

What's wrong with one star?

In the spirit of the #10yearchallenge that seems to be the gripping trend in social media at the time of this writing, why don't we look back at our own lifestyle 10 or 20 years ago?

See where you are eating?

Or, where you shop?

Or, the products and services you use?

Unless you have been living under a rock, in which case, it's your fault anyway, the changes in our lifestyles should be painfully obvious. We are now neck deep in what we once playfully considered enemy territory; the prim and posh five-star routine.

There you were, having your kebab stuffed in bun burger just down the road from your coaching centre, and now 10 years later, there you are again, chomping down on delicious food; yet again, but this time a very expensive platter, dipped with cheese, meat, and pasta, and prepared in a manner similar to being in a laboratory. Not only is the food served different, but also the place itself is also fundamentally different. No longer are you in a shop that is 10 feet away from some coaching centre, but rather, a posh five-star hotel in an

just about anyone can afford. And then who can every overlook the convenience department stores have brought.

The benefits are numerous, but that does not exempt the flaws that exist in this type of lifestyle, especially with it becoming the only way of life for some.

The 'five-star living' thrives on social media, with hashtags and selfies. This has not just become a matter of convenience, but also a sort of gauge of superiority amongst some people, and people who feel they can't measure up just because they didn't have their breakfast at Gloria Jeans!

And let's not forget that the five-star lifestyle, despite being more accessible to a larger audience now, is still an expensive affair, particularly more so if you still survive on your parent's money. This means there is more spending happening than there is saving, something the older generation did well.

Five-star living have other, much more veiled, consequences that do not become apparent to the casual observer. The same hand that brought you the higher income, that sustains your lifestyle, is also eating



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or worse, shut down completely.

Vacationing is another aspect that reflects the negatives of the high roller. Back in the day, a vacation for most of us would be a trip to our ancestral homes for three days, catching up with the out-of-town relatives, and maybe do bonfires and share ghost stories.

The really lucky ones could afford to cross the pond and go to fancier places, but even they had to limit their trips to maybe once a year or two.

Now, the story is very different, as the amount of people heading out of the country for vacations have jumped to unimaginable numbers. And it just isn't vacations either, special occasions also warrant a trip out of borders — Eid, New Year's, birthdays or anniversaries!

We get it, the villages no longer feel like villages, but rather, just another neighbourhood through a narrow alley, and most of the people we loved are now part of the population statistic of Dhaka. But, that doesn't mean our country has nothing on offer for vacationers looking to chill without having to worry too much about the bill.

What many people choose to ignore is that Bangladesh has a good set of resorts all over the country. We even have community tourism, a concept mostly unheard of in Bangladesh, offering visitors a unique experience of living and chilling with the indigenous people there.

If that's not your cup of tea, why not head to the exotic resorts in Cox's Bazar? You get private beaches, sumptuous luxury and great food, while still squarely within the boundary of the nation. However, what usually happens is most people end up on planes heading to Thailand or Bangkok to experience pretty much everything they can do here, and in the process, hurting the tourist industry here.

Dhaka's urban landscape, despite what the traffic makes it out to be, is small enough in terms of commute, and no place you can think of is more than 6 km away (unless you bring up Uttara, in which case, it's more appropriate to get a passport for travel, rather than a commute).

It's no secret that public transport here is woeful, and the introduction of ride sharing services have been a total god-send. But like all good things, it doesn't last long, and now, to get in on the business, the roads are packed with more bikes and cars than the city roads can deal with.

Here's a tip; unless you are in a 'hair on fire' level hurry, you don't need to call an Uber or Pathao. Why not enjoy the streets the way we used to when we were younger and just use a rickshaw, or just WALK? It's the eco-friendliest (matches with the current trend of go eco and all that), it helps the underprivileged, it costs much less, and you get the wind (or sand) in your hair; what's not to love?

Don't get us wrong here; we are always a fan of advancement, and the five-star living has tonnes of ups that you just can't deny. Food, travel, living, fashion; you name it, there has been improvement in it. But if dialled up to 11, even the best of things could just be another unwanted shadow in a bright beautiful room. You know what they say: "Everything in moderation, including moderation."

By Intisab Shahriyar
Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

upmarket neighbourhood.

The credit for this lifestyle bump goes to the rise of income in the middle class, leading to access to better standards of living. Other factors such as access to information, education, cultural dissemination are also key for the general rise of standards of living amongst the middle class society.

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Things are so much better these days, with proper cakes being available at prices

away at your precious time.

In the olden days, we would see our parents always come back home in reasonable hours and had enough time to spend with their families or friends, or with themselves.

Fast forward to today, and what you will find is a complete lack of time amongst most, if not all, officegoers. Couple that with near cutthroat competition, and what you have, is a recipe for psychological disaster. Our desire to socialise and lack of time forces us to stare at our screens all day long. These, and many other factors, are some of the root causes of psychological problems that we face.

Research conducted on depression in most developed countries show a trend that aligns perfectly with the scenario

above. Lack of time, and putting careers on much higher priority list also impacts lives of families, often times leading to estrangements and divorces.

If you are a fan of tradition, believers in five-star living wishes you are not! Before you raise your pitchforks in protest, let me ask you this: Do you know of someone who has perhaps spent their Baishakh at the lobby of a certain hotel in a certain neighbourhood, rather than going to Ramna Botomul and watching the real celebration there?

Are they donning the classic sari and panjabi combo, or are they sporting the newest gown and jeans below the bum style? See a trend there?

As is the usual case with us Bangalis, we always take on the styles of other culture to too many extremes, and that goes for the five-star living too. Name a festival or event, and you will find a crowd, wearing, eating, and attending at the wrong place at the wrong time.

People say that one of the best things that have come out of the five-star march is the number of establishments that can now thrive, thanks to the financial boost in society, establishments that were once thought to be unfeasible just 15 years ago. One of the primary beneficiaries of this new business scheme are the new luxury hotels popping up all over the capital, followed by upscale restaurants dealing with exotic foreign cuisines.

And, for the most part, people are right. Choice is always good, and the rise in restaurant numbers have given rise to stiff competition, which is always good for the consumer, as they end up with better and better products, and services. However, the problem lies when your consumers wants nothing but the high class stuff, and forgets that there are other, sometimes just as delicious, if not more, options out there.

Ask yourself this: Which would you have — a piping hot shish kebab from any decent local 'restoras', or a Grilled Skirt Steak with Herb Salsa Verde at some fancy restaurant whose name takes 2 minutes to say? Whatever answer you pick will reflect everything written here. Because of these big businesses, a lot of properly good, but smaller budget ventures get overshadowed,