

THE LIFESTYLE PARENTHESIS

DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2019, FALGUN 12, 1425 BS 09

The session suddenly turned from utter nonsense to definite shocks. He started to point out certain facts that were definitely on, or near the mark, and not the vague stuff that most people latch onto. While I wasn't a big fan of the doodling he was doing on my hand, some of the more intimate knowledge he was coming up with was more than enough to distract my annoyance. To keep things interesting, I vehemently denied just about everything he was getting right. However, as all good things in life, it was also coupled with some nonsensical filler, such as being told not ride on bikes, a near non-existent life line, getting into arranged

supposedly on it.

As I walk out of this entire experience, I am still left feeling somewhat unchanged in my opinion. So, if I were to take all of this seriously, I am, according to the astrologers/palmists, a very famous ghost who can't find love, with severe road rage, and not allowed to ride a bike, in a country predominantly reliant on Ubermotos and Pathaos, and very good at marketing, so perhaps I can put out a good word for us ghosts and the astrologers/palmists that made me so.

By Intisab Shahriyar

TAKE THREE

You would think that being raised in a Hindu household would make me quite the expert when it comes to understanding the religious connotations and practices in relation to how astrology and Hinduism coexist. Heck, that was exactly what made the biggest sceptic in my own family.

Before you start hurling chunks of dhooop at me, it is important to clarify that I acknowledge the privilege that came with my birth right. A big part of Hinduism is allegorical, focusing on human nature and celebrating womanhood. But the astrology and palmistry practices related to the faith are ones I barely tolerate, even with endless vats of salt.

A quick google search, and I managed to find one near my workplace, located in a shopping mall in one of the busiest hubs of Dhaka. Being recently married, the astrologer I was going to could base whatever claims he had to make on my very visible shidur, shakhas and wedding band. So, I washed it off, and took off my shakhas and ring.

The astrologer's shop took some time to be found. You see, the forefront for these shops are usually selling what they claim as semi-precious stones in the form of jewellery. The setting is very similar to that of visiting any local general physician's chamber; pharmacy up front, doctor out back! The authenticity of these stones are pretty suspect if you ask me. But for a mere Tk 500

there is an expert sitting in the back of the room, claiming to be an astrologer and palmist. I sat down, and the old man took out his "prescription pad". He asked for my phone number, place and date of birth and full name. I confidently fed him "tweaked" information, just to prove a point. He did some calculations using the wrong digits of my mobile number and the correct date of birth. I smiled politely as he drew some conclusions based on his 'numerology' scam. He informed me that my zodiac sign was Gemini, ruled by the house of Mercury, and people under this sign are naturally studious and of high intellect and usually inclined to focus on technical subjects like science. "You are from a science background, right?" I saw through the persistence. He was trying to put words in my mouth. Of course, I am a student of science, because essentially, every discipline is a science in its own way. I nodded in agreement, resisting a strong urge to roll my eyes, and said, "Yes, in social sciences". He went on to tell me that if I wanted, my educational career could progress further down and am destined to go abroad if I choose to. That led him to inquire whether I had anyone living abroad. Everyone has someone living abroad. Such vagueness in his question was astounding.

Wealth wise, I would always be fortunate, and apparently, already am. The confidence with which he kept repeating about this non-existent wealth had me speculating his enthusiasm. Turns out, I had forgotten to take off the solitaire diamond pendant around my neck that he had probably caught a glimpse of and the matching studs on my ears.

He then turned towards reading my right hand, because apparently, whichever hand is the most dominant should be read, as it carries all the brunt of everyday work done. Disappointingly, he commented that either Shani or Rahu had entered my fate, hence prolonging or causing delays in my plans. He asked if I was married, and when I told him that I wasn't, he was awestruck. "You

should've been married by the age of 28, or at the very least, last year for sure!" I looked at him innocently. He already knew I was knocking on 30. What amazed me was the correlation he made between not being married to Lord Shani. He also added that it had an effect on my luck line as well. "It is of utmost importance that you start wearing an emerald ring to ward off this negativity in your life."

