

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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SHOUT QUIZ: AN ACHAR
FOR EVERY MOOD

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UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES
MISS STUDENTS AS MUCH
AS STUDENTS MISS THEM

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THE SINGLE-SEX SCHOOL EFFECT



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

EDITORIAL

After every new app gains popularity among the youth, it is inevitable that soon its reputation is to be tarnished after some unfortunate news surfaces about the platform being misused by certain users. Cue talks about the platform being banned, cue adults telling us life was objectively better before kids were hooked on to their phones and they had to swim three miles, cross the Himalayas and recite the alphabet backwards for a leprechaun in order to reach their school each day.

It is a natural first reaction to wonder why, like giving away one's money so one can no longer be robbed, we want to take away these platforms much loved by the youth entirely, instead of regulating and creating safer cyber spaces for the youth to engage in. However, that only addresses part of the problem.

When we embrace globalisation, technologies reach us before we know we are capable of handling them. A platform that originates in a different place was never created keeping a different society's problems in mind. The craze the youth has for these apps proves its popularity, but there is nothing to prove our preparedness for the dangers or exploitations an app brings before it is ready for downloading.

-- Mrittika Anan Rahman, Sub-editor, SHOUT



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PLAYWATCH

MUSIC



Miles' Prottasha: 28 Years and Aging Like Fine Wine

SABIH SAFWAT

Miles are... oh wait, they don't really need an introduction. For a band that's piggybacked the country's rock scene for more than four decades, that'd be an insult.

Prottasha was their fourth studio album, coming out at the time rock music was perhaps approaching peak popularity in the country. Songs like "Neela", "Dhiki Dhiki", and "Phiriye Dao" defined the era, and to this day are loved by people across generations. Oh, and did I mention Neela? An absolute icon of a ballad.

I discovered the albums, in three stages, spanning two decades.

Firstly, in childhood. Dad was a fan of the band, and had a collection of their cassettes. Of course, their songs would pop up frequently on the radio, too. Miles was everywhere, and I didn't mind in the least bit. I didn't understand the lyrics, barely took in any of the intricacies of the music, but I loved the feelings the songs evoked in me. As if I was peeking into a whole new world. I vaguely remember memorising one or two lines from songs like "Phiriye Dao", "Shopno Bhongo" and singing them all the time.

The second stage was during early teens, trying out random CDs from dad's collection on my desktop. Streaming music online was far from a mainstream thing back then. I can't really express the waves of nostalgia when I realised I'd been familiar with the songs since preschool. This was, for me, a ride through the meanings behind the songs.

There's something about the vibrant, energetic soundscapes that border on carefree, and Shafin Ahmed turning verses that could've been labelled cheesy, feel charming and endearing instead. The emotions are all there: fantasy and wonder (Pahari Meye), heartbreak and yearning (Phiriye Dao, Kotokal Khujbo, Hridoyheena), relaxation (Rim Jhim),

frustration (Shaanti Chai), despair and lamentation (Noshto Oteet, Shopno Bhongo) and pure love (Neela, Jaadu).

Fast forward almost a decade. There's a big event in the campus and guess which band's coming to perform? I had to go rediscover Miles' discography.

This time, the music hit me hard. Over the years, I'd learned a few things on analysing and composing music, and it was like unlocking a secret map in an RPG game. I figured out the special ingredient that made them stand out so much; the balance between pop, funk and rock elements in their compositions.

Manam Ahmed's keyboard arrangements on the songs are brilliant. The catchy musical phrases that people remember the songs by, captivating solos, and in general decorating the soundscape with lush chords outdid his role. Hamin Ahmed's clean guitars dish out the funky vibes, while leaving enough space for Shafin Ahmed's beast of a bass to go wild. The insanely groovy bass lines are pretty much the engine driving the train forward. The lead guitars are also placed thoughtfully within the songs in places that demand seriousness and emphasis. Add to that consistent drumming with a love for hi-hats and bells, you get top tier musicianship.

The production of the album was quite impressive for 90s Bangladesh standards. Crisp clean vocals, half a dozen layers of instruments mixed without the least bit of muddying and about the right amount of prominence, especially the bass. Aural delicacy.

Prottasha is a milestone in Miles' journey. They were way ahead of their time back when they released it, and 28 years later, its charms haven't stagnated the least bit.

Cheers to the coming years of vintage love. Excuse me while I loop "Neela" for a few hours.

SHOUT Quiz: An Achar for Every Mood

RASHA JAMEEL

Spicy, sweet, sour, or a mix of all three? Let's figure out the right fit for you, shall we? Attention, attention! The following quiz might tickle your tastebuds and cause your mouth to water uncontrollably. Please proceed with care. Here we go.

