

STOP ROMANTICISING THE SACRIFICES OF MOTHERHOOD

ANUSHA MOURSHED

Motherhood generally comes with a lot of love, solicitude, and a great deal of sacrifice. There are very few things that come with such selfless and pure intent like that of a mother's benevolent sacrifices for her children. From the basics of feeding and raising their children to the death of plenty of careers of these nurturing women, the limits are boundless. There really is no way around admiring and applauding these brave women for all that they do for us.

However, there seem to be some extremely unrealistic expectations set by the extreme glorification of a mother's sacrifices all over the world. Although all of their unparalleled contributions are more than commendable, it is also important to allow them to make choices for themselves from time to time, if not always.

The primary issue with overly romanticising these sacrifices is that it sets superlative and unreasonable standards that are almost impossible to meet all the time. This in turn ostracises many mothers who find themselves feeling insecure for not being able to score the "perfect parent" tag. Subsequently, this makes it all the more difficult for moms to ask for help. Furthermore, it convinces numerous women that they must surrender all of their personal ambitions, wants and goals because if they don't, they are selfish.

The internalised prejudice within society expects mothers to have it all together and to enjoy every minute of this rewarding yet exhausting process from the moment their child is born till they grow up completely. This pushes mental health issues such as postpartum depression and anxiety under the bed and makes it rather difficult for these women to adjust with the new changes they are suddenly required to make.

Such idealisation also lets countless fathers off the hook since the societal expectations from them often start and end with providing for the family. How many people really care as much if a father has cooked, cleaned or attended his children's parent-teacher meetings? Even if they have, chances are that they are far more applauded for the same actions than any of our mothers ever have been. They are met with more appreciation simply because when father's take such responsibilities, they are doing things that are not already expected of them. The question is, why not?

It is crucial to maintain transparency for the sake of our heroic mothers to let them know that it is alright to feel frustrated, exhausted and everything in between. Motherhood is not all peaches and cream and it should be okay to acknowledge that. Do not forget to praise your mothers for all their blood, sweat and tears and also remember to tell them that it is okay to make mistakes. Let them know that it is alright for them to put themselves first, take a day off every now and then, and most importantly remind them that all that they do for us is enough.

Amusha usually has a lot on her plate. Send her memes and motivation at amusha.mourshed11@gmail.com



7 Stages of Online Shopping

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

Picture this: It's 2 AM and you're curled up in bed, your face illuminated by the light from your phone screen, as you scroll through your Instagram feed. Your eyes light up when you come across a bag you've always wanted. And so it begins.

Stage 1: I want it.

You've been looking for a bag in that colour for months! You tap and swipe, looking at all the pictures they have, a smile tugging at your lips. It's the exact colour you've dreamed of. You must get it.

Stage 2: Time for some math.

With fingers crossed, you look for the price. You put on your accountant hat as you squint your eyes and frown. With no hint of the girl who failed sixth grade Math, you're doing mental math at a pace that would have impressed your teacher.

You did just buy those books. You chew on your fingernails in anxiousness as you try to convince yourself that you can afford this. So I'll just hold back on the takeout this month.

Stage 3: I deserve this.

When you find that the numbers aren't exactly on your side, you find a different way to convince yourself. *I worked so hard this month. I never really buy anything for myself.*

You try not to pay attention to the closet filled to the



ILLUSTRATION: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

brim with all the bags you thought you deserved. *Yes. I can get myself things now and then. I deserve it.*

Stage 4: But is it worth it?

You impress yourself with the speed at which your mind changes and thoughts take a completely different route. Your brain is now reminding you of all the things you could get if you didn't spend on this bag. Or maybe you'll actually be responsible and save?

Yes. You're finally doing the responsible thing. You scroll past the pictures, determined to get the image out of your mind. You pat yourself on the back for

being so grown up.

Stage 5: Hmm. Reality check.

Your maturity lasts all of thirty seconds, before you find yourself back with the image. You have no idea how you got there. But there you are. Convinced that with this bag, you'd be a much happier, cooler person.

Reality hits you hard. You have the mental age of a child and have no self-control over yourself, so pretending that you would save this money is bizarre.

Stage 6: You only live once!

You've bought it! You've placed the order and for a brief moment you're satisfied with yourself. You look at the picture and smile.

The next few days, you glance at the progress of the order repeatedly. You show everyone the picture of the bag for validation as you say, "Why not, right? I mean, if not now, then when?"

Stage 7: Regret.

A few days pass and the honeymoon phase dies out. You're now staring at a different bag. One that's definitely more what you wanted than the one you ordered. You come across ten other things you're sure would have been a better purchase.

Oh well. Next time.

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com

Where is Winter?

HIYA ISLAM

Fleeting days, lingering nights. What's expected to sink the mercury yet makes it reach great heights. What am I?

