



HOMAGE TO AN
UNEVENTFUL EID AT HOME

PG 3

STAGES OF DOING A
MEHNDI DESIGN

PG 4



NO REST FOR THE WOMEN

HOW WOMEN ARE BURDENED
WITH HOLIDAY RESPONSIBILITIES
AT HOME



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

EDITORIAL

Okay, I know many people my age, in and around their twenties, will disagree, but I still really love Eid. I enjoy the hell out of it and it's usually the highlight of my year. It's the best!

I think I know how I got here too. I had that angst-filled teenage period where I found it hard to enjoy normal things, my greatest pleasure was in being a non-conformist and Eid made it very difficult to keep acting like a rebel. But then one fine year, Eid just clicked for me. I found myself immersed in the experience of being surrounded by loved ones, having Eid lunch at home and then going out in the evening to meet friends. For someone who's either working or studying 35 days a month, the concept of a day spent with family starts to become alien at one point, and Eid, at that point, is a hipster among the mundane days of my life. Come to think of it, the idea of a day dedicated to happiness is quite a "hippy" concept. The fact that I have totally bought into this idea would please my teenage self greatly.

On that note, Eid Mubarak!

– Azmin Azran, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

TV



Growing up with *Ityadi*

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Reminiscing one's childhood in its entirety is unfeasible. What's left in our memory are *Alif Laila*, *The Adventures of Sinbad* and probably the most persistent one, *Ityadi*.

With the entire family cooped up in your drawing room on Eid day, you sit through the 8 PM news on BTV and wait for the show to start with that iconic opening theme. Apart from Hanif Sanket's amazing arsenal of alliterations followed by short comedy skits, few of the routine segments still resonate all these years later.

NANA-NATI

The routine comedy skit between an annoyed grandfather and his quirky grandson was probably the most anticipated part of the show. A typical "Nana-Nati" sketch would start as a generic conversation between the two, except the grandson would find faults in everything his grandpa had to say.

Nati's bizarre nit-pickings would remind us of the silly mistakes we make in our everyday conversation and annoy Nana enough for him to give up on his grandson, start crying or worse, start beating up his grandson to put an end to his hilarious misery.

MAMA-BHAGNE

Typically, the nephew in the skit would come up with a witty business scheme and invest in it with his uncle's money. The schemes would usually be intended to capitalise on faults or weaknesses in our daily habits, social stigmas or some sort of national crisis.

The idiosyncrasy of the business plan mixed with Bhagne's hilarious and eccentric pitch to his uncle made the skit iconic. The uncle, however, would almost always reject his business plan and end the sketch on an educational message.

BANGLA DUBS

Though Nana-Nati and Mama-Bhagne segments were hilarious, the epitome of comedy for me has to be *Ityadi*'s Bangla dubs of foreign video clips presented in regional dialects from Noakhali and Barisal. Although the clips were mostly taken from British sketches and skits, Hanif Sanket and his team's hilarious script blended with peculiar accents made it the most exciting segment of the show.

Hanif Sanket took it up a notch when he introduced a new segment where foreigners dressed up in local clothes and acted out typical Bangladeshi household scenarios. It didn't even matter whether the jokes landed or not; foreigners speaking in broken Bangladeshi accents ended up being the funniest thing I came across as a kid.

SONG PARODIES

How ingenious of an idea is it to make a Bangla parody of the popular song "Hotel California" by Eagles on national television simply by using the word 'Saladia' in place of 'California' to give it a local flavour while giving a tribute to roadside restaurants! Not only did *Ityadi* provide a platform to emerging artists, but also arranged the biggest collabs in the music industry while presenting the most eccentric, unique, and unconventional music – be it parodies or social commentary.

Even after all these years, *Ityadi* isn't about the sketches, songs, gift hampers or the very culture of social commentary through satire that Hanif Sanket popularised. *Ityadi*, for me, will always be the only connection I have left to my simpler days of Eid that went missing somewhere along the way.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

Under Pressure
Queen

Life Goes On
BTS

Lucky Charms
Anson Seabra

That's Hilarious
Charlie Puth

B

Math
Sara Kays

Ami Tomakei Bole Debo
Sanjeeb Choudhury

Hurtless
Dean Lewis

Like Real People Do
Hozier

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

Homage to an uneventful Eid at home

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Eid is when your parents get more than two days off from work, when you get to make unreasonable demands for gifts, and the time to cop a decent sum of money as salami.