1. It's sunny outside, how many jars of achar are perched on your windowsill or left to dry on the rooftop?

- Oooh, all of my favourites, so about 37467947538
- Lord knows
- Three. The standard. In a triangle formation.
- None because my recipes differ from the traditional ones

2. Which particular street food are you craving at this exact minute?

- Fuchka
- Jhalmuri
- Shingara-samucha
- Bhelpuri

3. The summer heat is making you dizzy, which beverage do you reach for?

- Coke-Pepsi
- Whatever's in my line of sight I guess
- Lebu shorbot
- Mango lassi

4. You sense that it's about to rain, how do you prepare?

- Getting cozy with a book
- All I know is that there's nothing new left for me on Netflix
- Cooking khichuri, of course
- Participate in a water war

5. Pick your preferred side-dish to go with a plate of piping hot khichuri.

- Chicken/Beef bhuna
- Dim bhuna
- Begun bhaji
- You can't make me choose between labra and aloo er dum

6. What are you watching while you scarf down your khichuri?

- A cheesy romantic comedy from the 90s
- Did I not say that there's nothing good on TV?
- Anything directed by Satyajit Ray
- A documentary about multicultural food

7. It's now 7 PM and you have guests to entertain. What snacks or food are you serving?

- Tea and piyajju
- Toast biscuit...
- Noodles. Can't go wrong with noodles.



PHOTO: SAVEURS SECRETES/PEXELS

8. If the neighbour's mischievous toddler were to ransack your abode, which personal item would you not miss?

- Anything that doesn't remind me of home
- How about I get back to you after I figure out what is where?
- My middle school report cards
- Uh, I don't have a neighbour

9. The weekend has arrived, and the sound of traffic outside wakes you up at--

- 9 AM
- I can sleep through anything
- Noon, because it's the weekend every day anyway
- I never fell asleep in the first place

10. What are you having for breakfast?

- Payesh. Oof!
- Cha-muri
- Porota-mangsho-niramish
- Ordering in from my favourite fusion cafe *heart emoji*

11. How are you dressing for the day?

- In casuals
- The same way I dressed yesterday, and the day before, and the day before, and the...
- According to personal comfort
- Experimenting with OOTDs, be right back

12. Pick a colour that you'd like to paint the walls in your room with.

- Blue. Always blue.
- Grey
- Any pastel colour
- An edgy wallpaper for me

...and we're done! Let's round up all our responses for the final result.

If you've mostly picked a's, you're possibly longing for some sense of comfort. Some mishti achar made from fruits such as *boroi* (Indian jujube) or *chalta* (Elephant apple) might just give you (well, your taste buds really) the warm hug you're looking for. Pair it up with a plate of steaming polao for the best results.

If you've mostly picked b's, then your life can probably use some spicing up. Why not dare yourself to try a pinch of *naga morich er achar*? If *morich* isn't your thing, you can always reach for some *roshun er achar* instead. Whatever you pick, make sure it's *jhaal*.

If you've mostly picked c's, you've given yourself away as a bit of an *achar* purist. Only *tok achars* for you, my friend. But don't be too sour about it, okay? The classic *kacha aam* or *jolpai er achar* should do the trick, but feel free to go overboard with the sour quotient by indulging in *lebu* and *shatkora er achar*. That thing is divine.

If you've mostly picked d's, I imagine you're not easily impressed with conventional options. I suggest you go for a bit of *Kashmiri achar* to suit your adventurous palate. If you're in the mood for something even more outlandish, Keka Ferdousi's iconic *noodles er achar* could be a more exciting option.

If your choices are all over the place, perhaps you'd like to sample some *tok-jhal-mishtii* mixed *achar* eh? The goodness of green mangoes, limes, and even some chopped vegetables, all lathered up in a savoury mix of spices and oil, mmm. Bon appetit!

Rasha Jameel is your neighbourhood feminist-apu-who-writes-big-essays. Remind her to also finish writing her bioinformatics research paper at rasha.jameel@outlook.com



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I'm Just Like the Other Girls, and You Probably Are Too

SYEDA TASNIM ISLAM

When I was a little girl, my dreams revolved around living in a big pink mansion, and desperately wanting to be the fourth Powerpuff Girl. Once I turned eight, I had decided that was a rather unrealistic dream so I moved on to a more plausible option – becoming an astronaut.

However, as I stepped foot into my teenage years, the point of plausibility became irrelevant and all I wanted was to *not* be like the “other girls.” Who were these other girls, you ask?

