

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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IS UNIVERSITY REALLY THE
BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES?

PG 3

EVERYTHING WRONG
WITH THE HSC SYLLABUS
THIS YEAR

PG 4



TOO MANY BBA GRADUATES?

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

EDITORIAL

When I was much younger, I would categorize what people were studying with where they would work and what they would work with. People studying medicine would work at hospitals, and people studying aviation would work around planes. What I could never make sense of was where business graduates would work.

For a while, I thought they all worked at banks. A few years later, I realised that many BBA graduates do not work at banks.

A degree in BBA is said to prepare graduates for a multitude of executive functions in different fields. Hence, we see graduates with the same degree and training go into digital marketing agencies, accounting firms and even e-commerce companies.

However, does the BBA degree equip the students in a way that they can deal with the nuances that each of these firms and industries require? Surely the needs of a tobacco producing company and the needs of a content creating firm are not the same. So, how do the graduates evaluate the decisions they need to make to carry out the executive functions? And who takes responsibility to make up for this gap?

-- Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MOVIE



Movies from Iran: *Where realism meets elegance*

IRINA JAHAN

Everyone in the universe needs to know about my three-week binge on Iranian films and the pristine emotional depth they hold.

The movies may be agonisingly slow-paced and minimal, however, there is a reason behind their simplicity. Prior to the Iranian Revolution, filmmaking in Iran faced fewer restrictions compared to the current moviemaking climate, where directors must work around several religious mandates on music, physical interactions, and attire shown on screen.

Yet these movies are considered to be the epitome of exemplary storytelling. Allow me to share.

Ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances

One of the most popular directors in Iran is Abbas Kiarostami and, out of his expansive filmography, I took the time to watch only a few. A blatant injustice I will admit but one that I expect to overturn eventually.

My epiphany, however, comes from pinning down the character trait that is embedded in all his protagonists – novelty brought by life's predicaments. The more I pondered over his characters, the more it became apparent that extraordinary folks exist in our day-to-day life, hidden in plain sight. It could be any one of us. Only time will tell if our innate uniqueness will ever be tested and be brought out to the world.

Movies reflect reality through fiction

This may be an odd thing to say but not when we are talking about movies like *Close-Up* by Kiarostami and *The Apple* by Samira Makhmalbaf. These movies blur the lines between fiction and reality in the most captivating ways.

For instance, *Close-Up* seamlessly

zigzags the audience's attention between a courtroom scene and re-enactments of the real-life arrest of the protagonist of the film. *The Apple* tells the story of two children who are allowed to reacquire themselves with the outside world after enduring a gut-wrenching confinement of twelve years by their parents. We may lose ourselves in the immersive stories and forget that what's being shown is not always real. However, these movies captivate us because art indeed imitates life.

Existential crises can be a good thing

This will sound like a motivational speaker's one-liner but bear with me – the sun indeed rises even after the darkest nights. What prompted this painfully cheesy statement? The movie *Taste of Cherry* which carries a concept as heavy as self-harm in a way that excuses the viewers from having to sit through heavy emotional content. The most important message this movie offers is that our darkest moments can bring us to the greatest adventure of our lives but we must be bold enough to seek it.

The profound lessons I have learned from these films transcend time and culture. Nevertheless, it is an injustice to constrict them to brief descriptions. Instead, like some gallant heroine who is destined to lead others to experience the sweetness of living with introspection, I will leave this message: When in need of a heart-touching thoughtful film that may or may not leave you in tears, know that Iranian movies will never disappoint.

The writer of this article is currently recovering from the emotional override of watching too many beautiful films. Send her your thoughts and prayers to irinajahan17@gmail.com

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

Dhaka City
 Jalali Set

Phase Me
 WOOSUNG (김우성)

Gangsta's Paradise
 Coolio

Here It Goes Again
 OK Go

B

Physical
 Dua Lipa

West Coast Love
 Emotional Oranges

Let's Do This
 Hannah Montana

About Damn Time
 Lizzo

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



Is university really the best years of our lives?

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

SARA KABIR

“You are going to have the time of your life in university!”

While most people have heard these exact words before starting their university journey, throughout the last four years, I have come to the realisation that this does not ring true for everyone.

Filled with starry-eyed enthusiasm and misconstrued dreams, most young adults go into university thinking they are going to completely reinvent themselves. Students from different backgrounds and experiences come together to learn and share experiences.

