

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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SUGAR AND SPICE AND
EVERYTHING NOT-SO-NICE

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MENTAL MUSCLES AND
DIGITAL DILEMMA

PG 4



PERSONAL FINANCE

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

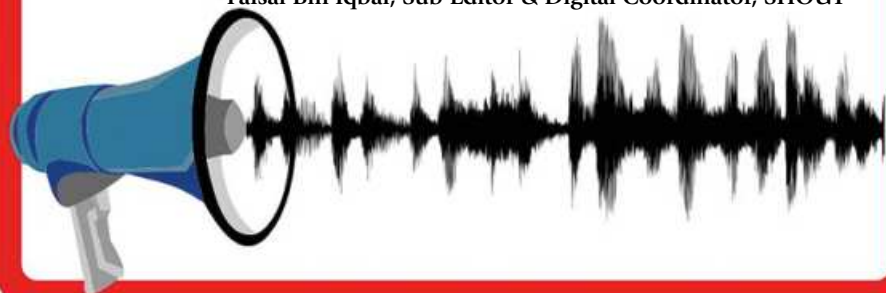
EDITORIAL

"The Theatre is living its dream. Madeira, Manchester, Madrid, Turin and Manchester again. Wreathed in Red. Restored to this great gallery of the game. A walking work of art. Vintage, beyond valuation, beyond forgery or imitation. Eighteen years since that trembling teenager of touch and tease, first tipped on to this storied stage. Now in his immaculate maturity, CR7, reunited."

These beautiful words by Peter Drury pretty much sums up my emotion right now. For someone who has always been a fan of everything poetic, Ronaldo's second debut for Manchester United has been nothing short of a mesmerising sonnet, one that will resonate within me for as long as I am alive. As a Manchester United fan, and as a fan of football, last Saturday's game against Newcastle in the Premier League is something I can never forget.

Ronaldo's brace, Fernandes scoring a screamer, and Lingard sealing the deal at the very end – what more could a fan want from his team? But at the end of the day, it was not the win that mattered. It was the moment that made everything feel so special. "Living in the moment" – I guess that's the right phrase for it.

– Faisal Bin Iqbal, Sub-Editor & Digital Coordinator, SHOUT



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PLAYWATCH

TV SERIES



A scene from the "Mrs Prohelika" episode of Unoloukik.

Unoloukik and the Use of Silence in Cinema

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

One of the most gripping scenes in crime genre movies has to be a particular one from Martin Scorsese's *The Departed*. When Sergeant Sullivan (Matt Damon) calls undercover agent Billy Costigan (Leonardo DiCaprio), through a dead Queenan's phone, none of the characters know who to trust. The plot can deviate either way depending on how they choose to act or more importantly on who talks first.

How does Scorsese use music in this tense moment? He doesn't.

It's absolute silence when the two characters wait for the other one to talk, and eventually, Billy hangs up. However, the original *Internal Affairs* from which this movie was adapted, felt the necessity to use background score to build tension, almost telling the audience how and when to react. The YouTube channel Every Frame a Painting explains this elegantly in their video "Martin Scorsese - The Art of Silence".

While the greats like Kurosawa, Ozu and Ray had mastered the art of silence, directors like Scorsese, Fincher and Villeneuve are the modern flag bearers. Silence allows the audience to concentrate on the actors' expressions and emotions. Unfortunately, filmmakers these days feel the necessity to keep something playing in the background at all times.

Lazy filmmakers often underestimate the power of music and play it safe. In local movies, the background score is too predictable. Silly music in a humorous scene, high pitched music during sadness or ominous music in a suspenseful one doesn't challenge the audience enough. There's a reason humour in *The Office* works better than others.

When a scene has absolute silence, you're telling the audience to get closer

and concentrate. With proper execution of background score, you have the power to involve the audience in your narrative and control their interest. With silence, timing is really important. Overuse it, and you lose the audience's attention.

And that brings us to the anthology series *Unoloukik* released on Chorki, which created a well-deserved hype. While all five stories were unique with their approach, "Mrs Prohelika", directed by Robiul Alam Robi and starring Chanchal Chowdhury and Nusrat Imrose Tisha, stood out. Not only because of the two masterful acting performances but also a gripping screenplay and most importantly, its use of silence.

Two characters talking is one of the most difficult things to pull off in cinema. And to approach an entire film based on just two characters conversing was bold of the filmmaker. With maestros like Tisha and Chanchal on screen and a gripping script, toning down the background score and using silence gives the audience a perfect opportunity to concentrate on their genius. Thrill, curiosity, fear -- you don't need music to carry out these emotions if you trust your actors' capabilities.

When Chanchal's character, a psychiatrist, isn't paying heed to Tisha's case and interrupts her frequently, you can perceive subtle annoyance on Tisha's face. Silence allows the audience to notice these small expressions and consequently, entitles them to unfold the story themselves.

The series has excelled in multiple aspects ranging from acting to cinematography, raising the bar to a new height in the process. However, the use of silence, an elusive yet crucial tool of storytelling, is the epitome of master filmmaking that is *Unoloukik*.

