

THE DEFINITIVE  
**YOUTH**  
MAGAZINE  
**SHOUT**

DHAKA THURSDAY MAY 19, 2022, JAISHTHA 5, 1429 BS

A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

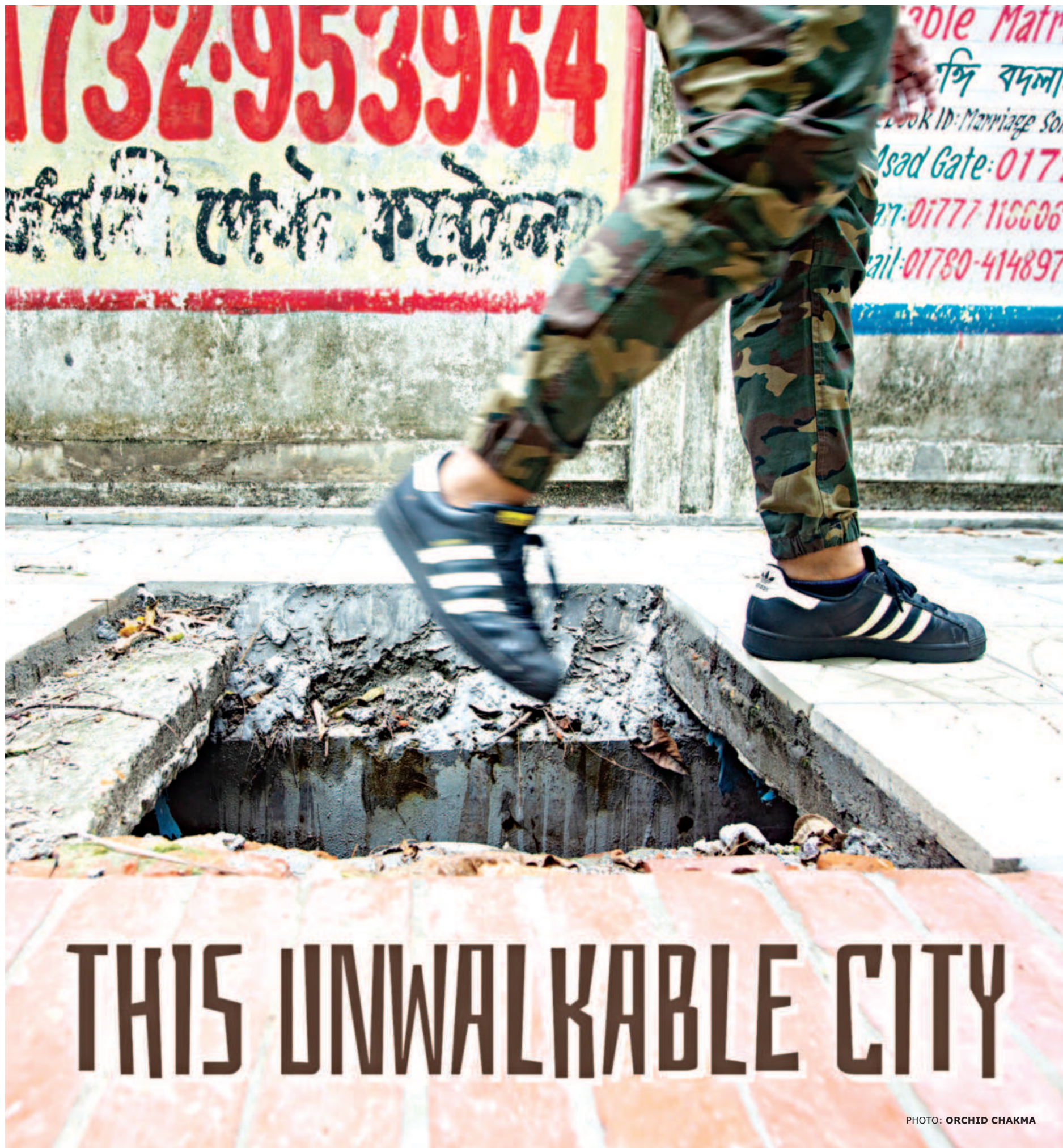


WHY I'M OKAY WITH  
LEAVING JOINT FAMILIES IN  
THE PAST

**PG 3**

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME  
FOR STUDYING ABROAD

**PG 4**



**THIS UNWALKABLE CITY**

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



# EDITORIAL

I enjoy walking, till I no longer do.

Whether it's because I need to be somewhere, or simply because I need some fresh air, walking never seems like a bad idea to me. However, every time I step outside my house, I am reminded why this city is not meant for walking.

Footpaths here are almost non-existent. Those that do exist are either occupied by tea stalls and hawkers, or have to tolerate bikers trying to dodge the morning and evening traffic jams. If not hawkers or motorbikes, I still have to be aware of uneven surfaces and open drainage lines. Because of course, something as simple as walking has to be the one of most difficult things to do in this country.

I, however, occasionally find my will to walk when I am at one of the few well-painted parks in Dhaka. Sadly, in no way does it make up for all the times I lose my desire to walk. Most importantly, the parks that are suitable for walking are not accessible to the wider demography. So, where do they go?