For many, university is a chance to thrive outside the strict confines of parental guidance. It is their chance to go on trips with friends and make the best of

their time. But while the fast paced “university culture” might be freeing for some, it can also be quite stressful and confining for others.

The harsh reality is, for students who are trying to be financially independent, juggling jobs with studies, or have certain standards of grades for academic scholarships to uphold, the privilege of spending time with friends and joining clubs is simply a luxury they cannot always indulge in. In the Venn diagram of work, academics and social life, there is simply not enough hours in a day to do all three.

While clubs definitely help students get out of their comfort zone and meet like-minded individuals, similar connections can be made outside of these. Most freshmen feel like they will be missing out by not being able to establish the

wide-forming connections through clubs. So, they fall into the peer pressure trap and end up joining half a dozen clubs and regret it later once the workload hits.

Our passions and our motives in life can easily change as we grow, and it is only natural that the degree someone choose as a teen might not be their passion anymore as a young adult. Switching to a subject that genuinely sparks interest can be quite hard, considering the taboo and shame that society puts on quitters. Learning to prioritise your own happiness and passion is hard, but it is a necessary step in truly enjoying the years you spend in university. Not everyone will spend exactly four years in university; some will spend less and others will spend more, and that is okay.

If university is supposed to offer the best

years of your life, then does that mean the rest of your life is all downhill from there? The “college experience” is a very romanticised, glamorised concept, but in reality, it is just one season in our lives.

At the end of the day, university is simply what you make of it. Amidst the chaos of academia and the bustling campus life, some find themselves, while others use it as a stepping stool for bigger dreams.

Reinventing oneself doesn’t have to be confined to the boundaries of university. There is no definitive timeline, no one size fits all. Everyone has their own paths in life and university is simply one of the many hurdles we have to pass on our way.

Sara Kabir is a dreamer, a literature major, and a writer. Share your university experience with her @scarletfangirl on Instagram.

What your ancestral home really says about you

NAHIAN NAWAR

You introduce a new friend to your Mom. After the initial exchange of greetings, your mother makes polite enquiries about your friend’s life, about things like where they live, what their parents do, how many siblings they have. All was going well. And then, out of the blue, she asks the dreaded question.

“Where is your desh er bari?”

The energy in the room shifts instantly and everyone stands quietly for a moment; the distant chirping of a cricket fills your ears.

“Barishal,” your friend finally replies, with an awkward smile. Your mother’s face breaks into a frown of disapproval, but she chooses to stay silent for now. Over the next few days you lament a friendship that ended before it could even begin.

Growing up in a Bangladeshi household means that you must have come across a parent, a grandparent or at the very least a

distant relative, who is prejudiced in some way against people who belong to certain parts of the country.

“People from Noakhali are all cunning and selfish.”

“Why do ‘Barishailas’ always have to be so aggressive and hot-headed?”

“Never met someone from Tangail who wasn’t a miser.”

The list of stereotypes goes on.

While no one knows how these stereotypes came to be in the first place, to most of us young people it is clear as day that there is no factual basis to any of them. Judging a person’s entire character based on their ancestral home is narrow-minded and regressive. Yet, the older demographic

of Bangladesh seems to be in no hurry to unlearn these biases.

Whenever young people, myself included, overhear the elders in the family making derogatory remarks about a person because of their place of origin, we tend to laugh it off or ignore it altogether. After all, none of this usually impacts us personally. But in some cases, parents or guardians take it a step too far when they start to impose their preconceived notions onto their children.

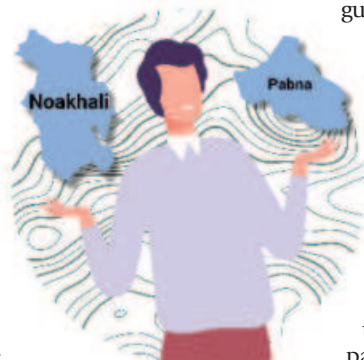
I witnessed this first-hand when a family friend of mine confided in me that she was worried about how her family would react when she told them about her long-term partner, since he came from Cumilla, a place her parents

told her to be wary of. Her worst fears were confirmed when the parents did in fact react unfavourably, asking her to rethink her decision simply because he belonged to Cumilla.

Instead of making light of the issue when our loved ones make such absurd generalisations, it will prove more fruitful if we try to engage in constructive conversations to help them acknowledge the irrationality of these claims.