Despite all that, you don't always have the mental capacity to deal with all the socialisation. Especially if you've had a tough year and finally got a vacation after ages. Or, you're one of the unfortunate souls whose friends and favourite cousins have all headed to their villages, and your parents think it's best to stay in the city. Or, you might fall into the third category, who's too much of a homebody to entertain the idea of stepping out and having fun, even on Eid.

I'm a mix of all three. My family rarely goes to our hometown to celebrate Eid, and I'm a homebody who avoids socialisation.

Here's how a typical Eid goes for me. Dressing up real nice is the first thing I do in the morning, because it is Eid after all. Besides, it's important to show my mother I fully plan on wearing the super inconvenient clothes she advised me against buying.

Of course, the next few hours are spent sitting on the sofa and eating she-mai. One might say I'm overdressed for the occasion, but as a firm believer in going full glam for a quick grocery run I refuse to let that stop me.

By midday, the realisation that my mother was indeed right about the dress

being inconvenient will settle in. Tena-ciously, I soldier on while pretending that the stitches aren't digging into my arms and shoulders.

When evening rolls in, I use my inductive reasoning to conclude that since no guest paid a visit all day, I should not expect company in the last couple of hours either. However, just as I change into my ratty T-shirt and settle in front of the TV, the calling bell rings and the door opens to reveal every single one of my relatives who are in town.

I greet them with a smile, acutely aware of how I, advocate of dressing up for every little occasion, am the most underdressed person in the room.

Spending Eid this way can be quite relaxing, if not somewhat boring. A day without worries of deadlines hanging above my head isn't all that it's cut out to be, as sitcoms don't really feel right without the academic stress.

While it's not a totally bad day, I have to admit that scrolling through social media watching everyone spend their Eids much more eventfully is slightly upsetting.

So, if you're a homebody like me whose big travel plans for Eid is a quick trip to the drawing room, consider adding a couple other entries to your itinerary before you end up with a two-digit salami.

Zabin Tazrin Nashita is holding back the urge to overshare on the internet at fb.com/zabintazrin.nashita



Bored youth in their natural habitat on Eid day.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

When holidays are not an equal privilege

FATIN HAMAMA

When Pahela Baishakh and Ramadan crossed paths this year, we got a day off to adequately celebrate while fasting, after two years spent cowering indoors owing to the pandemic at its peak.

What's even better is that Eid is near and so is another bout of holidays waiting to be spent with friends and family. No classes for the last days of Ramadan, and no exams at least until after the vacation. But that's not the reality for everyone when it comes to their own festivals, is it?

April 13 to 15 marked the calendar dates for Biju, Bishu, Sangrai, Boishu, and Changran – the prominent socio-religious festivals of the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, and Mro people. While the delightful glimpses of the festivals adorned our social media timelines, a lot of us chose to skip over the fact that there was something very peculiar about it all. Instead of being back home with their beloved ones for the most important festivals of the year, most of their youth were observing small-scale on-campus celebrations at best.

These dates aren't recognised as public holidays in Bangladesh, and so all public and private universities, along with other educational institutions, remain open with complete disregard. As if it couldn't get any worse, many even choose this very same timeline for holding exams alongside regular classes, which was indeed the case this year. It's not even surprising considering how the situation is nearly the same for the religious minorities of this country as well.

Students get to have rather sufficient breaks for both Eid and a few more special occasions, whereas most schools and colleges only allow a break as small as 3 to 5 days for an occasion like Durga Puja, the celebrations for which last for as long as 10 days.

In between discussions about these issues, one of the most common suggestions people leave is to make these festivals optional holidays for the ones celebrating. Although it sounds like a solution, it's a bare minimum and has a very real chance of not working out.