-- Faisal Bin Iqbal, Sub-Editor & Digital Co-ordinator, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### TV SERIES



## Is *Roar* too loud for TV or just loud enough?

**SARA KABIR**

*Roar*, Apple TV+'s latest eight-episode anthology series, boasts a stellar female cast, including A-list actors like Nicole Kidman, Cynthia Erivo, Alison Brie, Betty Gilpin, Meera Syal, Issa Rae, and more. The series showcases a collection of genre-bending stories told through these women's eyes.

Based on the eponymous short-stories collection by best-selling author Cecelia Ahern, the series is insightful, bizarre, and poignant. *Roar* promises to show an insightful and hilarious portrayal of what it means to be a woman today, featuring a unique blend of magical realism, speculative fantasy, and futuristic worlds.

From Merritt Weaver dating a duck to Alison Brie solving her own murder as a ghost, *Roar* has it all. Without spoiling the show's entire premise, let me just say, it gets weird and intense fast.

Each standalone episode is an amalgamation of all the injustices and microaggressions experienced by women from all walks of life. We see each woman go through a transitional, life-changing event, as they rage against their circumstances and attempt to figure out who they want to be. As Nicole Kidman describes it, "Each instalment is about women who either feel, or are unheard, or unseen."

Each episode title neatly summarises the following episode, leaving little space for the viewers to wonder what it's about.

The "Woman Who Was Kept on a Shelf," revolves around Betty Gilpin becoming a literal trophy wife, doing nothing but sitting on a shelf to be stared at and admired like a trophy.

In "The Woman Who Ate Photographs," Nicole Kidman finds herself con-

suming photographs from her childhood to relive and hold on to those fleeting, nostalgic memories, all while taking care of her own mother who is losing her memories from dementia.

And in "The Woman Who Slowly Disappeared," Issa Rae literally turns invisible as she starts feeling unseen and unheard in a room full of white executives trying to commercialise the trauma of her black experiences.

While the show sounds brilliant in theory, it falls short in a couple of places. The episodes tackle some hard-hitting, heavy topics, the least of which include the complications of motherhood, all-consuming nature of a toxic relationship, feminism, invisibility of race, sexual abuse, misogyny, and even death and old age. However, with discussing such heavy themes always comes the risk of not taking it seriously enough.

Following the formulaic approach to blending fantasy with reality that's reminiscent of the *Twilight Zone* and more recently, *Black Mirror*, *Roar* attempts to portray their feminist issues through a semi-fantasy lens, which can sometimes result in the plot failing to connect with the audience.

As impressive as the concept and premise are, the execution sometimes feels lacking. The show is so hell-bent on proving its self-defined role as "darkly comedic feminist fables", that it sometimes struggles to be more than just that.

With its stellar cast, out-of-the-box plots, and experimental storytelling, the show is just different enough to stand out. *Roar* is absurd, quirky, fantastical, insightful, motivating, and grotesque, but it certainly does what it set out to do – leave an impact.

### TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



**A**

Venus  
Shocking Blue

A Man Without Love  
Engelbert Humperdinck

Walk All Over You  
AC/DC

Walk on the Wild Side  
Lou Reed

**B**

Worst Of You  
Maisie Peters

These Boots  
Nancy Sinatra

'Walk  
Foo Fighters

Walking On Air  
Katy Perry

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



# Too much self-help doesn't work. Here's why.

**NOUSHIN NURI**

While browsing the shelves at a bookstore, I see *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* staring at me. Another look and I'm beckoned by *The Power of Now*. It's hard to resist the temptation to be all that these titles promise – creative, consistent, communicative.

However, how much reading do you need to be a changed version of yourself?

Spending 40 minutes watching three videos on how to stop procrastinating is a 21st century paradox most of us have been a part of. Even doomscrolling leaves us with one or two productivity hacks nowadays. But does knowing or learning about improving ourselves translate into actual improvement?

It turns out that the abundance of self-help content has led us to spend a lot more time learning about self-help than actually helping the "self" improve.

I first came across the connection between the amount of self-help content we consume and its effectiveness in one of the classics of the genre. In *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie advises us to read only one chapter of the book per day. He does so because knowing how to make friends takes as long as it takes to read the book. But making friends by implementing

what you learn takes time. Time is what we don't allow when we are in a race to read every book with an enticing future printed on its cover.

The threat of consuming without implementing is higher when the content is in bite-sized digital media. Watching one self-help video leads social media algorithms to suggest more. The thumbnail guaranteeing "a new you" is hard to ignore.

Soon, you've watched more videos in one day than what you can implement in one month. That

is how self-help crosses the border of education and becomes entertainment.

