

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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A CALL FOR CAREER COUNSELLING

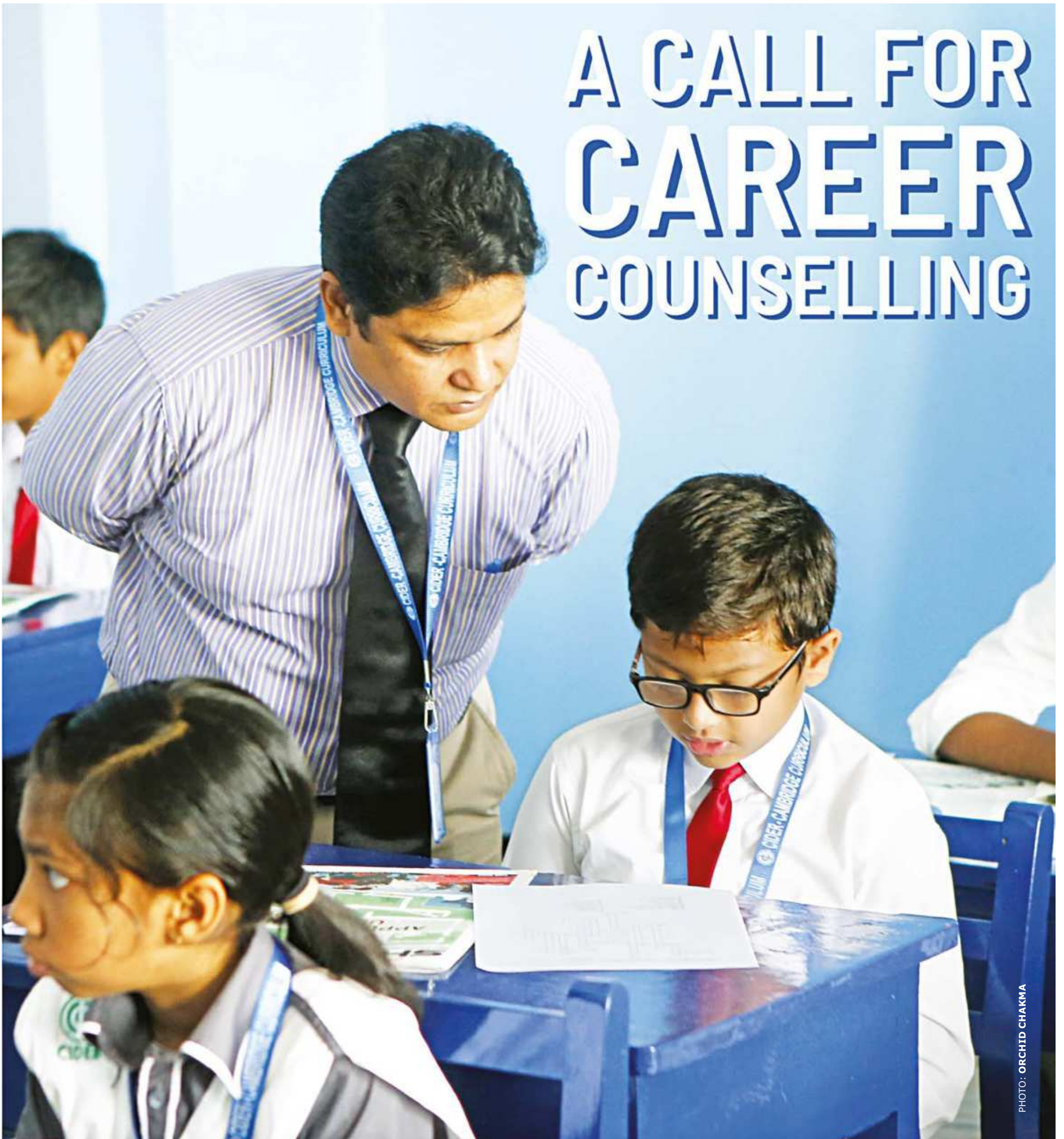


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

EDITORIAL

A young me in class 8 held strong prejudices against all studies that were not related to science. I didn't know any better, to be honest. In my school, only people who failed a couple of subjects were made to pick business studies. Everyone else was forced (key word here) to pick science, and consequently, no one even pretended to be interested in anything that wasn't Physics, Chemistry, and Biology.

Things tend to arrange themselves to order as people grow up, for the most part. While there are many people who are still stuck in unhappy majors and jobs, still many others take the opportunity to shift streams once they are out of school. But the damage is often already done at this stage. This is yet another case of a stupid problem with a simple solution, and that's what this week's cover story is about.

Career and academic guidance in schools serve simply to inform students better, making sure everyone knows what they're doing by the time the rat race gets close and messy. For example, I always knew trying to become a writer entailed much frustration and self doubt, but in light of recent events, I wish someone had told me about the occupational hazards as well.

-- Azmin Azran, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

DOCUMENTARY REVIEW



Framing the Life of a Pop Star

ADHORA AHMED

If you were growing up in the early 2000s, the name Britney Spears should be familiar to you. Perhaps you've even heard of the quote "If Britney survived 2007, you can handle today."

