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DOES OUR POSITION IN
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
ORDER AFFECT OUR
MENTAL HEALTH?

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HOW LANGUAGE
MINIMISES THE
IMPACT OF WOMEN'S
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Why We Cook



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

EDITORIAL

This city's chaotic nature is about to reach its peak, and I am not ready for it.

It is early days of Ramadan 2022, and Dhaka has already descended into the chaos we all know and hate it for. Except, this time, the chaotic energy seems to be at an all-time high.

I can understand to some extent as to why this is the case. For the last couple of years, the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented people from fully "enjoying" the chaos, therefore stopping many others from causing more chaos. Now, as the fear of the virus seems to be dying down, we are back at it again.

I don't have anything against people enjoying Ramadan and all its festivities. In fact, I personally enjoy participating in them. I do, however, have an issue with how unarranged everything is.

Despite my displeasure towards these situations, I don't actually mind. We all look forward to this month, and a bit of chaos isn't going to stop us from enjoying it to the fullest.

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



PLAYWATCH

MOVIE



The best of the "whodunit"

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

Few things in life make me happier than a good whodunit. A sprawling location for a setting that serves as a character itself, a dozen or so colourful characters, prodigious detectives, suspense, plot twists – there is little that isn't exciting about an edge-of-the-seat mystery.

Here are my favourites.

MURDER BY DEATH (1976)

A blind butler sticking stamps all wrong on invitation envelopes and hoping people will show up, a woman whose nurse is clearly older and sicker than she is, a father who sends his son across a bridge to check if it's broken – the comedy of this mystery/thriller is quite unique. It wouldn't even suffice to say it's dark humour; it's out-of-the-box and plain absurd.

This movie is a pastiche of the whodunit genre. When five detectives and their companions are summoned to a mansion and are challenged by the host to solve a mystery, you soon realise each of the detectives in the film are spoofs of different famous literary detectives.

As the drama escalates, each detective presents their own theories to the case, and the story slowly pokes fun at the tropes many famous mystery authors use in their writings.

Fun fact: Author Truman Capote appears in this film.

CLUE (1985)

Remember the board game "Clue" by the Parker Brothers? This movie is based on that game and brings to life the characters of Colonel Mustard, Professor Plum, Miss Scarlet, and the like. Six strangers arriving at a mansion having to solve a mystery equipped with

the props their characters are given in the original board game is the kind of set up mystery nerds dream of.

The humour of this film ranges from dark to plain bizarre, but the gags and jokes always deliver, no matter how over the top. The back and forth banter, both verbal and physical comedy by the cast, only adds to the absolute chaos that ensues in the mansion.

Fun fact: This film is famous for having three alternate endings – three different solutions to the problem are presented, leaving you to decide which one you want to believe in.

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS (2017)

Agatha Christie is called the "Queen of Crime" for good reason. Every movie on this list is heavily influenced by her works. *Murder on the Orient Express*, as an adaption of her novel of the same name, is mostly true to its source.

The Agatha Christie fandom is split over director Kenneth Branagh himself playing iconic detective Hercule Poirot, and I agree with those who believe he isn't very believable as Poirot in this film. Regardless, this mystery aboard a moving train where ten strangers all become suspects of a murder does not do disservice to one of Christie's most suspenseful stories.

Honourable mentions: *Gosford Park*, an excellent ensemble drama; *Death on the Nile*, the second in what is likely to be a Branagh-directed Christie trilogy; *Knives Out*, perhaps the weakest of the films on this list but with a sequel on the way; and *Murder Mystery*, Netflix's own parody of this genre.

Mrittika wants to know which your favourite murder mystery is. Reach her at mrittika.anan@gmail.com

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

i'm so tired
Lauv & Troye Sivan

Budapest
George Ezra

Caution
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willow
Taylor Swift

B

Bon Appétit
Katy Perry

Ocean Spray
Manic Street Preachers

coffee for dinner
orion sun

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Does our position in the socio-economic order affect our mental health?