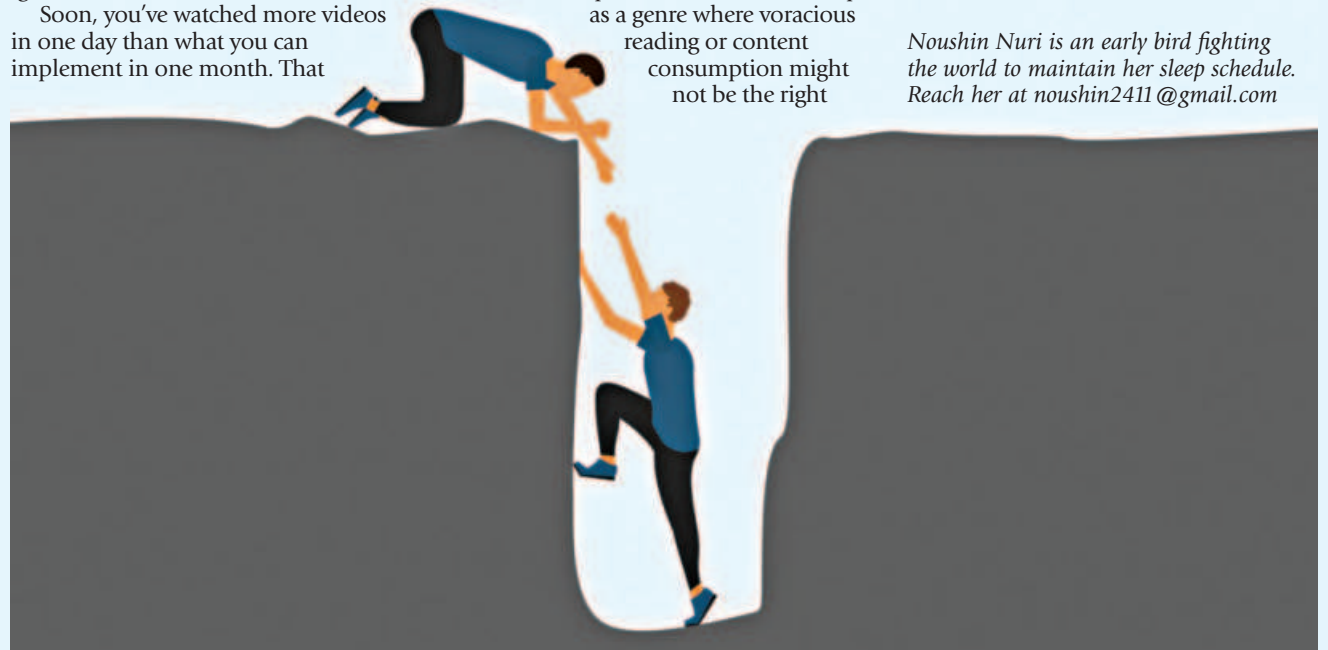
The problem with consuming self-help content as entertainment, on the other hand, is that it constantly tells us that we need to do better. However, because of the sheer volume of content we consume, it's easy to lose focus on what it is that we want to do better and end up not doing anything at all.

Perhaps we need to see self-help as a genre where voracious reading or content consumption might not be the right

answer. Consuming or reading needs to be coupled with action, and if necessary, needs to be rationed to make room for action.

While self-improvement in itself is noble and worthwhile, overdoing it can actually mar the purpose. There is no end to its pursuit. So, when you know that the finishing line will never be in sight, is there any point in going so fast?

*Noushin Nuri is an early bird fighting the world to maintain her sleep schedule. Reach her at noushin2411@gmail.com*



# Why I'm okay with leaving joint families in the past

**TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM**

Joint families (read: chaos) have been irreplaceably woven into the yarns of Bangladeshi culture, intertwining familial lives across the subcontinent with threads of love and warmth.

Every form of Bengali media, from our rich literature to the feverish Zee Bangla serials, has solidified that a family is incomplete without grandparents, uncles, aunties, and cousins residing together. Yet, joint families are slowly vanishing in the urban parts of the country. Nevertheless, as someone living in a semi-joint family, I can say that joint families dying out may not entirely be a bad thing.

First and foremost, joint families tend to engage in altruistic behaviour. The family's head gets too much of a say in everyone's life. In many cases, individual decisions are superseded in favour of collective ones. Correspondingly, you feel restrained, become hesitant, and start questioning your own beliefs and opinions.

As clichéd as it sounds, Bangladeshi families represent more of *Game of Thrones* than *Modern Family*. There's always going to be bickering going on in some shape or form. Everyone has a different opinion, and in very few cases, are they willing to agree with an alternative point of view.

Simple matters on sharing the kitchen and dining table can escalate into full-blown arguments and fights. Turns out *Star Plus* and *The Kardashians* were warning us of this all along.

Then we have matters of privacy and personal space. In a joint family, privacy is arguably non-existent, as personal issues

find a way to become the whole family's business. Aunts, uncles, and screaming children will barge in, unannounced. People will appear out of thin air and stream Facebook videos or watch *Sultan Suleiman* on full volume the night before an exam. The constant inflow of relatives and random people can feel suffocating at times, no

matter how much you love your family.

A staple of deshi culture is to make comparisons. Unsurprisingly, joint families take it to a whole other level. Constant comparison on justifiable and trivial matters can turn your cousins into combatants instead of friends, resulting in a lot of unhealthy competition and resentment, which in many cases sours relationships and creates distance. Not to mention how stressful and damaging it can be to a teen's self-worth.

Don't get me wrong, growing up in a joint family isn't all bad. Living together with your family can teach you important life lessons. Furthermore, they are a great support system and will be there for you when things get bad. Additionally, the joy of holidays gets amplified in these households.

Nevertheless, opinions regarding joint families are subjective. I'm sure many people love living with their extended families in a supportive and safe space. On the flip side, the problems you face living with your family are genuine and shouldn't be discounted.