Why is a world-famous popstar going through difficult times, and why should we care? This is what *The New York Times Presents: Framing Britney Spears*, the Hulu documentary, tries to answer. Throughout its 74-minute runtime, the documentary chronologically depicts Spears's public life, focusing on the ongoing #FreeBritney movement on social media because of her complicated conservatorship case.

Through the lenses of close associates, journalists, lawyers, paparazzi and fans, we see a small-town girl's meteoric rise to fame. Her determined attempts to forge ahead in her career despite the intense scrutiny into her private life followed by a series of pitfalls that the public eye latches onto more greedily than ever, giving an unethical peek into a person's most vulnerable moments. This leads to the infamous conservatorship that still allows Jamie Spears, the pop star's father, to control most aspects of her life.

Framing Britney Spears does more than charting the trajectory of the singer's career. It shines best where it provides commentary on how the media circus, imbued with good old misogyny, demonises the same female celebrities it luridly obsesses over. The filmmakers' sense of self-awareness is acute in pinpointing the media's flaws, since they themselves are a part of it. This is infuriatingly evident in a scene where a paparazzi expresses no remorse for his contribution to Spears's infamous breakdown in 2007. Speaking of her breakdown, the filmmakers suc-

ceed in persuading the audience that the media circus had a significant role in the deterioration of her mental health. They also go on to show that the same media turned Britney into the butt of jokes, when they should have taken accountability. Last but not the least, by addressing Justin Timberlake's relationship with Spears, the documentary sheds light on how male celebrities of the same stature are mostly unscathed by such scrutiny, if they are scrutinised at the same level at all.

While it would be very easy to portray the pop star's life as a melodramatic sob story, the documentary does the commendable job of reminding the viewers repeatedly of Spears's resilience against the entire unjust backlash she has received. For instance, in an archival footage from an interview, a self-assured Spears declares that it's not her responsibility to please everyone, in response to criticisms of her not conforming to society's expectations of what she should be like.

Although the documentary is an excellent investigation of contemporary media's sexism, it would have been better if they had observed the borderline creepy over-analysis of Spears's Instagram posts by her fans through a critical lens. As well-meaning as it is, the filmmakers should have kept in mind that this behaviour might not be in Spears's best interest either.

Overall, *Framing Britney Spears* tries its best in framing the subject in a way that will hopefully give her the voice she has deserved for so long, and it does a very good job of it.

Adhora Ahmed tries to make her two cats befriend each other, but in vain. Tell her to give up at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com



Building a Minimalist Wardrobe

HIYA ISLAM

At first thought, you may think a minimalist wardrobe does not define you. The word “minimalist” itself has a scanty, pained connotation. However, that’s far from what it is. As Joshua Fields Milburn, a well-known minimalist, put it “Minimalism has never been about deprivation. Rather, minimalism is about getting rid of life’s excess in favour of the essential.”

Minimalism has been at the heart of sustainable fashion and is often misunderstood. The essence of minimalism is to focus on what’s *really* important and to free yourself from the clutches of consumer culture, all the while allowing yourself to reclaim your life. It’s been said that 80 percent of the time, you wear only 20 percent of your clothes. Go on, think it over. It’s safe to say getting rid of and limiting your closet would bless your pockets and the planet.

The first step to building a minimalist wardrobe, is discovering your own style; depending on the kind of person you are, this may be the toughest yet. Often, we have all types of clothing mixed up in our closets, and therefore we do not realize what kind of clothing resonates with us. What are some of the colours you can’t get enough of? What fits perfectly for your body type? What kind of cuts and fabric do you love wearing? Who’s your fashion icon? There are plenty of bloggers online who’ve dedicated themselves to help you out on this.

Moving forward to the existing bane of a wardrobe. There is no fixed figure to stick to; 15 to 50 clothing items is a common range to follow. Begin with some decluttering. Remove items that would not suit your newfound sense of style. Keep pieces that you absolutely need and love. However, it’s not as easy as it sounds. Decluttering is a process that takes time. Leaving out all items at once may not serve you the best.

How does shopping look for a minimalist? Well, for starters, not fun. But I am not trying to talk you out of it. You will need to invest initially. Analyse your wardrobe before a haul. Keep a running list of items you need. Go for clothing items that you can pair up to make several OOTDs. Lastly, shop intentionally, not impulsively. Do the 30-wears test. Ask yourself if you will wear what you’re holding at the mall for at least 30 times.

A great way to get started is to hop on a challenge -- Project 333. Pick 33 items (including jewellery and footwear) from your closet. Now, stylise these items for the next 3 months. Experimenting this way will help you gain a sense of what’s coming and how to deal with it. There are other variations; 10x10 (10 items for 10 days), 7x7 and so forth. Or, try creating a capsule cupboard for a season. A capsule cupboard is a small collection of useful clothing that you love.