For instance, if they were optional holidays indeed and that allowed the indigenous or religious minority youths studying in educational institutions across the country to take a leave in the midst of an ongoing academic session, there's no guarantee that they'd receive fairly compensated make up lessons owing to the core problems in our inefficient, conventional schooling system. The same goes for workplaces and honorariums in an extended scenario. Paired with the raging discrimination these people already face in every aspect of life in this country, this will only let others weaponise their rightful freedom of cultural and religious expression.

Biju is not supposed to be celebrated solely in a congested campus in the urban heat of April, with academic stress and suppressed sadness so palpable that it's apparent despite the smiling faces. Half of Durga Puja is not supposed to be spent running from class to class, jumping from assignment to presentation while merely reminiscing about the celebration.

This needs to change. And soon.

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

Stages of doing a mehndi design

SABIBA HOSSAIN

It's chaand raat. You're sitting in front of your laptop, browsing through mehndi, or henna, designs, with a cone in one hand. You're confident that you will surprise everyone with your incredible designs this year.

However, the moment you start, you realise that it's not what you thought. Take a look at the stages a noob goes through when applying mehndi by themselves.

STAGE 1: EXTREME ENTHUSIASM
Gone are the days of dependency, when you nagged other people for hours to draw mehndi designs on your hand. Now, you have Google – the source of all wisdom. You can apply any design you want to; no need for others' approval. Feeling extra enthusiastic, you find an intricate bridal design and decide to work on it.

STAGE 2: A GLIMPSE OF REALITY
As soon as you start, you figure out that applying mehndi can be tricky. You have to put the right amount of pressure on the cone. If you put too little, the paste won't come out, and if you put too much, it will wheeze out of the cone, leaving splattered blocks of green inedible chutney on your hand.

Recovering from your trauma, you opt for a much simpler design. Because



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

who wanted those tacky bridal designs anyway?

STAGE 3: DOUBTING THE PRODUCT
Even after going for a simple design, you can't seem to draw a straight line on your wrist. This is the moment when you start to doubt whether the mehndi brand you bought is authentic. Come to think of it,

the shopkeeper did give you a suspicious look when packing your purchase, as if they had something to hide.

Of course, you couldn't draw anything after sitting for an hour because the seller sold you a knock-off, not because you are horribly unskilled. After all, you did win an award drawing a mango in first grade.

STAGE 4: TIME TO GIVE UP
After wrestling with the mehndi tube for two hours, you realise that it's time to give up. Then you realise you're a warrior, and no warrior returns home empty-handed. So, you use whatever remaining bit of creativity you have left. When you finish, you feel quite proud of your handiwork.

STAGE 5: THE BIG REVEAL
It's Eid day. Your relatives have come to your home, and after eating food and having a little chit-chat, they start showing off their own mehndi designs. When it's your turn, you hold up your hand, beaming. "But it's just your name!" your annoying cousin shouts.

Honestly, people are the worst. They will never value originality or creativity. The flower you drew? It may look more like a cat's footprint than a real flower, but hey, at least you dared to come up with an original idea than the copycats who shamelessly stole their designs from Google.

Really, they could've printed the design and pasted it on their hands. It wouldn't make any difference. Kudos to you, though. You went through a challenging mission and came out victorious.

Request Sabiba to stop being an inutile @fb.com/Sabibastro. She might listen.

Looking for an Eid gift? Look beyond clothes.

NADEEMAHAFROSE MONDOL

A very common practice on Eid is giving gifts to loved ones. As wholesome as this tradition may seem, this joyous exchange of presents often becomes an obligation. We watch our parents struggling to buy gifts for every single relative, including their kids. And the strangest part? The gifts are usually clothes.

Everyone tries to buy new clothes to wear on Eid day which, besides being a pretty nice thing to do, also makes Eid more eventful in many ways. However, buying clothes for so many people can be very difficult and tiring.

First of all, it's hard to remember and buy outfits according to all the sizes and style preferences for each relative. Then there is the struggle of going shopping during Ramadan, with all the chaos in the malls. For shoppers, the heat waves on top of being dehydrated result in immense exhaustion, especially if you're fasting. If it's not a fixed priced shop, there is no option but to bargain until you and the shopkeeper are spitting feathers.

