

The repercussions of a sheltered childhood

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“Your parents only have your wellbeing in mind,” is something most of us hear growing up, especially when we vocalise our dissatisfactions towards our parents. While there may be some truth to that statement in many cases, sometimes well-intentioned actions end up going sideways. When parents restrict us from certain activities or interfere in our lives, it may be from a place of concern. However, the degree of involvement can prove to be disadvantageous later on in life for the child if it exceeds a certain threshold.

Parents will often say that they’re not going to be there for us forever, which is easily the best counterargument for their inclination to be overly sheltering. “Not being there for us” does not only mean physically being absent. It also means how we can’t count on our parents to always solve every little problem in our lives, even if they are physically present. If our parents previously didn’t allow us the chance to navigate our lives, we may end up struggling to cope with being on our own.

The realisation doesn’t quite hit us until we get thrown into a bout of anxiety over simple tasks, or when we struggle to make independent decisions without parental input. Becoming independent as we grow is natural, but the habits formed from always having someone to depend on becomes hard to let go.

This is further solidified by the endless justifications for parents not allowing their children to go out alone, especially in Dhaka city. Road accident numbers soaring by the day, unknown environments, stranger



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danger – the list goes on.

Parents, including my own, will even burden themselves by shifting important errands in their own schedules to make sure their children reach their destinations safely. The self-sacrificial gesture is touching, but this constant practice has resulted in me having a terrible sense of direction where a straightforward route practically feels like a labyrinth. If Google Maps didn’t exist, I’d probably be trying to figure a way out of Iqbal Road instead of writing this.

Another deceptively uncomplicated sounding activity I’ve struggled with

doing alone is going through bureaucratic processes. Granted, in Bangladesh something as simple as picking up a certificate is unnecessarily long-winded, but at this point I’m not entirely sure how the process is even supposed to go. In fact, if someone were to come up to me and ask how you’re supposed to renew your passport, my answer will probably be, “You tell your mom.”

If you’ve led a similarly sheltered life, odds are, there’s probably one or two pretty basic life skills that you may be lacking. As we grow up, however, it’s unwise to

blame external factors and take some accountability. Once we’re no longer barred from taking the initiative to make up for our lackings, we might still resist personal growth out of sheer force of habit.

Just as it is important for parents to let children experience aspects of life for themselves, it’s also necessary for us to realise that it’s on us, as young adults, to step out of our comfort zones to work on the problems we face in our everyday lives.

Remind Zabin to take it easy on the caffeine at zabintrn@gmail.com

The ethical minefield of employing domestic helpers

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The practice of hiring domestic workers has been a cultural mainstay in our society for a long time. It is common in most middle to upper class households, where the workers aid in cooking, cleaning, and other household chores. However, questions have been raised about the ethics of this practice, with many pointing fingers at how the majority of the workers are treated miserably and paid measly salaries while essentially being on the clock 24/7.

At this point, it is common knowledge that domestic helpers, in many instances, are cruelly subject to constant abuse, both verbal and physical. There are no specific laws protecting the rights of domestic helpers, making them prime targets for exploitation. This glaring lack of protection for these vulnerable workers, most of whom are underage girls, means that all domestic helpers are potentially at risk of, or are currently subject to, exploitation.

Some people argue that this occupation allows economically disadvantaged people to have a stable source of income, live in the city with accommodation and food, and have a better standard of living. However, the absence of these basic necessities in their lives is exactly what is being used to take advantage of them. Their in-



PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

come is often minimal, that is if they do get an income at all, as many are told that the food and accommodation is enough compensation for their work.

Furthermore, this occupation has become familial in certain cases, where new generations of workers are funnelled into the field by parents who have not been able to better the lives of their children. How

can this, in any way, be considered a way to improve living standards?

Others also argue that domestic helpers are necessary to aid the elderly or people with disabilities, who may face difficulties in doing chores by themselves. While it is true that the elderly and people with disabilities should have access to help, it may be better to employ specialised caregivers,

or workers who are not bound to stay at the homes of their employers.

There are cultural prejudices surrounding the prevalence of this profession as well. Do we view cooking, cleaning, and other household chores as inferior to other work? These are largely unaddressed questions that we as a society need to ask ourselves in order to unlearn the ingrained prejudices.

All these things show how the issues of economically disadvantaged people cannot be fixed simply by paid domestic work, or any other profession for that matter. The key, instead, is to bring about systemic change. Implementing and enforcing specialised laws and regulations to protect these workers will go a long way to ensuring they receive fair remuneration, have set working hours, and aren’t subject to violence. Changing cultural perceptions around domestic workers should also be of paramount importance, which includes giving them and their work the proper respect, and this goes hand in hand with treating them as employees rather than servants.

Rafid is busy dozing off every chance he gets. Wake him up by sending a notification at rafidkhandaker@gmail.com.