

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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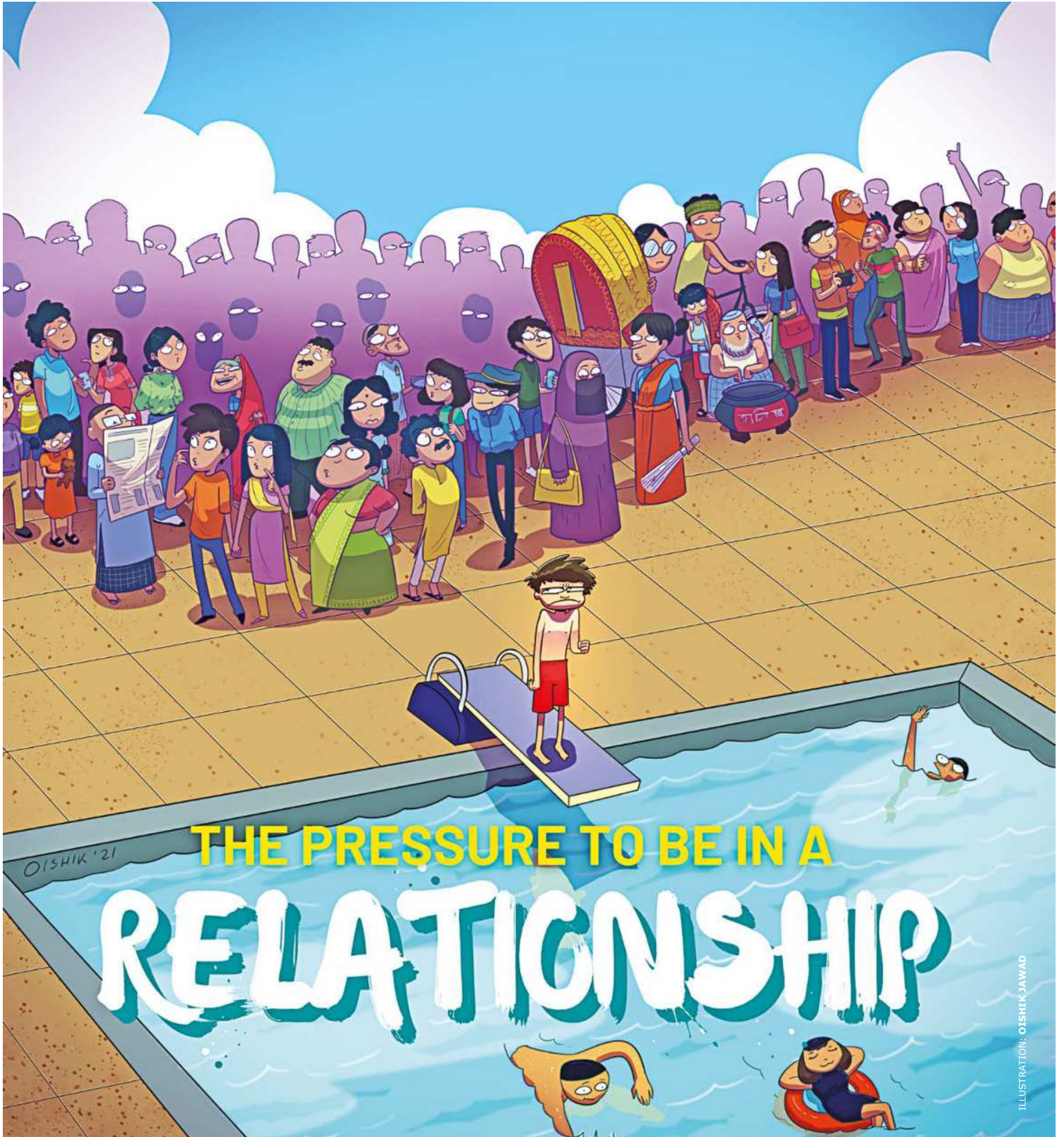


A MUCH-AWAITED RETURN
TO CAMPUS

PG 4

A FORMER TELCO
ADVERTISEMENT YOUTH
VISITS HIS THERAPIST...

PG 6



THE PRESSURE TO BE IN A

RELATIONSHIP

ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

EDITORIAL

When I was at school, a friend once pointed to a junior and went "Even that kid in Year 6 is dating someone but you aren't."

I didn't tell her that only seeing a person during assemblies and getting to send them one text every weekend when their mom wasn't looking wasn't exactly something I wanted. It didn't make sense to me -- but it didn't need to.