Minimalism does not correlate with asceticism. There is no hard and fast rule to it as long as its essence thrives and the satisfaction prevails. But, it does demand a lot of self-discipline. Minimalism looks different for everyone because we all have specific needs and are at different points in our lives. At the end of the day, it only aims to create more fulfilment from what we own.

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



Is Your Relationship Burning Out?

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

If you google what a healthy relationship looks like, you are most likely to come across 3 C’s – communication, compromise, and commitment. These are the most crucial factors that come into play among the myriad of other things needed to keep the flames of a relationship burning. But sometimes it’s not the flame that you focus on – rather the wax that’s been melting away with time.

Feeling stuck or dwelling on the negatives doesn’t necessarily mean that you have started to despise your partner. Maybe there was a spark once, however, with the smallest things your partner does, it burns down in resentment. Realistically speaking, burnout can not only happen from regular arguments or mere disputes, but also due to loveless bonds where you’re tired of pretending things are okay. When you mask your feelings or strive hard to portray a version of yourself that looks good in someone else’s books, you face inner turmoil that exhausts you. The proper term for this is “surface acting” which loosely refers to faking emotions in order to keep up with what’s going on around you whereas “deep acting” is when one starts to believe that these fake emotions are actually real and positive. Acts like this require a lot of emotional labour and it sure can leave a person feeling drained.

Burnouts are like slow poison. Unlike an abrupt breakup, it kills a relationship slowly. Although you feel the pain, you can’t get out of the cycle easily. For many, it comes down to spending sleeping nights trying to melt that emotional frost with

their partners. However, hyper-focusing on a single topic or person can also make someone lose interest in all the other important things around them. Things that once provided you joy don’t seem interesting anymore. You feel stuck and render yourself disoriented.

A relationship is not a one-person job. It requires time and effort from both sides to make an alliance successful. A hurting relationship can be healed. Even if you feel silly talking about the things causing you problems, there is no way of fixing things other than having a sincere conversation with your partner. Setting up boundaries is important, and both parties decide together on what works best for them.

It is equally crucial to portion some time to yourself where you can work on your goals and desires. Sometimes a little space can bridge the distance. Do things that make each other feel valued. Words of affirmation, gift-giving, acts of service, or any other love language may rekindle the spark that you lost on the way.

A loving relationship is where you grow, it’s a safe place where you don’t need to wear your mask of presence. It shouldn’t wear you down and make you feel miserable. And if you see no end to the daily fights and emotional burnouts, it sometimes is better to let the person go instead of playing the crippling blame game.

Be free.

Farnaz Fawad Hasan spends most of her time dreaming about chicken nugget castles. Tell her to snap back to reality at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

FEMINISM IN 2021: The Ideology vs The Aesthetic

RASHA JAMEEL

Every year, during International Women's Day (IWD), lifestyle brands around the globe centre their marketing around women and their necessities. Popular brands here in Bangladesh are no different. Last year, we saw a brand of soap host a much-televised women's day campaign on March 8th. Their campaign featured models, bloggers, and female entrepreneurs.

The campaign was well shot and well presented, and ironically lacked the feminist spirit.

The women featured in the campaign all looked the same: conventionally fair, dressed in glamorous, non-functional attire. They all sit still, look pretty, speak gracefully and never do any heavy lifting. They all come from a place of privilege and do not speak their mind. As the video progresses, you come to realise that they're only there because a brand has a business to promote.

So, is that what we're celebrating? The exploitation of the feminist movement?

Read on as I break down the feminist movement for you, so you can decide for yourself.

FIRST WAVE FEMINISM

Feminist ideals have been around since the 15th century. It can be deduced from the works of historians that Christine de Pizan, a poetess at the court of King Charles VI of France, was quite possibly the first person to reflect on feminism.

The ideology only grew from there onwards, with the advocacy of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary de Gournay, and many more.

The feminist movement itself kicked off in the 1850s, with the women's suffrage parades. Suffragettes took to the streets to demand women be granted the same voting rights as men. During this period of feminist activity, women demanded equality in mostly legal matters such as owning property, being able to cast votes and choose professional fields of work, having the rights to child custody in divorce proceedings, and so on. Notable activists headlining the rise of "First Wave" feminism were Dorothy Day, Sojourner Truth, Jane Addams, and Elizabeth Blackwell.

All white women, hailing from blue-collar households.

First Wave Feminism came with double standards, and rejected the idea of intersectionality. Only privileged, white women's accounts were heard and seemingly taken into consideration.

SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

The Feminine Mystique was published. The non-fiction by Betty Friedan challenged and argued against the conventional, patriarchal ideas of femininity.

Women of colour, namely bell hooks and Audre Lourde, finally found their voice and joined the feminist movement. The discriminatory air of the First Wave Feminism had finally begun to

dissipate.

The 1960s brought in new ideas and objectives from liberal and radical feminists. Women's demands moved past enfranchisement and focused on issues such as female sexuality, domestic violence, rape, and women's reproductive rights.