From my experience living in a joint family, I can say that it isn't for me, and I wouldn't mind leaving the concept in the past.

*Turns out Taaseen Mohammed Islam can write semi-decently at the expense of being able to do basic math. Send him pointers at taaseen.2001@gmail.com*



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM



# Before you leave home to study abroad

AFIA IBNAT

*Going abroad to study comes with bittersweet feelings. For me, the excitement of finally moving on from my online classes after two long years of sitting in front of a computer is unparalleled.*

However, I'm also grappling with the intense emotions that come with having to leave my family, friends and my life in Dhaka behind. It's the only life I've known for two decades, and the realisation that everything will be different so soon hits hard.

I've found that there are a few vital things to do to ease this massive transition. If you find yourself in a similar position, these might help you mentally prepare.

*Friends, relatives, close colleagues, even your favourite bank teller – meet all the people you're going to miss.*

## MEET ALL THE PEOPLE YOU NEED TO

This seems fairly obvious, but hardly anything is more important. The last few days will most likely be super busy for you as you're trying to finish all your last minute shopping and packing. Amidst all the mess, you'll want to meet your loved ones and make sure to spend adequate time with them. Remember, you won't get a chance to

be with them for a while and you'll definitely regret it later if you don't make time for them now.

Friends, relatives, close colleagues, even your favourite bank teller – meet all the people you're going to miss. If meeting in person isn't possible, a heartfelt phone call will also suffice. That being said, make sure to not go too crazy because you wouldn't want to deplete your social battery.

## LAST-MINUTE BURGER RUNS

We all have something that we're really attached to that we won't get a chance to experience once we leave. For me, it's a specific burger at my favourite burger joint that nothing will ever beat because it tastes like my childhood in a patty. For technical reasons, I can only say this place has a yellow logo and is also the best burger joint in town (thank you).

It doesn't just have to be burgers, it might be your mom's special dherosh bhaji or even a park that you have made great memories in. The point is to experience it one last time before you go. Your future self will be grateful for the effort.

## FINISH UNFINISHED BUSINESS, MORTAL KOMBAT STYLE

Okay, we've all got something we've been putting off for ages. Whether it's

You don't necessarily have to repair every dissolving relationship before you go, but it's good to take the first step if you think it's important

getting all your relevant documents printed before your flight or resolving that age-old beef you've had with your friend over something you can no longer remember, it's time to put our foot down and get it done.

enough. Also, don't wait until the last moment to print your documents! Though moving away isn't easy, it doesn't have to be too difficult either. You'll miss your people, your city and the comfort of your own bed, but you'll also carve out your own little bubble wherever you go. I wish you the best of luck.

Afia Ibnat hopes that there are subtitles in Japan. Give her advice at [afiaibnat09@gmail.com](mailto:afiaibnat09@gmail.com)

# From best friends to lovers, a transition

UZAYER MASUD

*Falling in love with your best friend can be a wonderful experience. They seem to understand you without a word, and you don't have to go through the trouble of initiating a new person into your life.*

However, as someone who has long struggled with differentiating between platonic and romantic love, be assured that it can just as easily spell disaster. Given a situation where you have found yourself to be in love with your best friend, there are a couple of things you can do.

The first major question to ask yourself is if you are truly in love. It's important to make sure that you are not mistaking your liking for them as romantic attraction. There are many kinds of love out there and it is easy to mix them up. What might just be platonic love might be mistaken for romantic love.

My cautious view on the topic is not driven by pessimism but rather deep concern and empathy for the afflicted. It is too common of a situation and it is incredibly easy to get hurt to mistake one for the other.

If you are sure that the feelings you harbour for this person is indeed romantic love, then the most important thing to figure out is if you are ready for a relationship. It requires immense kindness and patience. Communication is everything. But you also need to figure out if the person likes you back.

Feelings of unrequited love may on the outside look incredibly romantic and even invoke pity for the unrequited lover. However, it is anything but easy for the person in love. If you know that there is no chance of a possible relationship, then it is simply best to move on. One-sided love can be dangerous. The one you long for will always be distant.

There are, in reality, a multitude of people you would be compatible with. Love itself is never one-sided. It is also okay if all your best friend wants to be is just that

– your best friend.

However, if you do decide to take the leap and ask them out, confessing your feelings for your best friend can be awkward. The fear that it may ruin your friendship is real. There is simply nothing you can do but to ask them out and see. People are more understanding than you might think.

If they say yes, congratulations. There are arguably very few things that are more rewarding than being in a relationship with your best friend. It is beautiful.

Uzayer Masud loves pretzels, guitars and pretending to write. Send them memes at [instagram.com/uzayermasud](https://www.instagram.com/uzayermasud)



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

# DHAKA This Unwalkable City

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

This should sound relatable – you get out at 8 AM to attend a 10 AM class, attend the two classes for the sake of attendance and by the time you start for home around lunch hour, the entire city is stuck. The bus hasn't moved an inch in the past 15 minutes and so you start walking under the heat, only to realise, there's literally no space on the road.