The pressure to be or not to be in a relationship is real. Winter is almost here and a new person on your friendlist will get married every time you gulp down an overfilled cup of cough syrup.

A friend has already taken a hiatus from social media in a desperate attempt to avoid this frenzy, and now occasionally tries texting me from her number. Another tried making a pact to not talk about weddings and couples at all this season, but went back on her words soon enough to dive into a detailed analysis of the clothing of the next bride she saw on her feed.

I wonder when the relationship enthusiasts from middle school will get married.

-- Mrittika Anan Rahman, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

ANIME



To Your Eternity exceeds expectations

MYNUL KARIM

Released in April earlier this year, *To Your Eternity* is the anime adaptation of Yoshitoki Oima's 2016 manga series *Fumetsu no Anata* or *To You, the Immortal*. Being the author's only other major work after her critically acclaimed film *Koe no Katachi*, or *A Silent Voice*, expectations set for this adaptation were high to say the least.

It is safe to say that not only did the anime meet those expectations, but also exceeded them in many instances, presenting itself as one of the best releases of 2021.

The premise of the show is about an entity sent to earth in the form of an orb, which adapts to its surroundings by transforming into the creatures it encounters. After coming in contact with a rock, moss, then a dying Arctic wolf, the being makes its first encounter with a human in the form of a young abandoned boy. This encounter allows it to learn about bonds and emotions and gives it the ability to transform into a human. The being, later given the name Fushi, makes new connections and starts to comprehend the way of life while facing shapeshifting adversaries called "nokkers" trying to hinder his progress.

The supporting characters are the crown jewels of the show. A lot of time is spent behind character development which is why the progression can often feel very slow. However, the show manages to keep viewers hooked with its meaningful worldbuilding.

Flawed yet charming, with their own

unique backstories and inspiring goals, the characters are stupendously fleshed out. One cannot help but be attached to them. Fushi himself does not get lost in this though, as his growth is strongly influenced by these characters; each encounter invokes new traits inside him. The bonds he forms with them are what truly bring out the best within everyone in the show.

Death is a recurring theme in *To Your Eternity*. Many key characters meet their demise and it is bound to make the viewers, who have spent so much time with them throughout the show, emotional. However, the show does not keep delving into such heart-wrenching feelings. Rather it celebrates the beauty of the cycle of life and keeps moving forward. Failures occur, but Fushi learns to better himself through these experiences whilst cherishing the memory of those he has lost.

To Your Eternity goes far and beyond to elevate the experience of the viewers. The incredible animation is complemented by the outstanding sound direction, and the attention to detail adds a layer of polish to the show. The anime takes its viewers on an emotional rollercoaster shifting from agonising sadness to gleeful positivity and drives the message of the significance of human life in a magnificent way. Vague, at times stagnant, yet enjoyable and inspiring, *To Your Eternity* is a fresh take on the adventure genre with its hints of supernatural occurrences, and it serves as an exemplary benchmark for what the best of anime has to offer.



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IMAGE: SOULSBD.COM

The significance of remastering classic Bangla songs

ABIR HOSSAIN

The iconic ballads of Hasan, the piercing riffs of Souls, and the jazz melodies of Feedback -- these are acts that not only provoke a sense of nostalgia for some but also serve to remind us of the drastic changes that have overseen the cultural landscape of Bangladesh.

What started as a hobby for young individuals went on to mould the outlook of an entire generation's perception of music. Their songs could be found on almost everyone's playlists, blaring through speakers across the nation, and being celebrated in student halls as well as concerts.

For an era that continues to stand the test of time, we, the audience, must wonder how the weight of their legacy can be truly preserved. While a small fraction of their discographies can be explored in the depths of YouTube and SoundCloud, it is imperative that whatever is left of their musical catalogue is carefully archived and remastered.

The 70s marked the beginning of a new wave in the scene. Souls began in 1973, initially covering western radio hits and playing shows in hotels. A massive stride was made when they released their first album *Super Souls* in the 80s and rendered themselves as pioneers of cultural change. This was the catapult that paved the way for generations that came after and deserves to be documented.

Inadequate recording material, less than favourable studio settings, and outdated technology likely plagued the greats of their generation. It would be safe to presume that such resources also required great sums of

money which eluded the then young musicians. Even if the recordings were found, they might not translate well to a digital medium. Either way, the technique of remastering is difficult from an engineering standpoint. The track order, dynamic range, and EQ decisions might leave a lot to be desired.

