARENTHESIS

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Written in the stars

TAKE ONE

Most rational human beings like to hedge our bets, minimise risks, whatever you call it. In my usually hare-brained shopping, I do like to check for the expiry dates on the juice packs and such, and the “actual” sale that the markets offer, whenever I remember to. You get the picture, I prefer to not be completely unprepared, in my own disorganised way. But the biggest bet of life has had me flummoxed since I



remember... the question of how long do I have here? Should I just give all up and start travelling now or is there still some time? Decisions, decisions. I really do wish I came with an expiry date, knowing how long I will last would give me a semblance of control. There is no such date, but there are those who promise capabilities to unravel our futures, the mysteries and such, so to speak, so you can well imagine how curious I would be to try

those. But being a kinda-sorta-trying to be good Muslim, I didn't try the forbidden arts of fortune telling, regardless of the allure. But when opportunity struck in the form of work, I definitely took it, and did not grudge the hours spent in looking for readers, or getting the reading done, albeit with a twist. False names with real dates, and a combination thereof.

So off we went in a team. I opted to see one palmist, and one astrologer, there was a budget constraint after all, no service comes for free!

For me, the palmist was an absolute disappointment. He just sat there poking and prodding my palm for the longest time, and said some generic stuff about me being inherently lucky but with a “shani” or Saturn sitting on it, not letting my luck shine, and how wearing a certain gem would make it all better, which I “could” buy from him right then. Meh, little did he know, I wear the colours of the rainbow in the gems on my fingers, changing frequently as I like my bling. If lady luck wanted one, she could have picked one.

The second person we went to was at least better at his interpersonal skills. My friends thought he read me like a book, but I beg to differ, as I have a semi-decent poker face! After all, it made him ask, “are you testing me?” Some of his revelations hit the mark well too, some were so far off, the entire solar system would fit in between. I did learn about having a different Indian astrology sign than the usual Aquarius that I had known to be mine so long. He started off with asking for my full name, birthdate, and time of birth. The name and date I am certain of, but the time was a bit iffy as I had never bothered to ask anyone about it. So a random guess sufficed. This info was used to create my very own “lagna” chart. Turns out, I am

“manglik,” so beware any possible amours, I could ruin your life simply with my dazzling presence (notice the grin.) He also said I would be married twice, so that means two people will go through that non-enviable fate. No wonder the husband count is still at zero, even at my midlife.

The fact that I am on the chubbier side did not go unnoticed, and he predicted I will get diabetes and face trouble in losing any weight. Duh, I like my cheesecake in doubles, no secret that. Also, the family history doesn't help either. Moving on to more shaming, the sun spots on my face, rather than being there due to my extreme laziness, and complete disregard to sunblock, was apparently due to the placing of my waste-basket in the wrong cardinal direction. So I should, according to some feng shui principle, move the waste basket to the south, or west, I forget. I keep it as always, under the kitchen sink.

He did say there is scope for travel in my life, and I wholeheartedly accepted that bit, for sure. This girl likes to travel. Did I come back a believer? Meh. My logic says there has to be some element of truth in it if God took out valuable time to forbid it. So I better listen, and let the future remain the mystery it is supposed to be.

By Sania Aiman

TAKE TWO

Palmistry is the claim of characterisation and foretelling the future through the study of the palm, also known as chiromancy, or in popular culture as palm reading. Those who practice chiromancy are generally called palmists, hand readers, hand analysts, or chirologists. And astrologers do nearly the same thing, except they do their predictions through a person's astrology. Got it? Great. Now try explaining that this is a 'claim' to the people who

blindingly worship, and pay lumps of money to have their life and personality being unravelled like some weird thriller novel.

Now, let me be clear, without going into too many specifics, palmistry, or any other kind of 'istry' that involves 'unravelling your fate/destiny/future/what to have for dinner' is prohibited in Islam. Unfortunately, like all things deemed prohibited, the allure of having your 'future' laid out in front of you like a tapestry is too good to pass off, our own version of the apple from the garden perhaps. While I can't say much for the other stuff, I can understand the appeal of being able to know when you meet your end, for example by being hit by a ridesharing bike, and simply not go out and kick back and binge watch FRIENDS instead. And I can't even begin to imagine the curiosity that someone with love on their brain would have regarding their future love life. Let's face it, no likes the uncertainty of being forever alone, and having a jyotishi, sporting 14 different necklaces and 15 rings with colours more than that of a rainbow, tell you that you will meet your special someone while screaming your lungs out asking a rickshaw to go to Mirpur, is more validation than having pushy friends trying to set you up on blind dates.

On the other hand (pun unintended), I also understand how nonsensical it may seem to the slightly stiff, sometimes unimaginative, members of the populous that your future is somehow written in the folds of your hand. “How the heck is my destiny, my supposed girlfriend, or my next promotion in a month, written in my hand when I am unemployed, living on daddy's money, antisocial, and just lost a round in Candy Crush,” you could be thinking. And I completely understand. It's

hard to imagine all of this written in a place that's hard to clean when you spill ink on it.

I am decidedly on the borderline of things related to palmistry. While I get the incredulity, I can also understand that some things in life can't be put on a weighing scale and measured and explained away. So, for the purposes of this article, and for your reading pleasure, I had decided to go on a little 'market research' and have my 'destiny' revealed to me, minus the theatricality you normally see on TV shows involving destinies. Like any good journalist, I decided the best way to get results would be to use a fake persona as well as my real identity, so it makes it easier to sift through rubbish.

So, without further ado, let's get down to the good stuff. We went to three separate people to have my fortunes read. The first one got my fake credentials, after which, he did an incredibly lame version of numerology with my fake cell number. With that done, he started with the palm reading, after which, I got my destiny forecast, which includes glorious fortunes yet to come, endless opportunity for travel, and weirdly, jumping from one relationship to another, without ever being able to settle down. Oh, and I apparently do not have the 'life line.' The second palmist/astrologer rang my 'hogwash' bell the moment he pulled out his laptop and started doing a weird survey style reading, where he took my name, date and time of birth, all real this time. After what seemed like an eternity, he pulled up some lagna chart, which looked like the outline of that origami folding paper fortune game that girls in our school played, yet to be folded. I also found out that I have two other zodiac signs, Aries and Scorpio, in addition to my original Aquarius branding.

“SUCCESS CONSISTS OF GOING FROM FAILURE TO FAILURE WITHOUT LOSS OF ENTHUSIASM”

Winston Churchill