While they may be unwilling at first due to years of social conditioning, patient and persistent efforts on our part can surely bring about positive changes. Maybe one day they will finally see that as Bangladeshis we are all the same in essence, united by our mutual love for summer fruits and our hatred for people who talk too loudly in elevators.

Nahian Nawar is a slow reader and a fast eater. Teach her how to change her ways by reaching out at nahiannawar.dhk@gmail.com



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

The grief of losing a skill

NOUSHIN NURI

When I find myself sliding into the endless pit called writer's block, I turn to prolific writers. One of them is Emily Dickinson, who left an oeuvre of 2500 poem manuscripts — most of it written without any incentive of getting published.

Perhaps to compensate for the perceived impossibility of publishing, women during those times used to hand-sew their poems into thin bundles called fascicles. Emily did so, too. But at one stage, she writes,

*Don't put up my thread and needle —
I'll begin to sew
When the birds begin to whistle —
Better stitches — so —*

Dickinson grapples with the fear of losing her stitches, possibly due to her eye disease that restricted working up close. She feared a distance with her thread and needle.

Undoubtedly, her most passionate art was poetry and sewing, perhaps a secondary hobby that aided the preservation of her poems. Yet, an autobiographical reading of this poem reveals her fear of losing this skill and the ensuing torment that led her to hem words into verses of sorrow.

My aunt too had put down her thread and needle. Anyone visiting her house can't help admiring the paint-

ings lining her living room walls. They are beautiful from a distance but only upon closer inspection with squinted eyes does one make this surprising discovery — the vivid sceneries are not creations of brushstrokes. My aunt had the talent of capturing intricate vistas of flowers, butterflies, diverse foliage, honey bees, vines, and much more with minute stitches of thread and needle on canvas.

Whenever I visit her, I take one of those artworks and brush the tips of my fingers through the textured stitches of decade-old thread. My aunt brims with pride as I do. But I also trace the shadow of a wistful smile reminiscent of the youthful leisurely days. When my first cousin was born, she was busy embracing motherhood and couldn't even tell when her craft left without saying so much as a goodbye.

As my hands slowly sweep the stitches, I feel tactilely connected to my own sense of loss. I remember the textured rubber surface of a basketball against my palms. It brings back the afternoons we spent throwing the ball from different points, polishing our lay-up shots and fine tuning the force of our chest passes. When the heat of the game had worn us out, we sat with legs stretched and gulped lemonade with basil seeds. The view in front of us featuring the

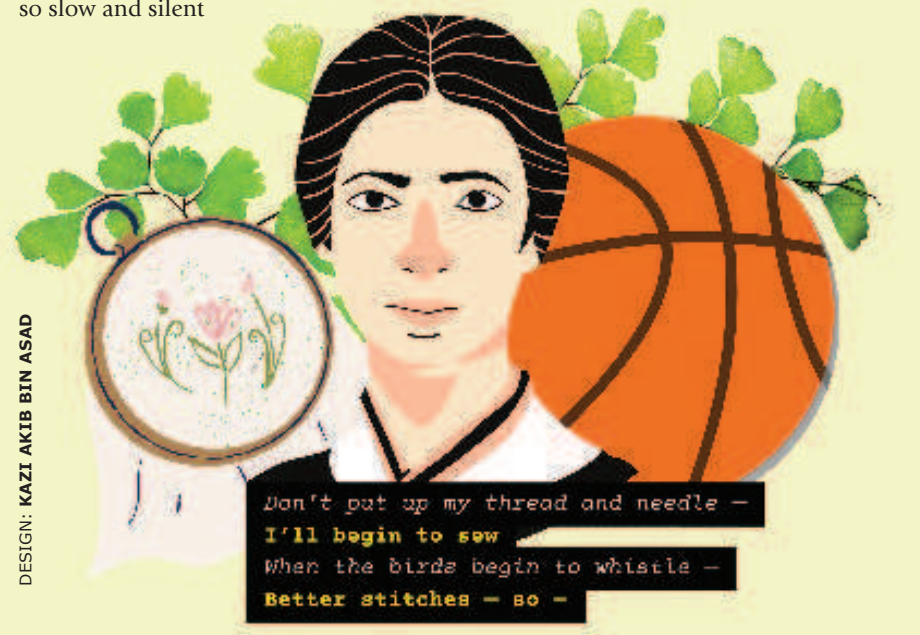
setting sun — an orange ball sliding down the hoop.