HRISHIK ROY

Our world is dominated by neoliberal capitalism. From gigantic billboards on the streets to annoying ads on popular social media platforms, it is easy to find oneself being sucked into the temptations of consumerism which encourages us to acquire goods and services in ever-increasing amounts.

But what does that do to our mental health?

We live in a society where we are constantly judged based on the material things we can or cannot afford, and this is fuelled by consumerism. From the clothes we wear to the restaurants we dine in, people are constantly under the pressure to meet societal demands of a living "standard". When people fail to meet those demands or choose not to pay attention to them, they are shunned and shamed.

For example, one of the main reasons why weddings are often so extravagant is because people do not want their extended families and friends to scrutinise and ostracise them for having a smaller wedding function.

People ostracise others based on material goods primarily because they often equate material goods with intangibles such as someone's value and character. This often happens from a very young age. So, for example, when someone is unable to afford a new pair of basketball shoes at school, they are often judged and bullied by their other classmates who treat them as someone inferior. Similar incidents not only happen in schools and colleges but even haunt us in places like offices or universities. These events cause people to look down upon themselves and it worsens their mental health as social alienation and self-loathing leads to issues such as

depression.

Additionally, neoliberal capitalism preaches competitiveness, not just in the form of consumerism, but by also promoting values such as individualism. Kids are often indoctrinated with ideas such as "hard work is the key to success" – a narrative which is the result of the competitive social order around us.

However, such ideas are not only false, but they are equally harmful too, as success is often dependent on one's innate abilities, resources, and their surroundings. Success and privilege have a direct correlation, and that cannot be left out of the conversation.

Not everyone is able to excel at everything. For example, someone who may be really good at sports may perform sub-par in the fine arts. So, when we are unable to succeed at everything we approach, we tend to blame ourselves as we think we are not just working hard enough despite giving the maximum possible effort. This again causes us to doubt ourselves and crushes our self-confidence and jeopardises our mental health.

People from low socio-economic factors have to face the consequences of such a competitive social order even worse. Thanks to a lack of regulations and dysfunctional labour unions, workers in factories have to work in hazardous workplaces for long hours to maintain the increasing costs of living. Working in tough and intimidating conditions, coupled with a lack of social security such as food and shelter, causes workers' physical ailments, and their psychological woes follow.

This is made even worse by how inaccessible mental healthcare is in

the country. Neoliberal capitalism also causes mental health services to be strictly driven by the incentive of profit in most cases and so the charges are often inflated. This means that people from a low socio-economic status cannot access the required services to fix their already aggravated mental health woes and this feeds into a vicious cycle.

Unlike the popular myth that mental health issues are solely related to emotional and psychological well-being, they often have their origins in distressful socio-economic conditions and a faulty social order. Improving social security, funding mental health services and encouraging better working conditions

by dismantling capitalist influences can go a long way in breaking the chain of mental health issues.

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Hrishik would like to dedicate this article to his comrade and mentor Sajid Bin Mahamud. Reach out to Hrishik at hrdibbo@gmail.com