Secondly, gifting clothing items is a pretty expensive affair as you may

require a high budget to buy suitable clothes for many relatives. Our loved ones are probably buying clothes for themselves for Eid anyways, so gifting them clothing items might not be a very felicitous decision.

Now, we have to figure out what these non-clothing gifts for loved ones can be. Home decor accessories make great gifts because everyone is usually pretty enthusiastic about decorating their homes for Eid day. Things like beautiful rugs, nakshi kathas, wall hangings, handcrafted flower vases and traditional clay pots as well as jewel-leries, crystal and porcelain pieces can be significant, charming as well as useful gifts.

Eid cards along with a box of sweets or a fruit basket for each family is also a pretty delightful gift option. Gifting plants should actually be a real thing. Apart from the fact that plants make great accessories to a house and have countless benefits, it's also considered a very nice gesture when you give someone a plant. Not to mention it's an environmentally friendly choice and very easy to buy.

When we consider these kinds of

things as gifts, we don't have to worry about personalising every single gift and it can be cost effective for us as well. In this way, exchanging Eid gifts can be creative and relatively stress free!

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

THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE

SHOUT

No rest for the women

How women are burdened with holiday responsibilities at home

TAJREEN TABASSUM NUSHBA

The holy month of Ramadan is associated with spiritual enlightenment. Followed by Eid, even the most jaded of us are moved by fanfare and unabashed childish delight. But it's also a challenging time for those who work behind the scenes to make these days as memorable as they are.

In Ramadan, we witnessed one of our society's unchallenged norms: the women of our families toiling hard in the kitchen to prepare the perfect food, while the men rest and prepare for a feast. Unfortunately, any celebration or special day at our houses would be incomplete without this sight.

With Eid in a few days, will things change at all?

Unlike the olden days, the number of working women in households has increased significantly. In most middle class homes, two working parents is common. Yet, after a whole day of fasting, only one parent is seen to endure the responsibilities of preparing for and cleaning up after an entire family. This lopsided distribution of household labour is nothing new, but it deserves more questioning during occasions and celebrations.

To compensate for sehri and iftar meals, many offices have their employees arrive late and leave early. Even though most men receive some relief from this, the workload for their female counterparts never truly eases during this time. In addition to office work, they are required to begin preparing iftar as soon as they return home, sometimes without even having time to change out of their clothes. Moreover, work resumes shortly after iftar and prayers, when they have to prepare sehri for the next day.

"I come home and go straight to the kitchen to prepare iftar. After iftar, I have to cook sehri and so I get really tired," states 45-year-old mother of two Afrin Akther.

I share some of the responsibilities of the holidays, but the bulk of it is still my mother's. None of it goes to my father or brother. If there's a rare day when the food is later than usual or not on par – when the lebur shorbot isn't sweet enough, or the piyaju is too salty – the annoyance, even anger, from everyone is made abundantly clear.

Homemaker and mother of three, Yasmin Nahar shares, "It's normal for me to do the cooking and all the housework even while fasting. But when my husband or my children push away food because it's not how they like it, it stings."

Her daughters, who are barely adults, are also expected to perform this labour. After studying for school and exams, they are expected to assist with the iftar preparation.

Tahira Tasnim, 19, student at Viqarunnisa Noon School, encapsulates this perfectly. "I feel that there is an expectation

for me to do housework in general and more so during Ramadan or other family occasion. I think it is because of my gender," she comments.

"Even though the boys and men in our family help out with serving food or laying out the table, the more complex and tiresome things like cooking and cleaning are primarily done by the women," Tahira says. Furthermore, most girls are even unable to question this standard, because they understand that the only respite their mothers will feel will be when they take over the reins.

"The notion of men helping out in the kitchen is so

my mother says I should study instead. I know it's hard because even my father and brother don't help."