Post World War II, the feminist movement branched into two different sections: "Radical feminism" and "Liberal feminism". Liberal feminists fought to reform federal legislation to cater to the diversification of women's roles in the job sector. The liberal feminist movement was led primarily by activists Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan. Radical feminists drew from their experiences in radical protests (mostly during the civil rights movement) and directly attacked the ingrained patriarchy in workplaces, bringing issues such as sexual harassment to public attention. The radical feminist movement was led primarily by activists Casey Hayden and Mary King.

THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

By the 90s, the feminist movement had gained massive traction around the globe. Global feminism began to take hold due to efforts made by the UN. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) within the UN, had formed a Commission on the Status of Women in 1946. In the 90s, the council worked towards the development of female empowerment all over the world, encouraging the inclusivity of women from all socio-economic classes, ethnicities, and nationalities.

"Third wave" feminists sought to restructure the ideologies preached by "Second wave" feminists in an effort to eradicate the flaws in their predecessors' perspectives. Rebecca Walker is considered to be a pioneer for the third wave of the feminist movement. Walker introduced "intersectionality", the dismissal of bias against metrics such as religion, race, sexuality, and ability. This resulted in the definition of feminism broadening to include "transfeminism" and "postmodern feminism".

The Third wave dealt primarily in matters involving sexual liberation, violence against women, and reproductive rights involving access to contraception and the choice to abort.

Punk subculture came into effect with the introduction of "riot grrrl". Ideas surrounding "self-sufficiency" and "self-reliance" were popularised by punk rock musicians.

FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM

In the 2010s, social media platforms collectively became the defining factor in our lives. If a subject has found validation on social media, it has then unofficially been declared as an issue worthy of global attention.

The feminist movement came to discover new meaning amongst the netizens of the 21st century. The "Fourth wave" in the feminist movement began

developing from beliefs rooted in intersectionality and with a focus resting solely on women's empowerment in different sectors. Social media aided marginalised groups in finding their voices, by providing them with the means to be heard faster and throughout the world.

Key events in Fourth wave feminism include actress and activist Emma Watson's "HeForShe" UN campaign, the #MeToo movement carried out on social networking site Twitter, and the "Time's Up" campaign hosted by women's rights activists and popularised by celebrities.

HOW IWD CAME TO BE

International Women's Day was first declared by the Socialist Party of America, during First Wave Feminism, and went on to gaining momentum internationally, beginning with the efforts of the leader of the Women's Office in German Social Democratic Party, Clara Zetkin.

In the 70s, IWD was first recognised and celebrated by the UN, and then integrated with the rest of the world's global and historic events.

From what history tells us, IWD has always been around to celebrate the achievements of women in various fields of work and education. The day is celebrated in accordance with the demands made and the rights claimed by women who struggled with the absence of equality in the society.

HOW IWD HAS BEEN TREATED IN RECENT TIMES

Thanks to social media, daily lives for everyone begin with a quick scroll through their notifications. Every year on March 8, a quick scroll-through like this one usually reveals various lifestyle brands using the aforementioned event to their own advantages. We come across marketing schemes centred on the spirit of International Women's Day, feminism, which effectively reduces a centuries-old movement to a mere seasonal trend.

According to history, the feminist movement has strived long and hard to attain diversity in its essence. The marketing campaigns that we come across on social media might lead you to believe otherwise.

Here's where Bangladesh stands

on feminism and the celebration of International Women's Day:

As a country consisting primarily of conservative and patriarchal communities, Bangladesh has just begun to grasp the concept of feminism. We have just about managed to adhere to ground-work laid down by First Wave Feminism, while remaining ignorant of inclusivity.

Intersectionality holds no meaning in the IWD campaign mentioned in the beginning of this article. The campaign limits its acknowledgement of women's achievements to only privileged women. Their narrative is one-sided and blurs out the plights of the marginalised groups. How often have you seen trans-women, queer individuals, the women who make up our domestic help, the women employed in the garments sector or the sex industry of Bangladesh, being given a platform to bring their struggles to light?

Is the feminism we're seeing in accordance with the ideologies laid down by its pioneers?

Perhaps it is sometimes. A handful of IWD campaigns make an attempt to include narratives of women from different walks of life. The women featured in those small-scale campaigns have a lot to say and don't shy away from doing so. That being said, even those campaigns have far to go in terms of intersectionality.

International Women's Day came to fruition because of the feminist movement, because of collective efforts put in by working-class women. It's imperative to honour the spirit of the working class. It's important to acknowledge the contributions of every single woman in the working class, not just a selected few.

Rasha Jameel is an overzealous Ravenclaw who often draws inspiration from mundane things such as memes. Send her your mespirational thoughts at rasha.jameel@outlook.com



A Call for Career Counselling

ANUSHA MOURSHED

Choosing a field of study or career is one of those nerve-wrecking, major decisions that mould the rest of your life. So, rest assured, almost everyone feels some sense of fear and confusion. What if all students received some expert help that gave them clarity and a more distinct objective?

Some people grow up innately knowing exactly what they want to do with their lives while others require a lot more time to discover their options and explore the opportunities before they decide. For the latter group of people, it tends to become exceedingly difficult to choose an area of study in high school that they will later pursue as a career in the future.