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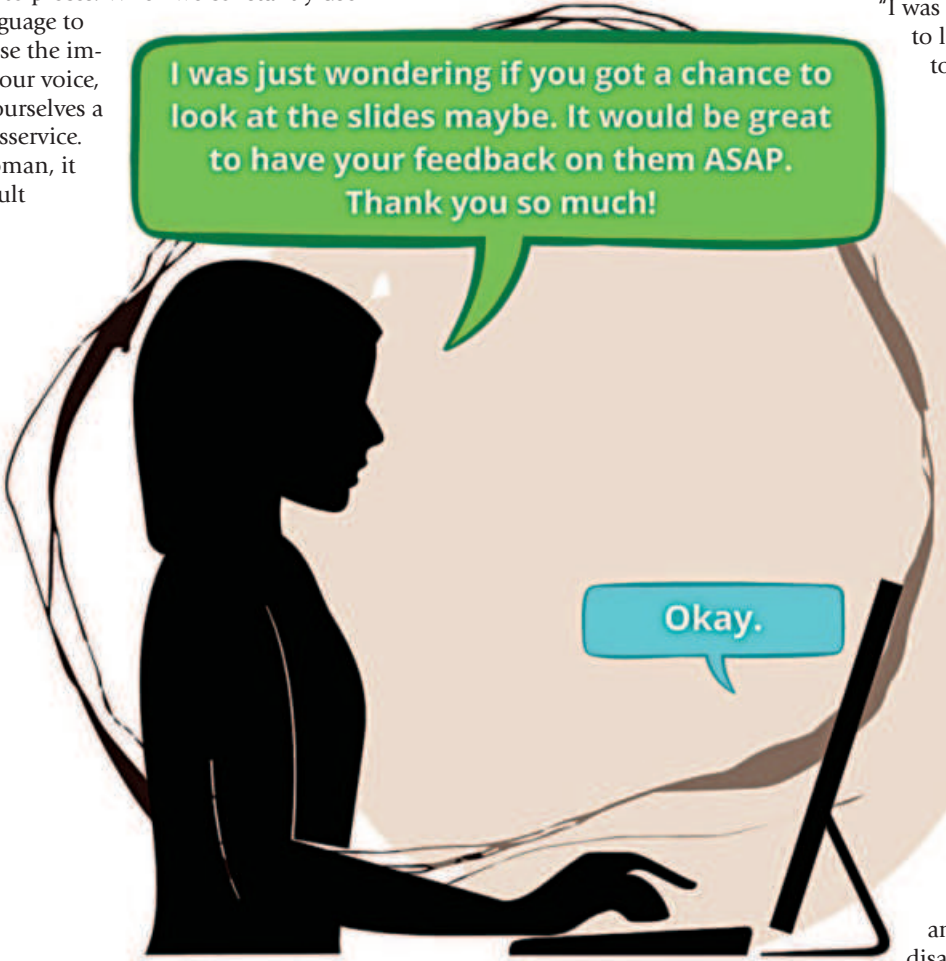
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How language minimises the impact of women’s communication

AFIA IBNAT

Language is a powerful tool. It can move people to tears, incite violence and rage, empower people or even disintegrate them into pieces. When we constantly use our language to minimise the impact of our voice, we do ourselves a great disservice. As a woman, it is difficult



DESIGN: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

not to notice the difference between how my female colleagues speak and how our male counterparts speak. If you compare our style of writing within emails, you’ll see a visible

difference in tonality and diction. Women tend to use more exclamation marks and downtoners, say “thank you” more often, and use phrase deliverables not as direct orders but as suggestions.

“I was just wondering if you got a chance to look at the slides. It would be great to have your feedback on them ASAP. Thank you!”

“Kindly take a look at the slides and have your feedback sent in by no later than 11 AM. Regards.”

I’ll let you guess on who wrote which one.

You will find an obvious difference that speaks volumes about an underlying issue – most women often put in more effort in coming across as friendly and likeable in the workplace, whereas men appear more straightforward and curt, usually avoiding pleasantries. When men show up with no-nonsense attitudes, they are hailed as effective leaders who are naturally authoritative. They have the privilege to skip on the niceties and still be glorified for it. On the flip side, if the hounds smell so much as a drop of assertiveness from a woman, they are quick to label her as disagreeable, uptight, and rude, among other things.

Especially with the use of downtoners such as “just”, women minimise the impact of the words that follow. It is often viewed as a signal of a lack of confidence in our own leadership to those around us. The word “just” seems like you are asking for permission. “Just”, is apologising for occupying the space that you have rightfully earned.