The process of remastering involves taking the original analogue recordings and then dissecting the layers. Locating the master recordings is a hurdle in itself. With physical copies gone obsolete and a few tracks hovering around the internet, much of the album is difficult to find, and hence, the prospect of remastering the songs becomes uncertain. In addition, with a lack of distribution deals and record labels, the original bits and pieces have likely been lost.

Nonetheless, remastering has been under scrutiny for decades. Some complain that it fails to capture the vision of the artist to the point where it compromises the authentic artistry. This is perhaps because remastering does not involve direct input from the artists themselves and risks deviating from what the musicians wanted it to sound like.

However, for a time that has well transitioned to a digital age, the music that continues to inspire young musicians must be archived and handled with care. Artistry like this helps us dream and even has the potential to garner a new generation of groundbreaking talent.

Abir Hossain is a failed SoundCloud Rapper. Tell him you too can't find anything to rhyme oranges with at fb/abir.hossain.19

How Hollywood is failing "feminine" female characters

ARYAH JAMIL

With the release of the highly anticipated *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, a reboot to *Space Jam* (1996), Hollywood continues to degrade "feminine" female bodies.

Lola Bunny, a *Looney Toons* character, is an anthropomorphic rabbit who is the lead female character in the film. In the 1996 version, Lola wore a cropped jersey with high-waist shorts, while other male characters wore jerseys that are more practical. Lola was amorous and a conventionally attractive female. As Bugs' romantic interest, her character was built to be "desirable".

With the reboot came changes in Lola's physical presentation. She is now shorter, her body differently shaped, and she wears looser fitting attire. Her feminine features have been toned down and her personality has been altered to be more bubbly and goofy. This redefinition of attractiveness rooted in the infantilisation of female romantic interests has been an ongoing trend.

The problem with sexualisation of feminine figures, whether it be hyper or desexualisation, is its relationship with the male gaze. Harley Quinn doesn't need to be barely clothed to perform the same tasks as the Joker.

In *Suicide Squad* (2016), Quinn's body and sexual nature were highlighted, while her evil witty self was understated. She was simply something to look at. *Birds of Prey* (2020), directed by a woman, tells a different story of Quinn, one which upholds her personality and physical abilities rather than her skin.

Space Jam: A New Legacy's director Malcolm Lee states "This is 2021. It's important to reflect the authenticity of strong, capable female characters."

According to Lee, capable women cannot have curvature in their bodies. This is exhibited by the new design of Lola's character which tones down her feminine features. This enforces the idea that peak athleticism can only be attained through a traditionally masculine body, and that feminine features are nothing but hindrances in attaining one's true athletic potential.

This is rooted in society's need to strip women of their traditionally feminine features to see them in positions of power. Why it is that powerful women need to resemble men? Hillary Clinton and Angela Merkel both have what *Vogue* termed as the "political bob" because having short hair and wearing suits are deemed "powerful" and "assertive".

If the removal of female anatomical features is so necessary, why stop there? Why not ask LeBron to wear a sweater or change his body to tone down his conventionally masculine appearance? This may sound absurd, but that's only because we've been socially conditioned into accepting the objectification of women and accepting that women have to absolve themselves of their femininity in order to succeed.

It's time to reconsider our mindless media consumption of the male gaze and its perception of women and rethink how we portray female bodies.

Aryah Jamil is mediocre at everything except laughing at their own jokes. Tell her to stop talking at jamil.aryah@gmail.com



A much-awaited return to campus

INQIAD BIN ALI

The last couple of weeks have been incredible in many ways. Since returning to physical schooling, we had an outpouring of joy and emotions as old friends reunited and bonded after a long separation. We were all relieved as we went about playing football and visiting the canteen or library to spend our free classes.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The change in our mentality after the break was evident. Many, including myself, found ourselves forming new friendships with people who we didn't get along with before the school closure. As we came to know each other more, it became apparent that we have grown and matured somehow and many of the social rules of the past such as who would sit with whom didn't apply anymore. Our social interactions undoubtedly improved as we had new perspectives.

As classroom learning slowly resumes, we now feel like we belong here after the somewhat soulless experience of online learning. Seeing the teachers again was

akin to being reunited with our parents after a long time. We were thrilled to see the gateman *mama* and *khalas* who we previously used to escape from.

