

# Post-graduation blues with a hint of Corona

I was on my way back to Dhaka on 15 June, 2019, on a one way-ticket flight from the United States of America. After rejecting one job offer that paid the bare minimum and two unpaid internships in the 'land-of-opportunities,' I was determined to look for a better platform for myself and make a statement of success; like the most of you. You see, I had a very clear and organised plan of working in Dhaka, saving up a good portion of money and spending some quality time with my family here before reapplying for graduate school. So far, everything was going as planned and while sipping my orange juice sitting on a window seat, looking out the now rising sun over some unknown country, I was content.

Soon after I arrived in Dhaka, I was consumed by the infamous summer weddings and numerous 'catching-ups' with my friends and family. The familiar hustle and bustle of Dhaka city poured in and out of my daily routine once more, and to be honest, I was loving it! To make things better, I landed myself a dream job for all economics graduates at one of Dhaka's finest research firms. In short, life was good and I was right on track in achieving my five-year-plan (yes, I'm one of those).

However, (and there is always a however,) something larger than my life plans was looming right around the corner. After working at my job for six months, I had

a sudden vision of trying a different field of work at a much bigger platform. My applications and interview for that particular vacancy went extremely well and in the spur of the moment, I left my current job. And that was when everything began to change rapidly and without warning — the project I had applied for shut down (enter Covid-19) and before I knew it, I was living under the title of unemployed.

I needed a breather from the hectic life that I'd been living and thought of using this time as an excuse to be away (for a short while) from both work and studies. I, along with the people around me started spending more time with their families and explored their creative sides that included any and every skill that was humanly possible. Some even tried inhuman skills (at least to me) of baking the perfect bread from scratch or completing a data-coding course work. In short, the coronavirus seemed to have brought a massive change to our robotic lives.

Fast forward to almost five months amid the pandemic, I am losing my mind and my hair. What seemed like a relaxed holiday soon turned into trapped isolation. Like most of you, I never imagined the virus to last this long, I truly believed that the situation would be back to normal in no time, and in the meantime, I was enjoying a much-needed break. Little did I know that we were moving

towards what is now known as "the-new-normal."

It is hard for me to pour out my emotional struggles like this on a public platform, but I truly believe that it is extremely important for us to share our thoughts and emotions with each other in these appalling times. It is important for us to realise that we are not the only ones waking up in the middle of the night with anxious thoughts and the looming fear of failure. We are among the many who are besieged by the horrors of this pandemic and its everlasting effects. And no matter how many perfect breads we make during the day, the terror of the unknown future keeps us up during the night.

On a personal level, I have been experiencing a series of anxiety attacks that mainly focus on my career. Being a discernible part of the "lost-generation," I often have days where there is nothing I can think of except the fact that my five-year-plan has gone down the drain. Being unemployed post-graduation and not knowing where and when I can apply for graduate school does not help my situation. On days like these, I feel lost, like I am worth nothing. I question my qualifications and I question my fate.

But here is where we all go wrong. The human brain often tends to be extremely pessimistic. Over the last few months, I have

realised that the true meaning behind being successful and happy in life is adaptability. I understand and realise that a lot of our plans have been delayed, are uncertain or have already been cancelled. Be that weddings, travel destinations, education and employment — our dreams of each seem to be getting less achievable by the second.

Nevertheless, it is important for us at this stage in life to rearrange our timelines in accordance with recent changes. There is no use for us to sit back and cry over situations that we do not have any control over whatsoever. Instead, apply for the next semester, research on current job opportunities, take that impossible data-coding class, improve and boost your resume, keep on planning that wedding with more details (now you have more time to make it perfect) and lastly, just bake that bread from scratch already!

This is a time for patience and a time for endurance, it is a time to be considerate and kind towards each other, a time for us South-Asians to realise that mental health is as important as our physical health. For my religious friends, this is the best occasion to show your faith in your respective Gods. And as for my non-believer friends, persistence and perseverance goes a long way, keep on trying, for this too shall pass!

**By Arusa Rahim**

# Flighty love affair of balloons

I have always thought of balloons as a merging point for dreamscapes and reality, like candies from my imagination put on a blue summer sky canvas — their translucence lending the belief that there's more than just air holding them afloat.



The red ones are straight from my memories of "Le Ballon Rouge," and when they bounce unexpectedly, a corner of my heart always hopes for sentience, a loyal helium filled friend to protect against slingshots and sharp edges.

There's undeniably magic in the sight of a child who has come in possession of a balloon; their glee making them skip on spot, the sugar rush-like excitement vivid on their face, attention phasing in and out of this world, and adventures in the palms of the tiny tot visible to any passer-by paying attention.

Many parties throw them on corners for the perfunctory appearance of fun, but it really shows when someone does so. In a world with award winning art and photograph from the same props, what a disservice it is to be dismissive of them.

The quest of friends blowing up balloons for a surprise party, a date with a bundle in hand, or someone happy with a balloon in one hand and an ice cream in the other cannot be mimicked without effort or thought.

A proper fair has to always feature blue and pink candy floss and an uncountable number of balloons.

There is an expression in Japanese, "fuwa fuwa," which is used to express the feeling "light and airy." And that light-heartedness is carried by balloons all around the world.

I once saw a girl cry from just looking at a room full of airborne balloons with cards attached to them, with little regard to what happened to her mascara and all the adoration of the world for her significant other. It was one of the sincerest efforts at a birthday party I had ever seen.

Just how we accept the possibility of heartbreak, we brace ourselves for the tragic fall of balloons or their deflation, or of an annoying uncle at a party popping one for attention.

Maybe we fall in love with balloons as kids and carry remnants of that onto adulthood, and rarely do we stop to get some, but the love for them follows us around whenever we pause to look at them.

Shuffling through my memories, I find they are quintessentially Bengali in how I have seen flocks carried in one rickshaw by a romantic hero silhouette, or vendors on random streets of Gulshan or Banani, beside the fuchka stands and tea stalls.

**By K Naim Uddin**  
**Photo: Collected**