

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE

# SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY MAY 12, 2022, BAISHAKH 29, 1429 BS

A PUBLICATION OF *The Daily Star*



HOW MUCH BANGLA  
SHOULD WE REALLY KNOW?

PG 3

THE BLESSING OF  
ELDER SISTERS

PG 4



THE PURSUIT OF

# *theatre*



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

# EDITORIAL

I've always loved the theatre. The earliest memory I have of watching a play is sitting next to my mom in the dark watching a production of Tasher Desh. As a child, I remember loving seeing the giant playing cards move.

Growing up, studying Literature in university meant spending many hectic afternoons trying to cram in as many pages of Ben Johnson or Moliere as possible right before my assignment was due. It taught me to appreciate how theatre is simultaneously so unique an art form yet universal in its origin and appeal.

This week's cover story is about young people who may wish to pursue theatre.

Speaking to the many people over the interviews we took made it very clear how it's difficult to make a living doing theatre in Dhaka. Yet, some people carry on the work out of their sheer love for it. For the rest of us, perhaps we can support the industry by being patrons. In a city that is devoid of many options for entertainment, watching a play can support local artists telling authentic stories just a few feet away from us.

– Mrittika Anan Rahman, Sub- editor, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### MOVIE



# Life through the films of Éric Rohmer

**CHOUDHURY MASTURA MAHBUB ADRITA**

There is a perpetual need for finding perfection and gaining a robust sense of proportion inhuman in us. This craving corroborates what was said a century ago: we have no time to stand and stare.

In all the hullabaloo, we stay indifferent to life's smaller gifts: a sudden gust that slightly alleviates the sternness of the summer sun's stare or a three-minute drizzle that drapes a silvery sheen on the city. But, the active partaking in the Japanese philosophical practice of wabi-sabi sets itself as a great human necessity, now more than ever.

This ancient art emphasises glorifying the transient, imperfect, and purely simple. It worships the beauty that resides in overlooked moments and celebrates blemishes that cement the realness of beautiful things. A rather unusual French new wave filmmaker, Éric Rohmer, epitomised this art of appreciating the simpler aspects of life through his films. He conveyed his message loud and clear by centering his films not on elaborately extravagant plots with shrilling climaxes, rather, making them orbit basic human conversations.

His films are quite the test of patience – what with their not-so-flattering characters and completely present oriented stories – the films might come off as monotonous and overstretched. This is also the reason behind Rohmer's appeal. His prowess to put to screen dainty everyday conversations among characters like ourselves impart the essential yet often ignored lesson of valuing what communication and understanding, both internal and external, offer unostentatiously.

Nadja casually talks about her life

as a student at a Parisian university throughout Rohmer's short film *Nadja in Paris*. A scene shows her admiring a park with an ersatz river and rocks made artificially by genuinely commenting with a "but that doesn't matter". Such a remark is quintessentially Rohmer-esque because it aims to demonstrate how to derive delight even from not-so-perfect things.

Just two weeks shy of her vacation, Delphine finds out she won't be going. Alone in Paris, she heads out to different places but feels dissociated. *The Green Ray* stands as a magnificent addition to French cinema by validating loneliness and desperation through Delphine's qualms.

*A Summer's Tale* shows a forlorn Gaspard falling in love anew while looking for lost love. *Four Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle* illustrates the friendship between a chic Parisian and a rustic painter, and what they teach each other. The films are nothing but common expected conversations, slowly unfurling, not overly deep or intrusive, and definitely not forced.

A thing about Rohmer is that he always knew how to people his films. Consequently, his protagonists exude an uncanny realness since they have the support of characters who portray average joes while having mesmerising scenic backdrops.

Ultimately, the embracing of the untarnished simple sires the understanding of the untainted truth, and this is the underlying tenet that Rohmer's films preach.

*Mastura wallows in despair because she can never be friends with River Phoenix. Console her at choudhuryrasturamahub@gmail.com*

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



**A**  
**Moves Like Jagger**  
 Maroon 5

**Fear & Delight**  
 The Correspondents

**Applause**  
 Lady Gaga

**Dress Up For You**  
 The Technicolors

**B**  
**Sidelines**  
 Phoebe Bridgers

**Get Lucky**  
 Daft Punk

**'That That**  
 PSY

**Uptown Funk**  
 Mark Ronson

Email us at [shoutds@gmail.com](mailto:shoutds@gmail.com) with feedback, comments, and reader submissions within 500 words.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

## How much Bangla should we really know?

**MALIK ARAF**

Recently, I noticed in a conversation between my mother and brother, that they were arguing about but their language was quite different.

