

Ibrahim 5: Ibrahim returns with a cool new suit and a thrilling ride

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Dhaka Comics has published the latest issue of its popular comic book series 'Ibrahim'. First published in 2017, the series has come to be widely regarded as one of the first superhero comic series of the country. With a well-balanced mix of an exciting storyline, suitable illustration, and fast pace- the series has gained a devoted following. Despite not offering anything groundbreaking to avid comic readers, the series seems like a fresh breath of air considering its setup in Bangladesh's context.



In the first two issues, we were given an origin story of the character that raises more questions than offers answers. Through the subsequent two volumes, we saw our superhero navigate through struggles over getting acquainted with his powers, maintaining control, keeping his vision steady and noble- all the while trying to find his place in this world. We're also teased by an almost-cameo appearance of two characters who seem to be watching Ibrahim's every move and claim themselves to be his parents.

The series offers day-to-day deeds and adventures of Ibrahim while slowly unravelling an overarching storyline. Villains shrouded in mystery are set up who aim to tarnish Ibrahim's reputation and break his spirit. This only adds to Ibrahim's growing internal conflict over whether or not he is worthy of carrying such immense powers. But our superhero

cannot escape the call of duty when a fatal terrorist attack is underway. His enemies recognise his selflessness as the perfect opportunity to damage his image irreversibly. When all seems lost, Ibrahim is saved by the shocking interference of the two surprising characters who claim to be his parents.

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In the last volume, we were left on quite the cliffhanger. When Ibrahim's misguided grief over lost innocent lives overcomes him, and he gives himself up to be murdered by corrupt police, he is rescued by a man and a woman who reveal themselves to be his parents. Ibrahim, whom we knew to be an orphan without knowing his parents, was just as much at a loss as we were as readers.

In the latest issue, we are taken through an excellently paced story illuminating the secrets these two new appearances bring into Ibrahim's life. Blending with flashbacks, the current day story also

progresses and seems to be getting more incomprehensible. Political intrigue is introduced, as are new characters who seem likely to become major players in the storyline. We are moved back and forth between forces who seem to believe in the goodness of Ibrahim and criminal outfits that only see the opportunity to criminalise Ibrahim's formidable image to their benefit. An imminent nationwide terrorist threat is set up.

With new information being revealed to him that should shake his very core, with his constant trouble of making himself believe that he is worthy of wielding such tremendous power- will Ibrahim be able to rise to the occasion? Is he bold enough to set aside his personal demons and become the superhero that his well-wishers believe him to be? When things finally start to take shape, we are left with another unpredictable twist at the very end.

Volume 5 is a satisfying read for any comic book reader. It touches

almost all the cornerstones of a good superhero comic. We are guided through palpable excitement. And we are treated to an explosive fight sequence. The dialogue does not seem out of touch or overly melodramatic. It's efficient, straightforward storytelling. The illustrations have just the right tone and flavour. It succeeds in replicating classic superhero comic book style panels punctured with the perfect amount of expressive-sounding gibberish. The drawing is vibrant and helps engrave the characters into the minds of readers.

We are kept guessing at the answers to several parallel-running questions. Whenever one particular side starts to come to light, the story is interrupted by action somewhere else. The newly introduced characters have a strong personality that leaves an essence with the reader. The people claiming to be Ibrahim's parents start their story while asserting their strength. The villains have a clear, strong motive that keeps them from seeming unrealistic. The forces seemingly on Ibrahim's side exhibit rigour, integrity, and intelligence. Overall, we are left with the impression of an exciting ride that comes to an unexpected, surprising end and leaves us wanting for more.

My only complaint is, it's been five issues, and the series has burned through all the superhero comic book clichés, admittedly well-executed. Still, it has failed to provide a storyline that keeps the readers theorising and digging. We're not hyped enough to be formulating plausible explanations for some burning questions. Up until now, all the shock elements have been the ones used repeatedly in superhero comic books. We are still waiting to be hit by some mind-bending twist that will leave our jaws hanging and fists clenched for the next issue.

All said and considered, that's a pretty cool suit they gave Ibrahim.

