

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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CAN IFTAR JUST BE A
NORMAL MEAL?

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MY SOCIAL ANXIETY
IS HOLDING ME BACK

PG 4



THE CALENDAR AT THE HEART OF

Bengali Culture

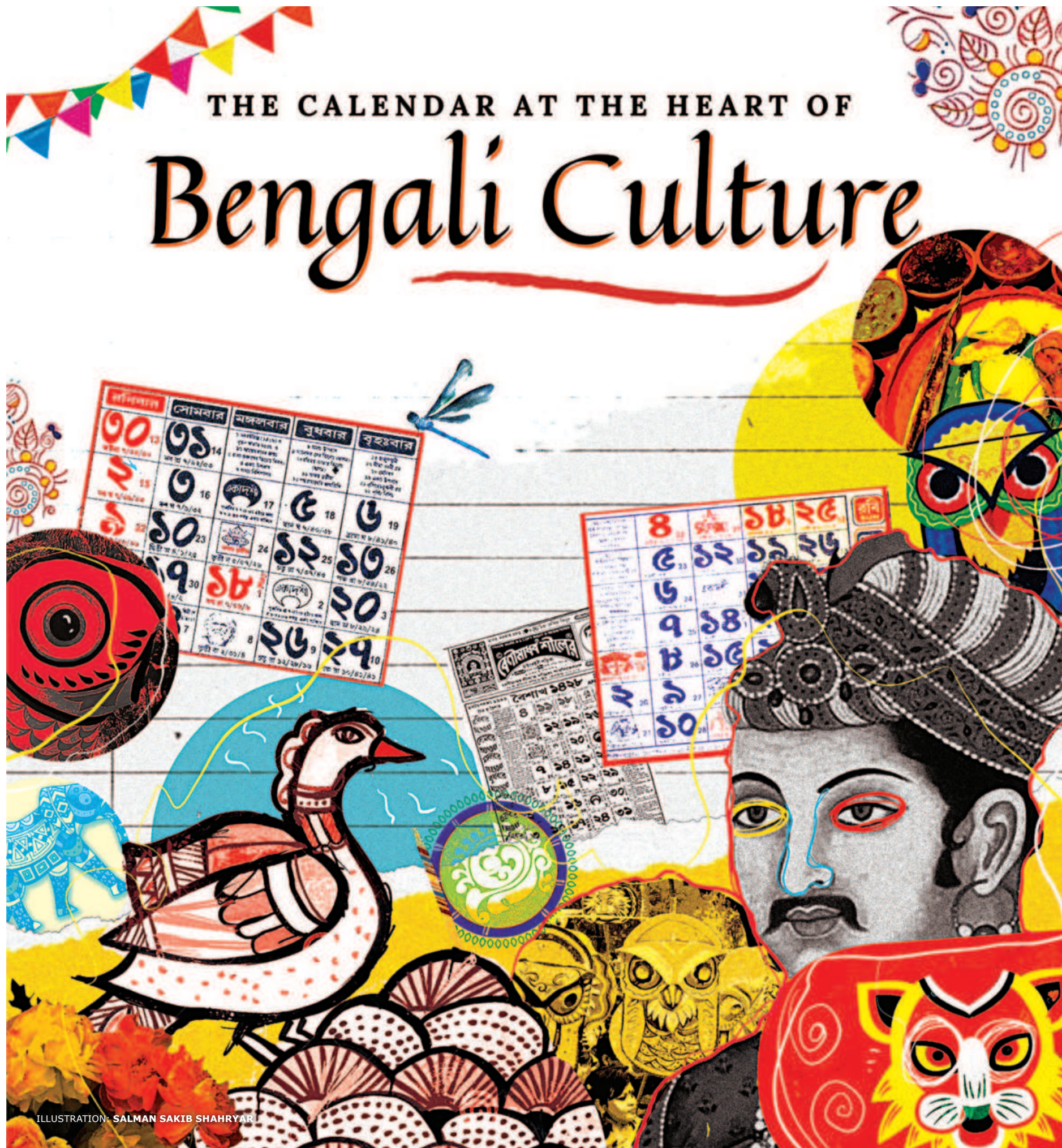


ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

EDITORIAL

The recent incidents involving our educational institutions and teachers have shaken us to the core. I remember how I considered the school my second home. We'd spend more time at school, even after hours, than we did at our homes. Our peers were also friends we'd made for life. The teachers were more than educators; at times heroes, at times a shoulder to cry on. But how times have changed, huh?