My brother was speaking in English, and my mother responded in Bangla. Even though their communicative expressions were different, they understood each other. However, what really bugged me was that my brother wasn't very efficient in speaking Bangla. It got me thinking.

Many people in my bubble, including myself, often use English as the go-to language for communication. I text, speak, and have a better understanding of the English vocabulary than Bangla. While this is completely fine because I can express myself, to a certain extent, this is also a bit concerning. Because I should have better flexibility around my mother tongue. Likewise, I believe we should at least know Bangla to an extent where we can express our thoughts adequately.

In today's age, the English language has this "ceiling". Corporate environments, educational institutions and local societies have this unspoken concept that we all should know English. Hence, people put a significant emphasis on English and how to use it as a language. This has led to educational institutions enforcing more students to speak English the entire time they stay there. This has also led to increased sales of spoken English tutorial books. In a broader sense, this has also made English proficiency a prime requirement in the job market. People

are now constantly trying to consume more English media from the internet. Compared to Bangla media, the significant amount of English media doesn't help either.

I find this narrative a bit troublesome since it allows people to use English as their only mode of communication. This impacts people to a point where they are more comfortable with English. As a result, they lose their proficiency in Bangla. Don't get me wrong; I believe knowing English to a certain level is essential in today's competitive culture. Not at an expense where you lose your ability to speak in your mother tongue, though.

I'm not asking the average individual to be the next Nazrul. But I am asking them to be more serious about reading or talking in Bangla. Things like knowing all the numbers or the alphabets, or simply writing a sentence however you like should be the bare minimum.

Some can argue that understanding the history behind Bangla being the language we know today should also be known. That is a bonus. Some also argue that one should go to lengths to study Bangla literature. That is also tough to pick up on unless you already have a reading habit. It could be good practice, but I think expressing your thoughts in Bangla should be respectful enough.

Before I get called out for gatekeeping, it's okay if you don't use Bangla. But it's not okay if you don't know how to use it. Learn it, explore it. It's the least it deserves.

*Malik Araf is running out of ideas. Help him at [arafmalik04@gmail.com](mailto:arafmalik04@gmail.com)*

## Punctuality is an unfair demand in Dhaka city

**IRINA JAHAN**

At 7 AM, light winds blow and little birds chirp cheerfully. It marks the calm before the storm, the storm which conjures up without needing a weather forecast and makes people shudder by its mere remembrance. We are talking about Dhaka city's top nuisance: traffic jams.

With such insane traffic looming over our morning commute, is demanding punctuality even fair?

Just last month, our entire class watched with horror and pity as a student tried to make her way into class but was denied entry for being 15 minutes late. Harsh as it may seem, it is not uncommon for such incidents to occur, more so in recent times.

One would expect that the shared experience of having lived through Dhaka traffic would make one kinder to each other but the reality is far from it. It is unfortunate that it is as such because students and employees have very little, if any, hand in controlling road traffic. Dhaka is a highly centralised city with most corporate offices and good educational institutions located in clusters. This channels all buses, rickshaws, and private vehicles to the same few ill-planned routes that run across the city. And so, it remains to be a mammoth task for people living away from such places to make it to their destinations on time on most days.

For instance, gone are the times when one could reach Bashundhara from Uttara in under an hour. With the newfound madness of the city's traffic, and development work along the way, it is unlikely one will make it out of the airport road's traffic without losing all their patience and feeling vindictive of every single traffic signal. While this sounds extreme, it can hardly contest the tyranny of the long hours one has to wait on just about any road in Gulshan.

Gulshan, the place of ultimate corporate frenzy, is also a place where vehicles move only an inch at a time. At least that is what appears to be the case whenever one finds themselves around the Gulshan circles. It becomes nearly impossible for anyone trying to reach their office to predict if they would be able to make it on time. Sometimes the best option one is left with is to abandon their cars and walk so that they do not have to meet with glaring faces from their managers at work. Of course, this scenario is not a far stretch when we speak of places like Mohakhali, Karwan Bazar or Motijheel.