You guessed it right, it's a sorry winter.

As lowest temperatures "surge" every season and headlines obsess over cold wave forecasts, overtime, we have witnessed changes in Mother Nature's bitter cold guise. I am supposed to be shivering under covers, sipping hot tea (or hot chocolate as I'd prefer) with my numb fingertips prancing across the keyboard. It is mid-January; the calendar should scream winter. But, #WhereIsMyWinter.

Thirty years ago, we'd be already living at biting temperatures. I know we don't go sub-zero in Bangladesh; anything around 10 °C assuredly puts us in a daze. It's 2021 and we are currently getting by some kind of a climatic mood-swing. Historically, winter rages on from November till February in the country. But I am now wondering if I should start tucking away my winter clothes? Are you even using them?

Misty mornings, balding trees and chapped lips – ah, the sweet hallmarks of winter. Foggy sunrises, too. If only they were a thing today. In fact, the span of mist every morning hardly counts. Make that idle morning, please. Mornings that are unnecessarily lazy, if not hazy. The (slight) drop in temperature sends us endotherms straight to dormancy, we cannot help it.

On second thought, is it even fog? Or are we confusing it with smog?

Remember when we took the first cold

spell in the city as a sign to bring on the winter fashion. You see, how many have you worn outside? No, it doesn't count if you took off your shawl after a few hours or if you held your jacket all day no matter how gracefully. It's okay to not be able to match that sweater with your shirt. Some of us did not care to go for winter shopping to begin with. I tried to put together a "cute winter look" I had saved on my phone since May, but it made me scratch and sweat till I gave up and changed into my pyjamas.

While on the subject, I think I have outgrown the last pair of gloves I had bought ages ago. At one point in time, my drawers almost flew open with a massive collection of socks. Yes, socks. An essential item to protect your feet from frigid floors (ring any bells?). By the way, mufflers are pretty much extinct now.

Moving on. It seems none of us realised that we do not see our foggy breaths anymore. The thrill in puffing out smokes has faded amidst the bread-and-butter frenzy. The science behind this is even more compelling. On a fine (read: sweaty) summer day, the temperatures are warm enough to let the water vapour we breathe out to stay in that gaseous state. On a wintry day, it can get cool enough (say, about 45 F or 7 °C) to let these vapours condense into tiny droplets of water that we see as a cloud of fog. In short, it never gets cold enough.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. And that iceberg is called climate change, friends. Winters are to get warmer and

shorter as time passes by. Its effect is all the more evident in guest birds who come and go as they please, nonetheless have a pattern of arrival and retreat. Aside from the pandemic and the subsequent stupor in anthropogenic chaos, the bird show often presents us with alarming signs followed by disappointment. Is it possible that, someday, these birds may never return? Will there be any special reason to visit the Jahangirnagar University campus in future winters?

It is a strange affair; to have a whole season slowly wiped out or be turned into a series of cold spells. While that counts as a plus for those who despise the time, they certainly cannot evade the chill when in North – a true, cold horror that calls for layers of gear.

Back in the city, however, what are layers? It is unfair on the urban crowd to be missing out on the cold for reasons scientific or not. On an average day, a quick stroll brings beads of sweat running past temples, and no hint of quiver. The Sun is never veiled except for the first hours. The rest of the day feels almost like summer, or a warm spring day. It is at night when we try to force-feel the season by pulling over blankets, only to push our feet out after a while. For some, the electric room heaters never made it out of the packaging.

Being positioned in Dhaka, my experience of winter has always been an urban one. I mentioned this to a climate enthusiast and they mumbled something about urban heat and there being less

greenery in the city and most city roads being black and grey and absorbing more heat than a rural area and something about pollution from vehicles too. I'm not sure if this alone explains my brother walking around in shorts last December, and me contemplating about turning on the fan every hour, but I'm sure there's a connection.

As we hop from one generation to another, changes change. The outlook on the season falls on a spectrum of emotions and feelings. Despite contrasting experiences, time and time again, the winter spirit never fails to rise. Picture campfires, fairs and steaming cups of tea, coffee or whatever you like.

As the chills sweep past, festivities begin. From *nobanno ushob* to *pithautshob*, from *kantha shelai* to *kombol bitoron*, from *bhapa pitha* to *khejur er rosh* – these are the moments that fill the memory lanes. I made a few spirited attempts to whip up a few different types of *pithas* myself to keep the tradition alive, but the wobbly, disjointed results taught me a thing or two of the expertise and patience our elders possess in the kitchen. Despite all that, I think it is the *pitha* in all its glory that steals the winter show, and of course, our hearts.

Once again, as you flip through the pages, who knows what the weather would feel like...

Hiya loves food that you hate by norm – broccoli, Hawaiian pizza and Bounty bars. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com



PHOTO: STAR