

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE  
**SHOUT**

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THE INTERNET IS MAKING  
US LESS INFORMED AND  
MORE OPINIONATED

**PG 3**

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH  
OUR VILLAGE HOMES

**PG 4**



# HOW WE LOOK

## and what parents see

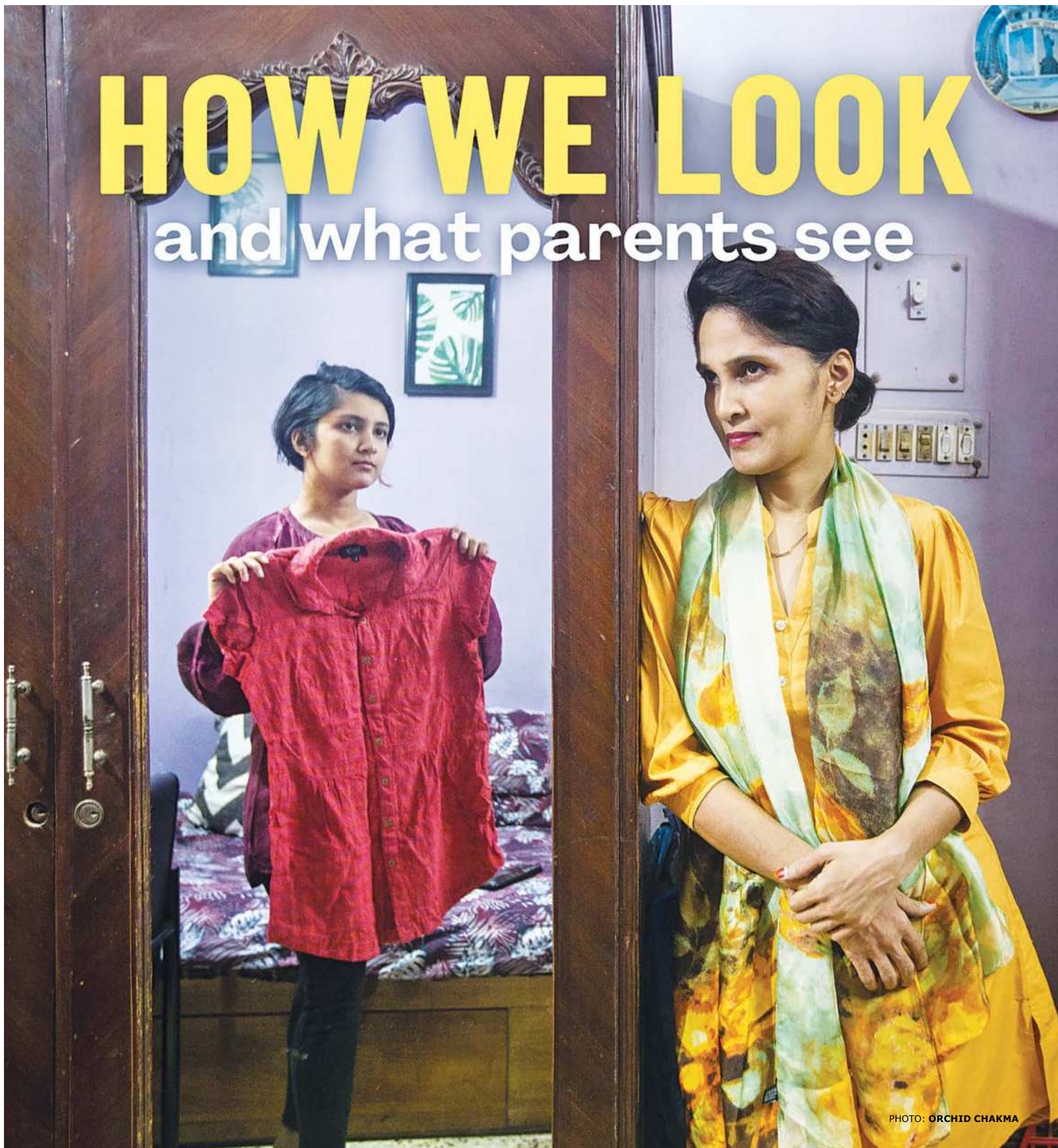


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



# EDITORIAL

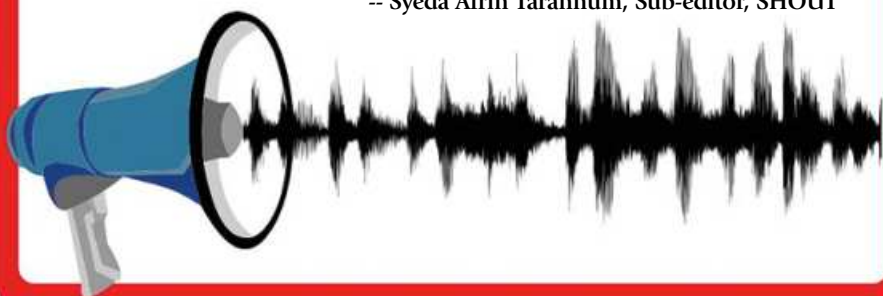
I spent the last two weeks in anticipation of seeing my favourite face after two whole years. I counted days, marked the calendar, set (multiple) reminders and yet, the day couldn't have passed fast enough.

