

THE DEFINITIVE
VOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 26, 2023, MAGH 12, 1429 BS

A PUBLICATION OF *The Daily Star*



WE SHOULD CARE MORE
ABOUT ONLINE PRIVACY

PG 3

THE TRADE-OFF BETWEEN
SCHOOL AND PRIVATE

PG 6



The promising world of
SPORTS JOURNALISM

ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

EDITORIAL

Winter is not winter-ing anymore like winter should. Or, by the time this gets published, winter is winter-ing like never before and I'm probably looking like a fool to you. Whatever it is, summer isn't that far away.

In terms of the weather itself, summer doesn't excite me too much. Apart from the fruits and festivities that this particular time of the year brings, it has nothing much going on. There's also the fact that the scorching hot weather will welcome hours of loadshedding with it. Are you all ready for that? I'm certainly not.

Imagine coming back home from your classes or work looking forward to a relaxing evening followed by a good night's sleep and suddenly, the power goes out. Ruins the whole mood, doesn't it?

Of course, everything has a flipside to it and the seasons are no different. The best we can do when that time comes is look forward to all the good things summer has to offer while trying to tolerate the rest.

– Faisal Bin Iqbal, Sub-editor & Digital Coordinator, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

ANIME



One Piece is an ideal embodiment of freedom in anime

MYNUL KARIM

Numerous anime incorporate themes of fights, struggles, and the glory of freedom in their stories with great success, but very few do it as sublimely as *One Piece*.

One Piece has become one of the most coveted and decorated anime and manga series of all time. One of the central themes of the series is freedom and independence. This is exemplified by the character of Monkey D. Luffy and his crew, the Straw Hat Pirates, who have their individual grand ambitions and are determined to fulfil them against all odds.

Luffy, in particular, is a strong advocate for freedom and independence. He is determined to forge his own path and follow his own rules, even if it means going against the norms of society. He is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his dream and not let anyone else dictate his actions.

This determination and commitment to freedom are also seen in the other members of the Straw Hat Pirates. Each of them has their own reasons for wanting to become pirates, but they all share a common goal of achieving true freedom and independence. They are willing to put their lives on the line to defend their beliefs and protect their crewmates.

Throughout the series, the Straw Hat Pirates encounter many other characters seeking liberty. Some of these characters are pirates like themselves, while others are civilians oppressed by powerful forces. In every case, the Straw Hat Pirates are willing to help those fighting against oppression, even if it means risking their own lives.

The series also explores the concept of freedom and independence on a larger scale. The history of *One Piece* is shaped by power struggles, suppression, and denial of freedom. The world is divided into different nations, each with its own government and rules. Some of these nations are free and open, while others are oppressive and tyrannical. This is further compounded by the strong grasp the World Government, one of the series' main antagonistic factions, holds over these nations and the general masses, which often renders them void of free will.

The Straw Hat Pirates often find themselves at odds with the governments of these nations and sometimes the World Government directly, as they seek to defend the freedom of their own crew and those oppressed by the authorities. In doing so, they often challenge the established order and risk the wrath of the powerful forces that seek to maintain their control.

Even though their actions are driven by their will to progress and aid the oppressed, their actions coincide with the historical prophecies of sovereignty, thus forming a connection of the crew with the narrative of the lore.

Overall, the themes of freedom and independence are vital to the story of *One Piece*. They not only play a crucial role in shaping the actions and motivations of the characters but are also pivotal in advancing the storyline. Through their struggles and triumphs, the Straw Hat Pirates and the other characters in the series showcase the importance of freedom and independence and the lengths that people will go to for achieving them.

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A
 There She Goes
 Taio Cruz

...Baby One More
 Britney Spears

right here
 keshi

Mirrors
 Justin Timberlake

B
 Is There Someone Else?
 The Weeknd

Hit The Lights
 Metallica

Abar
 Black

Selfish Soul
 Sudan Archives

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

We should care more about online privacy

ZIBA MAHDI

You talk to your friend about how bad your cavities have gotten and an ad for a toothpaste pops up on Facebook the very same day. You brush it off, share a meme about the platform eavesdropping on your conversation, and wait to see how many reacts you get. The creepily accurate ad is pondered momentarily but ultimately forgotten.

This experience may be more common on Facebook primarily because they are more obvious about it. However, it is not limited to just social media platforms, as voice recordings on Alexa have been found as text logs on Amazon servers, even after being deleted by their owners. A report discovered that Google still tracked users, despite their location history being disabled. These weren't isolated incidents in recent years, unfortunately.