Rafsan Nazmul, 15, shares his experience of helping out, saying, "I noticed that I am not usually asked to help with cooking or other work whereas my sister is just told to help out. I've been trying to help more, and I think my sister appreciates it. I want to help my mother, too, since she works hard at the office and at home."

As a child, I never had to comprehend the effort that goes into preparing the most delectable meals during Ramadan or preparing a house to entertain relatives and numerous other guests on Eid. There was always enough of my favourite food

And my experience is not isolated. Tahira shares, "My outlook on Eid hasn't changed since I don't have to do as much. I always have the older generation of women and my elder sisters do the heavy lifting in family situations. Even then, watching them shoulder burdens that could easily be lessened if the men did their part in our family makes me bitter."

I want to reassure you that not all hope is lost. We can actively appreciate our mothers and sisters for their contributions and share the responsibilities during the final days of Ramadan, during Eid celebrations and whenever possible. To truly bridge the gap, asking "How can I help?" isn't enough. Instead, we have to initiate work by telling our family that



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

incomprehensible to my family that even my own mother told me that we can't ask men to cook. That it's just not how it's done," shares Subah Basharat, 22, from Brac University. Men in our society are so removed from housework that, even if they wanted to help, they wouldn't know where to start. As a result, the reality for most girls is that they have no choice but to do the work.

However, we are seeing that the younger generation of men are more aware of this double standard. Sixteen-year-old Faisal Ahmed says, "I do want to help with cooking and other work. But

to feed a small village, and the house was always magically clean. However, as I've gotten older, I've realised that the magic is merely hard work, and that my family's fierce women were behind it.

Now, the mention of a holiday elicits a grumble and a slight resignation. I feel disinterested in participating in the holiday cheer because I know it comes with a steep price, for me and my mother. I can see in my mother's eyes when she's too tired from work and needs to lie down in the middle of Eid day, while everyone rambunctiously converses and devours her food in the other room.

we will take care of certain tasks and then following through.

Asking for centuries-old gender norms to be diminished in a single article is a tad bit unrealistic, and perhaps overly optimistic. But we can all do our part as individuals to change the scenario in our homes and to help out when we can.

As long as we are not complicit and oblivious, the price of a happy holiday does not have to involve inequity.

Nushba is uselessly raging about the patriarchy and crying because her cat doesn't love her. Please send help at nushba.tajreen@gmail.com

Spending Eid without loved ones

“Eid means joy and if that joy is gone, celebration feels pointless.”

AYRA AREEBA ABID

I grew up seeing Ma spending the entirety of Eid at home. Babai passed away when I was a little over two years old, and ever since then, Ma has stayed back home for Eid all alone, and she has expressed solemnly that she wishes things to remain the same.

This has been the norm for us and I never questioned her decision as I understood she somehow found peace through this. Though I am surrounded by my family every Eid, I felt a tinge of loneliness, especially when I see children being accompanied by their parents to the festivities. Though we all adapt, and learn to accept the way things are, events such as Eid end up reminding us of that ever-present void.

Abreshmi Chowdhury, 21, who lives abroad for higher studies, says, “During Ramadan, I could never wake up for sehri. My family would always wake me up. It’s very lonely now.” There’s a feeling of hollowness clenching its teeth into our hearts, owing to the absence of loved ones around us.

During Ramadan in 2019, no one could imagine how the advent of 2020 would cause everything to become disoriented. Ramadan and Eid would never be the



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

same for bereaved families. Many chairs have been left empty this Ramadan, and will remain to be so during Eid.

On Eid, when homes are to be infused with the fragrance of love and joy, the acrid taste of emptiness conquers instead. For Saba Nawaz, 20, life changed in the

blink of an eye.

“It was the early hours of June 3, 2020 when I lost my father. Even though it’s been about two years since then, the terrifying memories of that dark night are forever etched in my heart,” Saba recalls.

She adds, “The home in the initial days

seemed deserted. Now that another Eid is around the corner, I am reminded of that Ramadan when we used to all have sehri and iftar together without the slightest idea that this was going to be our very last Ramadan as a complete family.”

When our loved ones pass away, we learn to cope with loss, or at least try to, while keeping them engraved in our hearts. You feel their absence but you learn to wake up and feel okay. Disruption in life is inevitable, there will always be life-changing, tragic events and deaths of loved ones as we grow up, which can shake us to the core.

Sometimes people pretend to be happy, for the sake of others, for their children, or even for their own selves, but it’s never easy. It feels comfortable and familiar to linger in that void to find a sense of belonging. During Eid, we hug our loved ones and celebrate with abundant happiness, but what if we can’t embrace a loved one ever again?

This Eid, I pray that we all find solace. My heart reaches out to you. Eid Mubarak.

Ayra Areeba Abid’s favourite word is “serendipity” and she’s a Sociology geek. Connect with her at areeba.ayra@gmail.com

My hometown doesn’t feel like home during Eid

NADEEMAHAFROSE MONDOL

When people migrate out of their hometowns in search of jobs or in order to settle down, a piece of their heart always aches for not being able to live in their actual home. Eid is the time of the year when these people go back to their roots. My family is no exception in this case.

However, as much of a “homecoming” affair as it may seem, for me, this whole Eid celebration outside the place “I” call home couldn’t satisfy me, ever.

My older sister and I have had to visit my paternal home to celebrate Eid, ever since we were young. The journey is long and tiring, but it feels worse because I’m not fond of that place. Whenever I go there, I constantly feel unimportant and unwelcome. Eid is meant to be the day when everyone feels and tries to make others feel festive and jolly, but whenever I step into that house, especially during Eid, the atmosphere makes me feel asphyxiated.

I feel the eyes around me judging my every move. I cannot be myself. I can never talk or laugh loudly because girls are meant to be polite and calm. When others get busy hanging out, I can only think of my friends and loved ones back in Dhaka. The thought that revolves around my mind is how wonderful it would be if I got to spend Eid with them, go about my favourite city with my favourite people.

Food is certainly a big part of the Eid celebration. People who enjoy cooking and eating indulge themselves in preparing the Eid dishes that they were looking forward to. When I’m celebrating Eid outside my home, I neither get the chance to cook my favourite dishes nor can I eat them. It may sound silly, but as a food enthusiast, it makes me really sad not being able to feed myself and others my choice of food.

Also, being a girl, always makes it a lot harder to adjust there because dealing with body negativity, along with misogyny, is very exasperating. Most of the relatives, instead of greeting and talking to me as they haven’t seen me in a while, start asking about why I haven’t been losing any weight and come up with various hurtful ways to ask this question. Besides, when we have meals together in my paternal home or just gather around to chitchat, my male cousins significantly get more preference and privileges, which makes the whole atmosphere utterly uncomfortable.

Whenever the Eid season arrives, I am reminded that even during Eid, no place could ever give me the joy and peace like my home in Dhaka does.

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: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Handprints on the Unpartitioned Map of India

UZAYER MASUD

Your eyes are black,
Deep like the caves of Lascaux.
I put my palm against yours.
Fingers too, soon intertwined.

Trace the shapes in my mind, outlines
Drawing chickens, or a duck
Like children on paper.
Glue on googly eyes for added effect.
Crayons melting onto it, unto us.
Our handprints on cave walls,
16,000 years ago.

Your face is a mirror, I stare into it.
My hand against yours is
The intrinsic act of self discovery.
But do you believe me?
Of course you do, why wouldn't you?

When I ask you to close your eyes,
Do you see the face of god within me?
In the drawn out lines of your hand,
The creases accommodate a thousand years of history.

Do you see it like I do?
The hazy tendrils of an afternoon in Bengal,
The calmness of a moment within leaves
Swayeth gracefully; an éléphantesque grandeur.

Your skin feels familiar,
Your mind a testament, to
The unpartitioned map of India.

Do you feel the winter creep in?
When mornings smell like cha,
And the evenings are wrapped in shawls,
When the dust hits sharp?

One of these mornings,
When everyone else is gone, and you are too,
I will miss this.
When the silence of death is the only ringing in my ears,
I cannot fathom,
I hope the noise starts to make sense.