In the end, it is nobody's cup of tea to suffer through the orchestra of honking cars and heated cries of arguing drivers every day but when you live in a place like Dhaka, such encounters are inevitable. However, what isn't inevitable is teachers and employers becoming more forgiving of the occasional or perhaps even the routine tardiness so that we all may have one less thing to worry about every time we find ourselves stuck at another traffic signal.

*Irina believes in the supremacy of taking naps to forget about her problems. Wake her up by reaching out at [irinajahan17@gmail.com](mailto:irinajahan17@gmail.com)*



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

# THE BLESSING OF ELDER SISTERS

NAHIAN NAWAR

Between my two elder sisters, there is a running joke that I am the wisest sibling despite my age. It's because being the youngest means I get to live through them vicariously, so I draw collectively from their experiences alongside my own. While, personally, I think there's still a long way to go before, I can claim to have surpassed them in wisdom, it's true that my sisters have taught me just about everything I need to know to navigate the world as a young woman. From teaching me the know-hows of the perfect eyeliner wing, to giving me my first lessons on feminism, Apu and Apuni have the antidote to all life has to throw my way.

When it comes to love lives, elder sisters know better than relationship advice columnists. Nusaiba Hoque\*, a private O Level Candidate, shares how her sisters helped her end a toxic relationship. "When I was fifteen, I made the mistake of dating a guy who was a lot older than I was. The relationship was unhealthy and there was an imbalance of power resulting from the age gap. My sisters helped me realise how I was being taken advantage of and that I deserved to be



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

treated with more respect. When I finally broke it off with the guy, I was so glad I took my sisters' advice."

Older sisters are also a godsend when you are going through an academically stressful period. Naomi Sharif, a recent HSC graduate from Viqarunnisa Noon

School, shares how her older sister, Ornee, has been helping her cope with the gruelling university admission process in Bangladesh. She says, "The networks she had already built in these spaces gave me access to the information I needed to make the right call about my future.

While I had watched first-hand when she had struggled through this process all by herself, she made sure the same didn't happen to me."

Lamia Nur Rahman and her sister Farzana have a 10-year gap between them, but still share a strong bond. Lamia, who passed her A Levels from European Standard School, says, "People in my family call me the rebel who paved her own path but few know that the credit all goes to Sadu apu. She's the first woman in the family to take trips abroad on her own with friends, and also made her own choices when it came to important things like career and marriage. I get to be the best version of myself because she already fought the nasty battles for me."

I truly believe I would not have made it so far through life (relatively) unscathed had it not been for Apu and Apuni, and the more I think about it, the more it baffles me how anyone is supposed to function without older sisters to guide them along the way.

\*Name has been changed for privacy

Nahian Nawar is a slow reader and a fast eater. Teach her how to be the opposite at [nahianawardhk@gmail.com](mailto:nahianawardhk@gmail.com)

# Making a case for the quiet kid in class

NOUSHIN NURI

A teacher in high school once wrote in my report card, "Noushin is talented, but she is quiet." It was a revelation for a 13-year-old me — talented and quiet don't quite go hand-in-hand.

Being perceived as talented, specifically "smart," required being outgoing to a certain degree. After all, when the teacher asks a question, the "smart" kids are known to raise their hand and share their answer with the whole class. Having the quiet sort of personality doesn't usually agree with that ordeal.

Being an introvert didn't help when occasionally, the class was made to sit around tables with students facing each other. While everyone was expected to discuss and interact more than usual, this was proven especially cumbersome to us, the quiet sorts.

Thus, doing good in class often required something I wasn't naturally good at.

In an attempt to prepare students for the "real world," schools often end up constantly pushing students to be more "outgoing, collaborative team players," as most job circulars I've come across have indicated. The premium placed on extroversion in most workplaces explains why universities increasingly prefer team assignments. Therefore, extroversion bias in primary or high school is just a foreshadowing of what is to come.

Yet, I would argue that schools should re-evaluate their teaching methods that give a tough time to introverts. No matter how relevant extroverted skills might be in getting ahead, the formative years of childhood is just not the right time to tell kids to bend their natures.