In terms of romance, he had the best advice to part. Apparently, the love I would have to give to my partner would be unconditional and unreciprocating. Meaning, I was setting myself up for disappointment and regret every time it was not returned. Post marriage, I would still develop feelings for other men, for which reason, I would never really ever have a love that lasts.

At this point, you would think that I learnt my lesson, but no! For the sake of authenticity, I decided to find another one, and this time, be as authentic as possible. The shidur, shakhas and ring had made a comeback in search of my next quack!

The next one was a sight for sore eyes. He reminded me of Bappi Lahiri, with all the necklaces that still couldn't hide his double chin. He started off with spraying some cheap perfume on my left hand. Staring at my palm for a while before asking me in English if I spoke Bangla. Confused and curious, I replied back in full Bangla "Why wouldn't I"? See, this is the play they make. They talk you up so that you are mentally open to whatever they have to say, because after all, everyone loves to hear themselves being praised. He said my life and luck line were good, in fact, I could settle abroad very easily! Asked if that was why he had questioned my proficiency in Bangla, to which he agreed. He essentially went the same route, but with the added knowledge of my marital status, and said that my husband would treat me right and that we would have three children. He held my fingers up, palm facing towards him and said that there was a slight tendency of shani in my fate. My inner

sceptic and pessimist was rolling on the floor in tears! At this point, shani was my next-door neighbour! Only a dodo would fall for his trap. But I wasn't finished with adding fuel to the fire. As he went on, he told me I would do business. A baffled me, clarified that I had never felt the need to start a business and thought would fare better at a service-based job. This dance went on for a while. He was literally throwing random things at me, only to quickly change his words the moment he sensed rectification in my words.

I saved the best for last, when I told him what the previous astrologer had told me, claiming that he was the family's designated astrologer. I even went as far as to say that my marriage was predicted to not work out either. He dismissed all the previous claims, telling them they were wrong, starting from reading the right hand to no new romantic developments.

Here's the thing. Every time you read the attributes of your own zodiac sign, you start thinking it is true just because of how relatable it sounds. It is the same with these astrologers/palmists as well. Assessing quickly and efficiently from what you are wearing to how you speak. You do have to give them credit for being experts in just how well they can read people.

They start by telling you random things; things that we all wish or are concerned about. Travelling abroad, education, wealth and love. Some of their "predictions" are more contextually social than actual prophesying.

So, if you expect me to believe that my fate was sealed even before I could utter the word "No", then no! No, no, no. Maa Durga give me the strength and patience to break through this façade with 99.99 percent confidence intact in my attempt to prove today that these so-called astrologers/palmists are nothing more than con men trying to get you to do buy these questionable stones at their stores.

By Supriti Sarkar
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed



marriage, my wife's apparent miscarriage and sons, being told to keep a healthy distance from the future mother-in-law (an advice that comes naturally), somehow becoming famous when I have a non-existent social life, and not mature enough (fair enough). I walked out, slightly shaken from the experience, wondering if all the believers actually are onto something. Thankfully, the third one brought me back to reality, with the astrologer/future predictor team back on form, spouting the same nonsense that makes me distrust them more than expired milk. This palmist spent more time poking and prodding my hand than actually reading what is

Lounge KEY
FIRST IN BANGLADESH

Roads of Silk

Because you've earned it

- No extra card required for lounge access
- Use LoungeKey App* to stay updated
- Discounts at retail, spa & dining at airports

ACCESS TO 1000+ AIRPORT LOUNGES

CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS

3 FREE SUPPLEMENTARY CARDS

CREDIT SHIELD

BUY ONE GET ONE

2FA FOR E-COMMERCE TRANSACTION

MEET & GREET SERVICE

DISCOUNT PARTNERS

LOUNGEKEY APP
*Available in App Store & Google Play

For more information please call 16474 / +88 09678016474 (dedicated 24 hour call center), or visit our website: www.dhakabanktd.com/roads-of-silk, or scan this QR code