A few weeks ago, I learned about the passing away of a teacher I had in school. She taught us English language, grammar, and composition. We didn't always see eye to eye on matters, and engaged in healthy debates. I remember one day when I forgot to bring my homework, and resorted to acting unwell, keeping my head down on the desk. My teacher, walking around collecting assignments and not getting mine, simply said, "Ah, you're alright." Those words, at that time, was escape. Those words, now, is love and trust and adoration.

You'll come across many friends in life, dear reader, but you'll only have a few teachers. Cherish them.

-- Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Editor In-charge, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MOVIE



Analysing Riz Ahmed's *The Long Goodbye*

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

The Long Goodbye is a harrowing depiction of the atrocities ensuing from the rise of racism and Islamophobia. This riveting, unapologetic piece of lyrical poetry and bone-chilling visuals is a wakeup call against ethnic discrimination, hatred, and anti-immigrant mentality rooted in the minds of individuals.

The Oscar-winning short film can be divided into three significant sections where the viewers are sure to go through a sine wave of emotions.

In the first half, we see a people at a happy suburban home in Wembley, London, enjoying the festivities of a pre-wedding celebration. We get the first glance of Riz, carrying out his duties as the elder brother while his siblings are engrossed in a game of trivia. The audience is given a peek into one of the most special days of a South Asian Family lost in the cheery banter of organised chaos.

The happiness soon fades into a series of tragic events. Men clad in black arrest the souls and inflict upon them such horrific brutality that no heart can take. As Riz struggles to keep his family from falling apart, the world crumbles under his feet. With each gunshot, blood-curdling scream, and cries for help in languages unheard, we are exposed to the bleak reality of how xenophobia penetrates the prejudiced minds of people in power.

We see a hint of what's to come through the creators' subtle hints. The commotion on the television screen turns into reality minutes before he said to Naz, "You made space. You little gangsta." Little do we know these "gangsters" would take their space away.

As the frame focuses on the rigid, helpless body of a fallen Riz, the audience is smacked with a painfully beautiful soliloquy.

"They ever ask you, where you from? Like, where you really from?"

Ethnic discrimination based on religion and race has been going on for ages. Since Brexit, the South Asian communities have been subjected to unprecedented levels of bigotry and hatred. This 12-minute-long short film is Riz Ahmed and his director, Aneil Karia's answer to the growing racism against people of colour.

Riz's devastatingly beautiful monologue manages to condense all the pain, anger, and fear of being racially classified on land he calls his own. The poignant lyrics encapsulate how Britain came into being. How those who are now considered the minority moulded the country into greatness. We see instances of blatant racial profiling of the assimilated British-Asians. Riz also highlights the ethnic discrimination and false sense of nationalism from his own roots too.

"And I just got the shits when I went back to Pak"

And my ancestors Indian, but India was not for us."

Although he is half-Pakistani, he is discriminated against in his community for being "too white-washed" and is also not welcomed in India because he is a Pakistani Muslim. In a society that claims to value multiculturalism, ethnic diaspora members are constantly questioned about their contributions and denied proper rights.

The Long Goodbye shattered all barriers and spoke volumes. Riz and Aneil's brainchild is the strength for many like them, trying to break free from the shackles of apartheid. In Riz's words, "There is no 'us' and 'them'. There's just 'us'."

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

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

So What
P!nk

Loverboy
A-Wall

I Didn't Know
Skinshape

Don't Break My Heart
The Weeknd

B

Chasing Cars
Snow Patrol

Sunset
The Midnight

Take Me Away
Lifhouse

Opaline
Novo Amor

Email us at shoutds@gmail.com
with feedback, comments, and reader
submissions within 500 words.

OPINION

What happened to Hriday Mondol is a symptom of deeper insecurities



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

I don't know if the baffling lack of tolerance of free thought in our classrooms, like in all other spaces in our country currently, stems from hyper-religiosity, genuine hate for people of other religions, or sheer ignorance.

My own time at university was filled with apologies by faculty members after saying anything that could remotely hurt anyone's sentiments. A lecturer would make a statement for the sake of an argument, or even for humour, and quickly make an apology, scanning faces across the classroom to check if any student looked like their religious sentiments were hurt.

