



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

The Tragedy of Having Exams During Wedding Season

RAYA MEHNAZ

It was your mother who let you know of the wedding since the invitation came when you were outside doing “broke student” things. You take the invitation thrown haphazardly over your mountain of books and turn it over only to balk at the date. The wedding is right in the middle of your exams.

The wedding, in retrospect, was always meant to be around this time of the year. It doesn't matter that the wedding is of your favourite cousin, or your most beloved childhood friend, or your closest neighbourhood “apu/bhaiya”. It doesn't matter that this is going to be the event of the year, especially since the first half of the year was awful and to compensate for the misery, everyone would try to make this event even more fun than it would have been otherwise. You are, unfortunately, a student in this magical time of the year, and that is always going to have some consequences.

You console yourself with daydreams of you in your graduation cap, yet a part of you still longs to disregard all your academic responsibilities and just get into the fray of pre-wedding preparations. So what if you have your finals on, or that you are an HSC examinee, or this is a delicate time before your board exams?

It doesn't mean that you should be happy to miss out on spontaneous wedding shopping, *holuds* that go on till 4 in the morning, or countless impromptu hangout sessions to discuss the wedding. You sigh looking at the Instagram stories and then looking at your most recent post with the #studygram. You feel robbed, yet you understand that there's nothing to do.

There were a few moments where you almost called up the “man/woman of the hour”, begging them to change their wedding date. Thankfully, you had the last minute realisation that the world doesn't revolve around you, as much as you like to think of yourself as the “main character”. So, you carry onwards in your quest to finish this round of forsaken educational milestones.

You get very little studying done, mind you. Considering the unfortunate circumstances, you think that's good enough.

The wedding day comes and goes. If you are really lucky, you get to attend at least two programmes, and you truly have fun for however little time you could spare. After all, you are just really happy for the newlyweds, and the fact that you did not get to properly celebrate their wedding doesn't diminish that.

So, you congratulate them with your exhausted eyes that tried to cram two chapters worth of information the night before, and get yourself a celebratory glass of *borhani*.

On your way, you concur that you have shown remarkable restraint and maturity that you're surprised you had. You spent this wedding season with the least amount of drama and angry tears and even managed to study. You completed this wedding season with dignity and that is worthy of celebration.

Congratulate yourself on a job well done and get home to hit your books again because the wedding may be over, but your exam sure isn't.

Raya Mehnaz had to miss her brother's *holud* for her finals. Send condolences at fb.com/raya.mehnaz

Your Best Friend's Wedding (Not Starring Julia Roberts)

RASHA JAMEEL

There's loud music being blasted from massive speakers, the smell of fresh *kacchi* in the air, and elaborate floral displays left and right.

Your best friend is getting married. Disclaimer: This is not Julianne Potter's story.

The thing about your best friend's wedding is that the reality of it doesn't sink in right away. Not when they show you the engagement ring, or hand you the wedding invite card, or when you're three weeks into dance rehearsals for the *holud* ceremony. Even as you're helping your best friend sort through the logistics of a *deshi* wedding, you can't help but wonder about how it was just yesterday that you two copied from each other's Math homework and exchanged rants while munching on *fuchka* by the sidewalk. Your concept of time grows increasingly blurry by the minute as nostalgia takes over you.

Wedding preparations are always hectic. There are dance rehearsals to plan, venues to be booked ahead, caterers to be consulted, festive attire to be selected, and wedding invites to be sent out. You gradually find your excitement beginning to mirror that of your friend's. After all, it is a new phase in life much like high school graduation, completion of undergrad degrees, job promotions, et cetera.

As you lend some of your assistance in planning your friend's wedding, you become even more acquainted with the action behind the scenes, and in time, recognise your role as your bestie's go-to emotional support system at such a time. Having gotten over your initial sense of disbelief towards the whole event, you

stand by your friend as they take their time to clear their head or look for the occasional breather amid all the wedding frenzy.

You've had conflicted thoughts about your friend's wedding this whole time. There's been ample fun and excitement throughout the festivities, but they ultimately did little to dissipate the insecurity creeping up at the back of your mind: “Will our friendship ever be the same again?” Now you're well and truly anxious about the status of your friendship with your oldest friend.

There have always been ups and downs with all the struggles in preserving the friendship over a long distance and being there for each other through thick and thin. Demanding your friend's constant attention in your matters at all times will only introduce toxicity to the bond... and you and your friend deserve better.

It's the day of, and you get just a little teary-eyed seeing your friend next to their significant other. Happy tears, laughs, and giggles are exchanged over stories of the couple's courtship and successive plates of *kacchi*. As the wedding event draws to a close, both you and your best friend already know that your friendship is no longer what it used to be in high school or college, but that's the best part. It's been growing and maturing through changes, the different phases of both of your lives.

You can see your wedding festivities unfold from your best friend's perspective already.

Rasha Jameel's calendar begins at 'Deadline 001' and ends at 'Deadline 7634872354'. Help her locate the month of July in all this mess at rasha.jameel@outlook.com



PHOTO: AYNA MAHAL

THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE SHOUT

Do weddings need to be extravagant?