The 26 hours of her flight were cruel. I sent her snaps every hour in anticipation, and texted her notes about conversations we needed to have. The minute her plane landed, lightning struck and I couldn't go see her for another four hours.

After about twenty other such challenges, I finally reached her house with dishevelled hair, red roses and chocolates. I rang the bell and as the door opened, I saw my best friend and realised I hadn't felt better in the past two years. We hugged, giggled and wept all at once, but they were happy tears.

As I stood there singing an off-tune welcome-back in the tunes of "Happy Birthday", she cut her cake and I saw her not as she was that day, but as she was in kindergarten with loose pigtails. She will always be that girl who sat in a corner, writing in her secret diary sprayed with her mother's very expensive perfume. After all, I was the only one allowed to read it.

-- Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-editor, SHOUT



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## PLAYWATCH

### TV SERIES



# Netflix's *Inside Job* confirms all your conspiracy theories

## ABHOY HRIDDO

A product of creator Shion Takeuchi and executive producer Alex Hirsch (creator of *Gravity Falls*), *Inside Job* is Netflix's newest animated TV show with a promising plot and a large chunk of potential storylines. A show riddled with adult sci-fi humour, over the top propaganda, and wacky characters.

We follow Reagan Ridley, voiced by Lizzy Caplan, who is a genius scientist working in Cognito Inc., a company that organises the world's deepest darkest secrets on behalf of the shadow government which is basically the Deep State. Reagan, daughter of the former CEO of Cognito Inc. Rand Ridley, voiced by Christian Slater, is desperately trying to become the new CEO. Throughout the show, we follow her dream as she makes innovative new inventions while being introduced to outlandish and over-the-top characters.

*Inside Job* follows the general trend of Netflix animations as it starts off with putting the main characters into the harshest situations possible. As the show progresses, it evolves into a more heart-warming and down-to-Earth relatable show which reflects the more human side of the characters, notably of the main protagonist.

In my opinion, the finale was the best episode as it explored why some characters are the way they are.

In case of humour, it is much more than a roast on conspiracy theories and mothmen complaining that the coffee machine is broken. It also mocks many

iconic movies like *E.T.* in quite notably in the funniest episode in the whole season. It is also quite evident that the show takes inspiration from *Rick and Morty* with its similar animation style. The plot also reminded me of *Futurama* and shows even better potential with many storylines still left to explore.

However, *Inside Job* lacks on quite a few aspects. The show seems to lose track from the core on many occasions, diverting from one thing to another. Even though the last episode focuses totally on the core, the show could have done a better job at establishing that throughout the season.

Another aspect, which is a weak spot of the show, is Rand Ridley, the father. Rand could have been more than just a cliché drunk and irresponsible father who just does predictable things. He had the potential to be a character with proper growth, depth and sentiment but instead he was just made flat and full of common tropes.

Overall, *Inside Job* is a fun show with a good balance of humour and emotions. Some moments are predictable, but the end will leave you wanting more. Currently the first season consists of 10 episodes which are 30 minutes long each. If you are looking for something new to watch, give this a go.

*Abhoy Hriddo is trying to figure out if his next-door neighbour is one of the lizard people while juggling his first-year university assignments. Reach him at [abhoyhriddo@gmail.com](mailto:abhoyhriddo@gmail.com)*



**OPINION**

# The internet is making us less informed and more opinionated

RIYANA AFROZE

*In today's world, information knows no bounds thanks to the internet. However, does this accessibility to information lead directly to an individual becoming more informed? Are we open to ideas or opinions beyond, or contrasting to, our own ones?*

The internet has vastly improved networking. Nonetheless, people tend to socialise with individuals who reiterate their own thinking patterns. This is creating more and more echo chambers while strengthening existing ones.

An echo chamber may be a social media group, the pages followed, or even an individual's entire feed. The more you interact, the louder the echo becomes. This happens because social media platforms are designed to keep the user hooked for as long as possible. And what can be better bait for you than content you have already shown an affinity for?

Social media platforms run on sophisticated algorithms to customise your feed by shuffling content you are most likely to click. The more clicks, the longer you engage, and greater profits come their way. While this means you end up procrastinating more, there are benefits like getting the latest updates about the stuff you need (or like) without having to search for it.

Echo chambers might form with, for example, a preferred luxury brand, someone's favourite musician, or even with news outlets espousing specific cultural and religious sentiments. The latter may consist of misconstrued images of real-life occurrences and incidents that can create

and embolden dividing beliefs. *Digital deduction* is a term defining the increasing reliance on a handful of resources over the internet to reach a quick conclusion. And often echo chambers form that *handful of resources*.

An often-heard criticism of traditional media is that it's either partial, or at least heavily influenced by establishment powers like governments or big businesses. Hence, many have turned to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for a "better" understanding of a reported incident, forgetting that social media is not free of all forms of prejudice.

With more and more people expressing their opinions, echo chambers are becoming a critical aspect in turning a kindle into fire. It's important to mention here that while voicing one's opinion isn't a problem, but statements meant to divide people and rile up sentiments are. This problem worsens with human nature being such that negative emotions, like fear and anger, are more contagious than positive ones like joy and relief. Violent and segregating emotions are likely to garner more attention.

Echo chambers are unsurpassed at generating confirmation biases. A confirmation bias occurs when the brain is tuned




ILLUSTRATION: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

to assimilate ideas or opinions agreeing to a person's preconceived notions while rejecting anything contradictory. Consequently, the echo chamber becomes a bubble beyond which everything else is a lie.

So, which is worse? Being uninformed, or misinformed? Dogmatic views are a deluge over the internet. Critically consuming content is probably this century's

most crucial competence. The upshot is that yes, every person has an opinion and is free to voice it but this should not impair one's ability to form educated opinions.

*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\_*



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# Our relationship with our village homes

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Somewhere between visiting the village four to five times a year to barely twice at best, our generation’s relationship with its village home has evolved into a newer spectrum.

On a gloomy Sunday afternoon after Eid, my father breathed a sigh of insecurity and began to fear that my generation will probably end up being “rootless”. Each year after that, his sigh makes me question whether our generation is truly a tree without roots.

Many among the urban youth tend to restrict themselves within its comfort zone. For some, a visit to an ancestral home imposes a sense of responsibility, while for others, interactions feel formal and awkward with distant relatives and unknown faces. Some may even end up confining themselves to the few people they’re familiar with and constantly look for a way out.

For others, their village appears as a place of serenity. It’s a way out of this concrete jungle. The event might emerge as a glorious chance of meeting new people, reminiscing childhood memories and reconnecting with their roots for others.

Running around in the huge front yard, walking bare feet across the ridges of crop fields, sitting beside the earthen oven on a cold winter morning trying to get warm and cosy -- these are memories we cher-



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

ish. As we transitioned from childhood to adulthood, some of us subconsciously grew out of the nostalgia regarding our village homes, due to our unique ways of coping with growth.

For a major part of our parents’ generation though, our “village home” was

simply their “home”. For my father, our whole family going back to that tranquil village in Cumilla is a promise kept. It’s where my father, his father and his father’s father grew up. It’s where my late grandparents rest.

Their generation naturally holds an in-

herent urge for their children to connect to the place they consider home and the people they grew up with. Yet, the chain connecting a person to their ancestral home is such that the longer it stretches, the weaker it becomes.

When our fathers left their village for a better life, it created a new branch of the family. But maybe, the wider the branch spreads, the further it grows apart from its “root”. The sentiment that our parents’ generation feels for their hometown isn’t shared equally among the rest of us.

While my father reflects on his childhood in a vibrant Shashidal, I do the same in a grimy old building in East Bashabo. What was home to my father is my village home and may just be “my father’s village home” to my children.

This detachment cannot be ignored. As the tree spreads wider and wider, the root is the only thing that remains unshaken. While we expect our parents to understand our discomfort and insecurity more efficiently, maybe they require our generation to apprehend their sentiments better.

Remind Ifiti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

# A love letter to wrestling



AAQIB HASIB

Do you hear that? It’s the scream of thousands of people screaming “WRESTLING IS FAKE!” and “IT’S NOT A REAL SPORT BECAUSE THE OUTCOMES ARE PREDETERMINED.”

It’s completely fine to have an opinion, and it’s true that the outcome of wrestling matches are predetermined by the “book-er” for a promotion. But the one thing wrestling is not, is fake.

Wrestling is about the stories it tells using the characters it has, who are usually portrayed by wrestlers and on-screen talent. These stories are told through the “promo” — talking segments where a wrestler is either backstage or in the ring with a mic — and partially through the match.

The real beauty of wrestling is that there’s a little something for everyone. Because the characters themselves portray the human condition. From the struggling wrestler looking for their big break, to the arrogant and powerful, champion who has no respect for his challengers.

Think about when “The American Dream” Dusty Rhodes, a blue collar man who is somewhat on the heavier side and does not resemble the “ideal” image of an athlete, reaches his hand out to the camera and tells the people that he wants to win this title for the people.

“Hard times are when the textile workers around this country are out of work and got four, five kids, and can’t pay their wages, can’t buy their food... And hard times are when a man has worked at a job thirty years — thirty years! — they give him a watch, kick him in the butt and say ‘Hey, a computer took your place, daddy!’

That’s hard times!”

This promo gives me goosebumps every time. Most of all because while Dusty is the representation of the blue-collar man, his opponent, “The Nature Boy” Ric Flair, is the arrogant, upper-class evil champion.

It’s good versus evil. It’s rich versus the regular. Sometimes reality seeps into storylines, with the history between wrestlers, whether friends or rivals, make for some of the best wrestling.

During CM Punk’s infamous 2011 “pipe bomb” promo, he weaved his real life grievances with the company into the promo. That is why people back then believed it. He was airing out WWE’s dirty laundry, and he genuinely hated those aspects of the company. That’s why the fans got behind him so wholeheartedly.

Finally, it’s the fans who are the other part of the entire storytelling process. What they chant and how they react become a part of the story. Fans chanting “Yes!” incessantly till WWE was forced to put Daniel Bryan into the main event of Wrestlemania is one of the reasons why we got one of the best underdog stories of all time. Fans chanting “CM Punk!” at shows whenever they were unhappy with the stories being told is one of the reasons he came out of his hiatus and into AEW, because he heard the fans.

At the end of the day, wrestling is more akin to theatre, with the audience’s reactions fuelling how successful a play will be. And that is exactly why wrestling is awesome.

Aaqib is struggling to write his book and with life in general. Please motivate him at aaqib.hasib@thedailystar.net

# HOW WE LOOK AND WHAT PARENTS SEE

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

There are a lot of natural, valid reasons for us to care about how we look. And then there are some reasons, also valid, for how much we care to become larger than ourselves.

The latter reasons usually come in the form of external pressures, some everyday examples being certain relatives, peers, and even strangers taking responsibility upon themselves to comment on your appearance at every encounter, media and pop culture constantly promoting a perfect image and inflicting new insecurities upon us, and the beauty industry targeting those insecurities in their advertising and product innovation. You know, just the way the world works.

What might not immediately come to mind is the role our parents play in this. Bangladeshi parents can set high standards and push their children to excel in life, and this might end up costing the child a well-rounded childhood. When you think of how much our appearance defines how society perceives us, with appearance seemingly tied with academic achievement on how eligible we are, it comes as no surprise that some parents have a similar attitude toward their child’s appearance as well.

Maisha Tasneem\*, a student of BRAC University, shared her experience which gave us an understanding of the extent some parents might go to. She said, “Appearance-wise, I take after my dad’s side of the family. I was always a bigger kid. My mom has a feverish obsession with what my body looks like, including my height, weight, and skin tone. When I was a child, she would force me to exercise daily. Not for health and wellbeing, but for me to lose weight. If I didn’t exercise on one particular day, she wouldn’t give me dinner. She told me to earn my food.”

Yours truly had grown up with a struggle that is very similar, and also vastly different. While my parents only made occasional jabs, trying to change my appearance wasn’t a constant effort. It was for my sister, however, who is nine years older than me. She always fell under the “overweight” category, according to outdated metrics used in medicine to assess our health. It’s the size her body naturally goes back to and functions best at. There was never a time when my mother wasn’t trying to change the way she looked.

I grew up witnessing a never-ending battle, a battle of running from nutritionist to nutritionist, cutting out a new food group every week, substituting meals with supplements, and even a few

potentially dangerous weight loss “treatments”. Failure to comply with these restrictions led to insults and big shows of disappointment.

Naturally, growing up I internalised the idea that being thin and conventionally pretty was the only thing that would make me deserving of my mother’s love. I never wanted to risk being a disappointment or embarrassment, so in my mind how much I weighed became directly correlated to my sense of self-worth.

Maisha’s experience highlighted how our parents’ approach may result in long-term mental illnesses. “It got so bad I developed an eating disorder which I still struggle with. Currently, I’m doing better as I am in therapy. I think this is a problem much deeper than they realise. People put parenthood on a pedestal, and never question what they do. Sometimes, people do things that they assume are for our best but it really might be the opposite,” she added.

According to Dr. Sharmin Haque, clinical psychologist at Square Hospital, a more well-informed and effective way to address any concerns parents might have over their child’s weight is to seek out and understand the cause behind unhealthy habits they might have.

“When parents constantly ask their children why they fail to live up to their standards, the child starts believing that they are inherently incompetent. Their insecurities and unusually low self-esteem manifest into a range of coping mechanisms. This includes binge eating, restricting food, living a sedentary life because the child has trouble socialising with others, etc. This is counterproductive to the parents’ primary concerns about the child’s health,” commented Dr. Haque.

She also explained that when mothers try to pressure their children into changing their appearance, they may be exhibiting “learned behaviour”, saying “In South Asian societies, there is a lot more emphasis on a girl’s appearance because looking like how society favours means better marriage prospects. When our mothers were young girls it’s likely they had suffered scrutiny and belittling regarding, for example, their complexion. She had learned that to be accepted by society, one needs to look a certain way.”

She concluded that pressuring their own

daughters to conform to societal beauty standards may have no intent other than a drastic effort to shield them from such experiences.

Evidently, our parents aren’t any less vulnerable to the long-term impacts of being subjected to societal pressure and scrutiny, bringing forth the unreasonable obligation to be conventionally beautiful.

Dr. Sayedul Ashraf Kushal, lead psychiatrist and managing director at Lifespring a health services institute, believes strongly in the impact of representation and discourse in media. “When the media only portrays a perfect life and acceptance in society given to conventionally beautiful people, that becomes a social norm and expectation. Parents are not immune to this, when it is suggested to them that looking a certain way will ensure a better life for their children, they will try to obtain it,” he stated.

He added that, sometimes, a parent’s emphasis on beauty comes from a place of pride, which is damaging to the whole family, and everyone is exposed.

“In social gatherings in Bangladesh, it’s very common for relatives to compliment a child’s appearance, compare it with their siblings’, and follow it up with whether they look like their mother and father. There is a lot of inappropriate pride involved for a parent in this kind of interaction, it fuels their desire to have beautiful children for social credit,” he said, suggesting that we put work into being grateful for our privileges instead of being proud of them, since pride involves belittling someone else.

Parents are in a disadvantaged position. They’ve been exposed to all the damaging emphasis on and representation of beauty, but very little to the more modern discourse defying it, since they happen in parts of social media and pop culture to which mostly young people are exposed.

While it’s not going to be easy to erase decades of established beauty norms, the next step forward is for us to actively participate in raising and spreading awareness of its damages. With discourse covering more ground, representation in local media, and even a few conversations with our parents, I believe we can all dream of a near-future where parents teach young children to challenge problematic societal norms instead of pressuring them to conform.

\*Name has been changed upon request.

Amrin Tasnim Rafa is always confused, it’s literally her dominant personality trait. This is maybe her email, she can’t be sure: amrinrafa@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA





**ECHOES BY**  
ASRAR CHOWDHURY

# Skill, Grades and Universities Another side of the story

**I**  
In Bangladesh today, there are 53 public universities. Of these, 15 are general universities; 5 medical universities; 14 science and technology universities; 5 specialised universities; 6 agricultural universities; and 3 off-campus universities. There are another 103 private universities and 3 international (foreign) universities. This list excludes 18 polytechnic institutes but includes the national university, where the majority of the graduates study.

Each year, almost one million fresh graduates in Bangladesh add to the workforce from these institutes. Each of these institutes has students with high grades in their cohort. In the previous Echoes, we asked, "Are skills more important than grades?" Here, we will see, the answer is mixed.

**II**  
If you decide to pursue a bachelor in a specialised university (engineering, medical, agricultural, textile, and such), you will enter a niche field. Outsiders will find it difficult to enter your domain. Skill is more important than grades in these subjects.

This is one side of the picture. On the other side, specialised subjects transfer specialised skills (e.g. veterinary or maritime) that are not easily transferable to another sector. These subjects are also prone to external shocks. When an economy fails to boom, or there is change in technology



PHOTO: STAR

(e.g. from coal to solar energy), these skills can prove to become obsolete. It can lead to large-scale unemployment that Bangladesh, so far, has not witnessed, but could. The debate of grades versus skills is therefore not simple and straightforward.

**III**  
What about mother subjects that branched out over time? Fifty years ago, Physics was just Physics. Today, Physics has branched

out into Applied Physics, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering etc. When you enter the job market after studying one of these specialised branches, you may soon find out that allied subjects that were left out in your curriculum are needed. You have to re-educate yourself.

What about general subjects that did not branch out over time? Like Bangla, History, or Philosophy? If you study these

subjects with the objective of staying in academia, high grades are your target. You can develop yourself throughout your career.

The challenge arises if you study these subjects for other reasons, then you may find yourself in a dilemma because most students here find themselves in a profession outside their subjects. They prepare for competitive state exams; higher studies abroad with immigration in mind. They may also develop skills unrelated to their subject.

## IV

Good grades matter. Once you enter the job market and face competition, you will find the need for professional degrees. You will also find that your skills need to be updated. Or you may need to learn new skills altogether. Thus, both degrees (qualifications) and skills need to be updated over time.

Grades versus skills does not have a clear answer. Grades can be certified by your institute, but skills need to be acknowledged by a wider audience. Maybe that's the only difference.

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**satire.**

*Caution: Parental Advisory*

# "My father just hugged me."

**HASIB UR RASHID IFTI**

I don't think human beings were designed to hug their fathers. We fear them, get scolded by them, hide our tears from them. If we're lucky, we might even bond by watching a game of cricket and bash the cricketers together.

But you don't share a hug with your father. You hug your mom, your pet, your gaming PC or even your pet cow for social media points. Fathers are where we draw the line.

After moments of confusing emotions as he held me in his arms, he set me loose. I didn't know how to react. If I knew he was going to hug me today, I would have read the *WikiHow* page on "How to react when your father hugs you for the first time in 24 years".

But it's too late. This is worse than that time when my hand accidentally touched my best friend's hand and we didn't talk for six months. I had to do something fast. My hand clenched into a fist. This can't be happening.

I fist-bumped my dad.

All of our previous appreciations were exchanged through nods and grunts. A slow nod meant he's happy



for me, and one with a grin meant he's proud. A proper demonstration of appreciation like a sober family was too much to ask.

However, the family myth is that my *fupu* once saw *Abba* pat my *chacha* on the back when he finally got a job. But I'm not a superstitious man, and it feels odd to imagine my father ever saying "I'm proud of you."

We've come to a mutual understanding that it's best to take each other for granted and not express our love ver-

bally. For instance, I don't say thank you when he brings snacks from an office meeting. The man chose to stay hungry and bring the food home for his kids. Of course, I want to thank him! But I just accept the food like it was meant for me in the first place and move on with my life.

Sure, we have our differences. My father feels the sole purpose of having children is making them fulfil their parents' dreams. I, interestingly enough, have other ideas. It's our differences, mixed with occasional verbal fury, that has kept our spark alive.

My heart, cherishing an unknown feeling, was beating fast. Is this how affection feels like? Is this how ungrateful teenagers with privileged parents on Netflix feel? As I turned around and looked my father in his teary eyes for the first time, he knew what I wanted to ask. Why did you hug me, *Abba*? Why now?

With a broken voice, he said, "Zee Bangla's back on, son!"

I smiled, "Yes, it is *Abba*."

*Suggest Ifti nonfiction at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com*



**FABLE FACTORY**

# IN THE NAME OF THE QUEEN

**SYEDA ERUM NOOR**

Drenched in sweet moonlight yet hidden in part,  
 She sat on an oak tree that lived in the dark.  
 With a crown made of silver and a gown made of dreams,  
 Woven and stitched from black beads at the seams.  
 Alive as she was, yet dead as could be,  
 She watched the fair King ascend from the sea.  
 Swinging her legs, she forgot what's at stake  
 Her young, ancient soul and her King's throne to take.  
 Too smitten by tales that he'd spun just for her,  
 Her dark eyes on her moonlit skin would slow to a blur.  
 "For I am what is," the King told his men.  
 "What has been, what shall be, both now and again."  
 Lies spun in gold web would tangle her feet,  
 coaxing the Queen of the "dark" and "deceit".  
 For the inverted sea that split on its own,  
 Was never the Queen's unless it was stoned.  
 "Your beauty is mine," said the King in delight.  
 "A glow to my light and akin to my sight."  
 The sounds of his words surrounded her heart  
 Once again, the Queen was lost, she was in the dark.  
 The men and the women who toasted the King  
 Were guards to the same woman wearing his ring.  
 For the Queen only ruled the evil you see  
 With the wonder and glimmer of childlike decree.  
 In his wake rose white knights, while darkness would flee  
 But when time came to sleep, it was time for the Queen.  
 As folktales and songs went, 'twas time for deceit.  
 Darkness fled back to claim what belonged  
 To it and the Queen and to those who were wronged.  
 Children were warned of a wrath never seen  
 Locks clicked in place and fear settled in.  
 Silence and fear, brewed evil in contempt  
 Seeped out in hushed whispers, free from exempt.  
 "In the name of the Queen!" the voices echoed  
 Stealing her name as she wandered meadows.  
 Her whispered coaxes went and sprinkled their sleep  
 Ridding their monsters and counting their sheep.  
 Her scent was like rainfall wrapped in fresh winter dew  
 Her hum so lulling, till dark turned to blue.  
 When time came to retreat behind bars of shadows  
 Evil dusted its hands, with pride in its show.  
 When asked by the Queen, her head still in clouds  
 Evil denied any part in the fouls.  
 "We did as you pleased," he lied through his teeth.  
 "Spread joy for the children and peace as agreed."  
 Tranced from the dreams that she'd woven again  
 She smiled as she counted from zero to ten.  
 The sea that lay still in its sleep so serene  
 Shuddered to life with the rise of the King.  
 Eyes void of sleep, yet somewhere far away  
 The Queen wakes back in up in her prison to pray  
 That her people would see not darkness and deceit  
 But see her as clearly as they saw the King.  
 That darkness was only the absence of light  
 The evil was brewed within and in sleight.  
 Bound by restraints, the Queen only hopes  
 That her men and her women won't chant but will gloat  
 Of the sweet, serene peace that grows in her wake.  
 And the night, once lost, the Queen can now take.

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

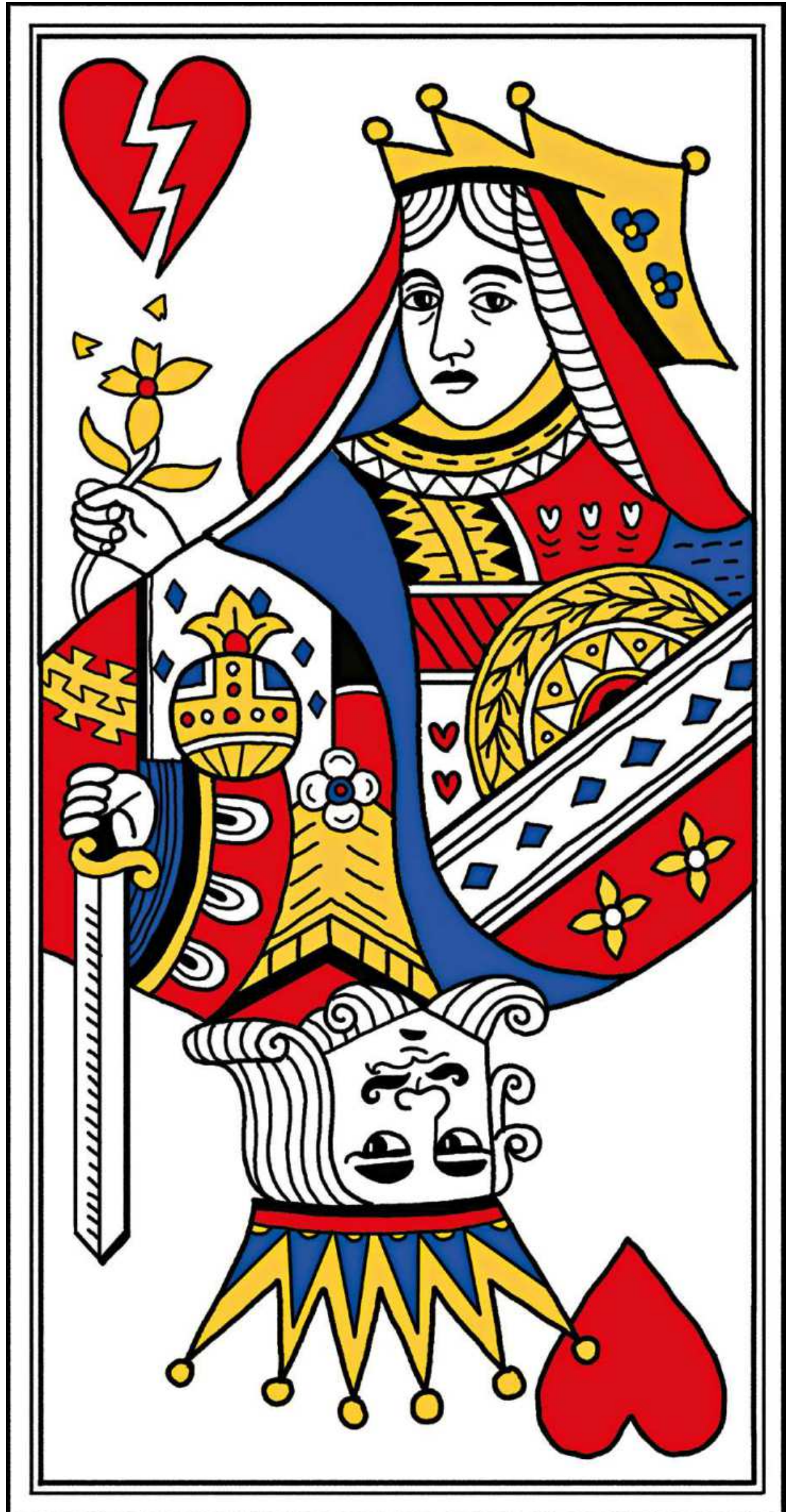


ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS



# Who's who on the badminton court

## FATIN HAMAMA

Just like the shuttlecocks stuck on the tree, or worn down to its skeleton but yet alive and kicking, or spins like choppers in the air due to the fraying, people on the Badminton court come in varieties.

Here's a few that deserve honourable mentions as badminton season approaches.

### THE TOKEN BORO BHAI

Dude always arrives prepared with over-used excuses to make up for the fact that he, in fact, is a horrible player. A few of his primary identifying traits include – getting down on the court with one hand in his pocket as if he's so good that he doesn't need a stance, missing the first serve of a match and laughing it off by saying that he didn't have time to warm up, and blaming it all on the wind and the racquet he borrowed from a kid.

"It's been so long since I played! When I was younger, we used to play for hours on end, hehe," he chants as he tries not to lose to children half his age.

The smash shot master who's not quite there yet

More often than not, this one's a kid aged roughly 13 years old who thinks that



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

jumping up in the air every five seconds to hit the shuttlecock maximises their chances of executing a good smash. Mostly, they just end up giving the opponents the chance to hit a good one back.

Oh, and random as it might sound, they're *always* swinging their racquets like cricket bats during a warm-up game.

### THE DETECTIVE AND DEFENCE ATTORNEY

The shuttlecock they hit fell outside the opponents' court? No way. The serve they sent hit the net before passing it? Haha, right. The opponent's foot went a nanometre out of line? Stop the game, gather the witnesses, bring the flashlights, let

them trace the footprints. They'll do it all.

It's actually pretty funny for a bit, but then they keep pausing the match every few minutes and since they won't take anyone's opinion for an answer; everyone eventually accepts their fate.

### THE MONICA GELLER

The most you have to do to play in symphony if you team up with this person is to stay out of their way, unless you want to get hit on the head by a racquet.

Seriously, they won't let you take *one* serious shot. Overhead shots you can easily back into? They are doing it for you. A drop shot you can very well dive for? They are skidding into your side of the court to do it. You might as well just vanish during a doubles rally, and they'll only be thankful for all the extra space they can shuffle back and forth into.

### DISHONOURABLE MENTION

Imagine having the incredible ability to be an omnipresent person despite never stepping into the court itself. Of course, I'm talking about those token neighbourhood elders who stop by for a bit to shoot dirty looks at every girl playing on the court. I'd say they make me uncomfortable, but since it's really nothing different from what I face every time I walk down the streets of Dhaka; meh.

# THE ELUSIVE WORLD OF AMBIENT MUSIC

## SHAYOR HAMID

Modern music is bass-heavy and mixed louder than any other time in human history, fighting to grab the listener's attention. After all, what is the point of music that doesn't even demand to be heard?

This is where ambient music comes in.

It is widely debated as to what constitutes some pieces of music to be labelled as "ambient". Classical composer Erik Satie is widely credited as the inventor of ambient music when he composed *The Gymnopédies* – three pieces that he deemed were meant to be background noise to daily activities.

The minimal and repetitive nature of ambient music came in all shapes and forms throughout the years from synth-based German electronic artists in the 80s, to field recording and tape loops in the 90s and 2000s. Even though the sounds varied, the notion of bare bone instrumentation and sounds that could be ignored remained consistent. What ambient music also succeeded in doing was enabling the audience to exist wherever they wanted at the time.

The ignorable quality of ambient music allows the listener's thoughts to be softened, without being impacted. Ambient music is now more popular than ever, garnering millions of views on YouTube. The genre has evolved to a niche where endless videos come up if you search for it. From music designed to study, concentrate or sleep, to music that evokes a specific mood. There is music that creates the ambience of a fireplace in a wooden house, a walk in the middle of the night, and so forth. The list is endless, helping the listeners create any ambience they want to.

There are videos catered to specific fandoms that allow the audience to feel as if they were in a Ghibli film or at Hogwarts. In a world where most of us are stuck between the four walls of our home, ambient music offers an alternative reality where we can exist in two places at the same time. It also helps us to somewhat slow things down in this fast-paced world, where we exist in the present while offering a gentle escape at the same time.

One of the surprising results out of all of this has been



how beneficial it is to people suffering from anxiety. Dr Oliver Sacks, in his book *Musicophilia*, wrote about how music and gardens were the only two types of non-pharmaceutical therapy that helped people suffering from neurological diseases. Some studies have found that predictability and escapism help the patients, while others suggest that predictability offers patients enhanced sensory awareness.

Ambient music will continue to evolve and flourish

while more medical studies are needed to understand its psychological benefits to the listeners. I, myself, do not exactly know why I keep coming back to songs that feature the same notes for hours. However, I do keep coming back to them and letting them play in the background at the strangest of times.

Try it and see for yourselves if it's your cup of tea. If it indeed is, I'm sure you will find that it's a great one.