However, not everything is as rosy as it seems. Despite the authority's best efforts, social distancing measures in many schools have been said to be wanting at times. This was perhaps expected, as students were bound to become emotional and hug their friends after such a long time. Nevertheless, it increases the risk of Covid-19, which despite its current drop, hasn't gone away yet.

Another unnerving thing is the fact that time has passed, despite it seemingly being

at a standstill for us. Our batch went home as carefree eighth graders. Now, we will turn 18 a few months later and are the seniors to whom the school looks up to with our O Level exams on the horizon. With limited time, we really have a huge job to both perform well in our exams and be a shining example to our juniors.

The *bhel puri* and *ghal muri* *mamas* were mainstays of our post-school *addas*. So, we were very sad to see they had left town during the lockdowns. We had so many good memories of munching their food and having the time of our lives at their stalls. We can only hope they return to the city soon.

There is also this subconscious insecurity which is nagging me. We students are still mostly unvaccinated, and the little pathogens don't discriminate on who it infects. Fortunately, vaccines have been promised for school students, easing my insecurity a bit. Slowly but surely, both students and teachers are getting up to speed with their old roles.

Now, my hope is the world will be healed soon and we can enjoy school just like the good old times.

Inqiad Bin Ali, despite his insecurity, is glad schools have opened. Keep him distracted from mocks at inqiadali007@gmail.com

Are individual awards in football being given the right way?

TAMJIDUL HOQUE

With the voting for Ballon d'Or concluding last month, the football world is divided over who should win this time. With candidates like Lewandowski, Benzema and Messi, people appear to be voting for who they like personally rather than voting on certain criteria or a system.

Individual awards such as UEFA Player of the Year (POTY), Ballon d'Or, and others are typically given based on votes or the judgment of a panel appointed by the awards committee. Currently, however, football is evolving and perhaps it is time for the award selection process to evolve as well.

There have always been issues with the traditional method of awarding prizes. The most notable issue is that it is prone to bias. Campaigning may also be used to try to influence the outcome. Players who participate in the process tend to vote for their teammates or close friends rather than the best individual performer. Popularity also has a significant impact on the decision, and a deserving candidate may be denied nomination due to their lack of it.

The awards do have their own set of criteria. The Ballon d'Or, for example, specifies criteria such as individual performance that year, overall career, and player class. The problem is that criteria like "player class" is extremely ambiguous; different voters interpret the criteria differently, and some voters ignore the criteria entirely.

Even though these issues existed, they went unnoticed

in the last decade due to the dominance of Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. But nothing lasts forever, and with age, their reign is coming to an end. As a result, more players are now in contention to win the awards. This ultimately made flaws in the award system more apparent.

So, what is the "right" way? That cannot be said at the moment because no other process has been tested, but with data analysis being more influential than ever in football today, there is potential for it to be used in determining the winner. This is not completely unproven; many clubs use data as well as an algorithm-based system to analyse players and this approach has been very successful.

One might argue total dependence on statistics will not show what you can see through the "eye test" and that wouldn't be wrong. There should be a system in place that takes into account the influence of data along with the expertise of professionals to determine the winner more accurately.

It is very unlikely the traditional method is going to be changed anytime soon, and any attempt to change it will face a lot of opposition from many sides due to various reasons but in an ever-changing sport like football, this aspect of football should evolve too.

Tamjidul Hoque likes to talk about football and checks his emails from time to time, you can contact him at tamjidulh@gmail.com



THE PRESSURE TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

"What does my happiness have to do with finding a partner?" asks Nibrash Kazi Subah, a computer science and engineering student from Independent University, Bangladesh. Well, I'm glad he asked.

The world will tell you that "happiness" and "finding a partner" are mutually exclusive. That you're never truly happy until you've found *the one*.

Unbeknownst to you, this bizarre concept is bred within from early on. It started as early as your first Disney movie. The prince, on his white horse, would appear and rescue the princess in distress, usually in an abandoned tower or lost in an enchanted forest, ultimately finding "the girl of his dreams." (Disclaimer: No hate. I love Tangled.)

For the longest time, the world told us that the only way to be complete, is to be with your other half. It creates an inexplicable, yet very real pressure on all of us.

It is so real, in fact, that professor of philosophy Elizabeth Brake coined the term "amatonormativity", and defines it as "the widespread assumption that everyone is better off in an exclusive, romantic, long-term coupled relationship, and that everyone is seeking such a relationship."

It's an assumption we're all meant to abide by.

"It took me a while to realise that I am a very private person. I don't really want to be in a relationship," explains university student Ramim Rahman*.