The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation went into effect in 2018, requiring transparency from any company with a digital presence operating in the EU, signifying a tipping point where even a law was enacted to counteract it. The law had a nice ripple effect, spurring certain tech giants to extend these rights to non-EU citizens as well.

Data breaches like the Cambridge Analytica scandal have motivated many to start using online privacy tools in a bid to take matters into their own hands. VPNs and adblockers seem to be the majority's first line of defence, but other sophisticated tools have also emerged in the market due to growing security concerns. Dedicated private browsers, encrypted messaging apps, tools that mask emails and credit cards, services that search the dark web for data leaks, and even entire operating systems that pro-

vide online anonymity have been useful in limiting users' digital footprints.

At the end of the day, it is still unrealistic to expect people to reject technology because some corporations may or may not be keeping their data. No amount of fear mongering or paranoia would motivate people to give up something as useful as Google, even if it knows more about them than their best friend. Hence, making jokes about big data is as far as most get.

On the flip side, it's not feasible for companies to stop collecting data altogether. Information is the price we pay for using social media, and viewing most content on the internet, "free" of cost since businesses need to generate revenue somehow or the other. The data is also used to personalise our experience on the internet and help improve customer experience.

When it comes to internet usage, a compromise has to be made between convenience and security. Raising awareness about how much personal information is being taken and whether it's a reasonable transaction for digital consumption is one way to fix the power balance between users and websites.

While it's very tempting to click on "accept all cookies" and move on with our lives, keeping an extension that auto-deletes cookies might be a good one-time investment as well.

References:

1. The Washington Post (May 6, 2019). *Alexa has been eavesdropping on you this whole time.*
2. Associated Press (August 14, 2018). *Google tracks your movements, like it or not.*

Ziba Mahdi is your resident pessimist. Cheer her up at mahdi.ziba@yahoo.com



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

Our misconceptions surrounding philanthropy

KOUSHIN UNBER

"You know who would be a really bad firefighter? An arsonist."

American journalist and author Anand Giridharadas believes that "philanthropic" ventures of the rich and their businesses actually fuel the social and economic problems that these millionaires set out to solve in the first place.

The appeal towards rich businessmen and multi-million-dollar companies is still prevalent across varying demographics. The idea of being a super-intelligent college dropout with a killer business plan who makes it big by the time they're 25 is very attractive to the youth. Movies about entrepreneurs also play a part in this, where they romanticise the rags-to-riches narrative and present it as attainable. However, we need to be reminded that ultimately, the story of the self-made billionaire is almost always a myth. In an ideal world, billionaires would not exist.

Coming back to the firefighter-arsonist quote, let's explore how donations and charity do not add any net benefit to social causes, but only brings it back to a net neutral position after inflicting harm to the working class.

Under the structure of capitalism, there is almost no such thing as an ethical business. Greater profits usually mean greater exploitation of workers. For these rich investors, money brings money, not hard work or fair pay.

A major reason for the rise of funds, trusts, and philanthropic organisations is not just to save face, but to chase tax reductions. The uber-wealthy charitable tax deduction can be applied to things that are not money – real estate properties, stock money, capital gain, etc. These assets can be used by the absolute rich as charitable donations in amounts that are close to negligible to them, but they end up reducing their taxes by up to 74 percent. For every billionaire giving a dollar to charity, citizens pay 74 cents of it.

Charity in and of itself is not bad. However, the fact that a large portion of people in the world depend on this charity from the uber-rich is regrettable. Put simply, the existence of 0.1 percent and their charity threatens democracy. Taxed money is supposed to go towards the enrichment of public goods and services, something that a democratically elected government decides. And that decision, however flawed it may be, still reserves the populace's right to choose.

This is the very reason why "capitalist democracy" has now almost been rendered an oxymoron. When billionaires donate money to private foundations, they get to put their interests ahead of the public's. They decide on policies without actually getting democratic approval. The money goes where they want it to go. Now, instead of funds being allocated on the basis of collective decision-making and equitable distribution, it is being controlled by big tech.

Our world's biggest socio-economic problems are created by wealth inequality, something that the ultra-wealthy rely on to sustain their massive amounts of riches. So why should we continue accepting, or at times glorifying, a system that headlines and depends on these "charitable" donations, rather than one that puts enough money into everyone's hands to live a good life?

References:

1. Inequality.org (March 19, 2021). *For Every Buck a Billionaire Gives to Charity, You Chip in Up to 74 Cents*
2. Second Thought (February 25, 2022). *Why Billionaire Philanthropy Won't Solve Anything*

Koushin Unber is on a mission to finish her dust-collecting Letterboxd watchlist by this year. Send her motivation at koushinunber27@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

The promising world of sports journalism

TAMJIDUL HOQUE

Sports enthusiasm has never been in short supply in Bangladesh. With the advent of the Internet, sports fans have been able to create communities that bring together individuals from all over the country, whose distinct voices and opinions attract audiences by themselves. This, in turn, has created growing opportunities for aspiring sports journalists.