Nowadays, I see my passing out of cadet college as the symbolic sunset of my journey with basketball. With the benefit of hindsight, I can find a dozen excuses to explain away my insincerity towards holding on to the game. But none of it fills the nostalgic hollowness I feel when I come across an Instagram story of the lofty hoop hanging against the sunset sky.

Some departures are so slow and silent

that we don't even notice that it's taking place. The busy days prolong. We put down our thread and needle. And one summer afternoon, we realise the pastimes we once took pride in have become glass-enclosed relics in the museums we carry in our heads.

Noushin Nuri is an early bird fighting the world to maintain her sleep schedule. Reach her at @noushinnuri on Instagram.



DESIGN: KAZI AKTIB BIN ASAD

OPINION

Everything wrong with the HSC syllabus this year

NADEEMAHAFROSE MONDOL

The HSC exam is only a few months away and the government has already published a curtailed syllabus for this year's pandemic-affected students. Being a candidate myself, I can't help but point out some serious issues regarding short syllabus.

Although the intention of publishing the new syllabus was to reduce the workload for students, it didn't end up being as convenient as it was supposed to be.

The first problem I observed while going through the short syllabus was selection of the topics. Being a Science student, I noticed that I had to put the same effort in finishing the short syllabus of every subject as I would have to in finishing the whole book. The reason being, there are some chapters that are left out but are deeply related to the topics that are included in the syllabus. For example, Newtonian dynamics isn't included in the shortened syllabus for Physics, but Newtonian mechanics is. With the whole concept of Newtonian mechanics based on the laws of dynamics, it did not quite make sense to exclude one chapter and include another.

Looking at it from a different angle,



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

there are some essential topics of every subject that a student has to have some knowledge about. For instance, safe use of laboratory equipment is an inevitable topic for a student willing to study Chemistry. This chapter also includes different types of reagents and their uses. But this is not included in the short syllabus, meaning that the students will move forward with vague ideas about the risk

factors and the necessary precautions at a Chemistry lab.

In the case of Biology, the chapter on reproduction is excluded, which was the only chapter that had information about sex education. Many teachers are already uncomfortable enlightening students about this topic; excluding this from the syllabus has taken the concept of having problematic ideas towards sex education

one step further.

Flaws like these in this year's syllabus are creating hindrances for students trying to prepare efficiently for their exams.

There is confusion over what and what not to study because it's still unclear if university admission tests will be held based on the shortened syllabus or not. Most importantly, their knowledge about every subject remains ambiguous. On top of that, the exclusion of ICT subject from the short syllabus seems hysterical in this technological era.

I asked some of my friends who are from the Business Studies and Arts group about their syllabus and they have similar problems and dilemmas regarding this. One of them also referred to the fact that teachers tend to repeat questions from previous years' exams. With a shortened syllabus, it's difficult to surmise if those patterns will hold this year. All of these issues are causing more stress in taking preparation and the short syllabus doesn't end up being helpful at all.

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

Too many BBA graduates?

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY & SYEDA ERUM NOOR

For a long time, many were under the impression that a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program was a safe haven for anyone who didn't quite know what else to do. Due to its popularity and the growing rate at which the universities are churning out graduates every few months, we now wonder, could there possibly be too many BBA graduates?

In universities across the country, undergraduate courses in the BBA curriculum often have the highest number of sections and even then, people enrolled in the program struggle to register for their desired courses due to lack of availability, signifying the growing number of people opting for a BBA degree.

While there may have been some truth to the assumptions behind why some students ended up opting for BBA, in recent years, many are going into this knowing what they want.

"I was always passionate about accounting," says Anna Alam Daniala, a BRAC University graduate, currently a trainee at Data Path Limited. "Ever since school, I was decent at math and I decided right then that finance and accounting was the way to go."

The same is true for Shahrear Ahmed, International University, Bangladesh graduate and HR & Admin Executive of Asian Automotive Limited. "It had always been my dream to work in the corporate world. BBA was the first step towards that," he says.

Gone are the days of ambiguous teens wandering into university without a plan or programs chosen by parents rather than students. Right?

"I honestly have no idea why I did it," laughs Rehnuma Ahmed, a student at North South University (NSU). "I had no intention of studying BBA. I'm passionate about teaching and after my internship, I quickly abandoned that route."