The other girls were the ones who liked pink, who put effort into their looks, the ones who listened to shallow pop songs rather than meaningful and objectively cooler 70s rock music. You see, even though I had convinced myself I was entirely my own person who didn't care for anyone's approval, my heart was polluted by internalised misogyny. I had somehow convinced myself that in order to be taken seriously I had to completely disassociate from anything and everything “girly.”

Once I became more aware about feminism, I realised that the sudden change in me was not solely the product of teenage angst – but a systemic process that made me shame myself and other women. Inter-



nalised misogyny is just one of the many tools of the patriarchy which makes you think that if you're a woman, your place in this world is so finite that you have to compete, and constantly battle yourself and other women. It manifests as the constant need to nitpick and put down other women for expressing themselves the way they want, or sometimes simply for existing.

The beloved shows and movies we grew up with relentlessly vilified the girls who were hyper-feminine and portrayed them

as shallow, cunning or dumb. The shows set them up to the fate of a humiliating loss (read: not being chosen by the male lead) while the “cool girl” who was nonchalant about her appearance was an avid reader and had “masculine” traits such as playing video games, further reinforcing the stereotype.

Even beyond the media, there's the endless stream of seemingly harmless misogynistic jokes, and generalisations at the expense of women in our everyday

lives. We are taught that other girls are our competition, instead of being taught how important female friendships and allies are. What's ironic is that to the other girls, you are also one of the *other* girls. After all, you cannot hate on other women without hating yourself a little bit.

It makes sense that in a world like this, many women are battling their internalised misogyny in some capacity. However, this is exactly where female solidarity comes in – it's the acknowledgement of the oppressive power at play that constantly pits women against each other, keeping them completely blind from the real truth: *every woman under the patriarchy is oppressed.*

The point of unlearning internalised misogyny isn't to only let yourself enjoy your femininity. It's to just let yourself and other women exist without imposing the same scrutiny that the patriarchy already imposes on us. The “other girls” are every bit as strong, smart, funny, kind, and all the other adjectives I consider myself to be and more. And, most importantly, we are all fighting our own battles in this patriarchal society.

Tasnim has realised her one true passion: marathon napping. Send her words of motivation at tasnim.upoma96@gmail.com

SATIRE

University Employees Miss Students As Much as Students Miss Them

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

Since the pandemic hit, the daily lives of many university employees and that of students' have drastically changed. Some are feeling restless and want to get back to their old routines as soon as possible, others however, are dreading getting out of their pyjamas and coming across unfamiliar faces every day.

“I am grateful to still have a job despite the pandemic ravaging job opportunities for most. However, it no longer sparks joy as I cannot bully—uh sorry, I mean assist students in person anymore,” admits Asifur Rahman, an employee of one university's administration wing.

University campuses are now mostly empty, except for the security guards who still carry on their duties diligently, but now, with much less purpose.

“Without any couples on campus, the university no longer faces the grave threat of two people holding hands,” says the head of security of Bidirectional University. The security team can finally go through the day without being ordered through their walkie-talkies to tell two students to sit further apart from each other in the cafeteria.

No longer can you see a swarm of tired students making their way to early morning classes. Many students now in fact miss their hectic yet enjoyable routine of attending classes and chilling with friends on campus. Things have been too different for too long now. Waking up early, getting ready and battling through traffic to attend classes requires a certain character-building willpower that sleeping next to your laptop throughout the class simply does not mandate.

The cafeteria used to be full of life back when things were normal, you could hardly find a seat in there. Now, needless to say, it is a ghost town. It is hard to imagine how much the students must miss the cafeteria food that they often found surprises in, especially the surprises that have six legs.

“I frequently went to the cafeteria at 9 AM to have my morning coffee. It's quieter and more peaceful during those hours,” says Farhana, a university student. Upon being asked why she was in the cafeteria at 9 AM when her classes started at 8 AM, she said, “I showed up for attendance, not an education. Please respect my choices.”

Her professor must surely miss her.

Nuzhat enjoys baking but simply cannot find the required ingredients. Tell her about your favourite baked goods at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com



THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE SHOUT

THE SINGLE-SEX SCHOOL EFFECT

FATIMA JAHAN ENA

In conservative societies such as ours, parents often want to send their kids to single-sex schools. These schools ensure that male and female students receive their education separately by putting them in different buildings or having entire schools designated for each one. Single-sex schools emphasise on delivering high quality education and a stable learning environment that eliminates students from opposite genders interacting/causing distractions. While that promise may have come true for some students, we often sweep some serious issues with single-sex education under the rug.