The conventional definition of sports journalism confines it within reporting and covering sporting events in a rather matter-of-fact way, by providing squad news, score updates, and commentary.

However, in this day and age, sports journalism has evolved into a much more diverse form of media which now also includes blogs, analysis videos, podcasts, and other sports content that cater to fans in ways that have never been seen before.

Rifat Masud, popular sports journalist and reporter working for T Sports, recalls the contrast in sports journalism a decade ago compared to what it is now. "Ten years ago, news regarding playing style, formation, and other details of a game in the newspapers in Bangladesh was non-existent. Usually, news would be more focused on a sports personality or player. Now, there is an increasing interest among fans towards analysing the game."

On top of that, the arrival of social media has accelerated the rate at which sports



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

news is disseminated while bridging the gap between the fans and sports journalists, making it easier for journalists to reach the audience.

We spoke to Shihab Hasan Neyon, the frontman of Neyon & on, a popular sports content creating channel on social media. According to him, "Social media has greatly reduced the barriers one would have to face in the past not only as a sports content creator, but for others as well who are pursuing different content creation."

Samama Rahman, sub-editor at The Daily Star's sports section, describes how newspapers were affected by this, "Print journalism changed drastically, with our online presence becoming increasingly important. Things usually reserved for print editions, had to be put online immediately to get more engagement. Consequently, we had to focus more on analytical stories, features or offbeat stories when it came to print."

Former professional cricketer Mazhar Uddin Omi, who now works as a commen-

tator alongside his role as a sports journalist for The Daily Star, reflects on how he thinks social media affected news.

"In the last three-four years, social media has taken over big time. Everything that is shared is news. One has to now consider which news is authentic and newsworthy and which news is not. Overall, this has made sports journalism much more challenging," he says.

Rifat Masud also agrees that social media has made sports journalism more challenging. "Social media has compelled sports journalists to improve as news has become more accessible. It is now the responsibility of a journalist to not only break a story but also provide a detailed report that includes how and why the story broke and the impact of the story in question. Or else, a fan and a journalist sharing a news update on social media will not be any different."

"Social media changed the way news is consumed, it also showed how little substance some stories had. We had to become far more proactive in trying to break stories before other outlets than we used to be in the past and had to learn how to make multimedia content very quickly," Samama Rahman adds.

This has forced sports journalism to expand and created new opportunities for aspiring sports journalists and content creators to explore. In this day and age, everybody is a content producer as they all have the necessary



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

social media tools and phones to create and distribute content. In order to stand out, one has to describe a topic from various angles, present all the relevant information and provide in-depth analyses, to gain the attention of curious sports fans online and to connect with them to build their own following on social media.

Someone who has been exceptionally successful at it is Saif Ahmed Chowdhury, who amassed a massive following on his Facebook page "Stories with Saif", where he writes about cricket. He currently works as a sports journalist for T Sports and Social Media Manager for Rangpur Riders and Bangla Tigers.

On building a following online, he says, "Before I started building my platform on social media, I already used to work for a couple of websites where I used to write insightful cricket articles. But on my own platform, I always tried to connect with the fans who are equally passionate about cricket or sports overall. I used to interpret the emotions of the fans through my writings. My only motive on my platform was to get connected with people who love to talk and discuss sports. Three years later, the result is now there to see."

Despite not pursuing the idea of building a platform on social media right now, Rifat Masud is very well aware of the potential in this sector as he says, "Creating a platform for a journalist has become necessary now in order to connect with people. I believe that in the future, the demand for freelance journalists will increase and journalism figures will become more influential than sports media companies and in some parts of the world, it has started already. People are now more interested in listening to what a reporter has to say when that reporter has a higher reach in social media."

Aside from reporting and writing, another facet of sports media that is particularly attractive to young people is sports commentary. But if one does not have a sporting background, Mazhar Uddin Omi believes it's tough to pursue it. "With lack of opportunity and platform to train in this scene, it's very hard to pursue sports commentary. A sports background is vital in order to describe what's happening on the field properly and spontaneously. One needs to consider the financial aspects of it as well but recently there are new people coming in and that's a good sign. I have personally been very lucky that The Daily Star has allowed me to chase my passion and accommodated my diverse roles," he says.