As if figuring out our own lives wasn't hard enough, we're constantly reminded and pushed into getting a partner. The idea is presented to us as though it's the only solution to all our problems.

Once we get a little older, already

riddled with false narratives of true love from fairy tales and white knights, relationships are the talk of the town or the schools, at least. New in puberty and high on hormones, teenagers decide the next step to move up the ladder of society and grow up, is to date.

"I was 15 when I started dating," adds Ramim. "Everyone around me was already in a relationship. I ended up dating someone I didn't get along with. And it didn't end there because this pressure persisted and I kept dating girls I never truly liked enough."

"It seemed like everyone was in a relationship, but me," recalls Shahrin Mahmud, a student of dentistry. "I felt that in order to keep up that's what I had to do as well."

Not everyone agrees, but it becomes the standard and so once again, putting aside the more important individual growth that one needs, people rush into relationships. Little did we know, this may have pushed us towards unhappiness, stress, and anxiety in the present as well as deciding what our relationships may look like in the future.

In the next stage of life, we're young adults, dealing with the awfully difficult transition from being a teenager to a grown-up. We have a million things to worry about as we try to find our place in the world; college, grades, jobs, finances, social life, family life, and figuring out how taxes work.

"A relationship requires time and energy and most importantly, meeting someone who's worth all putting in all that effort," says university student Farhana Rahman*. "It's a commitment and it requires dedication that you have to have the capacity to give."

Suddenly, home doesn't feel like

home. Time feels borrowed. For every second that you spend not actively finding someone to settle down with, your parents and family members are stressed. Yesterday, the very parents who told you not to talk to the boy from down the street because he didn't "look right", want you to find a suitable partner, get to know them, and get married at the earliest.

"It's such a sudden shift in gears," Farhana adds. "It edges on emotional blackmail in some ways, constantly being reminded that my place is not my own and that I am incomplete until I've found someone else and married them. Do my achievements mean nothing?"

It seems that everyone at home is fixated on when we can settle down. *Settle down*. When did that become a term meaning if we had a significant other? Why is it that settling down doesn't mean being comfortable in your own skin or having a stable job? What about being happy with who you are and where you are in life?

In an attempt to keep up with society and its ever-changing trends, and in spite of its strange fixation on romance and relationships, we grow up in a blur of "Are you seeing anyone right now?" and "Oh, you're single? Let me set you up!"

Let me clarify. Wanting a relationship or being in one is not wrong. It's perfectly normal and if you're in one, congratulations. However, rushing into one because the world said so? Not the best thing to do.

"Relationships aren't something that should be forced. It is something that should happen naturally," comments Shahrin.

Love and intimacy are deeply personal matters. Unfortunately, societal pressure

often leads to these rushed relationships that ultimately fail. Truth is, nobody will usually offer help when it comes to dealing with the hurt and trauma from a broken relationship, the very people who had rushed you will turn their backs and scrutinise the failure.

There are many reasons for one to feel like they are not in the right place to be in a relationship. Maybe they do not feel ready to make a commitment, or feel like they want to focus on themselves, their careers or other relationships they already have. Being in a relationship takes effort and time, and it is okay to not be in the mental state to provide that for someone else at a particular time. It is crucial to understand that these reasons, or any others one may have, are all valid.

Involving someone else in your life when there isn't any space makes both parties miserable. You might end up building habits that will take time to break, and build patterns that'll do you harm in the long run. It'll create stress, keep you unhappy and hinder any chances of personal growth because you're stuck trying to handle a relationship with someone you're not quite ready for. Making a promise you weren't prepared to make, makes it a task.

Being in a relationship needs work but it is not a full-time job. It is not a requirement and there is no designated time for it. So, how can you tell when you're ready?

Simple. It's when you decide you're ready.

**Names have been changed for privacy.*

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



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



ECHOES BY
 ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Skill, Grades and Universities One side of the story

I
 Lady Fatima Al-Fihri of Fez, in today's Morocco, established the world's first university, Al-Karaouine, in 859 AD. It was the first time an education centre issued certificates, testifying that a candidate had completed a certain set of courses and was competent to enter the next phase of life.

Al-Azhar in Egypt; University of Bologna in Italy; and Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in Britain slowly emerged on the same principle as Al-Karaouine. Today, all universities are certificate-awarding centres.