One of the most prominent issues of single-sex education is related to its most important selling points – the near complete lack of exposure to peers of the opposite gender. The implied promise of single-sex schools is about curbing “bad behaviour” at the root by separating boys and girls in order to ensure an academic life free of any sort of interactions.

However, the long-term effects of isolating the genders from each other may be staggering. Raiyan Shahryar, a former student of St. Joseph Higher Secondary School said, “A lot of my friends, including myself, developed problems with socialising with other genders due to our lack of familiarity with them or their behaviour. A lot of my friends still have problems socialising with women due to their lack of understanding; they view women as different beings and don't know how to properly behave around them. So, they prefer not to interact with them altogether.”

The parents' perception of how male and female students may interact plays a big role in this conversation as well. More than not, parents may have a traditional worldview that makes them view completely innocent interactions between boys and girls to be “inappropriate.” Even though their concerns may be valid in certain cases, this perspective only adds to the stigmatisation of normal, healthy interactions between peers.

In accordance with his own experience, Raiyan added, “The parents of the students in same-sex schools also make talking or interacting with girls a taboo for their sons. A lot of our parents enrolled us into same-sex coaching centres. Overall, the lack of experience and interaction with other genders, along with the deep-rooted sense of taboo from childhood that parents instil in their boys makes socialising hard for them when they finally enter organisations consisting of all genders.”

Sherin Chowdhury, mother of two, shared her reasons behind sending her sons to a boys' school, “We used to live in a rural area so I had no choice but to send my two sons to an all-boys' school. In those areas, it is the norm for schools to separate the female students from the male ones. It is also the norm in our society. People pass judgment if they see kids from opposite genders interacting.”

“When we moved to Dhaka, my sons attended all-boys' schools here too. But I did not react negatively to them having female friends from coaching centres. Kids can have friends. It is normal. Dividing the kids can lead to many problems in the future. The problems are all very common, unfortunately.”

Apart from developing issues with socialisation, the lack of experience with peers can oftentimes end up being harmful. In the future, students may have a difficult time distinguishing proper behaviour from improper behaviour from their peers.

Tashfia Islam*, a former student from Viqarunnisa Noon School & College said, “When I entered university, I called someone a friend who ended up harassing me in the second semester. The warning bells were already ringing, but I told myself that maybe all boys are like this, or that this behaviour is normal. This was because in school, I was never taught right and wrong when it came to what sort of interactions are normal between people of opposing genders. Ultimately, being around boys is not the issue. Being around the wrong people in general is.”

Tashfia further added, “Now that we are out of school, we have matured. We can now see how wrong things were there. Honestly, parents should learn that it doesn't matter if we are studying in co-ed schools or not. What they teach us themselves matters. If we were taught to stay away from wrongdoings instead of staying away from an entire gender, things would have worked out a lot better.”

Another problem arises when boundaries are breached. Students may feel a bit too comfortable when they are constantly surrounded by peers who are the



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

same gender as them. As a result, this may give some more leeway for behaving in a manner that may not be appropriate. Even if they do not realise it, the students may end up crossing the boundaries of their classmates, which can often border on being counted as harassment.

“A few students would behave improperly and just casually say, ‘It's just us girls.’ That's not a valid excuse or reason for their behaviour with others,” said Shahira Sarwat, a former student of Maple Leaf International School. She also added, “Everyone has their own sense of comfort and set of boundaries. Even if they made their boundaries clear, some people just did not respect that. Maybe this ‘just us girls’ excuse would not have become so normalised if they truly realised just how uncomfortable they made the others feel in our own schools.”

As for students who are currently enrolled in single-gender schools, the negative effects of their educational environment have already started to set in. Young students that are deprived of normal interactions with their peers can often be deprived of outlets for their typical feelings, such as childhood/teen crushes.

Nusrat Sarwar*, an eighth grader in Maple Leaf International School commented, “This probably isn't something that happens in only girls' schools, but in my experience, I have seen girls develop very unhealthy crushes on male teachers. They become kind of obsessed. My friends from other schools tell me about their crushes and they are all our age. Often, I feel scared that something bad or negative might happen as a result of our school environment. Of course, nothing bad has happened yet. But seeing the news makes me much more scared about what might happen. Someone might take advantage of the situation and do something grim or regrettable.”

A student who shifted from a co-education environment to a single-sex school might gain unique insight into the two environments, which is what happened with Ibrarur Rahman Choudhury.

Ibrarur, who graduated from Bir Shreshtha Noor Mohammad Public College said, “Though my shift had changed from co-ed, I still had female friends and my socialising skills were pretty good. Here, I will give the cred-

it to my family. They are very open-minded so the shift to all-boys didn't affect my social skills. But boys in my university, who come from boys' schools/colleges, not all but some of them, often make sexist, body-shaming jokes about women. They are often quite misogynistic.”