Whatever hint of pavement that's left is either occupied by vendors or construction materials. Standing in between a CNG and a bus, behind a queue of five people in the middle of the road as someone parkours his way over rickshaws, you realise that you, a pedestrian, is the last priority in your city's urban planning.

How people choose to move within a city is intrinsic to the quality of life in it. In a heavily vehicle-oriented era, a walkable community is considered a true, liveable one.

A walkable city prioritises its pedestrians over motorised vehicles in urban planning. "I often walk home at night after my tuition. With broken footpaths and no street lights, it makes the entire experience difficult and quite frightening," shares Eftekar Rahman Efti, undergraduate student at Bangladesh University of Textiles.

"Things get excruciatingly painful when you have uncovered manholes and drains. I fell into one of these manholes near Moghbazar one night. Thankfully, I grabbed onto the edge and somehow survived the fall but since then, I've been avoiding the footpaths in that area, taking the main road instead," he added.

The key factor impacting a city's walkability is the availability and quality of pavements. However, in Dhaka, roughly 515 kilometres of pavement are available in contrast to the necessary 2,600 kilometres. Most of the pavements are uneven, crooked or consist of uncovered drains and manholes.

If you do find a free section of pavement, chances are it'd be occupied by construction waste, litter, roadside hawkers or stalls. Inaccessible pavements force pedestrians like Efti to use main roads for walking and cause numerous accidents each year.

Another massive issue regarding the walkability in Dhaka is water congestion. The sewage drains are often uncovered or unstable.

"During rainy season, the road beside our house gets hazardous. With the roads filled up with water, you can't even see what's under your feet. You can't tell which is a small pothole and which is a manhole," explains Holy Cross College student Nuzaima Islam Arunima, adding, "With water from drains, road-side garbage and rainwater blocking the streets, I don't even know what I'm stepping on."

In areas like Mirpur, Malibagh, Jatrabari and most of South Dhaka, water conges-



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA



tion makes walking a horrendous experience and one that literally poses danger at every step.

Maximum intersections have been engineered to maximise vehicle flow and allow vehicles to take turns at high speed. However, this attempt at reducing traffic congestion negatively impacts walkability by lengthening the crossing. Most of the busy streets lack foot over-bridges and the ones available are either filthy, taken over by the homeless or deemed unsafe for pedestrians.

Efti, for example, doesn't prefer using foot overbridges because of safety concerns, especially when he's returning home at night. "I return home late and always avoid over-bridges, because it's a hotspot for muggers, pickpockets and all sorts of creeps. Even if it's a busy intersection like Moghbazar, Bangla Motor or Ramna, where there are always fast-moving vehicles, I end

up parkouring my way across the traffic rather than facing the risks of getting mugged." With pedestrians having to make choices like these, the casualties only keep on increasing. According to the statistics of the Accident Research Institute of BUET, at least 43 percent of those who lose their lives on the roads are pedestrians.

The scenario is much worse for women, like every other aspect of our country. In the crowded footpaths of Nilkhet or the deserted lanes at night, the streets of Dhaka have been nothing but unsafe for them. Be it the sickening male gazes, the fear of being groped on a busy footpath or much worse consequences reported in the news every other day, Dhaka's inability to provide a safe environment for its female pedestrians only adds to its infrastructural shortcomings.

Pedestrian amenities are viable in making a city walkable. Public toilets, benches

at regular intervals, trashcans, fair amount of greenery – these are fundamentals in creating a walkable community. The absence of trash cans is one of the most common complaints among pedestrians, especially in South Dhaka.

While a walkable city should have 25 percent of greenery, Dhaka only has five percent according to data from 2017. Inefficient street lights, lack of drinking fountains or curvilinear cuts in the footpaths for the disabled prove that Dhaka is a city designed keeping automobiles in mind although 19.6 percent of its trips are made on foot; the number is a whopping 37.2 percent in greater Dhaka Metropolitan Area.

On a quiet Saturday afternoon, those brief five minutes on Minto Road when I don't have vehicles storming up with loud horns or anxiety peeping over my head on how to cross the road, I sense a hint of pride in being a pedestrian. Walking, for countless others like me, is more than just a mere transportation alternative. It helps me look closer and comprehend this quintessential mess that is Dhaka.

I stand quietly in this urban jungle and tell myself that I was here before the chaos and the foggy dust took over. This city belongs to me, a young person.

## References

1. Debra Efti (August, 2011).
2. *Dhaka's BRT Walkability Strategy - Ensuring that Dhaka's Transportation Infrastructure is Pedestrian-Friendly*.
3. *bdnews24.com* (March 26, 2019). *Space on Dhaka walkways shrinks as shops, trees or construction encroach them*.
3. *The Daily Star* (September 30, 2019). *Why not a national footpath policy?*

Remind Ifti to be quieter at [hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com](mailto:hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com)



# Why I buy casual wear from the men's section

**AHMED NUZHA OISHEE**

Have you ever scoured the women's section at an apparel store looking for that perfectly sized denim or a T-shirt that fits you only to be disappointed? I have. When that happens, I make sure to look through the men's section. Men's casual wear has the upper hand in a few areas over women's casual fashion.

Here's what I've gathered from my experience.