PHOTO: HILL VALLEY PRODUCTION

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

The wedding bells are ringing for Neha and Samin.

As I write this, the couple is wrapping up all the arrangements for their big day. Like most other girls, Neha has been planning for the picture perfect wedding for as long as she can remember. For her, a grand wedding is a perfect start to the new sacred verse of her life. And for Samin, the smile on his bride's face is all that counts.

Weddings are one of the most significant events in a person's lifetime. In Bangladesh, big fat weddings evade all definitions. These are not just full of jaw-dropping extravagance, but also emotionally charged with an awful lot of hope, dreams, and desires.

“Nothing is more important to me than family. The idea of everyone celebrating and being happy for me on my big day is exhilarating. I want a big wedding where I am surrounded by love and positivity,” said Syeda Samiha*, a student from a reputed private university in the capital.

Anindita Bose, an undergraduate at Brac University, revealed, “I want a big wedding because I want to have the time of my life. I would love to entertain a large number of guests and get their blessings. From a religious perspective, Hindu weddings have many rituals and I want to have a traditional wedding following them all.”

One person, who wished to remain anonymous, shared her wedding desires. She commented, “To me, a wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity so it should be filled with excitement and bliss. The way brides and grooms dress in movies takes my breath away. The marriage scenes are straight out of fairytales, and I would love all that for myself.” Many, like her, take inspiration from movies and TV shows, and

personally, I think it contributes colossally to the idea of having an exorbitant affair.

However, there is the other side of the coin. Not everyone is down to sticking to the glitz and glamour.

In the words of Dhaka-based web developer and content creator Fahim Ahamed*, a simple and homely wedding makes for the best occasion. He confessed, “I don't want to spend on lavish and over-the-top ceremonies when I can perhaps use the money for a better cause. I would rather invest it in something fruitful.”

“I'm a very introverted person. A big and loud wedding would just make me feel like a spectacle, and I don't want that,” said another person.

Newly-wed Rafia Atkia Rafa precisely sums up her wedding experience as such: “The guest list is an ‘endless chain of acquaintances’, as I like to call it. The chain always gets longer, and one should know where to cut it.”

She further said, “After planning a simple wedding, I was able to keep the event within my financial capacity, invited my closest ones, spent a good time together and made many cherishable memories. Another good thing was that there was no extra pressure which could hamper the first day of my conjugal life.”

She also mentioned why she preferred having a tastefully sumptuous yet simple ceremony with her husband, adhering to their religious beliefs.

Those who go all out at their weddings, from elaborate decorations and sensational attires to gourmet foods, leave no stone unturned. Sad but true, many dream of such lavish weddings but only a handful can afford it. As reported in an article on *The Daily Star*, the wedding industry is a 2000

crore taka market, according to the Event Management and Marketing Association of Bangladesh. The industry feeds on this “once-in-a-lifetime” attitude; no wonder why weddings have become such an expensive ordeal.

Many parents and couples take loans to afford this luxury. Amirah Hossain, a junior at Brac University, commented, “Yes, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity but that doesn't mean it has to be a big, extravagant one. You can have an elegant wedding with minimal costs where you can enjoy it without putting a burden on your family and yourself.”

Parents paint a picture of their beloved child's “happily ever after”. In reality, painting this picture doesn't always go smoothly. Weddings are, unfortunately at times, seen as a display of how far you've come in life and how well-off you are.

In our society, many measure the success of the whole family based on the gold hanging from the bride's neck. The vermilion-red draped, gold-laden bride sitting in the middle of a gaudily decorated hall room is an indicator of how much the parents love their child. Not always do these ideals align with those of the bride and groom, but such disagreements often draw a wedge between the family.

“My husband and I wanted a cosy wedding with the blessings and presence of our close relatives. But my parents had their own guest lists. So, we compromised and settled for a moderately big ceremony,” said Dr. Afrida Tasneem, who serves as an assistant surgeon. Squabbles are inescapable when it comes to wedding planning. Compromise is the key to avoiding a rift between the parents and the soon-to-be wedded couple.

Entrepreneur and father of two, Feroz Alam Bhuiyan, shared why he wants his daughters to have their dream wedding. “I married late and could not have a big event. I don't want my daughters to have a wedding like mine. I want the best for them, and I will do the best in my ability to give them the wedding they deserve,” he explained. For many parents like Feroz, footing the bill for their children's weddings is very crucial, even if it costs an arm and a leg.

Many young individuals also believe in contributing to their wedding expenses. “No matter how small your arrangements are, the peace in knowing that you're contributing/being able to afford this is enough to bring joy,” proclaims Ishrat Nova, an undergraduate student of North South University.

“As it was the marriage of the eldest daughter, both my parents and my sister wanted it to be a pompous affair. I don't think that my family, especially my mother, would've settled for a small, intimate wedding because she had been saving up for quite some time now. My parents and I believe that having a smaller wedding is financially beneficial, however, there is a lot of emotion involved in the wedding of the eldest daughter. Hence, they chose to do it to their best capability,” expressed Neha's sister.

Big, small or somewhere in between, what matters the most on a wedding day is that everyone is happy.

*Names have been changed for privacy

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