When asked about whether or not he thought co-education or single-sex education is healthier in his opinion, Ibrarur responded, “When people study in single-sex schools, they share similar mentalities. They don't understand how to be okay with other's opinions. So, I will say that co-ed is very much the healthier option.”

The perception of single-sex schools are different between generations, as are priorities. Kamal Hossain, a father of three, commented on sending his kids to single-sex schools, “All my kids were enrolled in single-sex schools. My wife and I chose this system because of the schools' good reputations. Boys and girls being taught separately was an addition. Since we are a religious family, the system matched with our views. The issues with single-sex schools are definitely valid. But I did not see those issues with my kids. So, personally, I do not regret my decision.”

It goes without saying that these problems have not been experienced by everyone who studied in single-sex schools, as some people have fond and healthy memories of their school-life. Furthermore, not everyone develops the issues mentioned either. While most of the highlighted issues in this article may not be completely exclusive to single-gender schools, they do represent a fraction of actual students' academic lives.

We need to make room for appropriate discourse on the matters that are generally ignored. The necessary discourse may help to ensure that the students receive their education in a healthy and safe environment, regardless of whether or not they are in coeducational or single-gender schools.

*Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Fatima Jahan Ena likes complaining about capitalism and her forehead. Find her at mail2ena@gmail.com



ECHOES BY
 ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Bayes' Theorem, With No Maths

I
EVENT 1: A crazy driver hits your car and whizzes past. You get out and see your car is badly dented. The driver has disappeared. You're fuming, but there's nothing you can do. You tell yourself, at least you're alive. It could have been worse.

EVENT 2: You drive on. You notice that driver in front of a hospital. He's standing in front of an ambulance. The driver speeds into the hospital with a patient.

EVENT 3: Your prayers are now with the patient. Your anger has evaporated.

Before Event 1, you had a clean information set. You thought what anybody would have thought based on universal experience: the driver must be careless and reckless. Before Event 2, you're happy you survived. Event 3 is based on what you learned from Event 2. Your outlook towards the driver has changed. Who knows if that patient is still alive?

As new sets of information appear, we adapt our perception. In probability science, this is known as the Bayes' theorem.

II
 British mathematician Thomas Bayes (1702-1761) proposed that our perception towards the world is based on "prior probabilities". This is the probability set we start with. As we confront new experiences, the prior probability sets also change – "conditional" to what we experience. And with it, our perception changes.

We look at the world based on existing beliefs. When we confront overwhelming

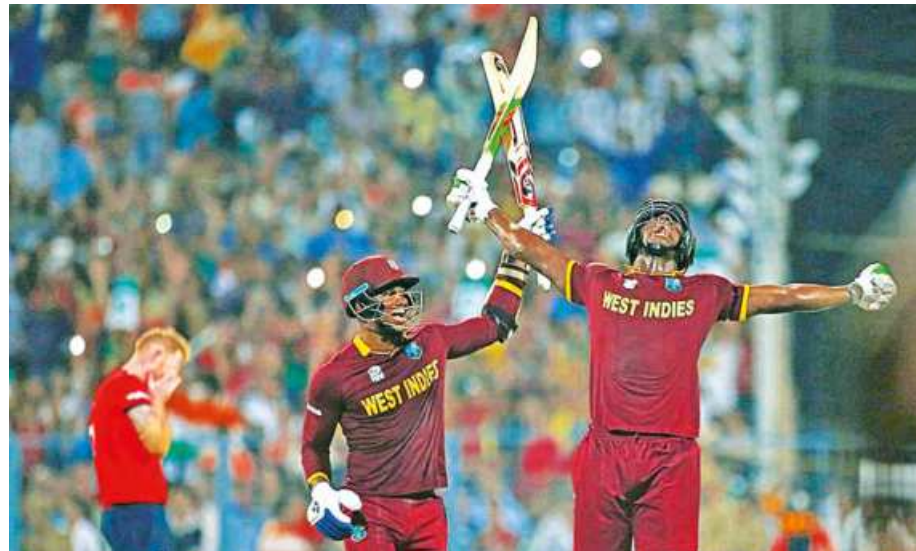


PHOTO: AFP

evidence that shatters our beliefs, Bayesian rationalists argue that our perception towards the world also changes.

Bayes didn't live to see the impact of his thoughts. His friend Richard Price published his work in 1763. Years later, it caught the attention of French mathematician Simone Pierre Laplace. Laplace introduced "conditional probabilities" and formalised the theorem in the equational form we see today.