Places of learning before Al-Karaouine did not focus on issuing certificates, but they did have common characteristics. In Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India and the Americas (Aztec, Inca and Maya), the learning centres catered to a priestly class or the royal elite. Humanities, astrology, and science (medicine, mathematics, and geometry) were in the hands of a priestly class. There was no formal age of entrance, nor a formal time duration in staying at these centres. The main focus was to extend knowledge. Ancient learning centres also catered to those who would join the bureaucracy, and in some cases, those who would join the army.

What about those who would become architects, musicians, and artisans? Young people who wanted to learn a skill for



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

livelihood had to either be an apprentice, or learn from their forefathers. A person's profession in ancient societies was highly influenced by the family they were born into because there were no formal job markets as we see today.

Later in the Middle Ages, guilds emerged in Europe. These were institutions that taught certain trades in the form of apprenticeship. The emergence of guilds coincided

with the decline of the Ottoman Empire, and then the Renaissance, when Europe would become the centre of civilisation.

II
 As universities emerged as certificate awarding institutes, they also developed a grading system. Better students were separated from the rest. These students were then absorbed in job markets or the bureaucracy. This process speeded up after

the Industrial Revolution. Workplaces needed skilled workers. The grades that universities certified acted as credible signals to reflect the skills of students.

What happened to the guilds? They were unable to keep up with the changing demands of the society. New disciplines emerged in the universities of Europe and later on elsewhere that had practical relevance in job markets. Universities slowly started to open architecture, engineering, medicine, agricultural, veterinary science and other related subjects. Students who would study these subjects would be learning more vocational skills than learning for the extension of knowledge.

III
 As time went on, grades slowly started to lose their importance in sending good signals of skills. This has become evident in recent times.

Are skills more important, or grades? The answer, as we try to find in the next Echoes, is shrouded in "the other side of this story."

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

satire.

A former telco advertisement youth visits his therapist...

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Therapist: This is November 11, 2021 and your third session of this month. State your name and profession for the recordings. Just a mere formality.

Sadman: I'm Sadman Sakib. I was one of the youth actors for the telco giant Gamla-Link. Now I stay at home, usually deleting their promotional texts.

T: Alright, let's start. You said you've been having trouble sleeping lately?

S: Mostly. Sometimes when I do get some sleep, I hear those jingles, those words in my head. They never stop.

T: What words, Sadman?

S: Words like "Yo", "Chill", "Yaar"... You can almost sense the desperation to relate to the youth through words people believe are relevant.

T: Your mother said you still dance in your sleep?

S: When I get some sleep, that is. Others would dance to celebrate the most random events and so did I. This one time, Raisa came back to campus after dropping a semester owing to some personal tragedy. But then this other girl told her everything is going to be alright because GamlaLink announced a new internet plus SMS bundle.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

And then they all started dancing.

T: These dancing people, Sadman...

What else do you remember about them?

S: They high-five randomly, almost like they ran out of things to celebrate. It was fine at first, but it got a bit insensitive when this guy high-fived me at my grandma's funeral. They'd come to my house early in the morning, splash water on me to wake me up and make cute friendship videos to

put on the internet. Pranks look adorable online, but I couldn't sleep in fear of being woken up to a mob of selfie-obsessors.

T: Do you think that's how your sleeping disorder began?

S: Maybe. Even after being on campus together for eight hours, they'd get back home, video chat and not shut up about how fast GamlaLink internet is.

T: You said this made you lose your friends and family--

S: I danced to GamlaLink jingles for a living, so obviously my family was ashamed of me. I lost my old friends. In any serious crisis, I'd just advise them to switch to GamlaLink 4G. Naturally, they abandoned me.

T: And I suppose this desertion affected your grades as well?

S: Between morning dance routines on campus, chaotic evening hangouts and mandatory house parties at night, I couldn't study and eventually dropped out. That same year, my girlfriend dumped me and my parents separated. You know when I realised I've had enough, though?

The therapist waits for an answer.

S: After I told my new best friend about my misery, he kept his hand on my shoulder and told me to chill because GamlaLink was now offering a 1 paisa per second call rate. And as I sat in my parents' old room staring at framed pictures of my once happy family, they kept on dancing around me. That's when I knew it was over.

Suggest Ifti non-fictions at hasiburashidifti@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

THE FIX

MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

Something was ominous about the way the doorbell rang. Not that the one who pressed it was bringing bad luck, but the other side seemed menacing for the one who waited at the door.

The thought didn't cross Manik though. After years of carrying a faded green bag that had all his equipment, the pain on his shoulder had numbed him off his thoughts and musings. He found himself waiting for the door to open so that he could get back home and have his dinner.