My faculty members were all learned people who knew what they were talking about and were making relevant remarks in context to things we were studying. So, why did they need to lower themselves and issue an advance apology to their students and pander to their egos?

Because we are all scared. Censorship comes in many forms and some are entirely self-inflicted. Turns out some people like being free and getting to see their families.

The recent incident where school teacher Hriday Mondol was sent to prison over a conversation he had with students about science and religion really strikes a chord.

We have to ask when we arrived at a point where we bombard our teachers with targeted questions and take it upon ourselves to find a place for them in jail for their answers. Why is this something that is permitted within the bounds of our classrooms?

Do we have authority over what someone else says? Is it our job to punish them? Perhaps these are questions that have confounded philosophers over the ages but few of us will pretend we don't have an opinion to these questions ourselves.

We have to ask why we enter a classroom in the first place. It will perhaps be naive to believe everyone goes into a classroom to grow as an individual, to expand our minds, to listen to viewpoints different from our own and learn to defend our arguments with logic, grace and respect.

Perhaps we go to classrooms to earn degrees, memorise facts and preserve our hard earned grades only.

What is the role of a teacher? Is it to encourage free thought and rational thinking among students or to finish lessons on time without straying an inch from the approved syllabus? Where is the room for free exchange of knowledge between teachers and students, where teachers are allowed to express their thoughts?

If it sounds like I have a lot of questions, it is because I really do.

Our minds are of course shaped by a larger society before we even enter a classroom. We live in times when communal clashes, religious intolerance, and moral policing are on the rise. We are closing our minds to new (or old) ideas that contradict what we already believe to be true.

We are scared of what people say out loud. We live in a society where people of different religions and cultures coexist. If we happen to be part of the ethnic, linguistic or religious majority, surely others won't pander to our egos and censor their every move and word to protect us, particularly when we do frighteningly little to return the favour.

Mrittika is sub-editor of SHOUT. You can find her at mrittika.anan@gmail.com

Can iftar just be a normal meal?

NADEEMAHAFROSE MONDOL

Ramadan is here and we are still trying to grasp the idea of a hectic work and study schedule after two years of sadly lying in bed before iftar, watching food ASMRs, and doing nothing. Remembering these, it occurred to me how appropriate will it be for everyone to have the OG iftar, every day this year?

As iftar is as much an emotion as a religious observance to us, consuming traditional iftar might not be the best idea this year. After a long, gruelling day at school or work, breaking fast with fried and oily food for 30 days might result in various health concerns.

A person who fasts can get extremely dehydrated and the pressure of work will possibly add much more to that. Feeling bloated, tired and difficulties in digestion could be common circumstances. In this case, switching peyaju and beguni with rice and fish or chicken curry can be an easier option for our bodies as they are much more familiar and comfortable digesting these foods.

Wait, don't get angry yet because I'm certainly not suggesting that we should completely sacrifice our beloved aloo chop or halim or whatever for the sake of health. I myself agree with the fact that the word "diet" sounds silly and enraging in the time of Ramadan because, come on. 'Tis the only time of the year when we get to devour delicious iftar items after a whole day of fasting, right?

However, if we think a little cleverly, we can use the weekends as cheat days and have

whatever iftar our hearts want on those days. I actually have tried it myself with my family during many Ramadans, and trust me, it's not that bad. In fact, it made the weekends more special than ever.

Another thing to remember is, regular iftar items or simply, a bunch of fried foods are not very easy things to cook. Besides, we might be unable to help our parents very much to cook because we will all be busy. So, eating regular comfort food at iftar as well as at sehri will be much easier for all family members.

If we think more widely, due to the price hike of daily commodities, many families struggle to buy the bare minimum of the essentials during this month. So, having traditional iftar might not be an economically feasible option for many of them.

We know that after having iftar, people again have dinner. Two meals before sehri means more preparation and cost than regular days. Therefore, if people who are fasting eat one proper meal like eating rice at iftar, they won't have to eat again before sehri, thus, less expenditure.

I think maybe we can try normalising the fact that iftar doesn't have to be that big of a deal and it can simply be about breaking fast, celebrating what truly Ramadan means instead.

Nadeemah always wraps her head around the thought of 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



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

My social anxiety is holding me back

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Did you ever drink piping hot coffee, even though it's 40 degrees outside, because you didn't want to tell the barista they messed up your order for an iced drink? Yes? I can relate.