For anyone who is thinking about pursuing sports journalism, they can get started with no experience, no degree in journalism, and with minimum investment. Although investing in the necessary equipment to create content such as vlogs or podcasts might give you an edge over other content creators, the most important investment you really need to make is the investment of time

and effort.

Along with that, regardless of which form of sports journalism you want to pursue, it is necessary to have a great deal of knowledge on the sport you are covering.

Rifat Masud emphasised how important it is by saying, "I believe there is a fine line that creates a large separation between a fan and a journalist. Many fans are watching a game just like you, what sets you apart from other fans so that they will listen to what you have to say?"

"There is no alternative to studying the game. The ability to put in effort to study a game after watching it by reading books, consuming other sports content on the internet, listening to the analysis by pundits and former players in pre-match or post-match shows is necessary to be successful. After studying the game for years, I believe a person might finally be able to separate himself from the audience as a journalist," Rifat added.

On the other hand, Saif believes in focusing on creating a unique style in order to build a platform online.

"It makes me happy now to see that many people know me including many international cricketers through my platform and I think it only happened because I created my own style on social media when it comes to writing about cricket. So, to the people who are trying to build their own platform, my small suggestion will be to stick to their own style and creativity. Understand your audience and try to connect with your followers. After all, sports is something that unites everyone."

Neyon stresses on the need for consistency in the competitive space of social media content creation. "Even if you know it's not your best work, you have to consistently create and put out content for the audience in order to adapt with the social media algorithm. Some creators get a lot of views in one video and then struggle to get the same amount of views later on, while others don't get views even after making videos which can be very demotivating."

The sports journalism industry in Bangladesh, however, is far from reaching its potential yet and Rifat Masud believes there is still a lot of time for that to happen. "In Bangladesh, as of now, sports journalism is not really attractive yet financially. The salary structure needs to grow so that more people are interested in pursuing this profession. At the end of the day, money matters. If this improves, sports journalism in Bangladesh will grow much more," he said.

Sports journalism in Bangladesh is on a rapid rise and people are noticing. With content being easier to put across to an audience, it's all about who can maintain better quality to get the attention of a massive fanbase.

Sports journalism in Bangladesh is on a rapid rise and people are noticing. With content being easier to put across to an audience, it's all about who can maintain better quality to get the attention of a massive fanbase.

Tamjidul Hoque loves talking about Football and watching Anime. You can contact him at tamjidulh@gmail.com

DIY SPORTS JOURNALISM CONTENT CHECKLIST

- Make a content plan
- Collect data to showcase using infographics
- Write a script for any audio/video content

START YOUR OWN PODCAST

WHAT YOU NEED

- A good microphone
- A laptop
- A Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)

By: Caragaband, Adobe Audition, Audacity, etc.

START A YOUTUBE CHANNEL

WHAT YOU NEED

- A decent camera
- Levelier microphones
- A video editing software

By: Sublime Premiere, Final Cut, Blender, etc.

START AN INSTAGRAM NEWS OUTLET

WHAT YOU NEED

- A phone
- Software for making designs

By: Canva, Adobe Photoshop, Affinity Designer, etc.

ILLUSTRATION: AAQIB HASIB

The trade-off between school and private

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

Bangladeshi students preparing for O and A Levels face the dilemma of whether to stay in school or just attend private coaching centres and register for the exams independently. The dilemma arises due to significant structural failures, and in reality, it's a choice only for some.

Due to the stakes of the board exams, more students are willing to enrol in coaching centres, where the teachers' income is directly proportional to how well they teach and how high their students consequently score. A cycle is created and perpetuated.

Because teachers are underpaid and underappreciated by their institutions, they might not be teaching in full detail in schools. What further consolidates this practice is the presupposition that students have already learned the material. Pupils being absent in classes, a lack of interest when they are present, or deliberate attempts by teachers to lure more students into coaching all lead to students making the decision to leave school.

Since coaching is made indispensable to many, staying in school can be an additional burden to maintain. The entire day becomes occupied by school followed by coaching, leaving students with no time for themselves or too drained to study at home. School and coaching may run at different paces, covering and test-



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

ing different topics of the same subject, which at its worst, feels like double the workload.

Coaching classes are not cheap and neither are English medium schools. The luxury of investing in both simultaneously is affordable for only a few families.

With the odds stacked against staying

in school, the more holistic aspects of education are lost. Private students don't get to participate in extracurricular activities. They have to look for opportunities they can pursue independently, which are often not available.

Losing out on the socialising aspect of school and only attending rigorous exam

preparation classes can also take a toll on the mental well-being of high school students.

However, the decision of whether or not to leave school should largely be made according to what one's aspirations are for higher education.

