

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY MAY 25, 2023, JAISHTHA 11, 1430 BS

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GRANDMOTHERS HOLD
A SPECIAL PLACE IN
OUR HEARTS

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WHY YOU SHOULD BE
WORRIED ABOUT DHAKA'S
AIR POLLUTION

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Breaking away from *dysfunctional families*



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

EDITORIAL

I got into the habit of journaling about eight years ago. I may not be as consistent with it now as I was in my teenage years (or as melodramatic), but I still try to pen down my thoughts as much as I can. Unfortunately, the practice has been a double-edged sword. While it has helped me organise my thoughts more articulately, it has also made me sound like a wannabe columnist of a newspaper in The Big Apple in spaces where I'm expected to be vulnerable. My spectrum of girlhood has gone from sparkly stickers and pigtails to sounding like a stout man who likes suspenders and fedoras.

This realisation is encouraging me to go back to my roots. I am on a personal mission to embrace textspeak, emojis, and grammatically incorrect sentences. This may not be the best course of action for someone who works at a newspaper, but words are not always enough.

In the primordial soup of life, we only have each other and emoticons. If you ever see me, don't say a word. Just say colon three.

– Fatima Jahan Ena, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

TV SERIES



Jubilee: A visual spectacle crafted by a masterful storyteller

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

In the first ten minutes of the first episode of *Jubilee*, director Vikramaditya Motwane succeeds in hooking the audience into the intoxicating and glamorous world of 1950s Bollywood. Starting from the grandiose in its set design to the fabric worn by the actors, you can't take your eyes off the screen for even a second. The masterful cinematography, the proper use of lens flares, and the soft and beautiful colour grading are bound to soothe your eyes.

But *Jubilee* is more than just a visual masterpiece.

Loosely based on Bollywood's first-ever scandal, the story starts with veteran actor and producer Srikant Roy, played by Prosenjit Chatterjee, and his hunt for a star he's going to launch by the pseudonym of Madan Kumar in his next film. Srikant's wife and fellow actress Sumitra Kumari, played by Aditi Rao Hydari, gets involved in an affair with Jamshed Khan, played by Nandish Sandhu, who's supposed to be cast as Madan Kumar and decides to elope to Karachi with him. Srikant becomes aware of the affair and sends his loyal employee Binod Das, played by Aparshakti Khurana, to bring the two back.

In a turn of events, when Binod ends up abandoning Jamshed in a car crash and leaves him to die in the hands of communal rioters, Srikant casts an amateur Binod as Madan Kumar.

The story revolves around Madan's internal conflicts and guilt regarding abandoning Jamshed in the riots and how the incident rewrites the industry forever.

Vikramaditya's love for filmmaking is evident throughout the series. Jay Khanna's character, played by Sidhant Gupta, is an embodiment of the aspiring filmmaker that once Vikramaditya himself was. Now a veteran in the industry, Vikramaditya has been one of the most consistent

filmmakers in Bollywood right from his debut film *Udaan*. Later, his films like *Lootera* and *Bhavesh Joshi Superhero*, went on to become cult classics.

With *Jubilee*, Vikramaditya reached his peak. With ten episodes, each spanning over 50 minutes, the director finally got the freedom to tell the story properly by dissecting the layers of human emotions underneath. The characters are humane, grey, and flawed – right up the alley for Vikramaditya to flex his characterisation skills.

The performances are flawless and subtle in execution. Aparshakti Khurana stands out as a hesitant and apprehensive Binod. Binod's evolution from a loyal servant to a rebel against Srikant Roy was captured brilliantly by Aparshakti. However, watching childhood hero Prosenjit Chatterjee as an elegant Srikant Roy was the most exciting part. His on-screen presence is brilliant, and he supersedes his co-actors in every frame.

The screenplay didn't have any rushed plot devices as well. Atul Sabharwal blended the partition of 1947 as a subplot brilliantly. However, what perfected *Jubilee* was its cinematography and its outstanding soundtrack and background score. Amit Trivedi has always delivered his best with Vikramaditya in films like *Lootera* and *Udaan*. Trivedi proved his abilities with retro Bollywood music in his previous venture *Qala*, and he didn't disappoint with *Jubilee*.