So, what happens when you constantly downplay yourself? You are undermining your own abilities. If you do that to yourself, it becomes even easier for others to start doubting your competence and capabilities. While downright rudeness should never be excused, there needs to be a standard protocol in communication that both men and women can use, especially in professional settings. Women shouldn’t feel like we have to always go out of our way to come across as likeable and amenable, while men should take note of making an effort to sound more approachable and less cold. As women, we often have an intrinsic urge to constantly make ourselves smaller in any setting, be it physically or verbally, and we are so afraid of having our assertiveness perceived as rudeness, that we go out of our way to be nice. It’s an uphill battle, but we still need to unlearn the long-term societal indoctrination that injects doubt into women’s competence and inadvertently questions our authority.

Afia Ibnat is trying to gaslight herself into being productive. You too can gaslight her at afiaibnat09@gmail.com

WHY WE COOK

UPOMA AZIZ & FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

Home is where the heart is, and the heart is definitely where the food is. By that logic, the heart probably plays hopscotch around the kitchen a lot.

Cooking is not always a prerequisite to having food, and yet people cook for reasons more than just sustaining themselves. While explaining how he learned to cook, Muaz Al Abrar, 27, a part-time artist and full-time merchandiser, says, “I learned while I lived in a hostel. The meals were terrible, so we refried them with onions, oil, and some basic spices.”

Muaz went from someone trying to make food consumable to creating a plethora of versatile, delicious dishes. Meanwhile, Apun Sarkar, currently a student of IBA-JU, says, “I learned cooking by observing my mother. I learned to make emergency dishes from my father, several tricky Bengali dishes like sweets or pickles from my maternal aunts, and native dishes from the rural areas of the country from my paternal aunts.”

Apun does agree that cooking alongside family members has strengthened her relationship with them, though there are occasional struggles about having to share kitchen space. But hey, who in a Bangladeshi household hasn’t had the urge to chase that annoying relative with a spatula?

Besides, to have generational knowledge in the form of family recipes passed down to you feels very humbling and is no less than a blessing, albeit in the form of cumin, coriander and a whole lot of other spice mixes.

When we asked some of our primary, intermediate, and advanced level of “cook” friends the reason behind their culinary journeys, we received a wide range of responses.

“What inspired me to learn cooking? I love eating. Why do I cook? I love eating!” Shafin Mahmud, an undergraduate student from Brac University simplifies. For all of us who cook, we relate hard.

Ishrat Nova, currently studying at North South University, says, “I cook mainly to meet my cravings, which are too intricate for my other family members to recreate.”

“Cooking works as an outlet for my negative emotions and works as a form of therapy,” says Adib An-Nur, an undergraduate engineering student, who does an alarming amount of cooking.

“I like to cook because it’s cheaper than buying cooked food, and I love baking because I adore the smell of freshly baked cake and cookies,” explains Dr. Moomtahina Fatima, intern doctor at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. “You could buy scented candles though?” one of our writers asked and barely survived getting pelted by a cupcake. And finally...

“I just like to watch things burn,” confesses Tawsif Jawad Promit, a student in his twenties, barbecue-enthusiast, and suspected pyromaniac.

Irrespective of why one chooses to cook, it is undeniably true that food does so much more than sustain the human body and provide nutrients. The way to a person’s heart is through their stomach, but it is not always about the calibre of the food or the number of ingredients used.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Food can convey complex human emotions like no other, which is exactly why the love found in home cooking cannot often compare to the richest of dishes. Md. Abrar Hossain says, “I thought I could make do with instant ramen and noodles when I went abroad to study, but I eventually took up cooking instead. Ever since I came back, I have a renewed appreciation for the simpler dishes I now find around easily.”

From picnics to potlucks, food plays a crucial role in bringing people together. Be it the activity of peeling peas and plucking spinach from the same bowl or having food from the same platter, there is a solidarity that food induces in us.

Like onions, cooking also has many layers. It’s not just putting everything in a pot and hoping for the best but rather, each sizzle, each whiff of the permeating spices, and each splatter of oil and curry on your shirt is no less than the work of master craftspeople.

Knowing your ingredients and giving them life is a sensory experience that cannot be done without leaving out the rest. Cooking enthusiast Afia Ibnat agrees that cooking is an immersive adventure. “Letting my thoughts wander while I become lost in the process is truly therapeutic for me,” she adds.