The door opened by a fraction and someone almost shouted to his face, "Are you the mechanic, bhai?"

"Yes," Manik said.

The door opened wide now and Manik stepped in.

Manik had earlier got a call from his boss that he had to go fix whatever was wrong with the power supply of a house and that he needed to rush in right away. He was about to start his dinner when he was called and the urgent barking of his boss indicated that it was an important client.

Inside, he instantly felt the heat slapping right at his face as he walked in. The house was in pitch black darkness, and a kind of smoky veil hung over him. The woman who had opened the door and shouted, lost all her voice like a turtle returning to its shell and squeaked now, "Apa, he's here."

The darkness felt suffocating to Manik, and he wondered why they had not lit up any candles or flashlights when a white beam of light blinded him from his right.

"Good that you've arrived. Fix whatever needs fixing," a coy voice said.

The grumble in Manik's stomach made him shove his uneasiness to an abandoned corner and get to work. He asked the person who he assumed was the household help where the switchboard was and turned on his phone's flashlight.

Strangely, the stark white light was somewhat swallowed by the darkness and it only fell in thin limbs over what he shook his phone over. In that inadequate light, he saw heavy outlines of tall wooden shelves and antique pieces. "Filthy rich," he thought as he made his way to where he needed to work.

The work was quite simple and Manik let out a sigh of relief as the lights turned on but it immediately turned into nervous sweat as everything was painted in this sick yellow hue. It made the house look even more unwelcoming than it was before.

Manik suddenly realised that the household help was nowhere near and he was all alone in the dining hall, sweating like a maniac.

"Ma'am," he called out but there was no reply. He raised his voice just a bit more when he heard some shuffling from the room right in front of him.

The household help came in when he hurriedly told her his job was done and he needed to be paid. She nodded and told him to wait in the living room.

Manik's phone rang, it was his mother who called for him to bring home some medicine. He sighed and looked at all the ostentatious things around him. For some reason, whenever Manik saw any expensive thing, he couldn't appreciate their beauty. Not that he thought they were ugly or not worth the price, but he just couldn't see anything past the price tag he wondered they'd come with. He always thought life offered you separate lenses to look with. Some were rose tinted because everything was too dreamy for them, some were sharp and clean because they didn't have the luxury of otherwise. Manik believed he was provided with a lens that helped him filter and categorise things into two: what he could afford and what he never could. He didn't have any dream or aspirations to cross the line to the other side even when he was surrounded by others' wealth and luxury. He was simply a man who did his duty.

Manik was lost in his thoughts and didn't realise

that the household help had returned. But as she handed him his pay, Manik's eyes suddenly fell upon the room which had a door open.

Even though the house was now fully illuminated, that particular room had no lights on. It was just bathed in the soft moonlight that shyly invaded the space through the windows. And in that light, he saw an old woman eating something from a small bowl, her head bowed down. In that house that was filled to the ceiling with lavish belongings, it was perhaps the shabbiest corner, the most ascetic room in which the old woman was in, yet it looked the most hauntingly alive. It was as if he was looking at some paradox.

"You fixed everything, right?" the sweet, young voice suddenly called out from a room.

Manik took the notes from the household help and couldn't find his voice to answer yes. He simply left.

On his way back home, as he walked along a street that was dimly lit by dirty street lamps, he looked up at the sky multiple times to see if the moon was still shining. He stopped to buy the medicines for his ailing mother and saw an old man nearby selling tangerines that were so vividly orange. The man took one look at him and didn't look back. He was busy trying to get more customers who definitely looked more well off than Manik did. He stared at the tangerines for a long time. Somehow they reminded him of the moon he never saw but its light he had seen in that room.

"Fools," Manik muttered under his breath. He heard something crumble slightly under his feet as he went to buy half a dozen of the beautiful tangerines.

Maisha Nazifa Kamal has lost track of time and is living in a world where she never existed. Break her reverie at 01shreshtha7@gmail.com

THE GREY AREA BETWEEN BOOKS AND SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

RASHA JAMEEL

Avid bookworms tend to go through a book twice. Once via reading it, and once when viewing its television or silver screen adaptation. As the trend of book adaptations continues to grow, reading and viewing these stories have become something of a package deal.

However, one question needs to be asked: *How should book-to-film adaptations really be treated?*

The practice of creating film adaptations of books has been around since the late 1800s, with Georges Melies' *Cinderella* (1899) being the earliest possible example in the field as a six-minute long silent film. Film enthusiasts will also cite Erich von Stroheim's 9.5-hour-long silent film *Greed* (1924), an adaptation of Frank Norris' *McTeague*, as being the most popular from the early film adaptations.

Stroheim's work was initially a flop upon its release, due to MGM Studios axing over seven hours of the film's runtime prior to its screening. The final two-hour long cut of *Greed* (1924) was poorly received by audiences and critics alike, and ended up discouraging plenty of directors henceforth in attempting to adapt books into films.

So how did book-to-film adaptations eventually come to gain such solid footing in pop culture? In the book *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature*, author John Desmond states that "...film is a pedagogical medium useful for introducing literary masterpieces in England, where generations of film producers have adapted the Great Books."

The evidence of Desmond's statement can be found in the widespread popularity of BBC's programmes adapted from literary classics penned by the likes of Agatha Christie, Jane Austen, Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and many more.

In Bengal, filmmaker and writer Satyajit Ray received critical acclaim and won the hearts of many with his film adaptations of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's *Pather Panchali* (1929) and Rabindranath Tagore's *Nastanirh* (1901). The aforementioned films and television programmes helped readers find solace in quality literary adaptations, and gave non-readers the ability to enjoy literature through cinema. The audience clearly responded well to their favourite novels being adapted for the screen, but only when they did justice to the source material: the original literary texts in question.

Here is where the never-ending debates stem from: whether or not the screen adaptation of a book succeeded in preserving the book's legacy. There have been countless cases of screen adaptations failing to impress the book's readers, from Ronald Joffe's critically panned adaptation of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) to Nikolaj Arcel's poorly received adaptation of *The Dark Tower* series (1982-2012).

While cinema buffs might get their fair share of on-screen drama and action, book readers longing for faithful representation are left feeling thoroughly disheartened with the mistreatment of their beloved works of fiction.

The distress caused by an insincere screen adaptation is quite palpable. As a reader myself, it hurts to see the legacy of a literary text that I'm so fond of being torn apart just for the sake of film studios maximising revenues.

However, despite my reservations, I also have to acknowledge the kind of effort put in by filmmakers to ensure maximum fidelity on their part when it comes to translating literary texts to comprehensible content on the screen. This particular feat is mostly complicated by the dialogues present in the original work of fiction. Filmmakers frequently struggle with adeptly recreating the kind of atmosphere built and the gravity exhibited by the words of a book's author. The original messaging, and the book's very essence, occasionally disappear in the translation from words to pixels.

There's also the issue with lack of details provided by the author of the book which leads the filmmaker to improvise using their interpretation of the original text. Every now and then, this is a tactic that pays off, as the filmmaker or director manages to improve on the source material, as seen in Netflix's

Shadow & Bone adaptation. In other cases, this tactic falls flat in its face, throwing the book's fan base into a furor, much like what the two *Percy Jackson* (2010, 2013) movies managed to do.

In the present day, we have been through over a century's worth of book-to-film adaptations. What has changed? Back in the day, filmmakers and directors were either testing the waters with literary adaptations, or earnestly trying to put forth their vision of what a timeless literary classic would look like on screen.

Cinema and television have come a long way since then. The primary incentive behind adapting a book for the screen is the original text's popularity amongst readers – a fandom, if you will. The adaptations don't necessarily exist to add to cinema, but to appease the fandom, thereby giving rise to a franchise combining the successes of both the book sales and the box office numbers. It is the numbers in a fandom that determine the fate of book-to-film adaptations now, making room for insincerity in production.

There are well-established authors by the likes of Stephen King, Dan Brown, and Jane Austen who have proven themselves to be bankable for all seasons in this new business, with almost all of their works being hastily adopted in the form of remakes and retellings repeatedly as per a formula. Even as I write this article, there's yet another *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation in the works, while a cheesy Wattpad fanfiction glorifying toxic relationships is being signed on as part of a multi-film deal purely because of the number of shares it received on the internet.

I have nothing against books being adapted for the screen, unless they're subjected to callous treatment at the hands of insincere filmmakers and directors. But I must admit, I have grown quite weary of the formulaic nature of it all. Advent of original content dries up, and the film and TV industries immediately turn to books as a safe option to keep the showbiz running. I mean, Reese Witherspoon practically built an entire production company out of it.

It's just that the marriage between books and cinema is on the verge of losing its spark. All I can do now is pray that they're not headed for divorce.

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