Regardless of how students ended up there, when we talk about the transition from student life to work life, our graduates had a lot to say about the matter. As always, it is important that we take the time to assess our education system and whether they're preparing us for the real world.

"It was a massive setback," explains Bushra Tabassum, a recent NSU graduate. "I had to learn most of everything from scratch. Sure, there were some similarities in the terminology but I was woefully unprepared."

While some agree that this is the case, Shahjada Aswad, a recent Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka (IBA, DU) graduate, has slightly varying opinions.

"I felt somewhat prepared," Shahjada explains. "While the BBA curriculum did help me, I think it was the ECA, such as business competitions, that did a better job of preparing me to enter the workforce."

Human Resource (HR) executives

have had similar thoughts while recruiting and training the newly hired business graduates.

"We had to train the new hires from scratch. We held seminars and gave personal training for their work as well as for getting used to the office culture. However, some of the graduates did not possess the skills they should have acquired by the time they graduate such as communication, teamwork, and leadership," says Md Sadman Uzzaman, an HR personnel and a BBA graduate himself.

"A business degree can be valuable only if the student receives proper training alongside the theories taught in class. It also depends on your pro-



fessor's teaching style, as well as what you do with the guidance given to you," he adds.

There is a growing number of organisations that give preference to engineers over BBA graduates for positions that require a bachelor's degree. At this rate, a BBA degree might become obsolete if not updated to meet the requirements of the workforce.

When asked about this phenomenon, Sadman says, "Technology has now become an integral part of business. A lot of BBA graduates lack 'tech fluency', giving engineers who do have the knowledge and the skills to implement that knowledge an edge over those who don't."

Earlier this year, Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni stated that students can learn a lot through diploma and certificate courses.

However, the job market's practices do not align with the statements mentioned above. Nearly all office jobs require a Bachelor's degree for application. As a matter of fact, many organisations even expect a Master's degree for entry-level jobs, making it the next logical step for undergraduates entering the corporate world. This trend is an ominous sign of an abundance of unemployed or unhappy MBA graduates in the country in the near future.

With the collective concern for the BBA program and what it lacks, students and graduates had a lot to say when asked what they would change to

make it better.

"Cut down on the GEDs for sure. We waste so much of our time on courses that don't add any real value to the knowledge we need," comments Rehnuma.

Others suggested that these unnecessary courses should be replaced with more useful courses, such as more structured datasheet and presentation courses and the development of soft skills.

"We lack in-depth technical skills in areas such as statistics, analytics, coding, and operating software. Other soft skills such as teamwork and people skills are far more handy than theoretical knowledge," lists Anna.

application and real-life experience as opposed to theory.

With all this dissatisfaction with the program among students, we then bring our attention to the next challenge they have to face — endless competition.

There is no question that with this influx of students flowing into the workplace, finding jobs is becoming increasingly difficult. When asked about the experience with competition when hunting for internships and jobs, we hear some mixed opinions.

"Here, it feels almost impossible without a reference," explains Rehnuma, further expanding on Bushra's statements of a toxic workforce. In an industry where connections are often more useful in getting a job than skills, one has to wonder what that means for students and the dangerous world of politics they're stepping into.

While most agree that it took some hunting before they were able to get a job, some disagree. Wasema Rahman Sreya, recent IBA, DU graduate, says that while she isn't currently working, she didn't find it very difficult to get a job.

"While there is a lot of competition, in a country like Bangladesh, with its population, I think that would be the case for any field," she comments.

It's clear that a certain level of dissatisfaction exists with the BBA programs offered in the country. Lack of preparedness for the workforce, an outdated curriculum and shortage of job opportunities were some of the major concerns of business students and graduates.