Culinary creativity, for most, is a result of constraint-based action. Most creative cooking pairings arise from not having access to certain ingredients or having dietary restrictions. Eighteen-year-old Mubassira Mahboob’s cooking endeavours follow a similar path.

“Sometimes when I create foreign recipes, some items are unavailable or too expensive, so I try to find substitutes,”

she says. “Coming up with replacements, I feel, necessitates a certain level of inventiveness.”

Cooking is a great method to unwind since it allows you to express yourself creatively. Not only that, but learning new techniques, combining them into various forms, and gaining expertise along the way is a creative and skilful endeavour in and of itself.

When asked how their cooking compares to that of their family, the majority of our respondents were an act in humility.

“I think I cook very well,” says Tamjeed-ul-Islam, an undergraduate student. “But it will take some time for me to catch up to my mother’s level.”

Ayra Areeba Abid, 19, on the other hand, believes her mother’s culinary techniques have inspired her own. “I’d say my dishes are quite similar to my mother’s, although it sounds strange to admit. However, I’m nowhere near my family’s cooking and I still have a lot to learn and a lot of confidence to gain,” she remarked.

Many like Ayra find comfort in their mother or grandmother’s cooking, but for Ishtiaq Kabir and Samia Khan – self-taught cooks – breaking off from their family’s cooking style is what makes theirs adventurous. “I like to experiment by adjusting classic recipes with different spices,” Samia says. “However, my family isn’t big on improvisation and always sticks to the essentials.”

Our perception of food differs widely from our ancestors. When it comes to food, the generation gap can be the greatest. Millennials these days are more acceptable to other cultures and interest-

ed in trying out newer cuisines. We see fusions of different local and international cuisines changing how we look at food.

Nowadays, cooking is more than just a matter of putting things together in a certain order. The modest tea has evolved into other varieties; doodh cha is no longer the staple, malta cha has made an appearance. Porota mangsho has been stylised into tacos de Carne Mexicana. The millennial trend of eating quick and easy dinner has completely transformed the cooking game.


Cooking can be gratifying. However, in this age of instantaneous delivery of freshly prepared meals to our doorsteps, the art of cooking is frequently overlooked. We have the luxury of having someone prepare our meals for us. They are, in the words of one of our friends, “missing out big time.”

“I love the feeling that I can cook something good for myself and devour that without having to feel someone else did the hard work for me. I really enjoy it when my loved ones admire my cooking; it’s a wonderful feeling for cooks to be able to spread love and happiness through food.”

Food is a love language and people who don’t cook are indeed missing out.

Upoma Aziz is a slouching, crouching, grouchy Goblin with a hoarding problem. Tell her to declutter her desk and her mind at upoma.aziz@gmail.com

Farnaz Fawad Hasan is a disintegrating pool noodle wanting to stay afloat. Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com




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Where are the plus sized clothes in a thrift shop?

NADEEMAHAFROSE MONDOL

Thrift shops or vintage stores are getting a lot of hype presently in Bangladesh. Personally, I love seeing people thrift shopping and truly admire the fits they put together. However, as a person whose shoulders aren't exactly a size 14 and whose waist isn't a "perfect" 36, I can't help but notice the disappointing lack of plus size friendly clothing in the online boom of Bangladeshi thrift shops.

If we look closely into these marketplaces, it can be observed that most of their clothes, from dresses to pants, are suitable for petite females who have smaller waist and bust sizes. It seems impossible to find clothes in L or XL, let alone XXL, even for men.

Similar circumstances are seen in the case of thrifted shoes. To find shoes for chubby feet in Bangladesh is like finding rare gems.

Unavailability of and inconvenience about clothing create difficulties for many people. Clothes for plus size men and women cost much more than regular clothing as they are found mostly in exclusive stores. Not every obese person can afford high-end clothing, so it is clear that plus sized people with affordability concerns face various issues while shopping.

So, why exactly is plus sized apparel so hard to find in thrift shops?