Vikramaditya previously co-directed *Sacred Games*, one of the first Indian web series to gain international praise. With *Mirzapur*, *Delhi Crime*, and many other mentionable names, the Indian OTT platform is going through a revolution, and *Jubilee* just might be the best they have offered to date.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



A

"Legends"
Juice WRLD

Guilty Conscience
070 Shake

Control
Zoe Wees

Trauma
NF

B

Family Portrait
P!nk

Takin' Back My Love
Enrique Iglesias ft. Ciara

How Could You
Jessie Murph

In The End
Linkin Park

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

GRANDMOTHERS HOLD A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS

NAHIAN JAMAL JOYEETA

I was walking into the living room one morning when the waft of a sweet smell caught me off-guard. My feet froze on the spot, and my heart skipped a beat as I took several moments to realise that I had not been dreaming. I frantically searched for the faces I was so eager to see, but in vain. The source of my nostalgia was laying on the counter, trapped inside the familiar blue bottle of coconut oil.

I lost my *dadu* about 7 years ago, and my *nanumoni* 2 years ago. Both times, I was not present during their final moments; the guilt gave way to lucid dreams and vivid hallucinations following each death, in which they appeared to be consoling me. The grief multiplied when I realised that things would be changing for good because their positions in my life are irreplaceable.

Grandmothers are universally acknowledged as the epitome of sass and grace. Subconsciously, they are often the first women we look up to. My grandmothers were my safety nets. Their drapes protected me from every threat, whether it was a violent cousin, my parents' anger, or a nightmare. Despite being heads of families with enormous responsibilities, they always found time for me and my abrupt demands.

In their upbringing and lifestyles, *dadu* and *nanumoni* were polar opposites. *Dadu* was all about principles, whereas *nanumoni* was mostly about traditional, cultural, and sentimental values. Being the eldest grandchild on either side, I got the best of both worlds. They were at the same time my biggest critics, as well as my most ardent fans. No matter how much I argued with others, I would never question my grandmothers'

instructions; I could never disappoint them.

The only thing I regret is that their teachings over the years never included their delicious recipes. On special occasions, my taste buds search for those familiar tastes. I crave *dadu's pulao* and spicy chicken curry, and my *nanumoni's jorda shemai* and *pitha*.

I inherited the tradition of evening tea sessions from my grandmothers. *Dadu* loved to take her tea after the evening prayers, whereas *nanumoni* always drank it before sundown. Their routines, snacks, and the tea itself differed greatly, even the amount of milk or sugar I added to my tea depended on which Grandma I was living with at the time.

They influenced most of my hobbies, starting from my inclination towards history to my infatuation with fairy tales and mythology. Although *dadu* was not a fan of cultural performances, she made sure to take front-row seats to all of my recitals, while *nanumoni* stood with me backstage for last-minute rehearsals. Nowadays, I tend to carry a trinket of theirs on stage to fill that void.

I try to substitute their presence by inhaling freshly starched sarees, or wearing their bangles around my wrists as though they were holding my hand. The minty fragrance of betel leaves transports me to the afternoon naps, the warmest hugs, and the laughter that ensued from venting our hearts out to each other. I find my eyes subconsciously tearing up whenever I hear someone bring up their grandmothers. In those moments, I wish I could travel back in time.

Nahian Jamal Joyeeta spends an awful amount of time daydreaming and laughing at her own jokes. Rant with her on [instagram.com/smolbabyjo](https://www.instagram.com/smolbabyjo)



ILLUSTRATION:
SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

Confessions of a ghost writer

A GHOST

In my experience, once an ability of yours becomes well known, you quickly become a target of "Hi can you please do this for me? Please please please!". The most common victims of this situation are budding artists. Or so I thought, before I started writing.