Ordering at restaurants is nerve-wracking for people who hate human interaction. By the time I'm at the front of the line, I've rehearsed my order nearly a dozen times in my head and then I realise that the baristas are friendly, and will be asking me about my day. My voice either gives up on me or cracks mid-sentence, or I say something stupid that'll keep me up all night.

Having social anxiety encompasses many experiences for me. There were times when I patted myself on the back for saying "hello" to someone spontaneously, and there were times when I refused to go up to the stage at the holud function of a dear cousin.

I also have occasional bursts of courage that a friend of mine calls "the mom friend override", which is when you carry out all the social interactions on behalf of a friend whose social anxiety is worse than yours. As you can see, there are the occasional good days, but this lining is greyer than silver if I'm being totally honest.

Social anxiety has downsides that go beyond being dubbed the asocial oddball by elders. For example, it's always



DESIGN: MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

been really difficult for me to make friends in new settings, as my character-istic awkwardness is often translated as standoffishness by others. I rarely make an appearance at family functions if my favourite cousin isn't going, and half of my relatives know me as my brother's younger sister.

I owe my lack of extracurricular achievements partially to my social anxiety, thanks to which I've always avoided activities that required me to go up on stage. The one time I was forced to do an extempore speech for a competition in front of others haunts me to this day. Every now and then, my brain helpfully

reminds me that I used the word "compassion" a whopping five times in five sentences that day. No, I did not win the competition, before you ask.

One of the worst drawbacks of having social anxiety is the difficulty I have in expressing affections for my loved ones, which is frustrating for them despite their understanding of my behaviour.

I've come a long way in terms of putting myself out there more. While I can take some credit for this improvement, it started when a particularly extroverted friend forcibly incorporated me into her circle and made me socialise.

For everyone who's struggling to come out of their shells – baby steps can take you a long way. Maybe ask the barista how their day is going, or drag yourself out of bed to dress up real nice and attend that wedding you don't want to go to.

Or you can keep scrolling on your phone and avoiding everyone. People aren't all that great, anyway.

Yell at Zabin Tazrin Nashita to fix her disastrous sleep schedule at fb.com/zabintazrin.nashita

The dangerous reality of being a woman on the streets of Dhaka

FATIN HAMAMA

Do you look back a lot while walking the streets even in broad daylight? Have you ever had a friend track you on Google Maps while you were in an Uber at night? Do you get to walk around late at night without having a trusted one's number on speed dial? Fear of getting pickpocketed is probably your only concern when you're amidst a crowd, yes?



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

If your first two answers are a no, and the rest are yes, I'm pretty sure that whoever you are, you're in no way a woman on the streets of Bangladesh.

For us, the drill begins even before we step a toe outside the threshold, no matter what time of the day it is. Turning on location sharing with a family member, grabbing pepper spray, putting on a stoic facial expression so that we look rather unapproachable before going out might sound overexaggerated, but this is exactly what more or less every woman I know has gone or goes through on a daily basis. However, that's only the beginning of it all.

The first thing we feel once we're outside is not the scorching heat or the sheer chaos of Dhaka. It's the constant predatory stares and snide remarks muttered and shouted from every possible direction. Half the women I see slipping in and out of the crowds on the overbridges and side-walks have their backpacks at the front as a way of protection from bad touch and usually, I'm one of them too.

Public transports are no respite either and are such a hotspot for passive harassment that it makes the option of walking by oneself seem like a "good" option. You may think that women who own personal transport and drive themselves have a fair bit of advantage, but that's not really the case either.

Firstly, the stares and scoffs intensify even more when a girl is seen riding a bicycle or a motorbike. Secondly, I've lost count of the times I've seen male drivers deliberately bumping into vehicles being driven by women and starting the usual string of misogynistic ramblings with nods from people around them.

What puts me in a perfect dilemma is how normalised it is for the majority of women to practise shrugging all these off from a shockingly young age but also, how hostile the situation becomes for a woman when she protests against the harassment she faced with half the mass around her pretending nothing happened and the rest turning on her with victim blaming.

I don't understand why people keep suggesting us to learn basic taekwondo and self-defence techniques just so that we can take a small walk down the street? Staying on guard every minute of one's existence outside isn't really a solution when they're the ones who must be granted the right to safety on the roads. It's almost as if there's a general societal consensus in Bangladesh that no woman on the streets has rights over her own body, let alone her safety.