If a child's strength lies in deep think-



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

ing and reflecting on their own ideas, forcing them into a small group discussion will not only stifle the spur of creativity but only stop them from discovering what they are capable of under an ideal setting. Schools should acknowledge that constant social interaction required by the system is often draining to a section of the kids.

The urge to force kids into extroversion can also stem from the notion that introverts cannot socialise — therefore it is a shortcoming and must be overcome. The

truth is, introverts can socialise but doing it within limits usually helps them come up with the best output. Our current classrooms do not accommodate this.

Introverts should not have to overcome the energy barrier of speaking up in front of a crowd every time they want to express an opinion. We need more introvert-friendly methods like participating in discussions through writing. The brainstorming sessions would bring much more out of introverts if they are allowed to take time and generate ideas on their

own before exchanging with the group.

There is no denying the unfortunate fact that the world is governed by the extrovert ideal. While an extrovert kid might be called smart, a smart introverted kid is at best considered a "geek." We need to change this perspective if we want introverts to thrive, and what better place to start than school?

Noushin Nuri is an early bird fighting the world to maintain her sleep schedule. Reach her at [noushin2411@gmail.com](mailto:noushin2411@gmail.com)



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

# The Pursuit of Theatre

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI & MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

Theatre – grand stories, poetics of the stage decor, thrill of seeing a live performance. The whole affair is nothing but enchanting. But how does this dazzling world work, and how does one find their way into it?

Saim Bin Mujib is a permanent member of Prachyanat, one of the most revered theatre groups in Dhaka, founded in 1997. He explains how their productions come to be.

"There's an executive body that decides when we start work on a new play. For one to two months there's script reading and rehearsals. Then we have vocal practice, blocking, figuring out whose exit and entry is where. Parallely we do music production, costume design, then target a start date or festival," Saim explains.

He continues, "If someone wants to work here, first they must complete a six-month course offered by the troupe. Upon completion, you are kept on a waiting list after which you are interviewed and if successful, recruited for a position in the group."

For young people who want to pursue their passion for theatre, the experience of setting foot in the industry is varied as each theatre group operates in their own way. Despite some exceptions, the overall structure of the training period is the same.

The main focus of the course is on acting but it also covers everything from vocal projection, dancing, physical exercise, improvisation, characterising, script writing and more. Students often have to make miniature versions of a set as well. This is intended to give everyone a well-rounded idea of what it is like to work in theatre. There is also a batch production at the end of the course.

The course runs on weekends. There are people from all walks of life. Most are students but there are also parents and senior citizens. Some are even recommended to take up the course to improve their mental health. It brings positive changes in people. Introverts join and

learn to become expressive people. Many actors and models join for skill building and career growth.

Zaheen Mahdee is a current student of the course at Prachyanat School of Acting & Design. He speaks of how his mindset is different now, and that his observation skills have improved. Zaheen is also a businessman, juggling with two start-ups.

"I have business interests. After the course, I want to work with OIT platforms professionally," he adds.

As interesting as the course may be, it is an arduous journey. Saim elaborates, "Theatre is a hard test. For six months, there is very cruel work, no matter where you come from. Unless someone is very lucky, they won't get major roles initially. Perhaps in commercial projects or street performances, but not in regular shows."

However, hard work often pays off, as Saim was cast as the lead in a short film through networks he made at the group.

There are, of course, avenues in theatre beyond acting. Since the introductory course covers all the areas, people take it as a starting point. Compared to acting or directing, there is more scope in sound and light or set design for example, since less people try to pursue these.

Ziauddin Al-amin Shiplu says of his experience with the theatre group Palakar, "For one and a half months, I basically lived in the studio, working on music arrangement and performance. Gaining experience in theatre is good for anyone who wants to work in Bangla music. The work is versatile and you can learn a lot. But you have to move on to apply and build a career elsewhere."

Zia now works as a member of the Multimedia team at The Daily Star. "You really have to be in love [with theatre] and just a tad bit crazy to go into it," comments Fazle Rabby, a natyarkarmi

working with Aranyak Natyadal. Aranyak was established 50 years ago by eminent actor, director and scriptwriter Mamunur Rashid.