III
 Remember the 2016 T20 World Cup final between England and West Indies? Let's

replay the last over. You have no "prior" knowledge of how the match ended.

England made 155/9. A competitive score. At the beginning of the 20th over, West Indies were 137/6. Their star batsman Marlon Samuels was at the non-striker's end. A relatively unknown Carlos Brathwaite would face England's star all-rounder Ben Stokes.

David "Bumble" Lloyd of England and Ian Bishop of West Indies were in the commentary box. Surely, West Indies stood no chance against Stokes. Brathwaite sent the first ball for a six off long leg. Bumble was

ecstatic; Bishop, silent. West Indies now needed 13 from five balls.

The next ball goes for a six off midwicket. Seven needed off four. Are you changing opinions "conditional" to new probability sets?

Third ball: six! Scores are level. Three balls remain. Minutes ago, many thought the game was sealed for England. Bumble is shouting at the top of his lungs. The rest is history – Brathwaite sends the fourth ball for a six off long-on. From nowhere, Bishop screams, "Carlos Brathwaite! Remember the name!" What Bishop hadn't dreamt of, was now reality.

As probability sets changed, alliance tilted from England to the West Indies. This is the crux of Bayes' theorem stripped of all mathematical vocabulary.

IV
 According to Bayesian logic, we change our perception as we confront overwhelming evidence. The first story supports this. In the second, even after watching a wonderful match, some people will still support England. This tells us Maths has its limitations. People don't always respond to mathematical predictions. Once we know the limits, we appreciate the beauty and the beast of a discipline.

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

YOUTH SPEAK FORUM 2021 BY AIESEC IN BANGLADESH

Addressing the Future of Work and Youth Employability

A CORRESPONDENT

Youth Speak Forum 2021 organised by AIESEC in Bangladesh on June 4-5, 2021, in partnership with United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh and SHOUT, The Daily Star aimed to empower young people to understand how they can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through short and powerful talks. The event sparked interest in self-development through hosting keynotes and PowerTalks about the future of work. In addition, Youth Speak Forum aimed to build capacity via case solving workshops and networking with thought leaders and co-participants.

A focus was also on SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth by increasing youth employability and exploring opportunities to create more jobs, thereby increasing youth employment.

Day one started with a keynote on future of work during and after Covid-19 delivered by Narayanan S, Co-Founder and CBO



of Unschool, an education ecosystem based out of Hyderabad, India designed to bring out the best in young people by providing an easy and definitive path for keeping up with the 21st century. A PowerTalk was delivered by Ipshita Fahmin, Country Human Resources Business Partner, A.P. Moller - Maersk about youth employability, speaking about how important it is to invest the four years of university life to greatly understand what one is interested in. The day ended with a problem-solving workshop from Mirza Salman Hossain Beg, Vice President of Dtac (Telenor, Thailand).

His workshop involved a capacity building space for delegates about problem solving at work, followed by a space where delegates could address any problems faced by current consumers in the market and how they may be solved.

Day two began with a keynote about the relevance of SDG 8 during and after the pandemic by Sudipto Mukerjee, Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh. He spoke about how important it is for people to respect diversity and become emotionally intelligent, rather than focusing on the IQ, as is traditionally done. His space was followed by a PowerTalk on youth entrepreneurship by Shah Rafayat Chowdhury, Co-Founder and President of Footsteps Bangladesh. He spoke about how young people are slowly coming into entrepreneurship, be it profitable ventures or social enterprises. He also said that if you wish to be a changemaker, just look at the problems around you and try to take the first step towards a solution. The day ended

with a workshop from SHOUT, The Daily Star who delivered an insightful session on effective communication and team building, outlining the importance of team building for every organisation and how communication is key to delivering output of the highest quality.

The Forum was closed by AIESEC in Bangladesh outlining the global professional internship opportunities on aiesec.org and a new soon-to-be launched initiative named "EntrePower" that aims to prepare young people to be competent for jobs both in the Bangladesh markets and also via AIESEC's global internship programs.

Feedback received from the delegates were documented, with most saying this is a space they learned loads of valuable insights from and hope to come back for future engagement. AIESEC in Bangladesh remains committed to developing leadership in young people via practical experiences in challenging environments and will continue to offer more such spaces.

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 in class 9 at Manarat Dhaka International College.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Fleeting Memories of an Online Bound Student

NABEEHA UMAMA KHAN

The gloomy sky above me grumbled, promising downpour.

Dhanmondi 7/A buzzed around me, full of life, yet I was stuck on the pavement in a trance. A rickshaw zoomed past, ringing indignantly as I hopped away, my eyes still locked onto the building in front of me.

