



Is university really the best years of our lives?

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

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“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.

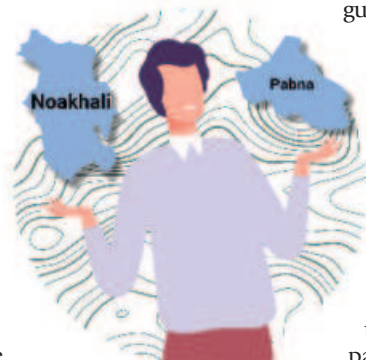
I witnessed this first-hand when a family friend of mine confided in me that she was worried about how her family would react when she told them about her long-term partner, since he came from Cumilla, a place her parents

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.

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