Rabby explains, "Bangladeshi theatre is like nijer kheyee boner mosh tarano, as no funding or monetary compensation exists for the beginner. You have to pay for everything on your own, starting from the training. Other than joy, there is not much that you will get in return. So, if you think about profit or money, this is not the path for you."

The earnings any group makes, such as through ticket collections, goes to the group collectively and is spent on costumes, props or other expenditures there might be. People who do individual gigs get some money from their work. This is because

you can hire other people from different groups or individuals if you need support, according to Rabby.

"Theatre groups are requested to perform at festivals, corporate programs or government events where organisers ensure payment. All group members get paid for these," adds Saim.

Despite the lack of financial prospects, all hope is not lost. As the CEO of Open Space Theatre Tisha Mahjabeen Chowdhury clarifies, "Theatre is not yet a sustainable profession for many, but it is in the process of becoming one. I know certain professionals who are earning a living by just doing theatre-related work. To be able to earn a living from theatre, a person needs to reach a highly demanded skill level."

Beyond that, people still love theatre because it's a process of self-development. As Tisha says, "Even if you are not interested in theatre, I would still encourage you to try it, because it gives you confidence, growth, and freedom within yourself."

"The process of taking a production

from script to stage teaches you extreme resourcefulness and helps you discover new skills. No matter where you are in life, when you get involved in theatre, you start a process of personal enrichment," she adds.

On an academic note, if someone wants to pursue theatre as a career, they can always look at university programs.

Dr. Fahmida Akhter, professor at the Department of Drama and Dramatics at Jahangirnagar University (JU) says, "We focus on the technical aspects like theatre design, acting, singing, directing, lighting, costume, and makeup as well as the theoretical aspects like reading and analysing plays, studying colour theory and communicative media. We teach everything from how to sew a shoe to reading Chandi Path."

"Students of the department also get opportunities to work at the National Institute of Mass Communication, different theatre groups or jatra pala depending on the course and instructor," adds Dr. Akhter.

Beyond a career in media, acting or performative arts, drama majors pursue careers in fields that involve communication, critical thinking, and collaborative work. From working in theatre, acting, advertising, television, radio or opting for higher studies, there are examples of these all among graduates of JU's drama department.

For a complete beginner, the world of theatre is accessible yet it is not a simple one to get into. However, considering the sheer love actors and performers have for their craft, despite the hardships, what's on the other side of the curtain must be just as beautiful if not more than what we see on stage.

Tazreen dreams of becoming a Himalayan hiker despite her inability to walk even 30 minutes a day. Expose your inner boomer by calling her a 'farmer instructor' at [tazreenzah-an@gmail.com](mailto:tazreenzah-an@gmail.com)

Mrittika probably missed her chance of working in theatre already but isn't too sure. You can reach her at [mrittika.anan@gmail.com](mailto:mrittika.anan@gmail.com)

satire.

# Man shocked that food doesn't cook faster if you scream at waiter

**HASIB UR RASHID IFTI**

Newly discovered information on basic human decency takes the youth by storm as self-proclaimed sigma male realises food doesn't cook itself faster if you scream at the waiter. As Greek alphabetical males across the country finally figure out that they cannot treat people outside home the way they treat women at home, mass hysteria shakes the nation.

After getting kicked out of a restaurant in Dhaka for howling at the waiter, the alleged sigma male told the press, "As superheroes, we deserve more respect from society, least of all from the people that our false sense of pride lets us scream at – the waiters, rickshaw-pullers, chauffeurs, and security guards. Our superpower is that if we scream loud enough, we get prioritised the way we want to and get our work done."

"Take a typical day at my household, for example. Maybe my mother's sick, our helping hand couldn't come and lunch is a bit delayed. But that's none of our concern. We use our superpowers, that is, we scream. And boy does it work! If it doesn't, sometimes my father will join in. We force my sick mother to get up from bed and cook for us because our glorious Bengali culture combines with our fragile male ego and it doesn't let us enter the kitchen for any reason other than asking our mother what's available for lunch. It's a bird, it's a plane? No! It's my genetically



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

inherited delusion of social superiority. It's Bengali Man!" he went on.

"I grew up watching my father use his superpower almost the entire time he was home, keeping everyone on edge 24/7," sigma male continued.