To answer this question, the first thing that pops into mind is the lack of plus size clothes in the overall clothing market in Bangladesh. In spite of holding the third position in the world garments manufacturer ranking, the garments in Bangladesh are not quite accessible for all types of bodies.

The big brands which import our manufactured clothes are not plus size friendly, except for some aspects of their business which are performative. As a result, among the clothes that are left behind to sell in the local market for us to wear, finding plus size fits can be very hard.

Therefore, when plus sized people do buy outfits that fit them, perhaps they do not consider donating their clothes because they want to wear that outfit as long as they can. If you want to donate your clothes to a thrift store, it cannot be in a worn out condition which means the lack of availability is the reason why pre-loved plus size clothes are given away for thrifting so rarely.

In addition, thrift shops in Bangladesh have little diversity in general and not all of the clothes are pre-loved in these shops either. This is mostly because people often confuse reselling products with thrifting as well as think of thrifting like distributing winter clothes to charity. As thrifting is a newly emerging industry, the condition may improve but keeping in mind the matter of body diversity, local thrifting really needs to reinvent itself soon.

Nadeemah always wraps her head around what she's going to eat next and thinks that the glass at her bedside table is half- full. Say hi at nadeemahafrose13@gmail.com

Everything wrong with teen TV shows

MASHIYAT NAYEEM

What do Gen Z kids and adolescents of generations past have in common? From early 2000s shows like *Gossip Girl* and *Pretty Little Liars* to newer shows like *Riverdale* and *Euphoria*, the problems in these teen dramas continue to persist to this day. Drawing from my experiences of watching this genre for several years now, my observations are as follows.

USING ADULT ACTORS

It is no secret that the actors parading around are not actual teenagers in real life. While there are very practical reasons for employing adults to play the part of children, such as increased working hours and prevention of minors from being groomed and exploited, 20-somethings effortlessly navigating high school while looking put together enforce a skewed perception of how teenagers should behave or what they should look like.

TOXIC BODY IMAGE

The vast majority of teenagers are far from the unrealistic supermodel depiction of the characters in these shows. The actors are almost always airbrushed to perfection, which is a strong contrast from adolescents who have to deal with acne and body hair. Body positivity is yet another element missing, with the women being slim figured and the men having a toned muscular body, thus perpetuating body image issues in a demographic already prone to low self-esteem and eating disorders.

HYPERSEXUAL COSTUMES

One would think the clothing would at least would reflect the settings of these shows (i.e. high school). Instead, the costumes are used as tool to hypersexualise the supposedly teenage characters. Sparkly and skimpy ensembles much

better suited to clubs, runways, and special occasions dominate the screen that do nothing to add to the plot, and just further instils a false sense of appearance in the minds of impressionable viewers.

HARMFUL RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

While dating is a huge part of the lives of those with raging hormones, TV shows tend to portray it as their only purpose in life. A commonality is the male characters in relationships being drenched with toxic masculinity and the girls going out of their way to impress these boys, often succumbing to mistreatment. Some shows go as far as screening teacher-student relationships, which is not only illegal, but promotes unfair power dynamics and grooming of minors.

OVER GLAMORISATION OF DRUGS AND SEX

A recurring theme in almost every high school show is drug peddling. When the main focus of the age group should be academics, extra-curricular activities and hobbies, it is entirely replaced with the obsession to try out exciting drugs and engage in sex. The problem lies in the fact that the false, overly glamorised portrayal of sex instils certain expectations and misleads viewers, who are probably just hitting puberty, to think that it is the focal point of high school.

While casting older actors makes way for directors to sexualise the portrayal of characters and incorporate mature themes, teen shows set in high school is not the place to do so. Perhaps, they are better suited to a college campus setting because adolescents are anything but passive consumers of media.

Mashiyat Nayeem is mourning the end of online school and the extra hour of sleep. Send her condolences at mashiyat.nayeem@gmail.com



Hidden Among the Florets

NUSAIBA NAWAR

The world has been mean to her
She did not feel okay,
So, she escaped to a place
Where no one will come to her way.