My eyes took it in hungrily – every brick and glass, rapidly renewing the rusted images that had been burned inside my head for the past year and a half. The world around me melted away, my mind a time machine of its own as it dragged me down to the past.

I was still standing in the same place, but everything around me had changed. Things were happier. I could hear the loud ringing of the bell, signalling the end of the class. I could see myself rushing out, laughing along with my friends as we celebrated the twenty-five minutes of freedom, impatient to get a last-minute bite as the precious tiffin-time minutes raced away.

Soon the scene changed, and I was in class, huddled around with my friends as we panicked to get in a final revision before the test. I could hear us cheering loudly as Miss gave in with a small smile, saying she would just ask us orally instead.

The first drop of rain hit my forehead and took me to another memory – a rainy Thursday. There I was, in class, with all of our eyes glued to the storm brewing outside, praying that the rain would continue until school was

over. Fast forward a few hours and we were outside, laughing and twirling in the rain with paper boats floating behind us in the water-logged ground.

A car honk brought me out of my trance, and suddenly, like a bucket of cold water, quite literally, I was brought back to the haunting present. The happiness was gone, and I was again standing in front of a lifeless building, a place that I had called home for half a day for the past three years.

A painful sigh escaped deep from my chest as I tugged my eyes away, staring off at the dark sky overhead as the rain pelted on my face, my drenched hijab clinging onto my head for dear life.

A passing mother's sharp warning at her child to not put his hand out reminded me of my own *Ma* at home. I could almost hear her fussing as she saw me soaking wet, nudging me to the shower as she prepared a steaming cup of ginger tea, all the while mumbling, "We'll see who looks after you when you get a fever."

The thought of my *Ma* had me moving with a smile as I walked home. Just before I turned the corner, I turned back to glance at my school for the final time with a promise that drowned in the howling wind. One day I will be back there with my friends again, laughing and studying, and everything will be alright.

One day.

The writer is a student of Class IX



A Case for Eco-Friendly Menstrual Products

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI

While menstruation itself is a natural process, the disposable products used to tackle it can have a long-lasting and detrimental impact on the environment. This is where eco-friendly menstrual products come in. Not only are they safer, more hygienic, sustainable, and reusable, but they also provide more comfort and ultimately save the total cost of menstruation management.

MENSTRUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Although statistics vary, the general range suggests that people who menstruate use around 15,000 disposable period products in their lifetime. Around the world, the annual menstrual waste adds up to 100 billion disposables. The number of disposable pad users is on the rise in Bangladesh. Apart from convenience, the stigma associated with menstruation is also causing a rise in disposable usage, as they are more discreet than the reusable cloth pads used by the majority of menstruators.

The plastic packaging, individual plastic wraps each pad comes with and the leak proof layer all are made with non-biodegradable material that ends up in landfills and waste dumps, harming the environment for the next 500 to 800 years. Moreover, due to the stigma surrounding menstruation, some people find it easier to just flush their disposable sanitary napkins down the toilet than conducting a stealth mission to dispose of them without anyone else knowing. This results in a lot of waste in rivers and, eventually, the seas and ocean.

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

Sustainable period products are eco-friendly products used for menstruation management like reusable cups,



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

discs, cloth pads or period panties. Menstrual cups are small silicone cups used to collect menstrual fluid. Discs are similar in function, just shaped differently. Reusable pads and period panties are made with multilayer absorbent fabric that can be worn during periods and washed for reuse.

The medical-grade silicone used to produce reusable cups and pads do not react with menstrual fluid or release any toxic substances like artificial fragrance, residual

pesticides from inorganic cotton or bleach into your body. So, in terms of safety, reusable products win easily.

Despite the daunting picture menstrual cups or discs create in your mind, it is far more comfortable than disposable pads or tampons. Once inserted correctly, it is impossible to feel its presence. Unlike disposable pads which can last up to 6 to 8 hours and tampons that last only 4 hours, menstrual cups have a 12-hour wear time. Considering the sticky feeling, bad odour, rashes and wear time disposable pads have to offer, menstrual cups can be an absolute dream when worn and fitted properly.

While disposable products are designed to encourage a lifetime subscription, one reusable cup or disc can be used for up to 10 years. Reusable pads can be used for up to 5 to 10 years. Although reusable products appear more costly, in the long run, they save a lot of money.

If not for the environment, for the sake of safety and comfort it offers and the sheer amount of money it saves, eco-friendly menstrual products are worth a try.