"The first time I watched my father assault a rickshaw-puller over 10 Taka, I found my idol. My father, like every other Bengali parent, wasn't aware of the fact that children learn from their parents and currently wonders why I turned out the

way I did. With each violent interaction my father had with my mother, my urge to grow up and emulate my dad and use my superpower to scream at the women around me increased exponentially. They say your dad's your superhero. Well, my superhero taught me that whenever something doesn't go your way, screaming is the appropriate response. When that scream hits my ears, it's not just a call. It's a warning, it's raw energy, it's power. It's power that I want, and will have," the guy couldn't stop.

Sigma's tendency to scream grew exponentially over the years. However, all hell broke loose when sigma finally realised, he could spread his screaming expertise outside home.

"When I went to the restaurant and saw someone else get the food before me, my natural reaction was to scream at the waiter. However, when the manager took me to the kitchen and proved that the chicken wasn't getting grilled any faster no matter how harshly I cursed the waiter, it broke my reality," whimpered the sigma.

Since this incident, restaurants across the country have started to hang up signs to let patrons know of their newest regulation. "Do not treat waiters the way you treat your mum" – signs read.

*Remind Ifiti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com*

## Growing up a third culture kid in Bangladesh

**BIANCA HASSAN**

During a parent-teacher meeting, my mother spent an unusually long time listening to unsettling words from my teacher.

I was falling behind in language acquisition; when I spoke, I was often incomprehensible and my writing was equally illegible. Little did the teacher know that I was trying to absorb two dominant realities – the foreign language spoken by my mother and the Bengali culture and Bangla practised by my father – and that it was normal for someone like me to have difficulty in the language department.

Initially, these situations create a state of confusion for many as the essence of both languages seep in unfiltered. Later on, this quality has the potential to become a strength.

For third culture kids, or TCKs, there is a constant and simultaneous oscillation between the different "places of belonging", like a pair of antagonistic muscles. The term was coined by sociologist and anthropologist Ruth Hill Useem, and can

present itself in various scenarios.

Your mother could be from one country and father from another, but you live somewhere else entirely; both your parents could be from the same place but you live in a different place; you could be born somewhere, your mother and father could be from different places themselves but you live in one of their countries of origin.

For me, the answer to "Where are you from?" becomes long and convoluted. It's one that I keep moulding. It can sometimes feel liberating, being able to shape an identity for yourself. Having an exposure to multiple philosophical, political and social perspec-

tives and the difference in values allow me to create a personal value system.

Like the cautious observer, you take conscious note of verbal and non-verbal cues. Sometimes you miss the humorous reference and have to pluck up the courage to ask someone in the group for an explanation.

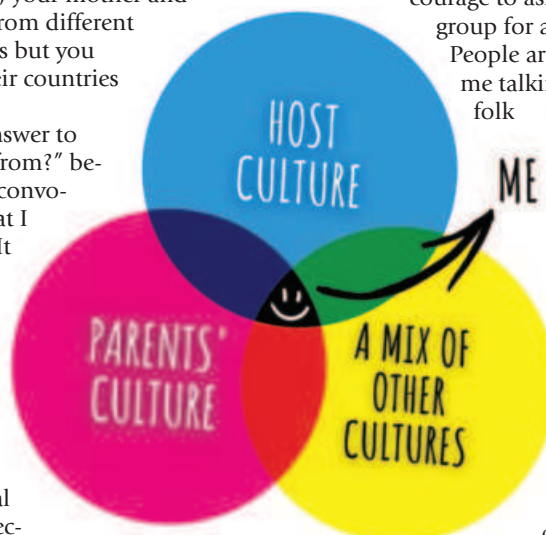
People are surprised to hear me talking about a Bengali folk singer for instance. Sometimes I forget something simple but on the other hand will know many things characteristically distinct to Bangladesh.

I will find myself gaining unique skills to demonstrate to one half of the family, almost like

show-and-tell, such as how to cut open a jackfruit, how to bargain, how to swerve through busy streets, how to wholeheartedly defend spicy food and so on. I follow the local newspapers of two countries and resort to Radio Garden to listen to my passport country's radio. When I visit my mother's country, I try to fill myself in on all the things I had missed – pop culture references, opening of a new restaurant, my aunt's new job and a new parliament bill about to be passed. I have developed a strange taste in music that can only be described as patchwork. Nearly everything else becomes a patchwork too, threads of contrasting colours woven together.