You won't find her in a city
Or dancing in a club,
You'll find her where the grass is
Beside a tree and a shrub.

She'll be sitting among the florets
Singing with a little sparrow,
She'll be pleasant like a sunset
With the wild breezes she will blow.

You'll find her under the covers
Blankets made of lavender,
You'll find her in the purple fields
She'll be a wild wanderer.

You'll be amazed to see her hair
Bouncing with the scented air,
She'll be a rare little floret
Not to be seen everywhere.

You'll keep looking for her
Among the wildflowers,
She'll be hiding among the florets
That day, till the sunset.

She'll be dancing with the wildflowers
But you'll never find her,
She'll camouflage herself with the evening glow
And you will never see her where her dreams flow.

As she'll walk, you'll hear her footsteps
And the sparrow singing,
But she'll be hiding and laughing at you
With the florets, all evening.

The writer is a student of Class X at Scholars' School & College.



PEACE

ANGELINA NODEE FRANCIS

A song that never ended, the music became so familiar that my ears yearned to hear it every night before going to sleep.

All these strings that have been pulled apart, how do I tie them tightly together again?

I scrutinised every part of my body from head to toe, unable to find the location of those broken strings and I was able to remember the place where I created a stage. A stage that lies inside my head, behind closed doors, in a room without any source of light.

Many of them walked onto that stage, dared to open those rusty doors that remained untouched for years. Sooner or later, they would have left because how long can one live in darkness and survive in a room where there's pin drop silence?

No soul attempted to speak loudly in there, no proper exchange of words, only sorrow that flowed through the silence and whispers of those dreamers who desperately wanted to escape could be heard rarely. Some were brave enough to leave, but some didn't even care to find the keys and chose to stay locked inside the stage.

Everyone abided by their own rules here. This is nothing but a cage made out of my own thoughts. I am trapped here along with those who have fed on my happiness, leaving me with an empty soul. A soul that dreads the entrance of another individual through the door because it's not a trap, but a loop. The loop where I have to fight consistently just for them to leave me.

The day I fear will meet me again after the sun sets. In the middle of the night, someone I have held on to, tightly, for a really long period of time, will push me off the cliff and I'll fall into this never ending hole where madness meets my conscience. I will continue defending them even if they have wronged me, I will lose track of time, burst into tears, scream at the top of my lungs, give into the urge of breaking everything around me until and unless the sun rises.

I attempt to find the key and unlock the door. From afar, I can see someone coming towards me.

Silence takes over the room again. But this time the air in here is not filled with sorrow, the sweet taste of happiness seems to find its way back to me. This silence carries peace along with it, the thoughts in my head that made up this cage is starting to diminish.

The vivid memories of moments of despair were fading away. I allowed my soul to indulge in the moment for once and breathe in the air that gives me life rather than choking me to death.

Every string that was pulled apart is being tied together again. The stage inside my head is letting go of all those uninvited guests, the doors are less rusty and the room has a constant source of light. Dreamers don't whisper anymore and each one of them have found the key. The key, to unlock these doors and never go back in.

Angelina Nodee Francis enjoys cracking self-deprecating jokes and running away from her problems. Send her memes at angelinafrancis004@gmail.com

Eating shouldn't feel taboo during Ramadan

NAMREEN SHAIYAZ

Of the twelve months in the Arabic or Hijri calendar, Ramadan is the most important and religious month for Muslims all around the globe. Unless someone is ill, elderly, or in the middle of travelling, they are obligated to fast from dawn to dusk for the entire month.

For most people, this is where the understanding of Ramadan ends. They only assume that abstinence from any food or drink is the entire point of it, and do not look at the deeper reasoning behind why this is observed. Due to this, those who do not fast attempt to ease the lives of those who do, and this leads to a slew of issues.