Hamama's problems smell like daruchini because she's duweep into them 24/7. Send help at fatin.hamama003@gmail.com

The Calendar at the Heart of Bengali Culture

SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

At different times of the year, we often notice our cities and towns adorned in vibrant colours. They are painted yellow on the first day of Falgun. Baishakh is welcomed with fairs and rallies, red and white ensembles, traditional meals, and old customs. Kites fly in the skies of Old Dhaka at the end of Poush, turning it into a kaleidoscope of brightly coloured papers.

This fondness for festivities is summed up in the saying "Bengalis have thirteen *parvans* (festivals) in twelve months." They observe these age-old cultural festivals by following the Bangla calendar.

There are different schools of thought about how the Bangla calendar has evolved to its present structure. Some contribute it to Mughals and some to Raja Shashank. Regardless of the origin, it was in use during both of these periods. The predecessor of today's Bangla calendar was used to collect taxes in the Mughal era.

The calendar was amended by Dr Muhammad Shahidullah in 1956. Later, the Bangladesh government adopted it as the official calendar in 1986. It has been followed along with the Gregorian calendar ever since. The latest amendment took place in 2019, pushing the first day of spring to February 14.

The cultural celebrations of Bangladesh mostly revolve around its seasons. *Pahela Baishakh*, the biggest festival of Bengalis, is celebrated to welcome the Bangla New Year. The tradition of opening a new *haal khata* or a ledger on this day is hundreds of years old.

Barsha utsab is observed to mark the beginning of the monsoon. *Sakra*, the kite festival is held at the end of the Bangla month of Chaitra. *Boshonto boron*, the arrival of spring is rooted in the change of seasons as well.

Some similar festivities are *Nabanna*, the celebration of the harvest of new crops, boat race, and the *piha utsab* which celebrates locally made cakes and desserts. Some of these were previously only held in villages on a much smaller scale. Over the years, connectivity has spread due to the easy access to technology. These festivals have become nationwide celebrations as a result.

Bangladesh's many indigenous communities have multitudes of yearly festivals and traditions, too. The Chakma's *Phool Biju*, the Tripura's *Boisu* and the Marma's *Sangrai* are some of these festivities that take place on the last two days of Chaitra and the first day of Baishakh.

Cultural festivities also include celebrating the lives and works of authors, poets, and philosophers. Rabindranath Tagore's birthday on Baishakh 25 and Kazi Nazrul Islam's birthday on Joishtho 11 are often celebrated together as Rabindra - Nazrul Jayanti, in May. Their contribution to Bangla literature has a great impact on this

continent's culture.

Tagore and Nazrul both were influenced by Lalon Shah, one of the greatest minds to ever grace Bengal. His philosophy, poetry, and mysticism have shaped a large part of Bangladesh and West Bengal's spiritual culture.

His search for spirituality denounced caste and creed, the hierarchy of society and the conflict of religious beliefs. Common people could effortlessly access his work because of the simplicity of his language and musical instruments. Lalon criticised the divide in humans while vouching for the search for soul above all else. Thus, he has collected disciples from

from the official Bangla calendar. Some historians believe that the ancient Hindu traditions that circled around the sun, called Surya in Sankrit, have much influence on today's Bangla calendar. Durga Puja is the main annual Hindu festival. Their other celebrations include Holi, Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, and many more.

Buddhists follow a lunisolar calendar, which follows the orbits of both the sun and the moon. Although, it is largely based on the calendar used by the Hindus. Buddhists in Bangladesh celebrate Buddha Purnima, Madhu Purnima and Kathin Chibar Dan.

National holidays that stem from

their hearts.

University students play a large part in keeping the traditions alive by planning yearly festivities such as *Mongol Shobhajatra* and painting *alpona*. Local brands and institutions arrange seasonal fairs and exhibitions. But these celebrations have inevitably been influenced by globalisation.

In recent years, local festivals have been incorporating more and more foreign elements. Sakrain, the kite festival, has gone through significant changes over the years. The main focus has shifted from flying kites to fireworks and music. The timeline has also been shortened from a month-long homely arrangement to one



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



PHOTO: LS ARCHIVE

a wide array of communities.

Lalon passed away on the first day of Kartik of the Bangla year 1297 (1890 AD). Each year on Dol Purnima, fairs are held by his devoted disciples in honour of his work and legacy. The importance of Lalon festivals lies in the fact that they are celebrated by people of

Different religious groups abide by their own calendars. The Muslim festivals are celebrated in accordance with the lunar Hijri calendar. Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha are two of the most prominent yearly occasions for Muslims. The Bangla calendar is thought to be influenced by this calendar by a group of historians.

Hindu religious festivals follow their own *Panjika*. It has a difference of one day

political events such as the International Mother Language Day, Independence Day, and Victory Day refer to the Gregorian calendar. The Bangla calendar was amended to match the Gregorian calendar for this specific reason, proving that since its birth, Bangladesh has favoured the English calendar for official purposes.

There is little to no practical use of the Bangla calendar in academia or offices. Schools, colleges, and universities exclusively use the Gregorian calendar on daily basis. Non-government institutions are pretty much the same. Some government documents still have the Bangla dates written along with the English ones. But even then, the English calendar is prioritised.

The Bangla months and dates are still written by some institutions and media. Newspapers and television channels feature news regarding Bangla months and seasons. People involved with art, culture, and literature keep the calendar close to

single day.

Along with the evolution of local traditions, people now celebrate and observe international days with increasing fervour. The New Year on January 1, Valentine's Day (which coincides now with Pahela Falgun), and International Women's Day are just to name a few.

The Bangla calendar is rooted deeply in Bangladeshi hearts and culture even though the offices and academics depend heavily on the Gregorian calendar. Most of the country's traditional, cultural, and indigenous festivals rely on the Bangla dates. These rituals, *utsabs* and *parvans* are old as the Bengal is. Passed down from generation to generation, they tie Bengalis past and present together and weave the tapestry of their collective identity.

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

Your guide to non-disastrous hair colours

BUSHRA ZAMAN

If you were influenced by an Instagram post or just wanted a drastic change by dyeing your hair a colour off the rainbow, this article is for you.

First, pick a colour keeping the overall cost in mind, inclusive of maintenance, and follow up appointments. For example, according to an article by *Seventeen*, you may need multiple hair appointments to get your desired hair colour, varying depending on your hair type and the lightness of the colour you are trying to achieve. You also need to be aware of your work schedule to see if you have time for hair appointments.

Most Bangladeshis have naturally dark hair colours. Meaning, if you were to dye your hair a significantly lighter shade, you would likely have to resort to bleaching if you want the exact same shade as the model on the packaging or the hair sample on display at the salon.

Bleach goes into the hair shaft to break down molecules responsible for your hair colour, while simultaneously breaking down fatty acids on the hair shaft, making your hair weak. So, if you have heard of or watched bleach disasters where an individual's hair burns off, that is indeed a possible scenario, though less likely if you are assisted by a professional.

An article by *The Washington Post* recommends that you only bleach areas that require it. You could avoid bleaching your roots if you want an ombré type look. If you only need to retouch your roots, maybe just bleaching the roots would be better option than re-bleaching all of your hair.

If you are dyeing your hair a bright red/blue/pink/green or any unicorn colour for the first time and have never bleached before, it may be best to do so under the supervision or guidance of a professional first.

But suppose you have done so and have gotten your desired outcome. Then what?

In my personal experience, I have noticed that unnatural shades of hair dye tend to fade faster. The good thing if you won't have to re-bleach every time your hair dye fades, because bleaching is permanent. You can just reapply the same dye to your previously bleached hair at home.

There are also certain hair care requirements that vary depending on the hair dye you've chosen. For example, if you have blonde hair, you'll need purple shampoo to avoid your hair from becoming brassy over time as you wash it. There are also hair care products specifically made for colour-treated hair.

The same article by *Seventeen* mentioned that red shades of hair are the most difficult to maintain tend to fade the fastest. So, doing your research beforehand is a must. That way, you'll have all the necessary products exactly when you need them after dyeing your hair.

Hair colour options seem to get better and better every day. If well thought out, your decision made on a whim might turn out to have a beautiful outcome.

Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushra-zaman31@yahoo.com



PHOTO: COURTESY

Comfort characters are our new superheroes

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

Comfort characters are those whom we can identify with, characters who make us feel calm and happy.

In a way, our comfort characters are an extension of how we choose to view our-

selves. Real struggles are often too hard to deal with, but when we see a fictional character go through the same things we do, often on a much grander scale, it can trigger a comforting effect on us. These characters give us a new way of dealing

hopeful. *Smallville* features a Clark Kent who is not yet Superman, and I feel like his journey parallels my own in certain ways. The interactions shown between Kent and his parents reminds me of my relationship with my own folks, especially in terms of the kinds of values they try to instil in me, and support me in every step.

Then there's the Clark Kent from *Superman and Lois* who is a hero with experience, with a family and a stable life. He has deep love for everyone around him and represents everything good and hopeful.

To me, the first Clark is who I am now, and the second Clark is who I aspire to be. Simply put, whenever I try to view myself as Superman, I feel happier and more comfortable.

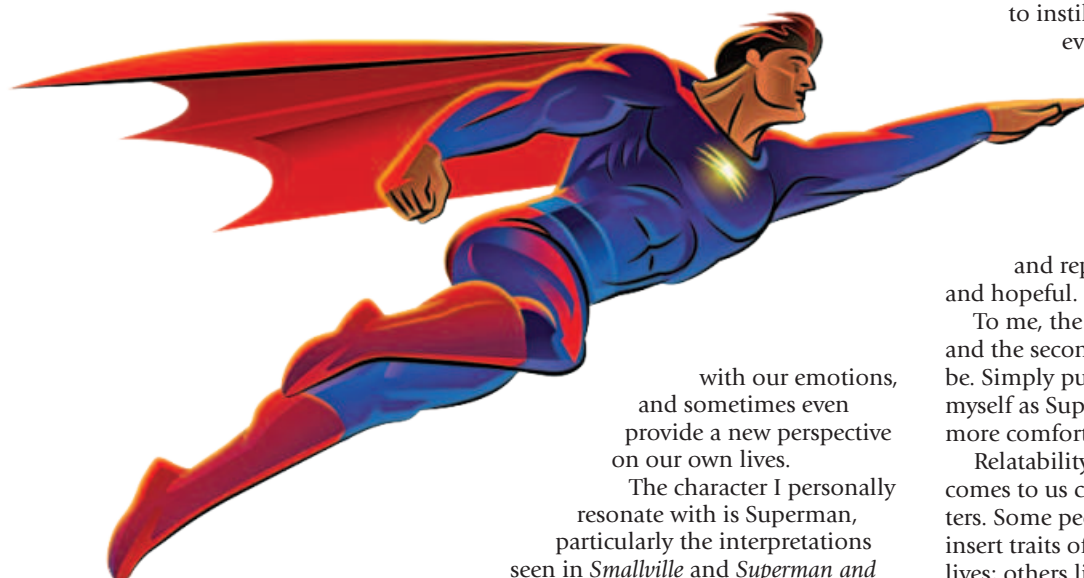
Relatability is the one constant when it comes to us choosing our comfort characters. Some people, like yours truly, try to insert traits of the character into their own lives; others like to view them as a fantasy version of themselves.

A friend of mine told me he relates to Lucifer Morningstar from *Lucifer*, because, like Lucifer, he tends to think he is misunderstood by people. According to him, the character is always misunderstood because his way of doing things for "the greater good" was different, and that is something he resonated with in his own life.

I asked another friend what her comfort character was, and she mentioned Lilly Linton from the novel series *Storm and Silence* by Robert Thier. She not only relates to this character, but finds her to be aspirational. Lilly is an independent and strong character who knows how to move forward on her own.

While relating with fictional characters is often considered to be a form of escapism, I believe we can feel inspired by these characters and try to improve ourselves too. The art of storytelling can do wonders for the human mind, and even people who don't exist can have a profound impact on our lives.

Sabil spends most of his time making memes and trying to stay as hopeful as possible. You can contact him at sabilsadat616@gmail.com



with our emotions, and sometimes even provide a new perspective on our own lives.