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Tazreen wastes her time winning fake arguments in her head. Remind her to finish her argumentative essay instead at tazreenzahan@gmail.com

When Bengali Folklore Meets Pop Culture

ADHORA AHMED

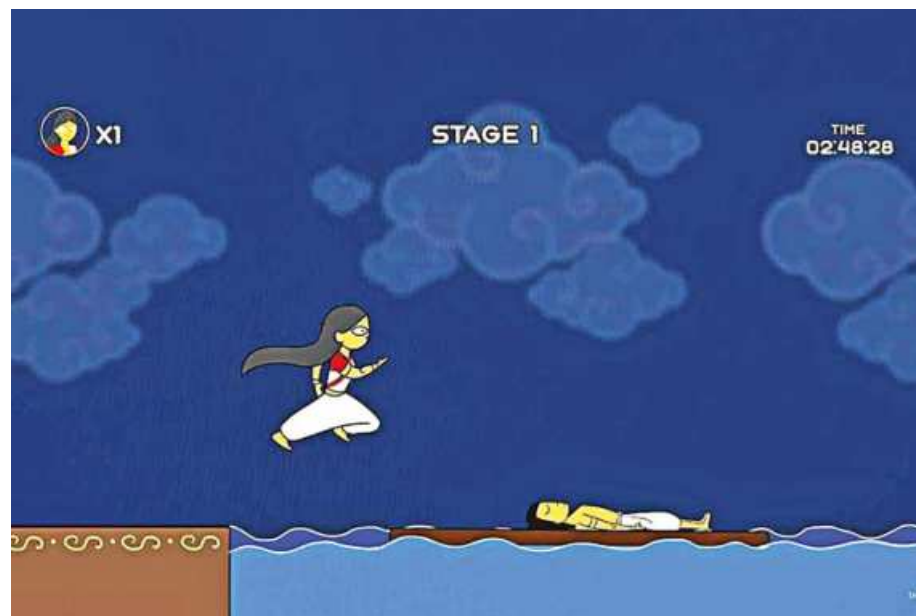
As a society, we often perceive urbanity as a benchmark of sophistication, development, and privilege, hence the innate richness of folklore pales in our eyes. However, our roots lie in our folklore, without which we cannot grow as a people. Yet, sometimes pop culture intersects with folklore in interesting ways, bringing forth obscure facets of our heritage into the mainstream.

BEHULA BY SHUNNO

This viral song is perhaps the most recent phenomenon of the intersection of pop culture and folklore, based on the love story of Behula and Lakhindar. There are several versions of the story with some common elements. Chand Sadagar, Behula's father-in-law, angered the Hindu snake goddess, Manasa. To protect his son Lakhindar from Manasa's wrath, Chand Sadagar built an iron bridal chamber. Despite his efforts, Manasa succeeded in cursing Lakhindar with a snakebite. Behula sailed with her husband's body on a raft, pleading with the gods to restore life to Lakhindar in exchange for winning Chand Sadagar's allegiance to Manasa. The gods were won over, hence they returned Lakhindar to his beloved Behula.

THAKURMAR JHULI

Only 2000s kids remember this gem of a



show. Just kidding, we all do, because this cartoon series was based on the anthology of folktales across Bengal compiled by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumder in the early twentieth century. Like other folktales and fairy tales around the world, the stories of "Thakurmar Jhuli" were transmitted primarily to teach children important values. The cartoon show reintroduced the timeless stories of *Thakurma*

to a whole new generation that is better acquainted with TV screens.

KRISHNO BY HABIB FT. KAYA

Habib Wahid's debut album, featuring vocalist Kaya, was all the rage back in 2003. Habib and Kaya's collaboration, fusing folk elements with hip-hop, gifted us an album full of insanely catchy and innovative renditions of folk songs, which are attributed to a number of *bauls*

and other folk musicians including Shah Abdul Karim, Arkum Shah, Jalal Kha and Deeno Hin.

SULTANA BIBIANA BY JAMES

Folklore doesn't only consist of songs and stories. It also includes other activities of life, such as children's games. This song is, essentially, an ode to the games some of us have probably grown up playing. In big cities like Dhaka, where fields are increasingly being encroached by construction projects and sports are becoming gentrified, "Sultana Bibiana" paints an idyllic picture of children running across rice fields, playing games like *daria bandha*, *bouchi*, *kanamachi*, or *danguli* to their heart's content. The title of the song refers to a rhyme, briefly incorporated into the lyrics, which is recited in some of these games.

The combination of pop culture and folklore might sound controversial to some. Although you could argue that a hip-hop rendition of an obscure folk song does the original material much disservice by making it palatable to the mainstream, I believe such references in pop culture can generate interest in our heritage. And what harm is there in knowing more about our culture?

Adhora Ahmed listens to too many "sad white boy" songs. Recommend her better music at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com