As a cultural chameleon, "home" and "identity" are tough terms to describe but they grant their own freedom and beauty and a suitcase of experiences never to be taken for granted.

*Bianca is trying to get herself going on walks in the morning. Reminder to do that at hassanbianca01@gmail.com*





# If There Were More Hours in the Day

**WAZIHA AZIZ**

Cool winter winds  
Carry stories untold  
Through cracks in my curtains.  
A quiet lovers' quarrel,  
A sleeplessly sobbing child.  
The low hum of television static  
*Mera jeevan toh hai tera saaya.*

Clocks tick in homes asleep.  
Plates clink at late dinners and  
Shutters close as shop-  
Keepers lock up before  
Turning in.  
Neighbourhood *chachas* walk  
The cemented pavement,  
An unfinished pack of death sticks in hand.  
The blare of sudden Toyotas intrudes  
Into the perpetual hush.  
The nocturnal own these streets now.

A blanketing fog dismembers  
The neighbourhood as I lay beneath  
Blankets of my own but  
I am one with it all  
The same and this winter,  
If there were more hours in the day  
I'd spend them wishing  
For less.

*The writer is a Grade 11 student of Cantonment English School and College, Chattogram.*

# Ramen Overnight

**MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL**

I believe recipes have stories in them.

You don't know how far the smell of sizzling crushed cumin has drifted to. You don't know what the whiff of freshly brewed coffee makes you remember. A slowly reduced sauce leaves behind not just red stains on your fingertips, but something else as well.

Aftertastes have afterthoughts. And afterthoughts have aftermaths.

Read in between the lines.

*A huge chunk of beef is bathed in the tanginess of vinegar and citrus.*

*The cleansing.*

*The cupboard creaks open and there are rows of jars of spices. They make their own concoction, a burst of fireworks of colors, chased with intervals of spoons of water. A paste that coats the beef and treacherously seeps into it.*

*Adding layers, nuances.*

*Put a pot on heat where more spices culminate in a pool of chicken stock. Few squirts of lime and some drizzles of soy sauce can totally change the game. Sprinkle salt and pepper as per your taste or mood. You decide. You get to be the writer, orchestrator, the director, the brain. You decide how much you can temper this.*

*The noodles have been soaked and drowned. They are now tossed into the slow-cooked broth where they swirl and dance. A nonchalant toss of blocks of tofu and onions have more leverage than one can think. Boil it up and simmer it down. Dice up sweet looking red chilies and spring onions for later. Boil an egg to your preference and cut them open.*

*The beef. You forgot where you started. Everything is all over the place, over-whelming, but you can fix this. Take the beef out of its sanctuary. The oil is heated, and the pieces of beef carefully join in. The smoke is the threshold, either you can burn it or you could get away with it. The skin on the*

*beef is just the perfect color, you turn off the heat and the temptation is giddy but the noodles wait.*

*Everything now has to be in place. The hot pot slightly burns off the flesh of your palms but it's okay. The beautiful bowl you picked up from an antique store will finally be taken off from its shelf of dust. It will look deserved and worthy now as you slowly pour in the broth and noodles and give them a good mix. Balance the generous portions of beef and bean sprout on top of it. The halves of the egg at the side will not only look good in terms of presentation but also double the flavor you packed in. The diced chilies and spring onions will loyally serve as great condiments. Everything is assembled.*