Once word got out that I started as a contributor for this particular publication, I became somewhat of a local celebrity in at school. My peers began to consider me as the gold standard of writing at our academic level. From proof-reading an email to writing an application to the principal, I was sought to do it all. As we grew up, the need for writing skills became more apparent.

When university applications rolled around, I was bombarded with requests for editing, proof-reading, and even help with writing material. Because I was a good friend and often found it hard to say no, I took on the tasks in exchange for treats. Soon, word spread to juniors and mutual friends, and an influx of essays and term papers came my way. I saw the opportunity to monetise my skills, my business instincts kicked in and I began charging people for my services. Business boomed and my pocket money was covered.

I soon discovered ghostwriting has more trials and tribulations than writing for myself, however, especially for those clients who do not even know what they need.

Generally, I expect the client to give me some pointers about what to write. It takes WEEKS to even craft a polished piece of writing for yourself (a person you have known your whole life) so it is frustrating when people think I will be able to concoct their life story out of thin air.

A major red flag is when they are unsure of the number of essays a particular university requires or the prompts I need to address. So, I have to research university websites to find out application requirements and make up justifications about their choice. This is an extra burden on top of the pressure I already have of pleasing the admission officers with the writing bit.

Unreasonable demands about deadlines and payments is another issue. "Please, it will only take you like 5 minutes!" is a common request. In my experience, it does not take me 5 minutes. Even if it does, it is only a testament to the amount of time and energy I have spent honing my craft and because of this very reason, I deserve to be well compensated. People often forget I have my own work and I cannot accommodate theirs in a short notice.

That being said, I have also worked with wonderful people who understood the scope of my work, gave me sufficient notice, provided me samples and outlined the essay, all while offering me fair compensation. They are a breeze to work with and in the end, we are both happy.

Alas, the good old days are over. ChatGPT has killed my side hustle, but I have lived to tell the tale.

The writer is a ghost.



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

Breaking away from dysfunctional families

THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE
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**RUDAIBA MAHBUB AND
RAIAN ABEDIN**

Our families play a huge role in who or how we are as people. These relationships affect us in our childhood, contribute to our growth, and give us the persona that we carry on for the rest of our lives. According to an article by *Turnbridge*, unhealthy or dysfunctional parenting has a high probability of resulting in children developing severe cases of a variety of psychological issues. In order to gain a better understand-

ing of this, a deeper look at conventional family structures is pertinent.

When talking about dysfunctionality in family structures, there can be uncertainty in how we perceive what they may be. Yet the effects of children growing up in dysfunctional households can be far-reaching, with many requiring years of professional support to simply break out of this toxicity. Even if the term “dysfunctional family” can be rather vague, there are certain symptoms that are always present within these households.

Faisal Ahmed Rafi, psychologist and founder of Faisal Ahmed Rafi and Associates, explains, “When a child does not feel loved or cared for in their family, or when they feel like they can’t share their stories with their family, that’s usually the biggest giveaway for a dysfunctional family. There is a myth where we assume that dysfunctional families are broken families where the parents have split up. In reality, most families that are dysfunctional are generally not like this. What they have instead, is a general lack of communication, intimacy and privacy, all of which can lead to both emotional and physical abuse. A child growing up in such a situation is affected not just mentally, but also in how they perform in their day-to-day activities.”

For deeper insight, Rain Annapurna, 24, a student of English Literature at University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB) shares their story, “Growing up, when I saw my

friends with their families, their parents were not as restrictive as mine. I was practically raised in a coop as my parents have always acted paranoid. I was not allowed to go outside, make friends, or have fun. I had no idea what freedom was. Even as a grown up I was not allowed to go outside without my parents at all.”

In addition, living in a patriarchal society often forces members in the family to play specific roles, and certain cultural norms can be the cause for rise in dysfunctionality in families. Rafi explains, “Fathers are made to be moody and serious, and feared by everyone whereas mothers are always taking the brunt of the emotional trauma. When we propagate ideas like these, we create an unhealthy situation in the family.”

