



DESIGN: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

The diary of an inflation-hit newlywed in Dhaka

SANJOY KUMER BARMAN

With the prices of daily essentials reaching new heights, sustaining a life in a metropolis as competitive and as expensive as Dhaka comes with new challenges every week.

Being an unemployed newlywed only adds to the list of struggles that every new couple faces. Speaking from experience, life for me was much simpler before the world was consumed by the dreadfulness of the coronavirus pandemic. I only had to ensure that I had enough to cover my room's rent of around BDT 5,000, fuel for my bike, and food, which cost me another five grand.

With freelance opportunities often presenting themselves, acquiring the basic necessities was definitely easier in the past. Not only did freelancing cover my daily essentials, but the amount I earned also sufficed for small trips or other such recreational luxuries every now and then.

However, after inflation hit the country, keeping up with rent, food, and other utilities has become almost absurd within the income we generate as a family, despite my wife holding a decent job.

Staples such as rice, which used to cost us about BDT 60 a kilo, now are being sold for almost BDT 100. Being able to get all the items that my wife puts in her grocery list within our budget has been next to impossible for the last three months.

Just last week, after paying all our EMIs, rent, and utility bills, we were left with just around BDT 4,000 to cover my wife's travel expenses to work and other personal small but necessary expenses, such as mosquito repellent.

With the prices of fuel and essentials skyrocketing, and only one person having a fixed monthly income, we are compelled to choose less healthier food options while also suffering from health complications in turn with nothing left for medical emergencies.

While I am sick and tired of waiting for my turn in job interviews for permanent positions, consultancy payments have also been reduced due to foreign funds being cut down.

On top of that, salary increments are becoming a myth in a nation where the graduation rate beats employment opportunities on a regular basis. Employers simply don't feel the need to do anything to keep their existing workforce happy.

While we continue lingering on the small savings from before, despite being young and in love, my wife seems to have given up on her dreams. Sacrificing small wishes, like getting a small one-pound cake for my birthday, also seems like a big financial blow on her salary account.

Meanwhile, theft and other mishaps only adds to her disappointment.

I still remember my mother-in-law's words from our wedding day – you two are young, educated, and earning. You will build a good life together. However, our present seems to be in completely misalignment with her prophecy.

Even though we made the decision that we were ready for this institution as mature adults, it seems that we have to stop weaving dreams that are now "too big" and "far beyond our capabilities."

The writer is a disappointed young graduate, struggling to cope up with the challenges of life. You can share your comments with him at sanjoybarman996@gmail.com.

Treating life as a transitional period

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

"Baba, you can play all day and night as soon as your exams end."

"Just bear with it four more years and you will be set for life at a good university."

"Wear that dress after losing a few kilos."

Every single one of us has come across some form of this talk growing up. An unfortunate majority have heard them frequently from a very young age.

We are connected to our friends, family, and acquaintances 24/7 via the internet. We learn about their accomplishments as they happen. We feel a subtle sense of inadequacy.

"The hustle" and "grind" are terms we've all heard. The internet is full of "motivational speakers" of questionable credibility. A retreat to the bookstore to seek refuge from this madness greets us with shelves full of "self-help" books with haunting titles.

One of the many unfortunate effects of this culture is feeling obligated to treat our lives as a transitional period. Meaning that we set goals, and up until the said goal is achieved, we don't "live" life, we spend all our time and energy toiling and yearning.

Accidentally having some fun is met with very unfun feelings of guilt and

fear of failure.

Another form of this is being so consumed by ambition and desire to succeed we lose sight of our happiness and physical and mental needs at present. We live an unbalanced life that is detrimental to our long-term well-being.

A characteristic of this phenomenon is that the current goal feels like the most important thing for our future happiness. Just get this one thing over with, and then I will live my life to the fullest. I would name it the "one more episode effect", because it does not end till the show is over.

A surprising positive of this effect is that simply being aware of it is a lot of progress towards overcoming it. Now every time you feel the need to put everything on pause till you achieve a new goal, you will realise that you are doing it again.

Then, we can take a moment to reflect on how important it truly is. Is it pivotal to our academics or career? How much time and effort does it actually require on our part? How much can we give while saving some time for our own enjoyment and sanity? This can help us prioritise and prevent us from overcompensating.

Burnout is a common result of spending years as a transitional period. It makes it difficult and makes you miserable to remain where you have gotten yourself through years of toiling. It is worth considering that success that comes at the expense of your personal happiness is equally strenuous to maintain.

Being mindful is easier said than done.

But wouldn't we rather try than look back midway through life and realise we left our best years behind, never truly aware of how happy we could have been?

Life does not start with the end of an exam, job interview, or emigration abroad. It has already started and you are in the middle of it. There is no pause button, live it as it plays or you will miss it.

Amrin's confusion is at its peak, she's been screaming internally for a while now. Send help at amrinrafa@gmail.com

DESIGN: **FAISAL BIN IQBAL**

