



Journaling in times of turbulence

NOUSHIN NURI

"Do you sometimes think that the world is unfair?" This is a question I know I will never get a satisfactory answer to. In fact, I would get no answer at all because I always pose this question to something that never answers, only absorbs – my diary.

Stories hide in the creases and corners of these questions. The asking of such a question is followed by the unfurling of events, be they momentous or mundane, and the unloading of thoughts that creep at the back of our minds while we're reading, talking to a friend, buying coffee, or staring at the sky. Sometimes, my entire head is filled with such thoughts.

But as the accounts of my journals suggest, few thoughts are as dramatic as the ones I had on December 7, 2022.

Shots were fired, and a man was killed. That night, it was in Paltan. Tomorrow, it could just as well be at my university, Dhaka University – the cauldron mixing politics, youth, and recklessness. I had no way to avoid going to university the next morning, as I had an important presentation. The uncertainty of the moment made the odds of getting caught up in a gunfight or a bomb blast seem much higher than it actually was.

It felt as if sitting and anticipating danger was not practical, especially with a presentation looming the next day. But my head was too heavy with daunting thoughts to take in anything else. With my parents already asleep by 12 am and my friends perhaps busy with their presentation preparations, the only place where I could shed the burden was a notebook.

The ink transferring from pen to paper was symbolic of my anguish oozing out from my head through my fingertips. It was liberating. Having your thoughts transferred to somewhere more tangible helped make sense of the mess. The chaos is under control, at least momentarily.

The presentation did get cancelled soon after. Not having to prepare for it opened up the window



to sink into a similar time from the past.

Not very long ago, in March 2020, I feared having to go to university and expose myself to a deadly virus. The contamination in Bangladesh hadn't even been confirmed but the deadline of the virus was increased manifold by my pessimism. However, these realisations are the benefits of hindsight.

Back in 2020, there was no way of knowing how things would turn out. My journal entries from those days are the blackness of confusion, uncertainty, and despair against the disturbing whiteness of a blank future. Reading them assured me that despite the hysteria racking our brains, turbulent times eventually pass. More than the hope of better times, what comforted me was reading through what I had experienced in the past.

As I held the stack of journals against my palms and flipped through my days, it felt as if I had summoned my past self to console the present. It often feels like the years are passing by too fast. Journals are my way of preserving time and retrieving sand-like memories blown away by a busy wind.

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Sunset Studios is making Bangladesh's first "anime-style" project

"It is a very personal project to me and I want to make sure that all aspects of it are preserved," said Irfan Chowdhury on his duties as a director.

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

Sunset Studios is an animation studio based in Bangladesh that has recently announced its new project, *Dead End*, which has been gaining traction as Bangladesh's first "anime-style" project. Irfan Chowdhury, the co-founder and director of the studio, alongside the technical director and sound designer Ali Arman, and 2D artist Humayra Kabir sat down with SHOUT to give insight into this ambitious project.

Sunset Studios was founded over 2 years ago by Irfan Chowdhury and his co-founder, Jiewon Hong, both of whom have backgrounds in the animation field. Seeing the absence of an animation industry in the country, they decided to take the initiative of starting an animation studio themselves.

Irfan originally has roots in theatre arts and Jiewon Hong is quite knowledgeable about 3D modelling. The amalgamation of their artistic and technical backgrounds resulted in the concept of *Dead End* being born.

Set in the year 2100 in a futuristic city of Bangladesh, *Dead End* will follow a brilliant

engineer, Zayn Khan, as he becomes involved with a street racing gang. Sunset Studios is promising a story packed with action that is still poignant and meaningful. The concept draws inspiration from a real place dubbed *Dead End* in Dhaka.

Once the initial idea was mapped out, they began working on the project in August and, as of late November, which is when the interview took place, it is in pre-production. They are hoping to make large advances on it by next year.

"It is a very personal project to me and I want to make sure that all aspects of it are preserved," said Irfan Chowdhury on his duties as a director. He is overseeing all areas of the production, ensuring that the story, the atmosphere, and the themes are being translated well in the animation.

Ali Arman, the technical director and sound designer, is playing a crucial role in the project. From animation to lighting and rendering as well as visuals and sound design are being handled by him. He is also in charge of the animators in the 3D and 2D department, with 2D artist Humayra Kabir working on the

character design.

As for their animation style, the team said that they are drawing inspiration from anime aesthetics, with the street-racing anime *Initial D* largely influencing their project.

The team also hinted towards the involvement of Bangladeshi animator and YouTuber Antik Mahmud in the project. "Although he won't be a part of the animation aspect, he is playing a role in the making of *Dead End*," said Humayra.

Sunset Studios also spoke about their hopes of achieving a theatrical release once the project is completed.

Animation isn't a booming industry in Bangladesh at the moment and it's very rare to come across people who are brave enough to pursue it as a career. However, these individuals are passionate enough to work in an environment without much support, as Irfan testified to the difficulty of finding people who are knowledgeable enough or even willing to work on the project. It required quite a bit of research and they had to dig very deep to find the right people. Keeping all of this mind, their commitment to their initiative is laudable.

How winter has changed for me over the years

AYAAN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

Growing up, December was the month I was always most excited for. And why wouldn't I be? Besides being my birthday month, December also marked the end of a seemingly never-ending academic year, and the much-anticipated beginning of winter.

But as I regrettably approach adulthood, I can't help but think that my relationship with winter has changed tenfold.

For the entirety of my childhood, I lived in a housing quarter that was always teeming with kids my age. Whenever winter approached, our days would be filled with insurmountable joy for a myriad of reasons. The best part was that studying became a foreign concept for an entire month. At the same time, our parents weren't as strict as they usually were with our daily routines either.

As such, playing *chor* police and badminton throughout the day was a long-standing tradition that we wouldn't miss for the world. Amidst the cool winter breeze and plethora of games at our disposal, time seemed to stand still for all of us.

Another significant highlight of winter came in the form of my grandmother's handmade *pithas*. Seeing her and my mother work in tandem to make intricate designs and delicious treats always inspired



us siblings to try and contribute in whatever way we could. The experience was always therapeutic, to say the least.

The winter experience started shifting somewhat as I grew older and faced board examinations as a national curriculum student.

Studying during the year-end break

became more of a common practice, because staying on top of the upcoming workload was the recommended course of action. This ultimately translated to less time allocated for playing games and having fun. Even still, regularly playing badminton and organising friendly tournaments was a must, and those were times that I cherish

to this day.

Fast forward to the present – I don't feel as excited as I did about winter when I was younger.

Hardly any of the traditions we used to follow are present now. Owing to everyone's busy schedules, playing badminton together regularly feels like a privilege now. The fact

that our childhood friends have all moved to different places and institutions makes it even harder to spend time together.

At the same time, my grandmother isn't as physically fit as she was five or ten years ago. This means that the *pitha* culture isn't as seasonally pronounced now, seeing that our most skilled crafter isn't healthy enough to bear the physical toll.

While I cannot say for sure that this shift is the same for everyone, the number of social media posts associating winter with depression and desolation does point towards that direction. It seems that, for many, winter blues have cemented their place in the tail-end of the calendar.

However, on the bright side, even though winter has changed, it has also evolved in some ways. While I cannot hope for the childhood experiences I took for granted to come back, I can look ahead to all the new traditions that await. From taking a stroll in the evening to regrouping with friends over a cup of warm tea, new experiences have already claimed their space in my day-to-day life, with many more sure to follow.

Ayaan immerses himself in dinosaur comics and poorly-written manga. Recommend your least favourite reads at ayaan.shams@gmail.com