On this note, Rezwana Ahmed Aunu, 21, student at North South University, shares her experience at home. “My mother has anger issues and a tendency to think that she is always right. This led me and my brother to navigate ourselves around her emotional states, like by not being ourselves or even lying at times. Sometimes, it gets chaotic as trying to understand her emotional state can be tough. She would also restrict me from doing most things. My father was absent for the most part. He never had much of a say in how we grew up, my mother was the one taking care of these things.”

The effects these toxic patterns lead to

can be disastrous for the children. Over the course of their lives, a child tends to form attachments to things and people that help them grow as a person. When a child grows up without a healthy bond with their parental figures, their young adult years may see them struggle to maintain relationships and feel lost amidst peers who have already moved ahead in life.

Annapurna shares further, “Given the circumstances I grew up in, I didn’t know how a person should act, or react in social situations or even carry out a basic conversation. So, when I grew up, I found myself surrounded in this ‘stranger-danger’ bubble. That became a huge problem in my life. I practically have no social skills. Not just social skills, I don’t have any skills at all, I don’t even know how to ride a bike. That is how restricted I was.”

These restrictions to a normal childhood ultimately lead to a situation from which there is no easy escape. Indeed, how is a growing adolescent expected to confront and alleviate problems they may have been facing their entire lives? From the many young adults and fully grown adults we reached out to, the consensus remains that the process of healing is an arduous one.

Arefin Akand*, 29, an undergraduate student, adds to this, “I have internalised the dysfunctional patterns and I think it’s this resentment and bitterness that allows generational dysfunction.”

For many, the attempt to find healing began with the process of moving out. Rafi elaborates on this, “Removing yourself from a toxic environment is actually mandatory for any sort of recovery. The next step is to perhaps work on the psychological effects they may be facing as a result of the situation at home. Here, regular healthy practices can go a long way.”

However, moving away from parents as young adults is a difficult prospect in Bangladesh’s socioeconomic landscape. Many of those still in academic institutions have to adopt lethal lifestyle practices to ensure they have enough money to make ends meet. There is also the prospect of seeking out professional counselling and therapy, something that already has plenty of social stigma against it and can be rather expensive for those already struggling financially.

Sreya Shah*, 22, a final year student of Law, reflects on her tumultuous relationship with her parents, “I have been living away from them for the past three and a half years. When I had to return back home during COVID, it was so much worse than when I’d left because they viewed me as a separate person rather than their own flesh and blood. So, I moved back out and got more jobs to finance myself. I sort of lost connection with them and was on my own for a while there. Eventually, after the whole COVID situation alleviated, things got a little better for them financially as

well. They reached back out and I let them in because I did not want to be the one to burn bridges.”

What comes next for many is an attempt to reestablish their boundaries and build a new bridge with their family. As young adults slowly veer towards adulthood, many begin to properly internalise the damage coming from these households with the passage of time. In response, many try to communicate and work things out.

Annapurna further adds, “It was difficult being the odd one out in the family, so I gave everything that was in my power to make changes. For example, I like reading. So, I suggested to my parents that since we are so distant and there is nothing common between us, maybe we can read some books as a way to bond. I urged for us to find a solution but to no avail.”

A healthy family may be defined as one where all members are allowed to openly communicate with each other. However, when one side of the communication channel is closed off, a productive conversation cannot take place. When reached out to many of the parents of young adults across Dhaka, we received no comments. This further showcases the struggle many of today’s adolescents face in regards to breaking the cycle of generational dysfunctionality as this can never be a one-sided action. New generation parents, however, have better access to information and can thus be

expected to do better.

Fariha Ferdous*, 30, a young parent, reflects on her perspective and her hopes for her children, “I would like to ensure there is safe and open communication with my child(ren) to ensure their opinions are taken and counted in family matters. While that may not be the most comprehensive step to healthy upbringing, I think it’s a start. I’d like to also work toward providing them with good education, a healthy family environment, and an avenue for them to partake in activities.”

In regard to the practices in a family, the spread of knowledge and awareness is heavily emphasised. However, our society and its cultural practices has normalised dysfunctional patterns in a way that it has internalised itself into family structures. While spread of information regarding dysfunctional families can help in alleviating the problem, it must also be acknowledged that only through constant effort across generations of healthy parenting can the cycle be dismantled.

**Names have been changed for privacy*

Rudaiba’s semester break is almost over. Send your sympathies at rudaiba.rhymee@gmail.com

Raian likes asking questions. Ask him a question in return at abedinraian@gmail.com



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

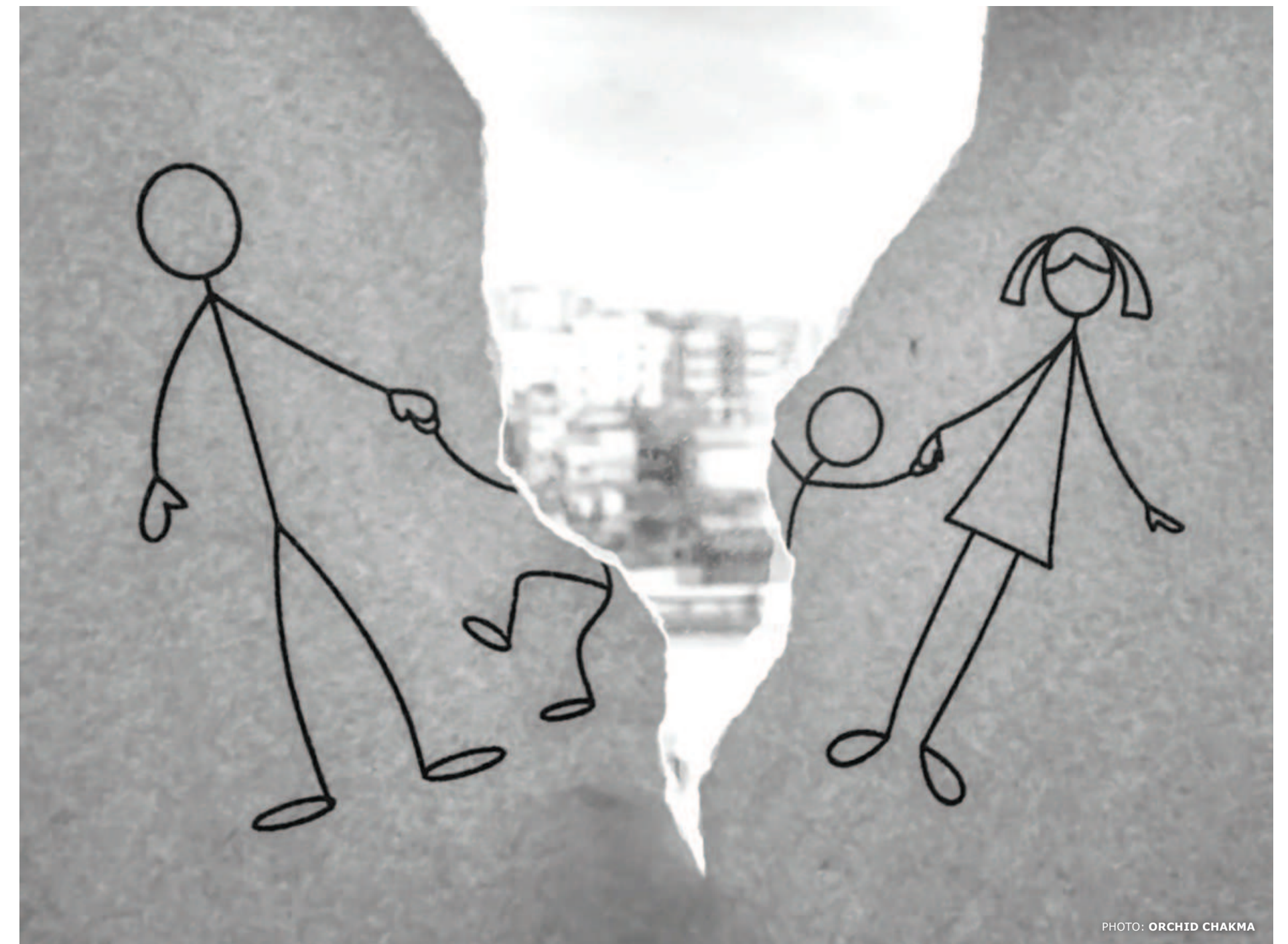


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Why we leave things undone

RUDAIBA MAHBUB

The painting that you had started with so much enthusiasm now sits on your table, half done, making you question a lot of your decisions. Other things that you had started impulsively or with all your heart, now remain incomplete, seemingly staring back at you from every corner. How often do you find yourself in that situation? Has leaving things undone or incomplete become a habit?

Often, we look back at all the things we have left undone and they start to take a toll on us, either by affecting our productivity or demotivating us. This creates a cycle where we often find ourselves starting a task and then not being able to finish it. Chances are this is not merely procrastination, and several other factors might be contributing to this hindrance.

The unfairly high standards we set for ourselves might be one possible explanation. We often start a task with a clear vision but, when things do not go accordingly, we tend to give up. The fear of judgement, either from ourselves or from others, might be stopping us from getting back to the task. In this case, focusing on the process instead of the results might prove to be more helpful.

Again, the process or the journey might not be as smooth as we may have expected, as it's natural to face hurdles along the way. This can overwhelm many to the point where they would rather abandon a task than go forward. In this case, it may be worthwhile to take a step back to gain some perspective. If you are too overwhelmed, take a breather and try to get back to the



ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

task with a clearer mind.

Lack of motivation caused by self-doubt or lack of commitment is another challenge. However, lack of motivation can potentially be a symptom of more serious underlying conditions like anxiety, depression, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Motivation is key when taking up and completing a task, so if this is where you are getting stuck, take some time to understand what is causing it. Figure out what might motivate you or

look back at the thing that motivated you to start the task in the first place.

Distractions are only natural and sometimes a break, or several breaks, may be necessary. But if you are continuously getting distracted and finding it hard to get back to the task, some self-discipline might be required.

The last thing that might be a cause of hindrance is the simple fact that you have committed yourself to too many tasks at the same time. In this case, try to prioritise

your tasks and divide your time amongst the more important ones. Depending on the priority of the task, you may opt to eliminate a task altogether. That way, it does not occupy extra space in your mind either.

So, if you find yourself leaving things undone too often, it might be a sign to give it some attention.

Remind Rudaiba to get back at the things she has left undone at rudaiba.rhymee@gmail.com

Anime music helped me study for A levels. Here's how

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

It was April. Just weeks away from my first A2 exam on the third of May. And I was in quite a pinch, to be honest. Work was slow and inefficient. My thoughts, more often than not, reassembled the points of a nonlinear scatter graph. All of it was unacceptable. Little time separated me from my days of reckoning, and I was still not quite where I wished to be.

"Why not listen to anime OSTs while studying?" a part of me interjected, suddenly interrupting one of my sessions of perpetual suffering. Lo-Fi tunes and classical music are usually the most popular when it comes to studying, but neither has really worked for me. How would anime soundtracks be any different? Wouldn't I just be squandering precious time and concentration? The idea was fresh, though, and I couldn't resist experimenting a bit. Would my performance shoot up, or would it dip?

I played an hour-long looped version of Ken Arai's "Next To You" from the anime series *Parasyte: The Maxim* and set to complete a chemistry past paper. Within two repetitions of the loop, I was done with the paper in two hours.