Applying to universities abroad poses certain challenges to private candidates. There are no official high school transcripts and predicted grades to show alongside board exam results, and no school faculty to send in recommendation letters. This means that the situation is made quite harsh for a student who had to leave school due to financial constraints.

Regardless, admission abroad is not impossible. The challenges can be mitigated by building a strong profile, presenting your case in a compelling manner, and explaining the private system in your personal statements.

For students staying in Bangladesh, leaving school should be fine as the prerequisite for admission tests are sufficient board exam grades. If the additional time gained from leaving school is used to get acquainted with the vastly different structure of the NCTB syllabus, leaving school might even be beneficial.

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

How I recovered from body image issues

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

Body image issues have been a concern plaguing the youth's minds for years, though it has become a more pressing issue now. The conventionally desirable body type changes every few years, but what remains constant is the largely unattainable aspect of it. However, it is branded as a "must-have" by popular media and many around us.

I still distinctly remember the day I got up to submit my work to the teacher. On my way back to my seat, a classmate pointed out that I had gained weight. That one comment sent my mind spiralling to an extent I couldn't fathom. I was only 12 years old and my impressionable mind suddenly thought I needed to make drastic changes to my appearance by losing weight.

Soon enough, I started trying to lose weight at an unhealthy pace. At an age when nutritious food for a growing child is essential, I completely disregarded its importance. The pressure to look a certain way led to coping mechanisms that I now know were harmful.

For several years, I bought clothes that were one size too small for me, thinking that they'll look great once I got slimmer

and fit into them. I became nit-picky about how clothes fit me as I believed something was wrong with the way I looked, so the issue must lie within me.

Another factor that contributed to my body image issues is the way people started viewing me as I grew up. As family members, even the ones I barely knew, started fussing over the need to cover up more once I got older, things got more confusing. I felt as though just the existence of a girl's body is what people have an issue with.

Years later, I can finally say I have recovered from that distressing mindset. I have obviously gained weight since I was a pre-teen, and I'm thankful for it. I'm physically healthy and give greater importance to nutritional intake than I used to.

I finally buy clothes that fit me and if something looks a bit odd after trying on, I simply accept that it is either not made for my body type or is simply faulty tailoring. This acceptance has brought me

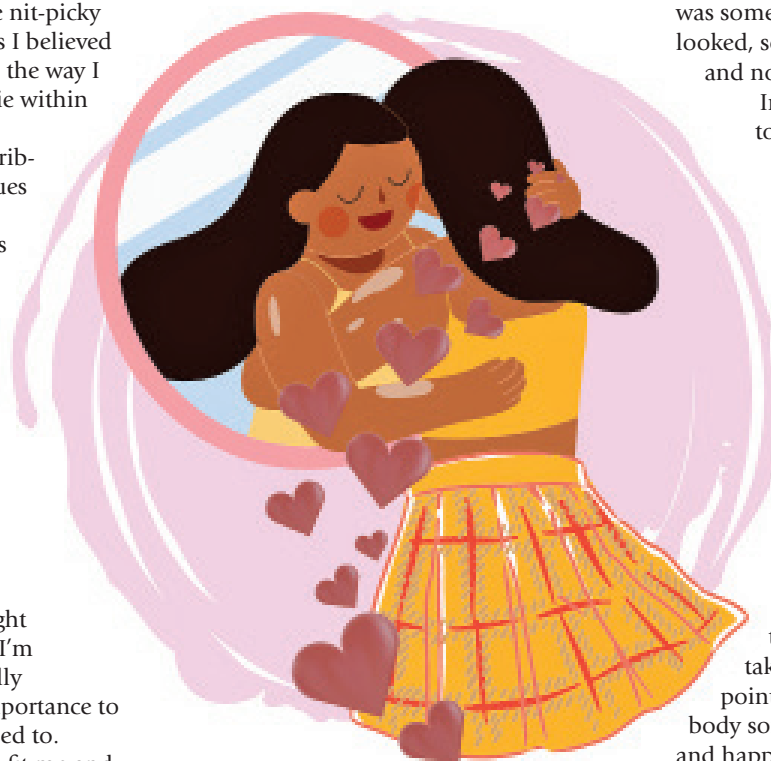


ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

great relief mostly because my body image issues once led me to believe there

was something wrong with the way I looked, so the issue must lie within me, and not the clothes.

In a nation where sexism appears to be the standard, it is no surprise that women and girls alike are constantly scrutinised for their clothing choices, even in their own homes. However, as I've grown up and become more comfortable in my own skin, I have realised that this has more to do with certain people's tendency to criticise and less to do with me personally.

Every now and then, I still catch myself wanting to look different, but now I'm able to quickly get past those thoughts instead of letting them consume me. My biggest takeaway has been that there is no point in me wanting to look or embody somebody else's ideal. My health and happiness have to come first.

Nuzhat zones out every ten minutes. Tell her to snap out of it at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com

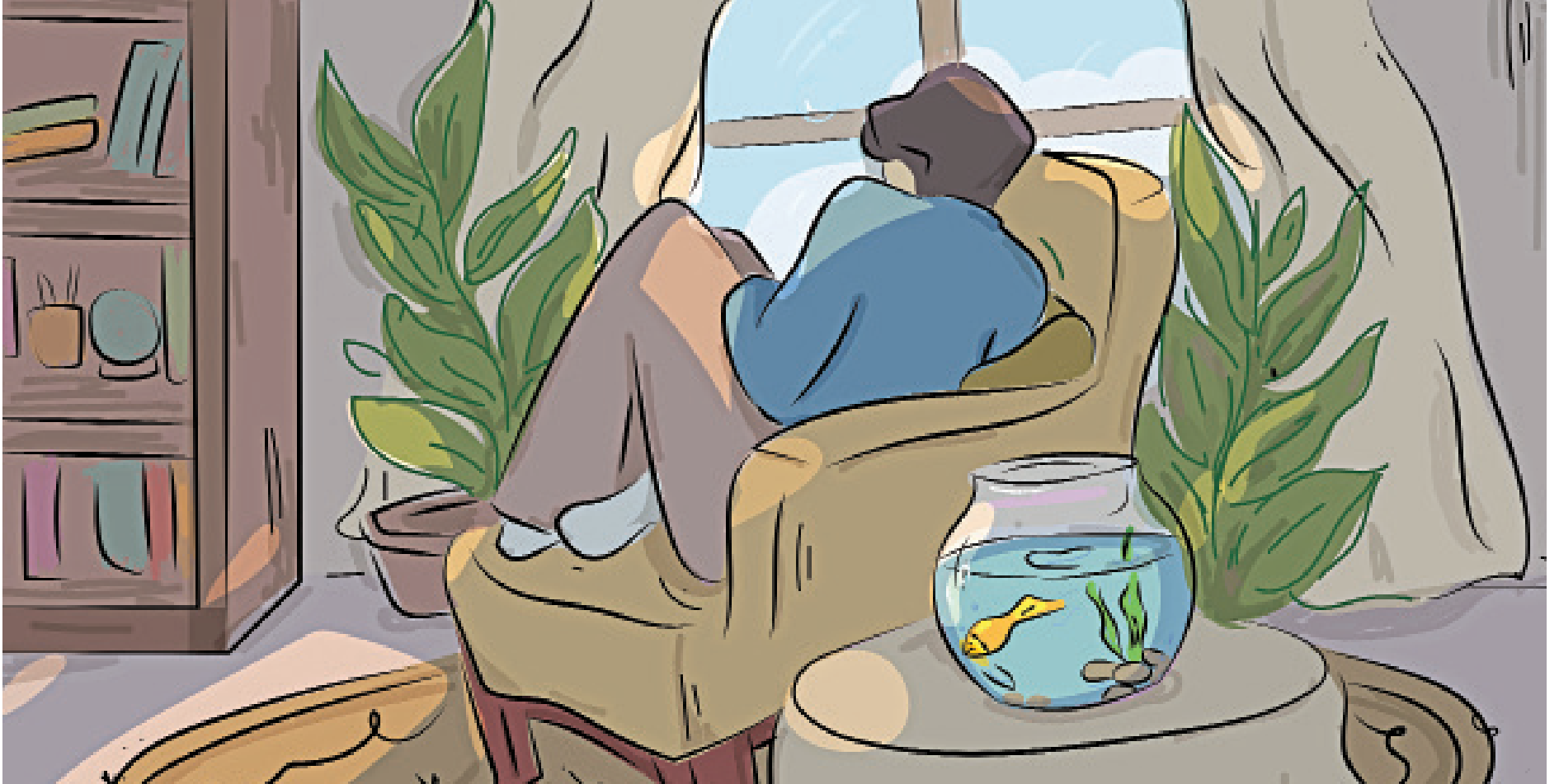


ILLUSTRATION: TUBA TUHRA KHAN

FISH TANK

MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

If someone were to ever ask me what the outside world looks like, it would instantly put a frown on my face. I would try to come up with an answer that would discreetly hide the glass wall that separated me from the outside world, which would cover up the fact that I had never really seen the outside world.

Nobody asked me though. Why? Because I never met them.

My life has been all about swimming in little circles in the fish tank that I've called home. For as long as I remember, it has always been me here, alone, in this world that seemed so big when I was small. However, now it barely seems spacious.

I've memorised how many tiny pebbles there are here. I am not scared of the toy diver inside. It's just a toy, it can never swim and it certainly can't eat me alive. I can now swim back and forth in mere seconds. And that has been suffocating. I know I belong in the wide expanse of the sea, of an ocean of which I would never grow tired of.

Sure, there could be other marine creatures, monsters even. There could be whirlpools that might swallow me in. Or there might be a tsunami that could carry me offshore and I wouldn't be able to survive. But it'd still be the outside world. The real world.

The world outside the ever-gloomy glass walls of my tank had three humans (a boy and his parents). I assumed that they were my owners but I hated the notion of it.

They were very wealthy – I could easily tell.

In the room I was in, there was a huge screen that engulfed the wall adjacent to the tank I lived in. It was called television. And every day as a ritual, the three humans would sit in front of it and watch something.

At first glance, it looked endearing. However, I have been their silent audience and I know for a fact that whatever show they watched featured people who were much happier than they were.

The three would only blink at the screen and it seemed that they would steal surreptitious glances among themselves to ensure that they were aware of the invisibly huge distances between them.

The boy would every now and then, look out from the window. I would too. Beyond the window of their house overlooked the edge of the sea – its blue and grey waves swelling and crashing gently onto the sandy beach.

Every time I looked at the sea from there, which was often, something inside me cried. Was it longing? Was it some sort of dream? I didn't know.

All I knew was that it was an emotion that swelled like the waves in my chest and filled me up until it felt like I would choke. And the aftermath of that was my anger of being trapped inside this miserable fish tank.

Until one faithful day.

I didn't know what really happened but it was the boy's doing. He would always talk to me in hesitant whispers ever since he was a child. He would draw lazy circles on the glass of the tank and talk about his

day which was spent within the walls of his house. The excitement he had when he was young kept waning as he grew older. His whispers were now little tufts of fury, and sometimes a concoction of sadness, frustration, and hopelessness.

Today he almost looked proud when he walked up to the tank. He thrust his hand into the water and quickly scooped me up in a plastic bag of water. I wasn't scared because sometimes they did that when they had to clean the tank. Today, however, the boy's hands were slightly trembling as he held the plastic bag.

He took huge breaths before he opened the door, and it dawned upon me what exactly he had been doing.

He was finally going out.

I had seen the boy look out the window for so long. I've seen him quietly wrestle against everything to leave. I've heard his voice fading when he wanted to speak up for himself for so long that it's only pride and happiness, I felt for him. It never really occurred to me why he had been taking me with him.

But both of us saw the outside world. The outside world is painted in brighter colours – a contrast to the subdued tones of the house. The boy's hands trembled even more as he, no, we took in everything around us. I could barely keep up with the jostling water and him, with the people around him. But when his pace picked up and he took a turn, I understood where he was going.

There was a hurl of emotions as the water toppled over, induced by the boy's

sprint. Thrill, anticipation and with a sharp pang – fear. I've complained about the fish tank for so long, but it was my familiar space. It was safe and tranquil.

The sea in front of me was even more beautiful than what I saw from the window. It's a mighty and roaring expanse of blue and grey. Moving and unmoving at the same time. But it's the deep unknown, the place where I could get lost so easily.

I looked at the sea, the boy looked at the people around. We looked at the house we've called home – so close yet so far away. We looked at everything we have had and could have. It's almost as if we had an eagle-eye view and saw ourselves in stark miniature against everything. A small step for us – that's probably bigger than our whole lives.

The lines smear and maybe I am the boy and he is the fish. Either way, we both were in a fish tank and now we needed to step out of it.

And suddenly the boy gently tipped the plastic bag forward. There was a small surge and I was finally in the sea, where the roar of the waves was deafening. The pull was too strong, the surface too tight, the toss of waves too mighty but it was so devastatingly beautiful and I tried to swim in.

But I caught a glimpse of the boy's face from under the water and I knew he realized it too.

This is just another fish tank.

Maisha Nazifa Kamal has lost track of time and is living in a world where she never existed. Break her reverie at 01shreshtha7@gmail.com

Fashion does not need to be gendered

AYRA AREEBA ABID

A fight needs to be made to break out of the neatly labelled boxes society tends to put us in. A fight for emancipation from said labels and constructs. In order for people to truly feel comfortable, they must have the right and freedom to express themselves as they see fit, which includes the freedom to express oneself through their choice of clothing.

Perpetuating certain seemingly harmless ideas, such as equating pink to femininity and blue to masculinity allow archaic ideas regarding gender stereotypes to remain prevalent. At a certain point in history, pink was assigned to boys as it was considered to be related to the mother colour of red, "an aggressive and active colour" according to Leatrice Eiseman, a color expert and executive director of the Pantone Color Institute, thereby proving that these ideas are subjective notions and could be open for debate.

The relationship between fashion and gender is often set by society's standards and not scientific facts. Thus, it is not necessary for us as a society to associate articles of clothing and pieces of accessories with a certain gender expression.

The phenomenon of expressing oneself through one's attire is not a new one. The iconic Frida Kahlo, defied normative boundaries and lived her life as a thor-



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA



oughly radical individual. Her sartorial sensibility ranged from donning men's suits to bright Mexican traditional skirts and blouses, all of which veered from society's standard. Analogous to her paintings, she used fashion as a powerful tool to express herself and her ideologies.

Young people, nowadays, have been steering away from socially perpetuated rules on dressing themselves, and focus more on aspects of self-expression and personal aesthetic.

Dameer Khan, who is a popular mu-

sician, shares, "I try to stand out with my personal fashion choices. I like bold colours and interesting silhouettes. I wasn't really into fashion until very recently, and I find it to be a really fun way to express myself. It is a poem you carry with you for the whole day. There is something about fashion, especially eye-catching fashion that excites me as a creator in a way no other medium does."

He adds, "I am still in the process of finding my personal style. I am constrained by my university student budget but that makes things even more fun. I thrift a lot because of this. I also trade clothes with my friends frequently, since it is wasteful to keep buying. I especially trade with my female friends the most as they will have pieces that they've grown bored of, which look totally wild on me."

In Bangladesh and specifically with the older generations, people are a lot more rigid in terms of these choices. When one decides to not conform to age old ideologies, they are often met with scrutiny.

Shadma Akter, a woman in her 50s, opines, "I believe there should be different fashion for men and women. Though men and women are all human beings, they differ in every sense. Men are expected to be rough and tough, while women are viewed as soft."

Azaan Khan, 27, currently working in the US, says, "I faced some constraints in more culturally strict places like Bangladesh. For example, I would have faced issues for having long hair, wearing the colour pink, wearing a shawl or even enjoying wearing 'feminine' perfumes. I collect fragrances and am learning how to

make them. To think that a smell can be considered feminine or purely masculine is quite ridiculous!"

Sarah Rahman*, 17, also feels uneasy often times when all eyes are set on them, she expresses that it often feels like they are being scanned like an X-ray machine. "Personally, I dress fairly androgynous. Given that I identify as gender-fluid, I dress differently on different days. Some days it's 'hyper-feminine' and others more traditionally masculine. In Dhaka, I get weird looks sometimes when I'm in the men's section looking for clothes."

However, all hope is not lost. In recent times, Bangladeshi youth have been treading the waters of creative clothing and have begun experimenting with their personal style to showcase their individuality.

Padya Paramita, 27 and professor at the University of New Haven, has also experienced criticism regarding her style back at home. She says, "My style is very androgynous and gender neutral. I'm not a very traditionally feminine person, so I feel most comfortable either wearing athleisure outfits at home, and for my work, I like to wear shirts and jeans. Lately, living abroad, I've also gotten into crop tops." She adds, "My extended family doesn't always approve but within reason, my parents have never disapproved of the way I dress."

Dameer also expresses his wish to be inclusive of his Bangladeshi background among his eclectic sartorial sense. "As I progress, I want to incorporate more Bangladeshi elements into my looks, particularly when it comes to our hand-em-

broidery and block printing abilities." The singer believes that, "...a good way to experiment more if you identify as a man is to try out clothing that society decided was not meant for you."

It is common for young adults in their 20s to experience unfortunate judgement before they find their personal style. However, this only allows them to become more confident and vocal through their journey.

"I think I struggled to find my style for a long time because I did not want to be 'feminine' but I was also looked down on for wearing baggy 'masculine' clothes. But I think my fashion choices would be more androgynous if I wasn't affected by people's comments so much. I'm also really enjoying just accepting my feminine side and exploring my style," shares Ahona Aroni Hassan, 26.

Gender-fluid fashion is nothing but a melange of unique styles. With torchbearers of gender-neutral fashion like Canadian designer Rad Hourani in the industry, it is safe to say that this is the present and the future of modern fashion. There is nothing pre-determined here and one should have the liberty to veer away from societal expectations.

**Names have been changed upon request*

Reference:
 CNN (January 12, 2018). *The complicated gender history of pink.*

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