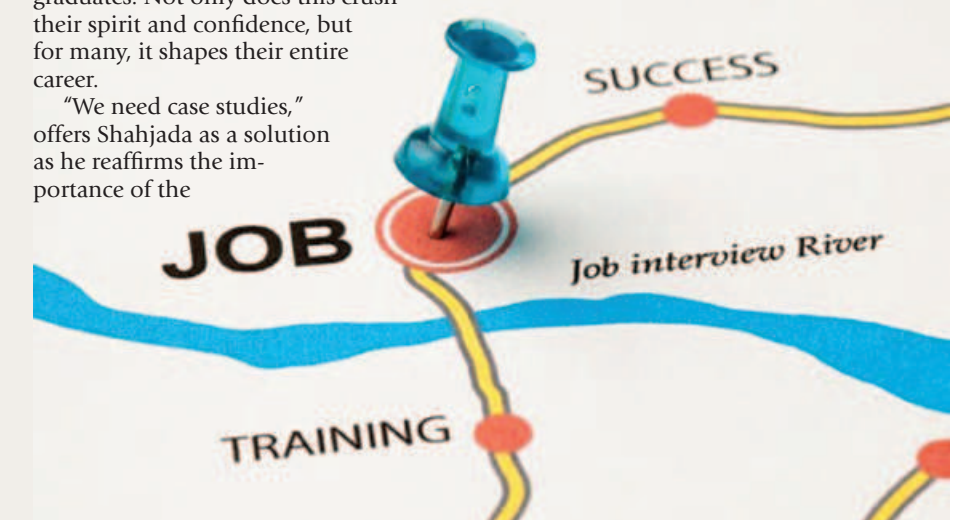
With the growing number of BBA graduates in the country, we must ask ourselves if this path truly benefits the students, or only the institutions that offer the program.

Reference

The Daily Star (February 25, 2017). *Achieving our higher education targets.*

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Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com



The aftermath of turning hobbies to hustle

TAJREEN TABASSUM NUSHBA

Last year, I opened an Instagram business art page after I'd been told by many friends and family that my art was good enough to be sold and admired. However, after every upload, the dread of seeing declining numbers became a stormy sensation anytime I viewed the little activity bar on my profile.

Despite the fact that I have sold some paintings, my page is now a ghost town packed with expired ambition and stale delight. Continuing with your art, be it music or illustration, after successfully monetising it, seems to be a turning point for a lot of people.

Since my scale of success is relatively small, I have reached out to people who have turned their beloved hobbies into successful commercial ventures to truly understand how this journey pans out.

Noushin Nuri is a business student and content creator, making funny and informative videos for her 41k followers online. Noushin began filming herself speaking on a variety of social issues with no aim of commercialising the videos. However, once her videos started gaining popularity, her ship of creating monetised content had set sail. The growing popularity brought with it an unforeseen new element that changed her outlook on her work.

When asked about how the tangible scale of success had impacted her, Noushin shared, "The number has affected me more than it should have. I have always been used to having a small group of friends. So, suddenly having thousands of people watching me online made me overwhelmed. I started double-guessing

before posting every video just because of the sheer number of people. The follower-count really had a bad impact on my content creation."

As for creating videos, Noushin added, "I decided to take a break because of the pressure. The break still didn't come to an end."

This turning point right in the middle of a success story does not seem to be an isolated incident. Afrida Mehzabin, an artist, filmmaker, and illustrator, encapsulated this same issue, and said, "When my first-ever animated film won the first prize at an international platform, at that moment I kind of felt like my work was a success. It did, however, put a lot of pressure on me. After my second film, I got into this huge artist's block for one whole year. But now I'm slowly trying to work it out."

An artist's block, or any form of creativity block, is something one faces in their lives at some point in time. But this form of block can most likely be attributed to a disillusioned sense of expectation, be it from within ourselves or the expectations others might set on us. Any level of success brings a spotlight on your work, putting it under the scrutiny of all of your viewers.

With so many eyes on your work, it's natural to overthink and second guess yourself before presenting something new

to the public. It is easy to fall prey to the anxiety of having to recreate success at every turn. The need to present consistently good work combined with the constant pressure to one up yourself creates a cycle of inflated expectations that truly robs us of the joy our hobbies initially gave us.

The inspiration that started our hobbies, whether for our own gratification or for a greater cause, becomes buried in the tangled complexity of exaggerated expectations and judgement.

Juggling our own motivations for working and others' outlooks of our work becomes a challenge, leading the two to become juxtaposed.

Afrida articulated, "I feel like people expect more of me now and I'll never be able to meet their expectations. I try to keep the pressure off by reminding myself that I do art for myself, not to meet people's expectations."

Furthermore, as an artist, putting aside what we want

to work on in order to meet the demands of commissioned work might cause us to lose sight of what it was that drew us to our interests in the first place.

Whether turning any and every interest of ours into a hustle is the right thing for us, is an entirely different conversation. Ultimately, whether we choose to monetise our hobbies or not, the aftermath of that decision is something we have to

deal with. Like most things in life, this is a double-edged sword. The affirmation of a measurable level of accomplishment, as well as the benefits of commercialisation, may help us solidify our relationship with our interests. Additionally, it may even give us new perspectives that we otherwise would not have attained.

"Content creation helped me understand our society a lot better since my content centred on social topics. I also mastered some skills like script writing, video editing, and thumbnail editing. I learned some stuff about the algorithm, too. None of these would have happened without content creation," shared Noushin.

Nevertheless, we have to cut ourselves some slack when we eventually get overwhelmed. Afrida imparted some advice she wishes she could give her younger self, "I'd probably say that never be hard on yourself and just go for what your heart wants. Also, ask for money in advance."

An artist's block is not something to be feared, just how commercialising a hobby is not something to dread. Prioritising our mental well-being while not losing sight of our original motivations, coupled with juggling the ups and downs of our creative pursuits are some of the prime factors in gaining success without compromising our true selves.

It may be difficult, but achieving this balance can allow us to continue doing what we love without jeopardising ourselves in the long run.

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



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



Melancholy

MASHIAT RABBY SADAT

The winter has seized my heart,
I can only hear the silence around me now!

I ask myself,
Have I become desperate for company?
Or am I slowly losing myself
In the cage of melancholy?

Have I had enough?
Or do I have to have more?

Why does the past still call me
On the number of my mind?

And lord!
Why does the time remain so blue all the time?

Couldn't it be a little bit merrier sometimes?

Woe!
I never saw any snow in my state,
But all hearts are frozen here;

All men broken
And all women dead!
Is it just me and my buried melancholy?

Or is it the reality?
The harsh, the dark, the cold!

The writer is a student of Development Studies at the University of Dhaka.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

GOOD NIGHTS

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

Every night as the clock struck 03:30 AM, I opened my eyes and saw a streak of light on the floor facing the northwestern window. It remained the same garish red it was each time. The day had not yet begun, the security light not yet put out.

Untangling my limbs from the knots they had formed with the weathered quilt, I attempted to straighten them. But couldn't. I cursed my memory for betraying my sleep addled mind once again as a dull ache began to spread across my lower abdomen. It always began like this. A small pinching sensation on the left.

In the early days, I had naively believed that pressing my pillow to the area could end it. But the truth was, no matter how much I tried to forget it, there was no escaping it. Slowly but surely like clothes being pulled down to the murky depths of a stream, weighed down by the water that seeped into them without their consent, the pain overcame me.

I tossed and tumbled with it, flailing my arms and legs in despair. My attempts to shake it off becoming not just desperate but necessary: almost as crucial as breathing itself. But all was in vain. I knew it, as did you.

It was in those moments of sheer helplessness that I best sensed your presence. While counting down from one thousand, I imagined each of my whispered digits fell in perfect sync with your nearly imperceptible steps. As I thrashed and fought, I fancied that the hushing in my ears was not the trapped air being circulated mercilessly by the overhead fan but your voice, paradoxically

both gentle and savage, telling me it would soon be over.

I don't hold it over you, you know. I realise you are not the kind to make empty promises or coax someone out of their misery with white lies. At the time I deluded myself into thinking I was suffering from Stockholm syndrome, falling for a cruel captor who denied me respite. But that really wasn't it. It was I who was holding you prisoner. Romanticising you, believing that you were someone or something within my grasp just so I could think, even for a second, that this miserable, horrible ache that became one with my body every night was something I could be rid of.

As the last of the pain abandoned me and the red light suddenly vanished from its spot on my floor, I reluctantly let go of you and let a new day begin.

I wondered sometimes why I never pulled the drapes on the window closed all the way. However, I never strove to answer this silent inquiry because, the truth is, I did know why. Make of this what you will, but I saw it as a ritual. In the midst of the uncertainties and intrigues that ruled reality, this was the one constant thing in my life. A visit from you was something that I even looked forward to. And perhaps the thread of red, the sliver of opening was my way of beckoning you.

But I realise now how foolish it all was. The foolish hopes of a foolish girl who was in love with you. Or rather, the idea of you. Of death.

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





BOXES

Paradoxes, people in boxes
Boxes that go after boxes
Long boxes, small boxes
Round boxes, tall boxes
People with boxes, paradoxes

PHOTO BY PRONAB NATH
CURATED BY ORCHID CHAKMA