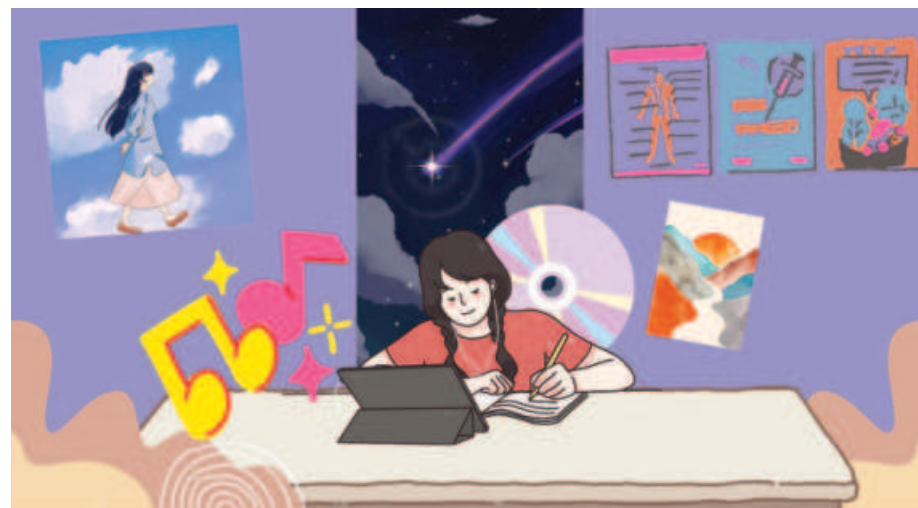


ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

I was honestly surprised. At home, it always took me much longer than the designated time to be done with that sort of thing. The experiment was a roaring success, and for most of the day and the rest of that night, if anyone had chosen to stand outside my door and eavesdrop, they'd only be able to discern that same faint, delicate, nostalgic melody.

I repeated the process throughout what time was left, playing a differ-

ent tune for every question paper and treating myself to a new atmosphere for each chapter of notes. For someone who has great difficulty sitting in one place for too long, the soothing serenity of Masaru Yokoyama's soundtrack for *Your Lie in April* would help quell my endless agitation. "Loneliness" and the character themes of Light Yagami and L – each an iconic piece from the classic anime *Death Note* – kept me calm and collected even

when things felt like an uphill battle. The otherworldly allure of Yuki Kajiura's soundtrack for *The Garden of Sinners* even made mathematics feel romantic and mysterious oftentimes.

For, studying has always been mind-numbingly boring. Somehow, the subjects I ended up picking, always threatened to send me into a deep, deep slumber. There's a little cheat code, though. Biology becomes much easier when you feel like a murderous genius with a lethal notebook. Chemistry is almost bearable if you can think of yourself as a Viking warrior searching for his purpose in a carnage-infested world. The key is to discover innovative new ways to like the things that you really don't.

My A levels went well for someone who'd fumbled up a lot in the lead-up. Aside from the people who came through in the times I needed them the most, I suppose even those maestros of music deserve a slice of the credit pie. After all, those days of intense cramming could hardly have been any more fun.

A levels are over and Nayeem is lost once more. Help him decide on his future at nayeehaider90@gmail.com

DELIRIUM

UPOMA AZIZ

If given the chance to choose, I don't think I'd want to reincarnate as a bird.

Back when the first wave of reality hit us harder than puberty, I began seeking solace in reveries like the river Lethe, washing away my current memories with little promise, but optimism stronger than Muhammed Ali. Many others did the same, there was nothing special about it. As I plotted out my fabled escape, you stood spectating, occasionally indulging in the low-cost luxury of daydreams. Our dreams did not follow the same route, but they did intersect, similar to one of those crossover episodes of our favourite shows we were so fond of. You were welcome in my myths, and I in yours. There would be an extra hammock outside my cottage in the middle of the forest for you, and there would be a well-furnished room in your extravagant apartment for me. Back when we had seen enough of life to want to escape its apprentice-level of hardships, I wanted to be a bird.

The wish itself was pretty mediocre and commonplace, a mundane fantasy to escape the mundane. I did not put much thought into it, and you too took it with a grain of salt. It's hard to achieve consistency at an age when you haven't gotten butterflies in your stomach quite yet, but you do have dragonflies in your bloodstream, your brain and body. It's hard work being restless.