The character I personally resonate with is Superman, particularly the interpretations seen in *Smallville* and *Superman and Lois*. He makes me feel inspired and

A Bouquet of Words for Her

ARSONIST

Is it possible to find love over and over again
In the same person, everyday?
I have walked so many roads yet this one feels like
It's leading me to my home.
Countless nights my life has seen,
I learnt to count my breaths long ago
Yet this is the first night I felt an embrace
As I was counting my breaths beneath my skin.
She is a beautiful singer.
She was singing a distant song,
She was running through the crowded cornfields
She looked back again and again
To check if I was still behind her,
And every time her eyes met mine, I knew for a certainty
That we are made for each other and we are meant to be.
She makes me think of myself
More than I'd ever think of
myself.
I would sit in silence, stare at the
moon
She would come, sit in front me
and I would smile happily
Like I found something I was
searching desperately
Only I didn't realise I was search-
ing it before she came in.
That's how it is.
I found her in destiny
And in all the pretty things.
She brought me solace with her
flower
And we both wonder about
meteor shower.
We have heard tales of the great
battles and the lost wars
The tears stroke our dreams and
sometimes it broke the vase
Yet we forget about the rest of
the world when we look at our
souls.
We peek into each other from
time to time just to
Discover nothing but us.
There is her and there is me,
Soaring, falling and flying.
And I couldn't take my eyes off
of her
When she tucked her hair be-
hind her ear
I smile whole-heartedly
Knowing that all these are
heavenly.
I found home in a stranger's
heart
I made it my own
In fact she did too and that's
what amazes me;
So many euphonic voices yet
she decided to hear me
Countless choices yet she chose
me.
I found my happiness that lies
only in her.
She is my reader, my forever.
I let my heart write words for her
She narrates them with purity
This bouquet of words is a gift
for her
A solemn tear.



Can You Ever Forgive Me?

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

From: oshurjo_sporsha@gmail.com
To: bouthakorani@gmail.com
Date: 25 March 2022, 03:17 am

Subject: What Happened

An impregnable fortress. Your mind is an impregnable fortress guarded by the three-headed beast that you have gone to such pains to train to be a vicious killer.

No, killer is perhaps ill-used here. To kill would be akin to mercy to her. A dancer is what she is. What a beautifully cruel dance it is too. One head to draw in the unassuming admirer with her irresistible allure, another to trap the prey in by weaving tapestries with carefully crafted motions and words. A third as poisonous as it is lovely – lying in wait to strike them at their weakest.

But it is not momentary, crushing agony followed by perpetual calm that she offers through her move. She picks at your skin, her claws dig into the supple flesh of your body, and she burrows into your innocence and leaves you bleeding on the floor for the scavengers to feed on. All who attempt to even slightly peek into you have no choice but to fall at her feet. They prostrate themselves on the floor stained with their own blood and beg and beg and beg to be spared before this monster of your psyche.

No crusader, not one as gallant as Lionheart or one as skilled as Saladin, will ever climb atop the towers of this fortress. None will march their triumphant forces through wide open gates into your embrace. And I realised yesterday how utterly unqualified I am to even try.

From: bouthakorani@gmail.com
To: oshurjo_sporsha@gmail.com
Date: 25 March 2022, 05:55 am

Subject: Re: What Happened

You remember the day at that old CD shop? The dust on the rusting shelves, the drowsy shopkeeper and the whirring of the fan. Whispered words and stolen snickers. My eyes flitting from you to the worn CD cases and back again. With your hair in a loose braid and your shari draped around you in an effortlessly elegant manner, you looked so beautiful and untouchable. The hundred in my pocket felt heavy and The Queen is Dead was calling. With my sweat-covered shirt sticking to my back and my mind going on overdrive thinking about you and Morrissey and you singing Morrissey, I could do little else other than stomp my feet and whine. Even if one was to scorch me with a red-hot iron till I was reduced to ashes and smoke, I would not be able to forget your breezy laughter and playful words, "God, are you dense."

I don't know why I am remembering this right now. Perhaps because it was the first time I understood what I could get. And what I could lose.

I AM impossibly dense. And I don't know if you noticed but I can't explain myself for the life of me. But what I am saying is, what I did is, without a speck of doubt or dissension, beyond forgiveness. But I don't have enough self-control to stop myself from asking you.

Can you ever forgive me?

From: oshurjo_sporsha@gmail.com
To: bouthakorani@gmail.com
Date: 25 March 2022, 03:17 am

Subject: What Happened

I am afraid not, honey.

Zaima is a fake poet with a serious problem against anything that resembles seriousness. Send her your sympathies at zaima2004adrita@gmail.com



BEJEWELLED

These yellow forts and palaces
Home to centuries of memories
Of kings and their bejewelled courts
Captured in the dancing dust of the sunlight

PHOTO BY AFRA ANAN SABA
CURATED BY ORCHID CHAKMA