Suggest Ifiti nonfiction at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

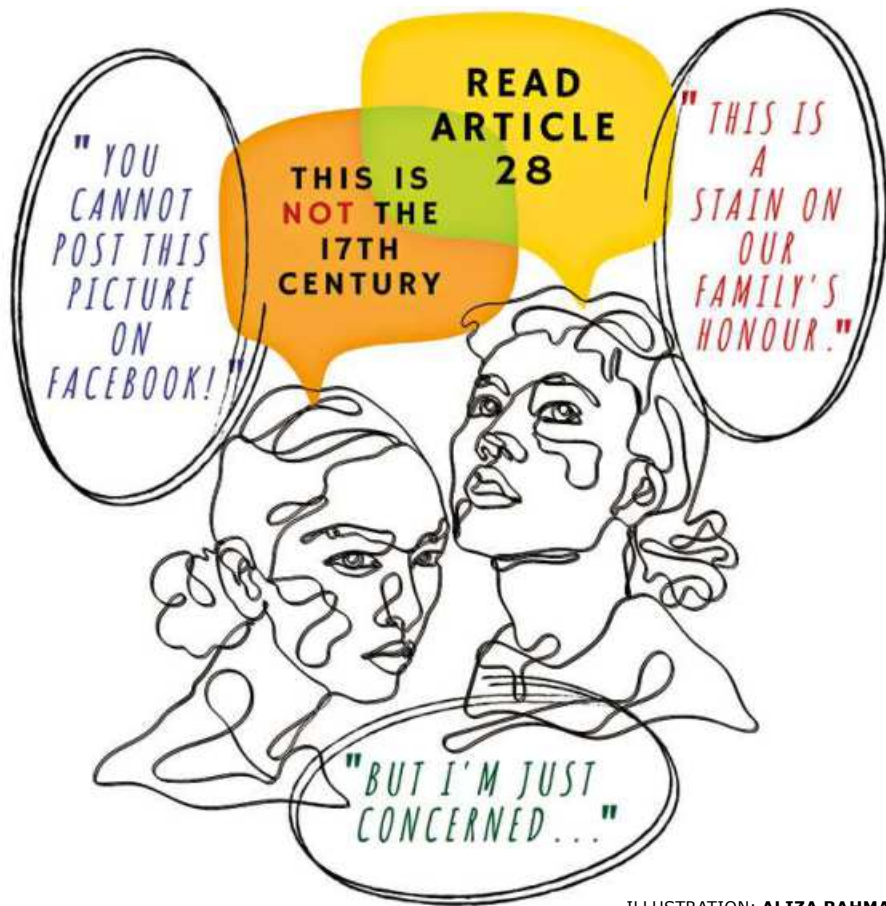


ILLUSTRATION: ALIZA RAHMAN

The 'P' in Moral Policing Stands for Patriarchy

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI

Being an English major, I had to read *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It revolves around an extremist puritan society's obsession with shunning Hester Prynne for her "immoral acts". The moral policing in this novel later turns into a full-fledged witch hunt, as the puritan leaders dehumanise Hester and her child every step of the way.

A novel set in 17th century colonial America couldn't have anything to do with 21st century Bangladeshi society, right? I thought so too, until I saw this pattern of patriarchal moral policing orchestrated repeatedly.

From the woman who was berated by random strangers for what she chose to wear, to a public figure who is being dragged through the mud for "immoral" personal choices she made — moral policing has become an extension of patriarchy in its attempt to forcefully fit every woman to the Madonna image.

Moral policing affects people of all genders, but women are more subjected to this euphemised form of harassment. The origin of this pattern is debated, but a moral high ground and subsequently the duty of being the moral guardian of women has been bestowed on men through everything from media to patriarchal social institutions. This notion of men being the morally superior protector of the morally vulnerable women who just so happen to carry the burden of "family or society's honour" is what legitimises extensive moral policing of women.

Is it legal? Absolutely not.

Constitutionally, moral policing compromises our civil rights and privacy rights as Bangladeshi citizens. In the case of women, Article 28 of our constitution promises

women equal access to public spaces and institutions. Although moral policing itself is not a legal offence that can be tried, its impact on the person being policed violates our constitutional rights.

From overzealous relatives who try to regulate what women in the family post on social media to self-acclaimed moral protectors expressing "concern" or straight out harassing women in both online and offline spaces for their appearance or action, do so under the pretence of protecting the collective morality of our society. But as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie puts it, "If you criticise X in women but do not criticise X in men, you do not have a problem with X, you have a problem with women."

Everyone is allowed to have their subjective understanding of morality. However, to impose it as the objective standard in a way that compromises someone else's rights is questionable. And if that subjective notion happens to be rooted in misogyny or internalised patriarchy, it is simply unacceptable.

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Tazreen is a part time English major and full-time feminist attempting to be the 21st century reincarnation of Judith Shakespeare. Reach her at tazreenzahan@gmail.com

Sugar and Spice and Everything Not-So-Nice

The case of subtle sexism at our dinner tables

ERINA MAHMUD & NALIFA MEHELIN

We have witnessed Meena trying to equalise her domestic workload by swapping roles with Raju. Meena probably takes pride in knowing that at present Bangladesh is the most gender-equal country in South Asia, closing 71.9 percent of its gender gap. In 2019, an estimated 36.37 percent of women constituted the labour force in Bangladesh, hitting an all-time high. These numbers are worth celebrating, although we should ask if they reflect greater equality in household work sharing.

Let's look at our dinner table today. Have practices around our dinner table changed much? Or, does subtle sexism still creep into our communication and convention in our dinner tables unconsciously?

In most households, women prepare the table and invite family members to dine. While they serve dishes to everyone, their plates remain the last ones in line. Women serve more and are comparatively served less in daily dining. The plates are also left to be picked up by women after everyone is done with their meals. Male participation in all this remains voluntary, often saying that it is women's work. The whole process harbours misogyny as well as toxic masculinity.