*Uzayer Masud likes beans, capybaras but definitely not pelicans.
Send them raita recipes at [instagram.com/uzayermasud](https://www.instagram.com/uzayermasud)*

Dear Anonymous

WAZIHA AZIZ

I'm not sure why I'm writing you this letter. All out of the blue when I should be finishing the last chapters of my book, while you've never written me a single word. Nevertheless, I hope it finds you in good health.

Pointless, really. Seeing as how I won't be mailing this letter. Definitely not today. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe never.

Don't get me wrong, it's not bad weather that's in my way. In fact, the weather's quite nice today... With the sun brightly blazing and a light dewy breeze, perfect for an afternoon stroll.

No, I'm not going to mail this letter because I don't want to see that man in the beige fur coat walking down the street ever again. His lacklustre behaviour is unbearable. Whenever I set out, in my faded cotton sarees and loose cardigan, with a scarf carelessly thrown over my head, he is there. While I try helplessly to escape the dancing sunlit patterns on the wool of my forearm, it doesn't seem to bother him at all. The glare of this old wrinkly woman, the hawk of street vendors settled on grimy sidewalks, the occasional banyan tree in his path – all is immaterial to him. Whereas for me, the banyan is always in the way. Its barks, not one pore the same as each moment passes. Shifting, contorting, existing, it drives me insane.

But the man's footsteps never waver. Humming an old *Bhawaiya* melody, hands in pockets and a curl resting on his lips, the fedora on his mop of black hair might as well be a chicken, and he wouldn't notice.

Sometimes I picture creeping up behind him, striking him in the temple with a large rock. His body would fall with a thud onto the pavement. Blood pooling out from the crack in his skull. But his body... His limp wounded body would then be *in the way*.

Mind you, I'm not much better at home. But the music playing as an old record spins and spins, soothes my senses. Life feels less fleeting when one closes their eyes, strums of a *dotara* flowing out of the phonograph, and pictures Lalon Fakir sitting cross-legged on the floor of his temple. Wispy beard brushing the edge of his fingers, he sings,

*Khanchar bhiton ochin pakhi
Kemne ashe jay?*

A question worth pondering over. How does one die? When the lungs stop inflating-deflating. When the heart stops beating. When the brain refuses to send signals to the rest of our body. When the soul escapes through our throats, travels to an ethereal haven and lives out the next phase of death.

Do we really have souls in our cages? Or are we just flesh and bone? Our tendons forming wires for a cage – devoid of birds and their songs. When we die, do we really go someplace else, or do we simply become corpses, to join the mud and dirt that sustain us?



Fakir Lalon isn't a corpse in the earth. Nor does he exist. His music lives on in the edge of our ears, the slow shift of our tongues. The chords – unchanged, forever static – rest in that bridge between life and death. Beyond time and space where his words remain continuous.

That is in fact, what I wish to achieve with my pursuit of literature. I want to escape this decaying body, these crumbling walls, this dying world. My work must linger beyond history, fleeting human objectivity, and the collapse of nature itself. My desire is to create something whole and pure, original, unchangeable. Completely and wholeheartedly mine. A mesh so intricately tangled with who I am, that future generations cannot separate one from the other. My thoughts, my words must escape this material world and live on, in that bridge between life and death.

You may call me selfish. I realise my cause could have been quite noble, like truth, justice or love. Instead I've chosen for myself, immortality.

I do not wish to keep you any longer. My thoughts have tired me. I will now go to bed, and try to catch dreams and hold them in my palm forever. Know that I am human, and that is my worst fear.

Yours truly,
A friend.

A celebration for people of all faith

SHADYA NAHER SHEYAM

As a Muslim, I eagerly wait for the Eid holidays all year. Even though chaand raat shopping, new outfits or countless itineraries are a big part of Eid, what adds most to the flavour of the celebration is gatherings with family, friends, and all our loved ones.

My father's non-Muslim colleagues often pay us a visit on the day, brimmed with passion and enthusiasm. We all sit together and feast on the traditional delicacies that have been prepared with a lot of care and attention. It is also a day when I get to meet a lot of individuals my age because of my dad's friends. As a result, Eid usually offers me new friends. This has been a custom in my family for as long as I can remember.