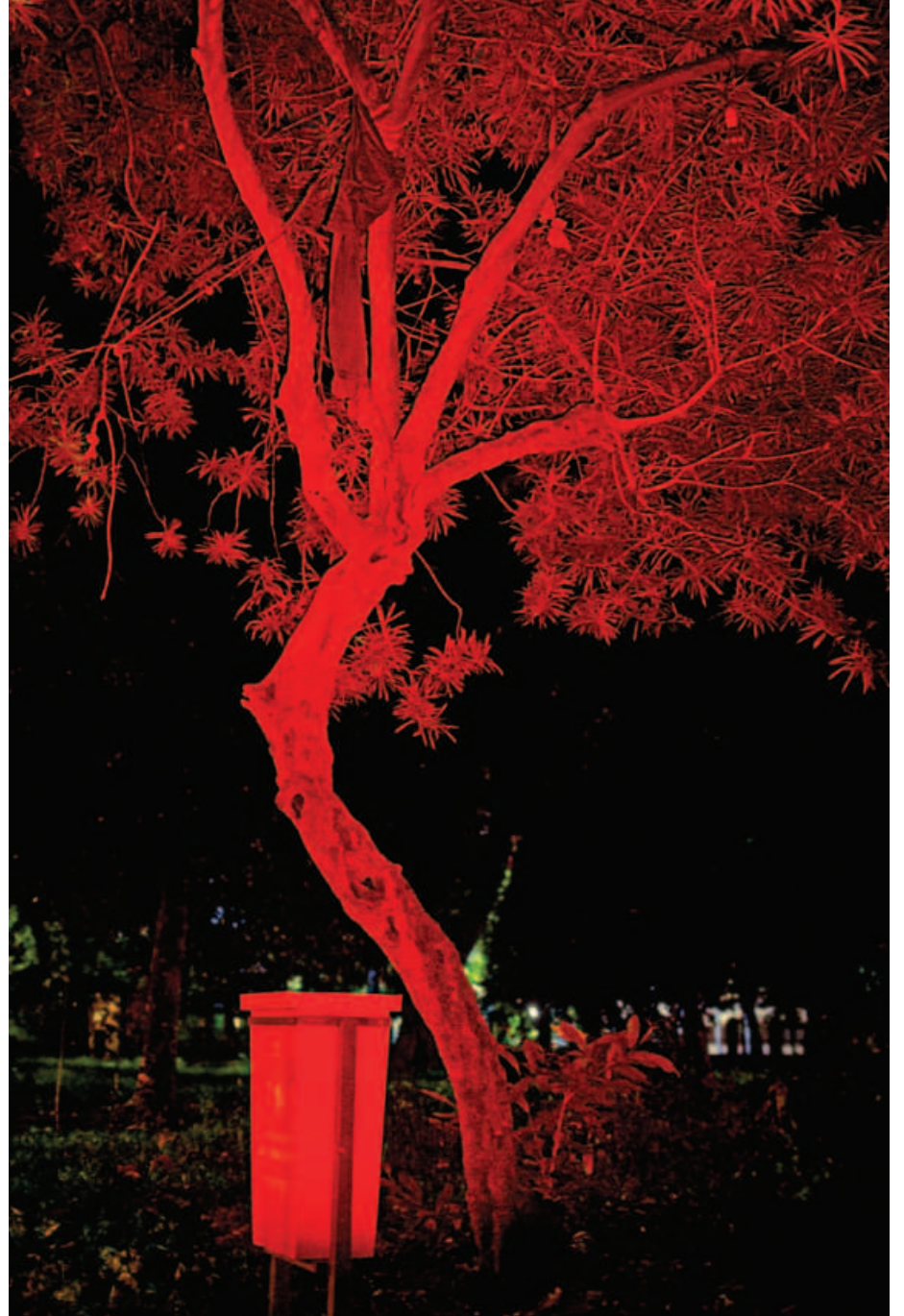
I take a look at my dilapidated kitchen. Through the small stub of a window where the ombre of hues of sunrise, that had melted away the void night, peeks in. I take a look at my tainted hands under the cold spill of water of the kitchen sink. How the hard work of everything is washed away, cleaned to ground zero. I take the bowl of steaming ramen in my hands. I can never tell in mere numbers how much time it took me to make it, to carefully craft everything layer by layer, detail by detail as per my own recipe till I could call it mine. It was the melting of thoughts, echoes and choices from one form to another that could come close to tracing the time it took me to make my own art.

Nobody was able to knock over anything into this. Nobody else had a say in this except me. It wasn't anyone else's craft. It wasn't made to cater to anyone's taste but mine.

This deeply woven tangle of ramen, cooked overnight, was only mine.

*Maisha Nazifa Kamal has lost track of time and is living in a world where she never existed. Break her reverie at 01shreshtha7@gmail.com*





# PHANTOM |

Into the night, he appears in shadows  
Stealing the laughter and cheer  
What once was light, hopeful and bright  
Darkness, they call him in fear

PHOTOS BY AANANDA ANTAHLEEN  
CURATED BY ORCHID CHAKMA