What's wrong with doing household chores? The problem is not in *doing* the chores rather in the unfair and unequal participation, and in romanticising it in the name of affection, hospitality, and culture towards one specific gender. Women are not the sole flag bearer of affection, nor do they have to adhere to practices that seem to cost them more. The problem also lies in the presumed hierarchy of men and in behaviour that discourages burden-sharing with women in our families.

Most importantly, the problem lies in its banality. We forget sexism starts small, in intimate spaces, before it spreads like wildfire in our society. We condemn sexism, misogyny, and mistreatment towards women in the public sphere, but do not evaluate or question our participation in these in the private sphere. Largely unaware, many of us tend to hold ourselves in a morally superior position and mask day-to-day subtle sexism behind affection for women in our lives.

The key to addressing this inequality lies in behavioural changes. Behavioural changes happen slowly and gradually, where acknowledging the problem remains the first step. Without recognising the unfair, sexist and imposing nature of the practices, the risk of sustaining and reproducing them through generations remains. Breaking this cycle requires greater sensitisation, along with stepping out of designated gender roles.

In pondering viable ways to address misogyny and sexism that plague our lives, we often wait for grand opportunities. This time, let's start small by trying to identify the pattern of our behaviours. We rectify this by *participating*. Irrespective of our gender, we serve the one who has served us all along, we ask them if they need more, we take our plates to the kitchen and wash them. Because the most crucial of changes start at home.

Erina Mahmud and Nalifa Mehelin are respectively outgoing and incoming MSc Candidates at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Mental Muscles and Digital Dilemma

RİYANA AFROZE

Ancient Greek philosopher Plato had an unusual apprehension of writing. He famously connoted “written” with “forgotten”: “if people learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls”. Being someone who has grown up religiously believing that writing once is better than reading thrice, this fear of written words puzzled me. Doesn’t advancement in writing lead to an advancement in thinking?

According to Plato, however, resorting to writing meant depending on an external source and not exercising the memory. Turns out this premonition continues to exist but on a much larger scale. Neuroscientist Manfred Spitzer coined the term “digital dementia,” explaining how extensive use of technology, especially the internet, is gradually leading to a breakdown of cognitive abilities. Idle memory muscles are foreboding to the intellectuality of our species.

When was the last time you mentally split the bill during a hangout? How many times do you check your phone to confirm a location? This reliance on phones and other devices for information we could otherwise retrieve from memory deteriorates short-term memory pathways. In other words, information that can

be instantly accessed is immediately forgotten. This happens because the neural pathways aren’t trodden enough to create permanent memories. As a result, we end up losing and, in some cases, failing to develop cognitive skills like arithmetic and location mapping.

Recalling memories strengthens them, and at the same time allows the brain to get rid of the distracting short-term memories. This mechanism saves energy for more recent and relevant tasks and enables the building of cognitive skills. Nonetheless, over-reliance on technology has hampered this to an extent that we need to consult our phones for the very last thing seen. The implications may be grave. Ever moved from one room to the other only to realise that you forgot why you came? Looks like short-term memory is getting shorter.

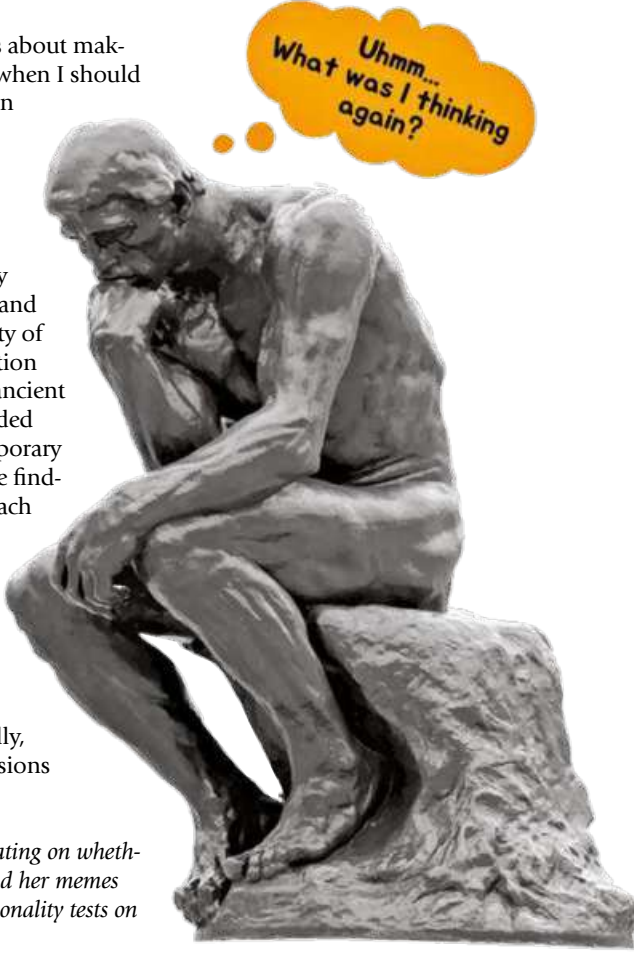
While the human brain is great at storing information, it is even better at recognising patterns and making deductions. Outsourcing certain tasks like the memorisation of phone numbers to devices can save cognitive resources for more important things like decision-making. This may also look like using digital or physical notepads for brain dumps so that one is mentally free to focus on the task at hand reducing the anxiety of multi-tasking that life in the 21st century

has brought about.

At the end of the day, it is about making a conscious decision of when I should rely on a device and when on memory.

Looking back at Plato’s quote, it’s still hard to believe. Partly because modern science has proved how writing aids memory by bolstering neural networks, and partly because the complexity of and accessibility to information now is no match to that of ancient Greece. Yet the reason provided is quite in line with contemporary research. In the light of these findings, memory expert and coach Jim Kwik remarks, “There is a price for lazy mental muscles, use it or lose it.” Perhaps the only resources in the world which decrease when unused and increase when used are cognitive resources. Hopefully, we can make dedicated decisions for the latter.

Riyana is an introvert self-debating on whether she is an INFJ or INFP. Send her memes on introversion and MBTI personality tests on Instagram at [_raya_riyana_](#)



THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE

Personal Finance for Young People

TASNIM ODRIKA

Young people these days have a broader scope of earning from an early age, as opposed to people from a previous generation. While writing this article, I discovered that even before finishing their undergraduate degree, many students get involved in some form of employment.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Therefore, after finishing their degree and joining the workforce, the first paycheck does not catch them quite as off guard as one would expect it to, and with prior experience in earning, they are able to make better use of the money as well.

However, even when one earns throughout their student years, earning after graduation holds a different sort of meaning since one is expected to suddenly be more responsible at that point. In one form or another, yours truly has also always had some sort of an income. The real dilemma of actually managing my finances in a proper way began when I was put on a monthly payroll while working full time for an organisation.

At the root of managing one’s finances lies finding a surefire solution of properly saving up that dough and this seems to be where young people struggle the most.

“I first started earning when I was 19 years old but it’s only been a couple of months since I actually started to save up portions of my salary. Before that, I would skip the savings part completely which I now realise was a foolish thing to do,” relays English literature graduate Tarin Ahmed*, 24, currently working as a content writer for a web development company.

With an increasing student debt culture circling today’s youth, the biggest advice anyone can give you about managing your finances is to always save up a good chunk of your monthly income whenever it is possible. This, of course, might not be feasible depending on one’s circumstances. But, even if you can save 10 percent of your earnings, it’s a good start. A good tip to get you going on your savings journey is to start considering it as a non-negotiable monthly expense.

Saving does not come without its own hurdles either. With the social media algorithms and targeted ads showing you things that you only thought about owning in your dreams, learning self-control has to become one’s second-nature.

Card payments and mobile financial services (MFS) have also taken centre stage among the youth now and although we cannot deny the advantages these services have brought along with them, the ease of payments through these methods sometimes make it all too convenient to purchase items.

Not to mention, when we purchase through cash, we are giving away something tangible which sometimes makes it easier to restrain oneself when we look at the ever-decreasing volume of our wallet. In contrast, buying something through the click of a button might not have the same effect. Therefore, self-control becomes all the more important and difficult at the same time.

This is when budgeting becomes your best friend. Budgeting can be as complex as you want it with multiple excel sheets and budgeting apps, or it can be as simple as mentally categorising the list of expenses

Besides strict budgeting, another way

and savings. A good middle ground here for starters would be to just use good old pen and paper to categorise all the required expenses for the month and then assign a certain percentage of the monthly salary to each category.

Having an idea of the necessary expenditures at the start of the month will help you mentally prepare on how to go about spending throughout the month as well as stop you on your tracks when you’re on the verge of overindulging. Listing down all the actual expenditures at the end of the month and keeping track of them would also help you make better spending decisions in the future because you’ll be able to see the bigger picture. You can track down where you’re spending the most of your money and if there are ways to cut down certain unnecessary expenses.

If you are interested in better controlling your cash flow, looking into budgeting apps can be an option. Besides providing budgeting solutions, these apps also provide other services that allow you to reduce your bills, save money, or even give you investment advice in some cases. Here, you’ll have to go through a trial and error process to find the app that best suits your needs. An important word of advice, stick to the subscription free apps and don’t add onto your list of expenses.

Only saving certain amounts of money

to create more wiggle room within your income is to simply spend smartly. What it essentially means is to take advantage of the fact that we can get any information we need at the tip of a button. Research extensively for better deals especially for items you need to spend on every month such as your daily groceries or an expensive piece of tech that you’ll be using for a long time. Make sure to always get the best deal for your buck. If you are able to even save 20 percent on your daily coffee, in the long run, this will add up to a huge amount.

A common theme that seems to extend among fresh graduates is their lack of any proper long-term financial plan or goal.

“In terms of managing my finances, I just keep my earnings in my MFS account and spend from there as needed albeit saving up 60 percent of my salary each month,” says Famia Farhin, a 22-year-old who runs a small business selling hand-made accessories and paintings online.

A similar mentality is again echoed by 25-year-old Farhan Rahman who works for a pharmaceutical company. After experiencing the corporate sector for about a year, he explains, “I usually save at least 50 percent of my monthly earnings. I wouldn’t call it a financial plan necessarily, but my idea is to have a sustainable backup since you never know what can go wrong.”

Only saving certain amounts of money

*Names have been changed for privacy

Tasnim Odrika has only one personality trait and that is cats. Share ideas for new personality traits with her at [odrika02@gmail.com](#)

IS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM OVERREACTING?

SUBAH NUZHAT HUSSAIN

Consider this: a spider crawls into a crevice never to be seen again, but the arachnophobic resident who witnesses the escape decides to burn down the entire house. Most people will say that the resident is overreacting, some would even go as far as to call her oversensitive.

The immune system is a lot like the arachnophobic resident, though it would not resort to arson.

Normally, the immune system is trained to spot and annihilate foreign molecules, by recognising a target site on the foreign particle known as an antigen. Sometimes, the molecule is completely harmless, but the immune

system decides that it must be destroyed. So, it raises alarms, gathers the troops, and unleashes its mighty attack force against a chunk of peanut.

Hyper-sensitivity disorders, better known as “allergies,” are characterised by a failure of the immune system to become tolerant towards antigens that are frequently present in the environment. Inhale or swallow a few particles, and you may experience symptoms as mild as a skin rash or a runny nose or more severe ones like your body going into anaphylactic shock.

In the past century, allergies have become more common. It is

widely accepted that environmental conditions elicit allergic reactions in people who have a genetic disposition that makes them more susceptible to hypersensitivity.

The key player in the regulation of allergic responses is the regulatory T-cell. The regulatory T-cell is involved in mediating tolerance towards allergens. T-cells develop shortly after exposure to antigens, in places where our tissues meet the outside world, the gastro-intestinal tract and the respiratory tract.

The main role of the T-cell is to reign in the immune system from going wild by releasing inhibitory cytokines (chemical messengers) and by reducing the number of antigen-presenting cells.

They also control allergies by blocking the release of histamine and other allergy inducing molecules from mast cells. Individuals that

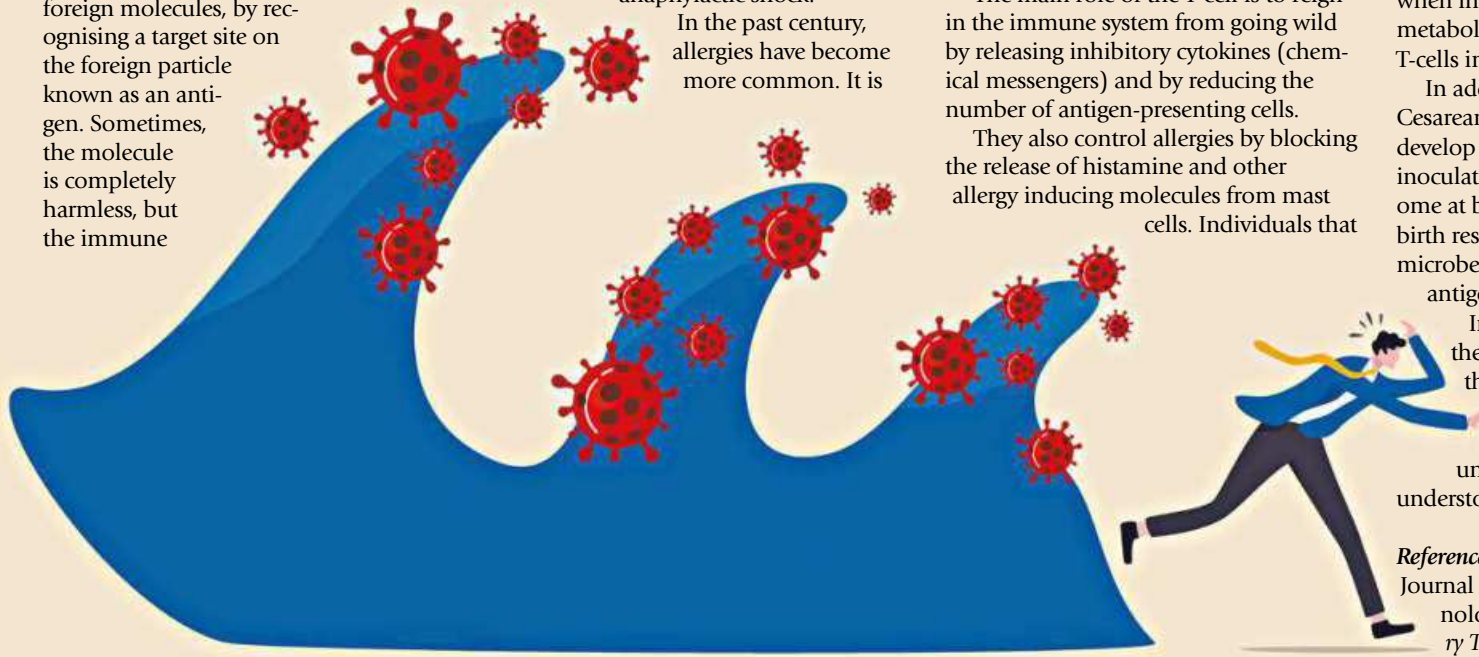
are sensitive towards allergens have a smaller population of T-cells.

Continual use of antibiotics, changes in diet, as well as reduced exposure to microbes during childhood could account for the prevalence of allergies. Collectively, these factors change the microbiome of the resident bacteria in our gut. Microbiota has a role in “shaping oral tolerance.” Polysaccharide A, a component in the capsule of a commensal gut bacteria enhances the function of T-cells. Short chain fatty acids, produced when intestinal bacteria break down and metabolise fibre, causes proliferation of T-cells in the intestines.

In addition, children born through Cesarean procedure are more likely to develop asthma because they are not inoculated with the mother’s microbiome at birth. Cleaner environments after birth result in infrequent exposure to microbes, which reduces development of antigenic tolerance.

In patients that have received therapeutic treatments for allergies, the number of T-cells increases in circulation. This proves that there is a link. However, the underlying mechanism is not fully understood.

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ECHOES BY
ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Breaking the Myths of Investment

I
An addition to the present stock of capital, in a particular period (usually per annum), is defined as an “investment”. If you have done an elementary course in Economics, you may have come across this definition. You may have also solved mathematical problems, and compared investment prospects of two projects to see which one is profitable, and more.

However, where did the investment come from? Who created it, and how?

Classrooms, by nature, are claustrophobic. Outside, in the real world, is where one learns investment and other concepts the classroom fails to make you experience.

II
At a new job, you decide to save a percentage of your monthly salary. Gradually, you have savings. This is how you added to your stock of capital that was zero before you received your first salary.

What do you do now? If you save in the bank, it will grow in your current account, or in a fixed deposit. That is a safe exit.

You can also use your saved investment somewhere else. Are you thinking of investing in the stock market? If so, then let me break two myths.

First, the stock market reflects the performance of the stocks that are exchanged



in it, and not the performance of the economy, as many would like to think. Second, investing in a market requires a particular skill set. Are you confident you have those skills?

Let me break another myth: the difference between “investing” and “gambling.” A successful gamble depends a lot on chance, and less on strategy. A successful investment is a calculated risk that depends on strategy more, like the throw of a dice.

Once you are confident enough to in-

vest, and you can also take calculated risks, you are now in the river swimming. Will you keep on swimming or stop?

III
Your investment is growing. Now, can you manage a large investment project? This is the test for temptation.

As an investment becomes larger, it becomes more complex. Different organisational complexities start to emerge that require different approaches in management.

If you can evolve, you can keep holding your investment. If not, then it will be wise to sell your investment and move on. Many successful startups are sold off to large corporations not because they fail, but the internal management no longer has the skills to run a larger project.

IV
The actor Omar Sharif was famous for gambling. He could win or lose a million dollars in one night. One fine morning, he decided to quit. His logic was simple. When he was earning money, he knew he could earn back the losses. When his earnings started to wane, he knew it was time to stop.

It is easy to become tempted to keep moving on while you are successful in investing. It is more important to know how much you can handle, and if it is time to move on to something else.

This is probably the biggest myth of investment no Economics text will ever tell you.

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

How Does the Bundesliga Attract Young Footballers?

SYED MD. RAKEEN

In the last decade, a number of young footballers, primarily from England and the USA, have joined the youth ranks of Bundesliga clubs. Teams like Borussia Dortmund, and RB Leipzig have led the way in signing promising talents from different leagues on a cheap to sell them for mammoth fees to bigger clubs.

Bundesliga's track record of producing world-class talents certainly raised eyebrows among young players. Most recently, Jadon Sancho, Christian Pulisic, and Weston McKennie have stood out as examples of players developing relatively faster in the top German league.

As more up-and-coming talents are shifting to Bundesliga, let's revise three key factors that influence young footballers to pick Germany as their destination.

IMMIGRANT LAWS

Stringent immigrant laws have prevented transfers in the past, especially in England. Notably, two high-profile players – Yaya Toure, and Ángel Di Maria – missed out on moves to Arsenal when they were young due to denial of a work permit. The duo was eventually granted work permits in

their 20s in England, however, much later.

Conversely, Bundesliga remains lax in terms of work permit rules, allowing diversity in their youth setup. This paved the way for many players like Giovanni Reyna, Jude Bellingham, and Jamal Musiala to join German clubs.

MEDIA PRESSURE

Modern footballers face an uphill battle of trying to shrug off media scrutiny. Youngsters, in particular, get overwhelmed at times with the online abuses getting into their heads. Poor performances or off-field incidents would lead to them dominating headlines for all the wrong reasons.

The media pressure is relatively lesser in Bundesliga compared to other top leagues. It allows managers to give more minutes to youngsters while playing them through bad form. This decision soon pays dividends when they mature themselves into top players.

TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

Several clubs incorporate training drills that build a tactical foundation for the youngsters, leading them to be more versatile as a player. Dortmund created their youth system to have their academy players play in multiple formations before

joining the senior team.

This trendsetting of youngsters plying their trade in Germany can also be attributed to the sporting directors of Bundesliga clubs. Former RB Leipzig sporting director Ralf Rangnick laid the groundwork for the club by signing the likes of Emil Forsberg, Timo Werner, and Naby Keita. The club's meteoric rise in European football is a strong indication of his magnificent work.

Additionally, Dortmund's sporting director, Michael Zorc, exemplifies how feeder clubs should operate. He brought in many youngsters at a low transfer fee, hired the right managers to nurture them, and later sold them at their peaks to top clubs.

Despite all the stories of youngsters flourishing in Bundesliga, it still doesn't guarantee success as few players like Reece Oxford and Ademola Lookman failed to develop into sought-after players. Then again, Bundesliga is miles ahead of most leagues in terms of producing global superstars and is probably a youngster's best bet at reaching the top.

Syed Md. Rakeen thinks Bundesliga won't be a one-horse race this season. Share your opinions at fb.com/rafsan.isnayeen



NOWHERE

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

You walk a star-covered path leading you nowhere,
You think you're no closer but you're nearly there.

Be as it will, the stars glow for you.
Broken and picked right out of the blue.
No breath left to spare, yet they still breathe for you.

The end of the path is where nowhere resides
Stories of her fill the dark coloured skies.

A witch who resides in a gingerbread house
With an old woman's soul and a pink, satin blouse.

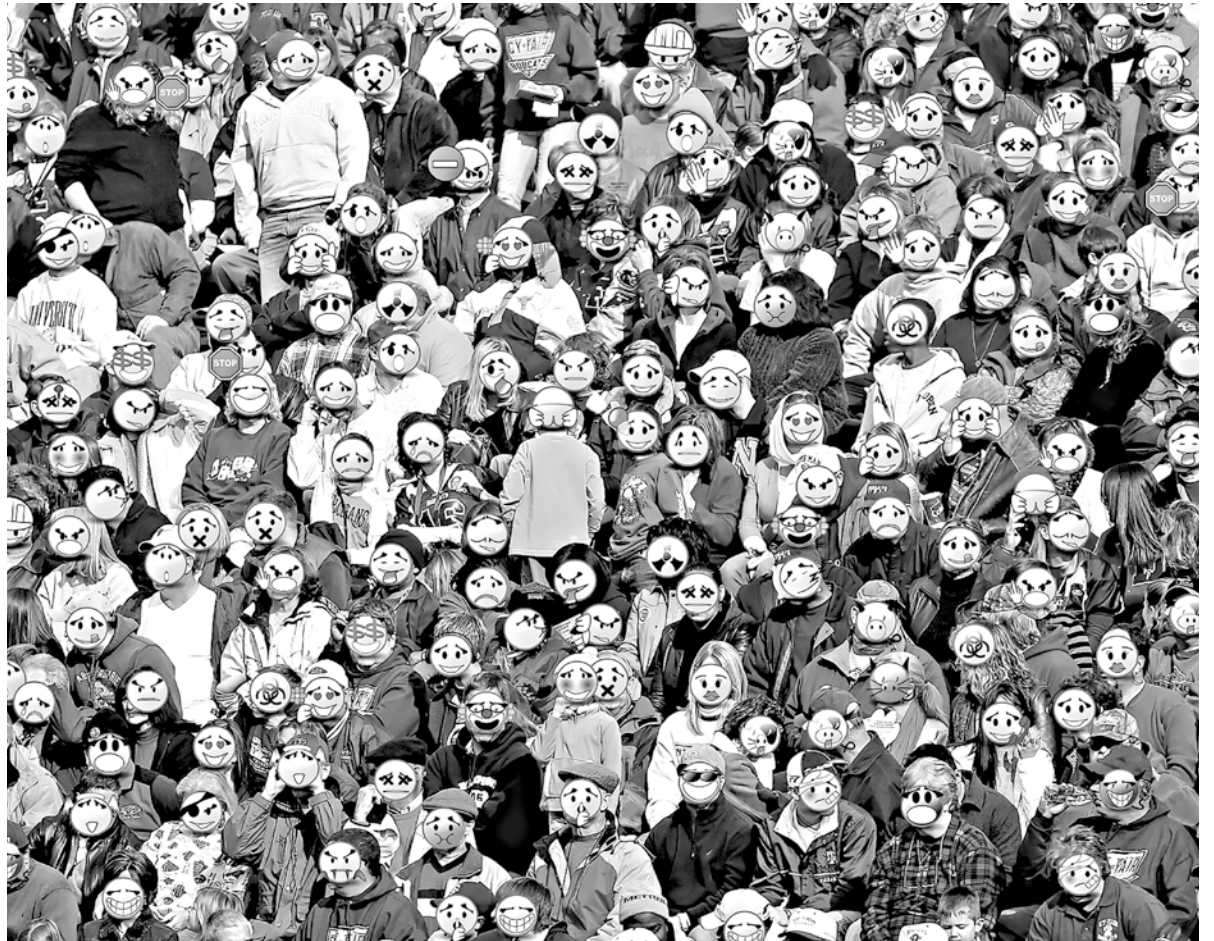
She lives in a space where time falls apart
She thinks that she knows where you really are
No nearer the end and no nearer the start.

Yet you carry on, on your slow morning walk
All while singing to the stars as they talk.

Of the nowhere they speak, and the nothing she bares,
Not knowing that nowhere is who put them there.

That they were the stories that she'd picked apart
Of the something and the somewhere that lives in her heart.

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



Harmonies and Haphazards

MALIHA TRIBHU

The overcrowded footpaths teem with unfamiliar faces, thousands of footsteps crushing over one another, rushing for home. Beggars hustle on one feet, barely reaching up to the next person before they intentionally walk away faster than usual, refusing to give out a change of cash crumbled inside of their back pockets.

Street vendors whirl across their neatly kept plastic wrapped pickles, ridding them of flies and moths, covering them from unforeseen dust-storms, awaiting their customers but no one arrives. Cotton candies lose their fluff in the force of air, gas balloons behaving wildlike in the wind. A teeming group of children dashing round the park asking their fathers to buy them this or that only to be forced away from the hawkers, empty handed.

All of this occurs at the same time, at a place same as mine. While I quietly sit and watch amid untimely afternoons, quietly giving in to an overcast sky. Till rainstorms wash off the very existence of roadside mobs. I observe every flinch of a child, tripping on their toes, every traffic signal turning red to yellow to green – directions and instructions that no one seems to follow. They don't mind, they don't have the time to.

I see them – interlocking a gaze, passing out judgments, spitting facts and gulping disappointments over a generation of frustrated vagabonds; unaware of where their troubles come from or how to favourably

solve any of them. I slowly walk away from all of it, vanishing amid the crowd unnoticeably. That's the beauty of it. When you are right in the middle of a crowd, jostling your way out, pacing back and forth, faster than the ones in front of you but slower than the ones behind, you are stuck in the middle of it all. You forget to rest. Eyes watch you, judge you, mock you even when they don't, but you do.

You are unseen yet exposed like wildfire, you are unnamed yet labelled strictly onto their memories, you forget to breathe and swirl out of the crowd, fast enough to be forgotten.

You follow their footsteps even when they don't lead you where you are supposed to be going. Following blindly as lines of ants do in hunt for food. For them, though, it is a hunt for a place.

Somewhere to belong to, to be meant something to someone, to be loved.

Some name it an escape. Some call it a home.

The writer is a student of Marketing at the University of Dhaka.



DESIGN: ORCHID CHAKMA

The Magic Inside an Idiot Box

ATTYA ANJUM AVA

I grew up in an era when the “idiot box” occupied the corner of the drawing room. The rectangular box was captivating people of all ages. When fathers came home from work, they would sit back on the couch sipping on tea as they watched the News at 8 on BTV and children would finish their homework by afternoon and wait for the Genie of Arabian Nights to pop on the television screen.

Weeks would pass with people wondering why *Aaj Robibar* was not being aired on Sundays. I would find joy in the smiling face of “Gaaner Khalamoni” showing up on the TV screen with Monti-Mithu.

The greatest of all artisans of Bangla television I know, whose Midas touch turned it into a magical box, is Humayun Ahmed. My introduction to his work was through *Aaj Robibar*. Friday dinners were moved to an earlier time in our household, so we could all watch the show on time. When there was a power cut during the show, my father had to keep calling the power supply office to ask for updates to appease me.

Konka and Titli were my favourite girls with double braids. The moment they would walk down the stairs of the iconic house lit with incandescent bulbs, my heart would leap with joy. I still laugh out loud thinking about Anis, the thick-spectacled nerd who got soaked in sweat while determining which doodle was more

hijibiji. I did not know what a coffin was until I saw Boro Chacha lying inside it. I still remember Moti, who added a new dimension to the series. It was hysterical to watch Boro Chacha squirting ink in the eye of this overly curious guy, who was looking through the keyhole.

The sitcom was so popular during those days, that it was aired later in Hindi on the Indian television channel Star Plus in 2017. After 22 years, the show did not lose its appeal; I even binge-watched the show during the recent lockdown.

You could hardly find any person from our generation who would not eagerly wait for Friday evenings to watch *Alif Laila*. *Alif Laila* is the Bangla-dubbed version of a Hindi TV series which aired previously on Doordarshan. The journey of the thousand nights was like a trip on a magic carpet to a fantasy land with green demons, magical lamps, treasure caves, the curly-haired Kherman, beautiful sorceresses like Malika Hamira or Sofan Isba. There were dances, music, chimes, magic -- everything that would keep the audience mesmerised for half an hour on weekends.

If we were out, I would keep whining to my parents so they would bring us home early and I would not miss the episode. The moment I heard the title song, I would lose myself in the kingdom of fantasy.

Another reason for the immense popularity of BTV among children was the wide variety of local and foreign cartoon shows. *Moner Kotha* by Mustafa Monwar or *Meena*

grew an enthusiastic fan base, as did *Bernie* or *Jumanji*. The character who planted feminism in me for the first time was Meena. She was the one who taught me how to be vocal about gender equity. She was the girl who set an example of female education for many girls of our age.

Besides Meena, there were other cartoon shows that I still cherish. There were times when I used to dream about living in a house like the one shown in *Bananas in Pyjamas*. Sometimes, I used to sink into the idea of becoming a superhero like Captain Planet and save planet earth.

Probably the most popular foreign TV series to be aired in Bangla television is *MacGyver*. The protagonist of the series was the eponymous character, a secret agent who, instead of keeping a firearm, would use his knowledge of science to solve any problem. He carried his safety kit adorned with a Swiss army knife or duct tape to escape. The guy with the golden mullet was the solution to all problems.

The Adventure of Sinbad was another popular foreign TV show. Though I was too young to understand the chemistry between Sinbad and Maeve, it was always fun to watch them participating together in their expeditions. I still remember the breathtaking knife-throwing skill of Rongar.

BTV had a wide variety of sitcoms and talent hunts, from musical shows to magazine shows showcasing local talents of Bangladesh. We had our very own version of America's Got Talent named *Notun Kuri*,

a show for kids and teens. Even today on Eid nights, my father eagerly waits in front of the TV for *Ananda Mela* to start. I never miss out on the famous magazine show *Ityadi* -- the brainchild of Hanif Sanket, which is undoubtedly the most successful magazine show in the history of Bangladesh television. The show consisted of different segments through which Sanket brought up social and cultural issues coated in humour and satire. My favourite part of the show was the famous “Nana Nati” duo and the foreign expats participating in Bangla skits.

Years have passed, and with time, the set-top box has taken the place of the TV aerial. It feels strange now to surf channels with the circular knobs of the television of CRT technology. There is no idiot box at the corner of the drawing room now. Instead, a sleek smart TV now adorns the wall with access to OTT platforms like Netflix, Hoichoi, and Bioscope. The land phones with dialer, film rolls with 36 snaps, and the VCR cassette tapes seem to be fairy tales in the journal of 5G.

That was our story. The albums we adorned with printouts from Fujifilm negative rolls were our Instagram; BTV popping up on the screen of the idiot box used to be today's Netflix.

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