As fasting is the only aspect that they focus on, they are worried about possibly offending the people who fast. Generally, they will try to avoid bringing up the topic of eating in their vicinity, or even feel pressured to censor themselves around fasters as they may feel guilty for being well fed while being around someone who is working just as hard but on less food and energy. This censoring, however, disregards one of the reasons why this fasting is done, and that is to purify the body and soul.

The act of fasting itself is known to have various health benefits, and is good



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

for one's health. However, fasting in Ramadan is also a spiritual act. It teaches self-preservation, because even if they do see food in front of them, it is their responsibility to not be tempted by it, not anyone else's. This goes not just for food, but for any kind of action that is discouraged during fasting. Having someone else try to accommodate them is not only

demeaning, but also negating the whole point of why they are fasting.

Another thing to note is that fasters cannot avoid being around food completely even if they tried. The fasting duration is long as it lasts for around roughly about half the day, so they need a nutritious meal to break their fast with. Rather than buying it from elsewhere,

most people prefer preparing their own food to ensure that it is as healthy as possible.

Additionally, fasting forces them to break out of their usual eating habits, and so it is quite common for them to try out different meals that will suit their current situation better. This leads them to look up various recipes for ideas. In case anyone wishes to order food from elsewhere, chances are that the people making their food and delivering it are also fasting. Therefore, there is no point in attempting to be hush-hush about food around them, as they will need to be in its vicinity, and may even have to seek it on their own.

It is completely natural for someone who is not fasting to feel bad to sympathise for anyone who is as it is a natural human instinct to do so. But as mentioned, a fast during Ramadan is not the same as a regular fast. The best thing a non-faster can do is to remember that Ramadan is about all submitting to a higher power and forging a sense of empathy for the less fortunate, and they themselves may try to follow these ideals if they wish to.

Namreen listens to the five songs on loop. Send some song recommendations at namreen.shaiyaz@gmail.com

My frayed relationship with my hometown

SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

All of my good memories of my hometown exclude people. When I think of my school, I think of the neem tree with white flowers, the spread of the krishnachura that painted half the schoolyard red from time to time.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

I remember the wintry mornings when I walked to school alone, a few minutes of calm before the madness of classes and gossip ensued. If I must recall something good about my home, it was the time when we left home for the holidays.

School for me was bitter. Kids can be cruel. You are fortunate if you have reason to disagree. I was incessantly bullied for being one of the bigger girls. The words I heard were subtle, but impossible to forget.

Our teachers taught us that we were competitors first, friends second. We learned to tear each other apart with smiles on our faces. Our mothers supplied us with the unkind words to say.

I did not realise the concepts of authentically building friends or clapping for a co-worker. Each time someone did well, I would be reminded of how I could not achieve what they did. We were fed hatred and prejudice with each meal we were given.

Our homes were scarcely any better than school. They were worse most times, made of fear and restrictions. To this day, I feel suffocated when I go home. The biggest reason is that the moment I set foot in my hometown, I have to wear clothes that don't even look like my clothes. I was denied the opportunity to experiment with fashion growing up. The reasons I was given were religion and modesty.

My younger brother was allowed to go anywhere without telling anyone. On the contrary, I was never allowed to go out alone except for school or coaching classes. The reason being the classic "What will people say?"

These people were aunties, relatives we rarely met, and our parents' colleagues. Looking back, it is comical how our interests were disregarded for their sake. This lack of support still makes no sense to me. Home should have been a safe place as a child. But it was where my privacy was neglected the most.

It has been some time since I moved out of this home. Now that I can look past the pain, I understand some things better. This makes me even more relieved that I got out of that toxic environment. In the present day, the saving grace of my hometown for me is my cat.

The idea of home is often glorified, especially by the people who have good memories to think of. But it's not sweet or nostalgic for everyone. It is quite the opposite.

We frequently hear "There's no place like home" being tossed around. True, no place resembles home. For some, their memories of home causes more nightmares than homesickness.

Shimin reads everything she can find, talks to cats, and writes a lot of letters. Send her a book at shim.mush@gmail.com