After the Eid holidays, I used to bring a large five-tier tiffin carrier filled with jorda to the school office room for all my teachers. In exchange, I would receive sweets and candies. Even after stepping into the university life, a teacher from my high school, hailing from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, continues the ritual of celebrating Eid with me.

Once, while heading for Bangla class, the same teacher handed me a package, in which my mother had earlier sent her food. This was ridiculed by some of my classmates, stating her ethnicity and religious beliefs. However, that didn't bother me or my family.

Another day, the teacher stopped by after attending a prayer meeting at a church and brought us a small trinket with a picture of Jesus Christ on it. I was hesitant to accept it, but my father insisted that I do so because it was a gift.

Although much has changed over the years, the essence of the Eid celebrations at my home has remained the same. The responsibility for inviting guests for some shemai has now been transferred to me, and it is interesting to see that the spirit of the celebration has so far been carried on by my friends of other faiths, as my Muslim friends are preoccupied with the festivities taking place at their own homes.

Despite the passage of time, my best friend from school, who is a Hindu, is still the first to remind me that her portion of shemai should not be overlooked. During Eid, the quest of "fasting to feasting" becomes complete as our families relish the glistening Eid items or desert delights, setting aside all kinds of political and religious disputes.

It is impossible for me to picture my Eid celebrations taking place without the participation of my non-Muslim peers. I owe much of my Eid delight to them.

Shadya Naher Sheyam attempts to live life like Ashima from *The Namesake*. Talk to her about Mira Nair films at fb.com/sadia.nahar



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Let's control our consumption this Eid

AFIA IBNAT

We live in a hyper-consumerist hyperreality where materialism reigns supreme and excessiveness is a glorified norm. This phenomenon is tragically more obvious during the time of celebrations, particularly when the long awaited Eid holidays come around.

Though Eid should be a time of celebration with our loved ones after a long month of fasting, it has instead transformed into an excuse to load up our shopping carts to the brim. With too many new outfits to count and with countless plates piled up to the stars with an egregious amount of oily, rich food, we've branded Eid as a capitalist fever dream that is vastly distant from the true tenets of the celebration.

During chaand raat, hordes of people will rush to malls in hopes of getting all the items on their wish list. Shopping bags fill every corner of our bedrooms and plastic packaging litters the entirety of our floors. All this culminates in a mountain of clothes, accessories, and shoes we perhaps don't need, but buy anyway in a bid to satisfy our intrinsic desire for more, more, and more.

I'm almost certain that we all know someone who undergoes at least three outfit changes on Eid day. While everyone wants to look like their fabulous self, throwing all caution to the wind and giving into superfluous overconsumption only distances us from the core idea of Eid and the overarching values of practising moderation.

While many people rush to do charity during Ramadan, most forget about it as soon as the calendar flips to Shawwal. Eid, too, is supposed to be a time of giving to those who need it the most. It's a time that signifies charity, community, and

celebration, yet many of us concentrate heavily on the latter while forgoing the first.

This year, Eid can be a little different. We can try to end the unhealthy cycle of an outlandish number of dawats, clothes, and feasts by letting go of the intense excessiveness that clings to Eid culture. Instead of buying five unnecessarily expensive outfits, we can opt for one or two that will last us a long time.

Instead of teleporting from Puran Dhaka to Uttara via Banani, we can try sticking to a few choice meetups with our loved ones. Not only does this allow us to spend quality time with those who are actually important to us, but helps us avoid multiple feasts and saves our digestive tracts heavy food immediately after an entire month of fasting.

The unequal system that allows us to hoard so much wealth and gorge on numerous feasts a day is the same one that leaves millions without a proper meal, even on Eid. Those of us who have the means can try to change that, even if it's just for one person.

This Eid, we can make it a point to consume with more awareness and give with less parsimony. Our bodies, wallets, and spirits are bound to thank us later.

Afia Ibnat is judging all six of your Eid outfits. Prepare for annihilation at afiaibnat09@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM