

# 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