## FUNCTIONALITY

It's a constant tug-of-war between what's fashionable and what's functional. Most women's denims and pants lack pockets while some have seams designed to give a "trendy" illusion of pockets. If there are pockets, they're barely large enough to accommodate anything. It's an additional hassle to have to carry a handbag to accommodate bare minimums like money, keys, and your phone. Most attires also lack functional zippers.

Feminine tops meanwhile are comparatively sheer, which proves to be a discomfort in formal settings. Menswear is more versatile. Paired with the right bottoms, casual plaid shirts, crew-necks, turtle-necks or polo shirts make clever formal wear.

## BETTER MATERIAL

Women's tees or tops can sometimes be borderline flimsy. The thin fabrics risk creasing, sweat staining or hitching up. Having to constantly pull down or adjust



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

the fabric defeats the purpose of casual attires. The fabric also deteriorates after a few washes. Cross points in my jeans appear and my tights happen to tear faster than in some of my brother's hand-me-downs.

Men's casual wear tends to be more durable. One reason being that there's a smaller manufacturing paradigm. They mostly adhere to the same kind of designs while making small tweaks for unique-

ness compared to the wide assortment of styles for women.

## COMFORT

In designs for women, comfort is often sacrificed for conventions. Women's tops typically have a flare at the chest, lower necklines and a tapered waist to fit female curves. Be it travelling in crowded transports, working or visiting family members, wearing body-hugging clothing can be uncomfortable, awkward and

movement restrictive.

Women's denims chafe skin, especially in the inseams far more than guys' jeans. Men's casual wear is slouchier and shapeless which offers better coverage while staying airy and breathable.

## SIZE OPTIONS

Buying jeans or t-shirts as a girl is never easy. Same sizes are labelled differently across different brands and even within the same brand there is little room for customisation. They're often non-inclusive to different body types.

It's fairly easier to navigate size inconsistencies in men's wear because their cuts are mostly loose fitting, straight and roomier. They're also free of constrictive tailoring unlike women's wear. I usually pick something a few sizes smaller in men's sizing in accordance to my height and waist. Bigger sizes can be pulled off as trendy oversized wear.

The men's section also has better prints, stripes and solids to choose from, at cheaper prices. You'll find a turtleneck is cheaper than a sheer cami or mesh dress. Besides the lack of functionality of women's wear, you also have to wonder why mass-produced clothing must be so harshly gendered to begin with.

*Nuzha prefers wearing T-shirts for every occasion. Send her fashion advice at nuzhaoishee1256504@gmail.com*

# Do I need to be "that" girl?

**FABIHA AFIFA**

TikTok and Instagram have been bombarding me with tips on how I can become "that" girl for a while now and I am sick of it.

If you are not familiar with the concept, being "that" girl is essentially a watered-down version of the not-like-other-girls trope. While girls who-are-not-like-other-girls sport a more traditionally "masculine" energy and may even openly despise conventional femininity, the "that" girl trope has a more subtle and traditional aesthetic. She wears makeup (but only the no-makeup look), religiously maintains a lean figure, and has the most austere, surreally perfect daily routine. Put simply, that girl "puts in effort," while making it look effortless.

On the surface, the trend might appear to be a very idealistic and conventionally feminine vision board promoting physical and mental wellbeing for women. However, if examined closely, an overwhelming sense of exclusivity lurks behind the perfect shots of matcha latte and yoga mats that go hand in hand with this aesthetic. It mutely suggests that there is a superior way to live one's womanhood and pushes for a singular way of life to be adopted by all women.

But naturally, one lifestyle does not fit all. I myself have found structure and convenience in not being an early bird, my flexible daily schedule and working on projects on the fly. It is precisely the idea of waking up and making myself a green smoothie, doing an at-home workout, taking a bubble bath and journaling all the nitty gritty details, all before the clock strikes 7, that makes me feel drained.

Although content creators promoting the aesthetic appear to be eternally energised and overly organised "girl bosses," their stifling insistence on a certain way of life certainly does not feel very empowering or inclusive.

Similarly, the aesthetic encourages a very specific model of femininity: light, dewy makeup; tight-fitting, pastel outfits; well-toned bodies, paired with a nonchalant, happy-go-lucky attitude. Nothing too edgy, nothing too "crazy."

Given our society's history of constantly policing what women should look and act like, it does not seem to be a coincidence that the viral trend pointedly supports traits that align with conventional femininity.

At this point, I should make it clear that there is nothing wrong in finding conventional femininity, or "that" girl's

lifestyle appealing and wanting to adhere to the standards set by these ideologies. It is just that the choice has to be organic and self-determined – something that can become a little difficult for young girls or women on social media platforms that are saturated by only one section of a spectrum.

Why does there even have to be a motif for women's identity?

To see femininity politicised and

advertised as a means of gaining social validation is upsetting and it is high time mainstream media, social media platforms and content creators alike start acknowledging that femininity is a spectrum and that wherever one stands, they are valid.

*Fabiha is secretly a Lannister noblewoman and a Slytherin alum. Pledge your allegiance and soul to her at afifafabiha01@gmail.com*



DESIGN: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**



# RUNAWAY

## JUAIRIA BINTE SHARIF

Typically, girls aren't supposed to go out on their own (analogy #1). I am a girl so, I am not supposed to go out with my friends, or attend any of our school programs because ours is a co-ed school (analogy #2). I don't remember the last time I saw the bare sky above my head. Wherever I look there are grey walls and ceilings. The car is too suffocating for me. Now, I have lost the intrigue of glancing at any handsome youth passing by me. I feel like no one can save me. It's an over statement but unfortunately, I cannot disregard it.

There are only a few events aside from familial functions that I have attended in my entire life. Apparently, attending family programs make me a diligent and social person (analogy #3). I am not allowed to wear a *saree*. According to the elders, I am too young to be wearing it (analogy #4). In my defence, I would like to state that this makes no sense to me. If I am too old to be wearing denims (analogy #5), how could I be too young for a *saree*?

I don't get the analogy of how wearing 4 inches high heels is inappropriate for my age and wearing sneakers with *salwar kameez* is suitable (analogy #6). Then again, I cannot appear to be boyish. I am supposed to be acting like my age. Wearing sneakers with *salwar kameez* is not boyish; wearing *saree* will make me excessively mature. I am seventeen years old, a glass half empty kind of person. My tutor tells me that it is scary how my insight to life is negative already. I tell her; the higher the expectation, the greater the fall. It scared her more than before for some reason.

Then, one day something went wrong with me. I ran away and no one knows that I stole one hour from life. I haven't had any revolutionary changes so far. It wasn't something that will leave a grave mark in my life. But I love how no one will ever know that the day happened. It's nice to own something in your life even if it is a memory.

It was a cold winter day, and we were sweating buckets despite that. Me and my friends stayed back after school, waiting for our coaching lessons to commence. It was supposed to start one and half an hour later, but most of our residences were too far from school. Most of us brought badminton kits and the game was rousing with time. I had been getting famous for my talents with the racket. I played for a solid 30 minutes before joining my pack on the abandoned benches in the playground. All of us laid back and gossiped as if we were at some party. We didn't have the privilege of throwing a party on our own so, we pretended the part.

Nancy had bought *bhelpuri* from outside by begging the guard to accompany her.

"I hate the guard," Rita rolled her eyes as she popped a *bhelpuri* in her mouth.

"No one likes him, actually not my parents even. He is sort of rude," Farina scrunched her nose; the reason maybe because the *puri* was spicy.

Far in the middle of the yard, the girls cheered.

"She plays really well," Nancy said enviously, eyeing Rosa who had been swinging about her racket in pride.

"You don't play any worse than her," Rita poked Nancy's shoulder with her elbow.

"Sana is crazy good as well," Farina said staring at me. "You should play Rosa some time. That brat needs a beating."

I was eating silently until I felt all their

eyes trained on me.

sellers outside," Nancy asked with *puri* stuffed inside her mouth. She was smiling sarcastically.

Farina sighed, "Yes, I am feeling rebellious today. Aren't you too, Sana?" Her eyes were dead set on me.

I didn't dare look back at her, "Let's do it." Nancy laughed out loud for no particular reason.

"Right, we are going out. Rita, darling,

I did that," I stepped down now trailing beside her.

"I am trying to live fearlessly here. You are welcome in my quest," she hopped to an ice cream seller and ordered a mixed scoop of every flavour he had.

I paid for the ice cream and groaned, "I do not feel welcomed."

"You have forgotten how to live, my child," she stated as dramatically as possi-



eyes trained on me.

"I can do that too," Nancy said furrowing her brows accusingly. I nod. We liked Rosa but, at times we couldn't tolerate her. She was a bit full of herself.

"Hmm," Farina focused back on her food. I thanked God quietly.

"You know what? This is too boring. Let's go out. I want to eat *bhutta*," Farina stood up huffing because the spice hadn't left her lips yet. She was a dramatic person, a bit wild. Nevertheless, I was caught by surprise at her demand.

"All of a sudden, without any reason?" Rita asked, bewildered as the rest of us.

"Do I need to have a reason to eat *bhutta*? It's winter," Farina snapped.

"Dream on. Bet you'll receive *bhutta* marks on your back when you return," Rita booed.

"I can take a *bhutta* or two," Farina shrugged.

"Yes, and you will buy them by breaking out of the school? There are no *bhutta*

pass me the bottle, my lips are on fire," Farina said as tears leaked from the corner of her eyes.

And like that, I was walking along the lake of Dhanmondi, in my school uniform as Farina savoured her hot *bhutta*. The day was windy. Farina had her sweater around her waist and I kept mine on. The water didn't appeal much to me yet, it was nice to have a change of scenery. After all, I hadn't gone to many places.

I carefully walked on the brick blockade whereas she accompanied me from the walk way.

"This is so weird. Why are we here?" I asked staring at the lake once in a while.

"You don't like it?" she kept sniffing; her taste buds were on fire. She wasn't a savoury type of person. I wondered what had gotten into her that day.

"It doesn't matter. If my family gets a gist of my whereabouts, I don't think they will let me in tonight. Plus, the guard is going to report me for fooling him. I can't believe

ble, "I am attempting to revive you. Why don't you help me already?"

"Sure," I laughed.

"I am planning on exploring the entire world and my journey starts here from the lake," she waved her hand to put emphasis on her words, "When you're tired of the world, always return to nature. No one should stop you from reaching here. Not even yourself."

I nodded my head to signify that I got her even though I actually didn't. But I didn't tell her that I knew what she meant. Because she knew it as much as me.

"I think I am going to get an ice cream as well. Just one scoop, one flavour but, it's worth it for today," I stepped up on the blockade again.

Farina smiled and we finished the rest of the ice cream and *bhutta* and anything else our money could buy.

*The writer is a student of class 10, Scholars' School and College.*



# To keep, or not to keep, that is the question

## ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Is your room overflowing with useless trinkets, making it difficult to stay organised? Are you constantly thinking about clearing out your living space so you have a neat room that brings tears of joy to your mother's eyes?

As a fellow hoarder, I understand, and I'm here to guide you through the process of clearing junk that you cannot seem to toss out.

## DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE FABRIC OF SPACE

You've worn that T-shirt you bought at a comic con too often for it to serve any purpose as a memento. All the clothes you're keeping around for DIY projects are better off being donated, because you have enough fabric to start industrially producing scrunchies.

Then again, you did make some great memories with your friends the day you

bought that T-shirt. The scrunchie business isn't a bad idea either, just in case your academics go south.

## RETHINK HOW YOU STORE YOUR STUFF

I know being a 90s kid or an early 00s kid is the centrepiece to many personalities, but you really don't need those floppy disks and cassettes. The Blu-Ray copies of Disney films have more scratches on them than a cat owner, so what's the point in saving them?

Well, you can't forget the possibility of regretting this decision upon finding someone with a collection of old school storage mediums. Throwing away old mixtapes thinking cassettes are useless may be a mistake, because Bob Dylan just doesn't sound the same on Spotify.

## TRY TO CONTAIN-YOURSELF

The serum bottles that cost you a fortune are almost too cute to throw out. The little vials of cosmetics also seem like good storage for trifles you do not own yet. However, will they fit into the matryosh-

ka doll of containers you already have? If not, consider getting rid of them.

It is a great idea, in fact, until you need to go on a trip and realise that the container would have been the perfect size for you to carry some shampoo.

## COMICS AND ILLUSTRATED STORY-BOOKS? REALLY?

Think about it, are you ever going to read them again? Even if you do, it is highly unlikely they are going to give you the same kick they did when you were young.

Keeping them is a waste of space. You are much better off giving them all to me.

## STEAMPUNK AESTHETIC IS COOL, BUT...

It's time to accept that the ancient phone you have switched out for a new one has passed on. So, unless it is a Nokia 3310 that can double as a hammer, I suggest bidding it adieu. If you have kept broken devices with the intention of deconstructing them someday, it is highly unlikely that your ventures will go further than taking out the ball of your mechanical mouse.

If you are understandably frustrated at the unhelpful nature of this guide, I would like to remind you that I too, am a hoarder for good reason.

*If you want to scream at Zabin Tazrin Nashita for bamboozling you, find her at: zabintn@gmail.com*



DESIGN:  
MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

# Should I delete this picture?

## SHADYA NAHER SHEYAM

You'd be bluffing if you said you never encountered this dilemma before. There will always be occasions when you question whether certain items of your phone's memory palace deserve to be carried into the future. It doesn't matter if you're a person who's decisive or carefree.

My decision making mechanism frequently hits a deadlock due to the fact that I'm a shameless hoarder. I think that to delete a photograph is not just to erase its presence, but also to sentence a fleeting moment of significance to permanent obscurity.

Therefore, emptying my gallery doesn't just mean deleting what is no longer important, it's about determining which memories from my past are worth keeping and how to incorporate them into my current life. And there lies the dilemma.

There is no doubting that as we grow older, we become more self-aware. We constantly prune our past, similarly to how a gardener maintains the form of an overgrown shrub. Deleting is a tedious process as it entails breaking relationships

with earlier attachments.

That being said, it's essential and may be relaxing, especially following experiences like a break-up.

For me, it's not so much the aching fingertips as it is the mental turmoil that makes this process so tiring. There are parts of our lives that we don't want to relive, and that's why closing those chapters and reading them again may be difficult. Deleting becomes more difficult when we are confronted with an overpowering mixture of emotions and anguish that is both uplifting and devastating at the same time.

Having had my life interrupted by the pandemic, even the most mundane of photographs in my gallery transported me to a distant universe during lockdowns, to a world where unmasked classmates sharing a bowl of potato wedges in the cafeteria or enjoying a cup of steaming coffee was still considered acceptable.

Certain photographs such as a group photo taken during school rag day, the last selfie taken with a loved one or even the blurry snap of city lights are tools in our arsenal to freeze time once in a while

to make sense of our world and assist us to sail through it.

One of my friends once questioned me about why I take so many images when I feel it's hard to get rid of them. I still don't have an answer. Maybe I will, when I can finally grasp why that one shot, which I took three years ago on a random November evening of a little girl playing with cats in childhood innocence, never ceases to bring me delight.

Taking a cue from Marie Kondo, I return to complete the process of decluttering my gallery. I re-examine the irreplaceable photograph; it is flawed in

every observable aspect.  
Do I need to delete it?

*Shadya Naher Sheyam attempts to live life like Ashima from The Namesake. Talk to her about Mira Nair films at sadianaharsiam@gmail.com*



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA