



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Expecting productivity after long commute hours is unreasonable

RAIAN ABEDIN

It's 6:30 AM when I head out for my 8 AM classes. The world seems to be asleep as I traverse the narrow alleyways, making my way to the main road, expecting to catch a bus.

But that's where it all crashes into me.

Everyone seems to be of the same mind as I – waking up early with hopes of reaching their destination on time. The roads are nowhere near empty, even at this early hour. Around me, everyone is running like machines, focused only on reaching their destination.

My house is on average, an hour and a half away from my university. On days when someone so much as sneezes differently, the minutes go up and up. Frustration is the single word that circles my mind as I deal with my daily routine.

The noise, the heat, and the sensation associated with clusters of people so tightly packed we're left with no breathing room all become far too draining. Even in the crack of dawn, this city and its unforgettingly poor infrastructure have been the root of many of my tears. And when I am finally able to return home, it's evening. That's an entire day spent in the pursuit of academic growth. I am left with no desire or energy to carry out other tasks.

Yet, for the sake of being a functioning human being in this city, I have to keep going. I have a list of unfinished tasks that demand completion. Work is due, along with assignments and lab reports. More importantly, I have to ensure that I go home and actually manage to nourish and clean myself.

Productivity has fundamentally different definitions for everyone, but even

carrying out the simplest task like taking a shower, eating, and forcing yourself to rest feels productive. The only issue is that after travelling a minimum of four hours nearly every day, your body simply loses all desire to do even that.

In a city where commute costs you all of your time and energy, it is impossible to expect people to continue being productive. How is a student expected to not only maintain proper grades but also practice any hobby or extracurricular work while living through the soul-sucking everyday routine that we've all accepted defeat to?

The more time passes, the more I am convinced that time is the most important capital of all.

Every day, I find myself with an impossibly long list of tasks that require seeing to. I breathe a sigh of disappointment whenever I am faced with a day where I must make a long commute because I know that means there is no way I can return home in time to finish most other things on that list. On days when I don't have to go out, I pray no emergency comes up and that I can stay home, away from the noise and bustle of the city that never lets on. These days are few and precious, but I cherish them. Not only for the immense amount of time they open for me to see to my non-academic activities but also for the calm. Sometimes, they are the only thing I look forward to at the end of a long week.

Raiyan spends his spare time staring at the roads of Dhaka City. Send him the pictures you take in your commutes at IG: @raian_is_burning

Feeling the pressure of getting older but just never wiser

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

When Taylor Swift said, "I have this thing where I get older but just never wiser," in her song "Anti-Hero", she spoke for many worn-out souls. Naturally, I'm no different. As I further approach adulthood, I frequently experience the burden of not being mature enough to make appropriate choices.

These days, however, I wonder what being mature truly means for our society's youth.

The process of growing up can be gruelling by itself. Carefree childhood days run out before we get to understand the utopia we had and soon, our shoulders need to toughen up to bear stressful responsibilities and expectations. With each passing year, time somehow feels both too little and too much. Too little time to enjoy ourselves with too much time left till we actually can.

With such struggles at hand, one of the burdens that seem to weigh in at the oddest of times is the one of not "acting your age".

"Why won't you act like others your age?" is a question people hear a bit too often, whether it comes from family, teachers, peers or even themselves. But people don't like to consider the hows and whys when they bring up this discussion. In the end, their self-esteem becomes staggered. Doubts fill up the emptiness created by trying to be someone they aren't at that stage.

Kids in our society find it hard to grasp the concept of maturity, perhaps from the lack of actual guidelines or simply from the failure of recognising its necessity. I recall how one of my friends would act more childishly than the others to cope with his hardships. It really got me wondering whether we're setting the right evaluation parameters for judging one's maturity, should we feel the need to do so.

Realistically, we can commemorate our youth in different ways. Whether it's from juvenile enthusiasm or the solace of solitude and realism, there's really no right way to do it.

However, normalising the concept of being disciplined into a specific age corners youngsters into questioning their self-worth and sense of identity. Being alluded to thinking you're not mature enough like your peers or experiencing FOMO – fear of missing out – for not being youthful enough both may stand in the way of a progressing mind.

I've seen that older siblings are more pressured to always act maturely. Undoubtedly, older siblings should prioritise showing their younger siblings the appropriate maturity level. But discouraging individuality is just another addition to the superficial burdens they bear.

When with friends, I always erupt into this bubbly ball of energy and joy. Yet, a few years ago, I would be afraid to express myself this way for fear of ridicule. Every time I did it, a part of me would squirm at how childish it was, making me feel unhappy with how I was celebrating my joy.

These fragments of self-loathing sedimented bit by bit till I almost forgot what self-appreciation felt like. Did I overcome that phase? Perhaps. But it nearly cost me my true youth.

Even after realising this, I occasionally question if I should act more mature like some of my peers. I think society needs to rethink what "acting our age" means for these concepts to be integrated.

Shaikh Sabik Kamal is inexplicably tired of the broken T-key of his laptop's keyboard. Send your condolences (avoiding any Ts) at sabik2005kamal4787@gmail.com



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