Many fear that they might be deciding too soon without having sufficient experience while others find themselves trapped under the weight of peer pressure. There is a tendency to associate respect and dignity so vigorously with certain occupations that the other options of the spectrum seem to fall short of prominence. This often results in a lack of confidence within students interested in the more unconventional paths. Additionally, it is seen that plenty of them are also not completely aware of all the possibilities or the options best suited to them due to the lack of understanding of what each profession requires and whether or not they have what it takes.

These issues are all intensified by the lack of academic guidance in schools and can further propagate into a more precarious situation for the students in the long run due to the absence of appropriate counselling at the most relevant time.

It is seen that even some of the most reputed schools in Dhaka do not have career counsellors. In the handful of schools where they do provide this facility, more often than not, the counsellors are not specifically trained for the particular job. This results in students receiving unsatisfactory services which might even end up causing more harm than benefit.

I spoke to some students to gather their opinions and to understand their perspectives better.

"The fact that even the most elite schools in our country don't seem to offer proper career counselling to students, let alone how they continue to disregard the fact that careers are not simply units but a spectrum of options, speaks volumes. For students to truly comprehend their potentials and find the most befitting option would require exploration first or at least being aware of one's options. Bangladesh's education system continues to push students towards only goals of sets of career options which they deem to be respectable, cornering the future generation" said Sharita Fairooz, a grade 12 student at a reputed English medium school in Dhaka.

This certain angle to the matter of concern raises a crucial point which claims that academic guidance is not only required to find the most befitting option for every individual but also to make them aware of all the other possibilities and to give them the liberty to explore.

"I remember being a ninth grader and feeling like my whole world was turning upside down when I was told to choose between Science and Commerce subjects that would shape the entire rest of my life. How was a 15-year-old with no real world experience even expected to know what she wanted to do for the rest of her life all by herself? All throughout ninth grade, I went through so many breakdowns second guessing my choices all the time," said



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Anila Paromita, who is currently completing her undergraduate from a prestigious university in the USA.

She continued eagerly, "In short, with all the stress of the overwhelming present and lack of objectivity, I wish I had someone experienced in this field to guide me through a solid educational plan fit for my potential. If I had been fortunate enough to receive the guidance then maybe, I wouldn't have suffered from the indecision or have to go through all the uncertainty and difficulties associated with changing majors. I wish I had a guide to help me see the big picture, so I wouldn't look back on those days of my life as the most helpless phase."

In essence, as someone who has suffered greatly due to the lack of proper guidance, she believes that her experience could have been a lot more favourable had she been lucky enough to receive a helping hand.

Although the primary goal of career counselling is to help students select a field best suited to them according to their specific attributes, it not only just lays out all the possibilities but also provides expert resources that make people aware of their interests, strengths and weaknesses. It allows students to make well-informed decisions about their education and career, thus helping them to reduce the overall career-related frustration of what can otherwise become an exhausting process.

Characteristically, most Bangladeshi parents tend to have the majority of control over their children's education, if not all. This includes making decisions such as what activities they partake in, what subjects they choose and which job field they enter, regardless of their children's own ambitions. This later results in a lack of job satisfaction or a general gratification from

all things in life. For such cases, academic guidance is exceptionally important for students to be able to navigate through the process and make healthy decisions for their own ultimate benefit. The professional help can give them a clearer understanding, a better chance to embark on a journey they would actually enjoy and instill more confidence in them to choose what they truly wish to do.

Contrary to popular belief, academic guidance is not meant solely for people who are unsure of their goals but also very helpful for those who already have a fixed objective. The counselling can make them aware of their shortcomings and help them understand what they must do to acquire the necessary skills that are expected from them. It can help students change unwanted habits and behaviour patterns such as unproductivity, procrastination and not keeping themselves updated with the changes and advancements of their chosen field of study or career.

There are plenty of students who know exactly what they want to do with their life but lack enough confidence. Career counselling can help them connect better to their choices and build self-belief thus redirecting their focus to the right places again.

Besides, the counsellors can also prepare students in advance, by helping them create their curriculum vitae, and training them for university or job interviews. Although it's importance is not recognised nearly enough, having had some prior practice and receiving guidance directly from professionals in this area of expertise can give candidates a lot more clarity and a head start for the unpredictable journey ahead.

"As I was preparing for my very first

internship, the career coaches at the University of Toronto were phenomenal in their guidance to help me secure a position. I remember participating in a mock interview, being quizzed about the Ontario Environmental regulations and finally the mental and emotional support from my career coaches. I was able to receive employment as a junior environmental professional at the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change," said Mehnaz Farhad, an educator in a well-reputed institution in Toronto, Canada.

She added, "After graduation, as I worked as an educator at the Centennial College, I collaborated with the learning strategists there to hold the most interactive career coaching workshops. My colleague and I helped members of the youth at risk with interview performance, resume preparation and salary negotiation. Career coaching helped them find their way into the world."

Therefore, the education system must recognise the significance of academic guidance in schools and question why students are being deprived of such a life-shaping opportunity. Under the current circumstances, there are already plenty of factors to consider before making the smallest decisions.

The decision-making process becomes even more complex for 15 to 19-year-olds trying to make choices that will mould the rest of their lives. The appropriate assistance at the proper time can nudge them in the right direction and set the track to the course of the rest of their lives.

Anusha often has a lot on her plate. Send her memes and motivation at anusha.mourshed11@gmail.com

Excellence in Education Through Cooperation and Compassion

In conversation with Prof. Md. Anwarul Kabir, Vice Chancellor, State University of Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vice Chancellor Prof. Md. Anwarul Kabir speaks to The Daily Star about the comeback of State University of Bangladesh, how they have been delivering quality education services to its students throughout the years and how the institution continues to be a symbol of excellence in the field of education throughout the pandemic.

Can you tell us about the origins of State University of Bangladesh (SUB)?

State University of Bangladesh has been one of the leading private universities in Bangladesh. It was established in 2002. Hence, our journey has been continuing for the past 18 years. To date, we have 10 departments and 18 programs. Some notable departments include Architecture, Business, Computer Science and Engineering, English, Pharmacy and Public Health. Some departments offer more than one program, which includes Bachelor's and Master's programs. Our Pharmacy department is highly reputed in Bangladesh. Both the Pharmacy programs in our university have been accredited by the Bangladesh Phar-



PHOTO: STATE UNIVERSITY OF BANGLADESH



macy Council. Our Architecture program is accredited as well. We always try to acquire the best available professors, lecturers and resources for our departments to function properly.

Due to Covid-19, the universities of the country like other academic institutions are detached from physical classes for about one year. How have you survived during this situation?

Like many countries around the world, the education sector in Bangladesh was severely affected by Covid-19. But, through sheer determination and coordination, the private universities in Bangladesh have persevered by shifting to an online education platform. During the beginning of the lockdown, our top administration, teachers and our students put huge efforts into integrating towards an entirely new platform

of education system. In only a week, we did the monumental task of transitioning from an offline class to online classes. We have already conducted our Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters through online classes, and continue to do so in Spring 2021.

What sort of support have been provided to the students by SUB?

Our faculty members, coordinators, and Heads of departments extensively reached out to all our students and provided counselling and support to transition into this online medium of education. You know that a lion share of the students who pursue university education reside in the countryside. It was a mammoth task for the SUB to bring all of them to our network. We also knew that the students, and especially their families, were in financial hardship because of the pandemic. For that, we have been providing every student with a 20 percent special waiver, so that no student is left out with the woes of financial hardship. We also monitor how many students are attending the classes, and coordinate with faculties and department Heads in finding students who were unable to attend those classes for lack of resources. We helped them by providing the essential resources. We have also revoked imposing fines on students who paid their fees at a later time.

Are you satisfied with the online classes those you have provided to your students?

How have you maintained the quality of the classes?

We did not apply the online platform of education in isolation. We looked at various other universities in our country, and abroad. Above all, we brought everything to the notice of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC). Whatever we did, we tried to follow the guidelines of the UGC. They directed how to conduct online classes and take online exams. They provided us with the guideline where four modes of exam structure could be used to take exams. The modes are categorically included visual presentation, case method, assignment and viva voce. For the outgoing students who have lab work, UGC circulated a 7-point direction which was to be followed for those students to take class in the University. So, we have followed all the directives of UGC to keep our education to the quality that was before the pandemic.

The government has indicated that academic institutions including universities will be opened soon. What preparation have you taken for post-Covid classes?

SUB has state-of-the-art facilities in Dhanmondi and Kalabagan, and a permanent campus in South Purbachal. We have a plan to take classes in all the three campuses. We are fully prepared to take physical classes as soon as the government and education board gives us the green signal to move towards opening the university. We

have taken the necessary health guidelines to action. We have the service to check the temperature of anyone who enters the university premises. We have stationed hand sanitizers at important sections of the university ground. We have spread out the seating arrangement in the classes to maintain the social distancing guidelines.

We have known that SUB has taken extended initiatives to expand its international linkage and research activities with a new dimension. Can you elaborate on these?

As far as research is of concern, our university is maintaining relationships with various government agencies. Some of the colleagues from our Food Engineering department have already received funds from the Ministry of Science and Technology. Some are also on the verge of acquiring funding for various other research and projects linked with the government. We also have the policy of promoting our faculty members based on their research capabilities. So, we have three journals, which have been published by three different schools and a good number of articles have been submitted. They have been sent to the reviewers and when all formalities are complete, the journals will be published soon. It's wonderful to have research and journals published in Bangladesh and in the rest of the world. We have been performing really well in this regard and I'm very happy about it.

What message does SUB have for those who recently passed the HSC exam and intend to get admission in universities?

I would like to congratulate all of them for their success. This is a crucial time for them, because now they need to choose a career. Our career development centre is very strong; our teachers are also very capable in showing the right path to the students. For students who passed HSC this year, SUB can be a good university to guide them towards their desired destination. We have a very strong alumni network as well, which is 15,000 strong. They work in various public and private industries, which students might find very helpful in the future. We are also trying to develop soft skills in all of our students to benefit their future careers. I have conducted a workshop with business students on Income Tax return so that they can fill the necessary forms without any outside assistance. We always believe in ethical education. One has to work hard if they want to get a degree from our institution. So, we hope the students will choose State University of Bangladesh as their new home for quality education and build capacity within themselves.

Darkness and Hope

FAHMI MASNUN ASHRAF

I clean up after my demons,
And when I'm almost done,
I glance back and I realise —
I'm running in a circle.

Running like a guinea pig,
Caught in an endless loop called life.
I live like an inanimate object,
Subject to someone's mindless experiments.
The cruelty and the frailty —
I don't think I want to live
Like this anymore.

I'm living through a cyclone,
I'm living through a storm,
I'm falling in the void —
Where's the golden life they promised me?
They lied.

I'm here at the bottom of the darkness —
I look up,
And I dare to hope.
And I dare to build stairs,
Made of threads of light
And hope, in my mind.

The writer is a student of class 9 at Manarat Dhaka International College.



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

A MEMOIR IN PINK

MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

The arrival of a new member didn't stir up the residents of the Closet. After all, every few days their population increased as one member (and sometimes even more than one) was added from the outside. Even though the Closet wasn't a huge place to begin with, but somehow, every now and then, new members found niches and corners to wedge themselves in. So no one in the Closet really batted an eye when one of them, who was recently bathed and groomed, whispered that she's seen someone new who's going to live with them.

"Nothing surprising," Purple Top scoffed.

"When you are old like I am and still a resident of here, you'll find this to be a piece of cake, dear," said Blue Jeans.

Yellow Sundress pouted and said no more.

However, when the day did come, everyone looked at the newbie. Even the Black Dress cult chanced a glance, a group who normally stuck to each other and rarely paid attention to others because of their superiority.

The newcomer was of a salmon pink that seemed like a sighing dreaming river of leisurely fading pink. She had the tiniest of pearls and sequins here and there that caught the little spotlights on the ceiling of her new home and smiled shyly.

"Whoa!" Duo-chrome Tunic breathed, "You're a saree!"

Everyone heaved a sigh of envy. Sarees were the least used members, yet the most prized ones. They would even be given extra thin white papers to sleep in and ironed quite often.

"Welcome to your new home, the Closet!" they still greeted her with warmth and affection. "Here you live till you are handed over to a new owner."

"Or you might not," smirked Red Tee, who was so old that she had almost faded to pink.

"Shut up, oldie," replied the gorgeous Silver Gown with sass, "it could be any day now that Nikita's mother steals you and starts using you as a you-know-what." Red Tee blushed in anger, her true colour showing, as everyone laughed. The new one was confused and a bit anxious.

"She meant a floor mopping rag," the warm White Scarf explained to her. "Don't worry though, you're a saree, you'll never have to see that fate."

Days started to roll by, and Pink Saree slowly became comfortable with the others. Whenever

the sunlight peeped in, someone would gasp and notice a detail, maybe the exquisite stitches of a peacock bursting into a thicket of pearly flowers and vines. Or maybe the little lotus buds crafted with utmost care. It seemed that Pink Saree had uncountable details. And with every detail, she told a story. Melancholic and nurtured with nostalgia, she remembered the stories bits by bits. She spoke of the hands that had woven her and threaded the details and embellishments. She was the least fancy out of all the sarees, but soon she became the most popular one and everyone adored her.

With years, Pink Saree grew older, the pink in her entering the void of white, her skin starting to crust, the details slowly returning to the world they came from. She had more stories to tell even then, stories she had experienced first-hand from Nikita. But even those started to fade, blood red roses were cocooning back, a blurry vision of a lake that was a glassy green, chunks of cotton candy disappearing, brick red buildings going into ruin in her memory.

A day came when she was too frail and papery but she was taken out. Outside, she breathed just a bit better as the sunlight caressed her. The world seemed a lot different and Nikita too, she now had short choppy hair, wore black glasses and a genuine smile. She stared at her saree for a long time and handed it to someone else.

When Pink Saree opened her eyes again, she was in a completely different world. It was no Closet, not that plush wooden boarded palace. She was upon a dented tin box coloured in screaming confusing colours. There was no concrete floor, but a thin bedding, a broken chair balanced with a lot of steel utensils and plastic boxes. A small window with broken glass and spangled curtains let in narrow beams of sunlight that directly fell over the saree. Someone came in and sat directly in front of Pink Saree. And even in her most feeble condition, Pink Saree was gazed upon with complete admiration and happiness by her new owner. She took the saree in her hand and mumbled something unintelligible to herself. She prized it beyond words.

"Welcome to your new home," Pink Saree heard someone say and smiled.

Maisha Nazifa Kamal is now concerned about how she has used one of her pink sarees as a prompt. Tell her that it's okay at 01shreshtha7@gmail.com





ECHOES BY
 ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Nobody Taught Us Money Management

I When you're in school, you never know what you learn will be useful. Schools also don't know what you'll become in life. We all have learned things we found useful. And learned things we never needed. However, the classroom and the syllabus is a subset of the total school experience. We all learned a lot outside the classroom.

The playground educated us in vital experiences. There we learned how to cooperate in groups and compete against other groups. We learned how to interact with our elders and youngsters in school. The more charismatic among us developed the skill of leadership. Sports activities also taught us the bond of brotherhood and empathy.

From day one, we've been told to study, study, study. The more we study, the more successful we'll be. This was indoctrinated into us. We probably were never told to listen. Think. When we listen only, we see a different perspective. Music, debating, and other activities taught us to listen *and* observe. They may not have contributed to a high grade, but they did train us to pay attention.

Finally, we were educated in ethics and morals through religious education. Religious education trained us to follow codes of conduct that are vital for social cooperation (ethics). The spiritual dimension of religion helped us to question ourselves on what's right, what's wrong, what's fair, and what's unfair (morals).

What didn't we learn in school that we could have? Think before you proceed.

II Nobody can survive without money. Yet, schools seldom teach us how to manage money. Societies think young



children shouldn't be given money because they could get spoiled. There is a degree of truth in this, though.

We're constantly reminded of the value of money. We're reminded not to waste money. Yet, we're not trained on how to manage money. Societies expect us to learn this later. Yet, if we aren't careful in managing money, we can end up in debts and all sorts of problems.

III I started school in 1974 in Aberystwyth, Wales in the UK. My teachers either experienced World War II, or faced its consequences as a child. I started my second school in Bangladesh in 1980. There, my teachers experienced the

consequence of the partition of India as a child or experienced the Liberation War in 1971. We constantly witnessed and experienced hardships. The society then wasn't as affluent as it is now.

It was when I went to Cambridge and lived on my own, I experienced two events that opened my eyes.

Omar Sharif, the actor, was famous for gambling in casinos. He would win a million and lose a million in one night. One morning he decided he won't gamble anymore. When asked he said, I can no longer earn back the money I lose. When I could, money was just a number. Now it's not. This was an eye-opener. I read between the lines. I slowly trained myself to spend on treats only if I could earn back the money in, say, three months.

A senior friend of mine at Cambridge was comfortable with money. I once asked him how he managed his expenses. The answer was very simple. He would make sure he earned his major expenses for the next year in the current year. After that, anything extra he earned this year was his to spend and enjoy. This strategy never made him very rich, but it did ensure he was never short of cash.

IV If you think money management is a skill vital for survival, then you've identified something you may have to learn from life yourself. Observe others. You'll soon know what suits you. As long as your nose is above the water, you won't drown.

Asrar Chowdhury teaches Economics in the classroom. Outside, he watches Test cricket, plays the flute and listens to music and radio podcasts. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu or asrarul@gmail.com

Why Opposites Attract in Friendships Too

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Opposites attract in friendships too, resulting often in unbreakable, decades-lasting bonds. Ever wondered why? This week, my clearly-not-a-psychology-student self will attempt to explain how this (very likely) works.

Let us start with a relatively general belief I personally do not completely agree with: the requirement of common interests for the formation of a strong friendship. While it may be easier to initiate a conversation with a person if you have a common interest, if both you and your friend want exactly the same things in life, it may potentially result in conflicts if you are both competitive. Picture adults fighting like kids would over a toy, but with more unnecessary drama and plot-twists. Also, long-term friendships often teach us how to grow as people by observing and learning from each other's beneficial qualities. But if both friends are bringing the exact same qualities to the table, individual growth for each person may slow down. It could feel similar to looking into a mirror and watching yourself make the same mistakes on repeat.

Therefore, certain differences in personality can most definitely be appreciated and



even contribute to strong friendships. Don't get me wrong, it is lovely to be able to relate to a friend and to have your thoughts and opinions shared. I firmly believe that similarities do contribute to the development of strong friendships – just not necessarily in the way you may think.

You see, similarities are not limited to simply wanting the same things, but also

involve sharing a deep understanding of how to achieve things, whether the goals are similar or not. In other words, I believe having similar basic morals play a large role in the development of strong friendships. Individuals with polar opposite personalities can form such strong friendships, as long as they share basic general morals.

For example, an animal lover can ab-

solutely have a best friend scared to death of animals, on the grounds that fear is understandable and the best friend would never harm the animals out of fear. A metal music fan can have a best friend who does not listen to music of any genre, because they both respect each other's music preferences. There is a general understanding of why a particular action is being done, and as long as the reasoning is respected, there is no reason for a strong friendship to not develop.

Differing traits can be admirable – your very sociable friend may admire you for your ability to enjoy your own company. Differing traits can also prove to be useful. If you and your friend ever get gifted assorted chocolate boxes, you'll have higher chances of finishing them all without bickering, all thanks to your different tastes.

In our hunt to find friends who are our complete equals, we may find best friends with personalities completely different from ours. Seemingly unpleasant dissimilarity may therefore result in unlikely friendship.

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