I was unhappy back then, uptight like

one of those wind-up cars, ready to leave home. The cacophony of conflict would crowd the halls of my home every single day. I wanted to be a bird and leave the nest, but you see, I forgot that birds too have to return home.

But, do they? Say, if a migratory bird gets redolent of the home they left behind, of the greener grass, of the known barometric pressure, and strays from the pack, what do they do? Do they go ahead and build a home of their own? Or do they stay back and settle?

I wanted to be a bird. Let me tell you when that stopped.

A few years ago, on a regular working day, the sky was identical to one of the mornings I woke up for school and felt my heart do an acrobatic flip because there was no raincoat in the world that could cushion me from the downpour. It was my fault for not checking in earlier, and unfortunately, rain no longer interpreted directly to a day of snug stay of splaying out in the bed. I battled against the yodeling wind with traces of ice-cold water to close the door to my place. I was rapping out obscenities in my mother tongue directed at my crippled umbrella. That is when I saw the bird.

It was a foreign version of our very own native sparrow, looking like a water-filled balloon with its wings soaked in water. The bird was quivering like a leaf, and I had a fleeting thought to open the door and try to let it in but I was already late, and I was not about to assume the bird would not inter-

pret my hospitality as hostility, so I left.

The rest of the day I could not stop thinking about the bird – while gnawing on a bone-dry sandwich I bought from a deli and trying to wash it down with tepid water, while tapping in monotonous numbers in the datasheet all evening, even when my lovely co-worker was chatting me up, albeit in her systematic ploy to hand me her portion of the work and leave early.

By the time I got home, the bird was gone, as was expected. But I still wondered, did it have a place to go to?

Tiredness loomed over me like a tidal wave, some days more than others. As I completed my *sehri* of two pieces of bread and a glass of milk, both days from going bad, I know I'd suffer from acidity the following day. I noticed the swollen eye bags and thinning hair as I scrutinised my appearance on the reflective surface of my fridge – I look like my father.

Abba passed away last year, I don't know whether you've heard, though the possibilities of me knowing the details are slimmer compared to yours, I did not go for a visit. I cannot say I have any regrets over this – the infinitesimal memories etched in my brain of him are not quite pleasant, and the rest I had to scrub off for many years. I feel selfish sometimes, but I also comprehend that if I'd shown this kind of pompousness earlier, I could have lived better.

The occasional grapple of fatigue aside, I'm not doing too bad. I dug myself a small garden in the slice of land I have and peppered it with some value packs of mystery

seeds. Though I still have to buy the bulk of my groceries, and most of the little of what I grow is ravished by the squirrels and the birds, I don't really mind. I suppose it's a way for me to repent for not letting in that lone, tired bird.

I shop for the week at a time, cook when I will to, and store it in little plastic boxes. I go outside sometimes but spend most of my days being a piece of furniture in my own home. I remained surprisingly domestic after having travelled this far from my first home – my blood was never spiked with adventure.

I don't think there will ever be a homecoming for me, I'm not a bird, I have no place to migrate to, nor a trail to lose.

Ever since I moved here, and even before that, I did a silly thing where I'd close my eyes and run my fingers through my own hair, pretending it was someone else tending to me. At the times of my ailment, in my fever dreams, I liked to think that it was my *Amma* by my pillow.

Self-deception and delirium are all they have been, but it was still a wishful thought that brought me momentary contentment.

I also like to think that, if I were to stand by your window, drenched in rain and wallowing in pity, you would not turn me away.

Upoma Aziz is a slouching, crouching, grouchy Goblin with a hoarding issue. Hold a virtual intervention for her to declutter her desk and her mind at upoma.aziz@gmail.com



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Why you should be worried about **DHAKA'S AIR POLLUTION**

RAIAN ABEDIN

In this city rampant with infrastructural mismanagement, dust drapes over every corner. Dust, ash, and smoke all create air that is actively harmful to us. This is almost commonplace in this city and has lulled its citizens into a state of monotonous acceptance.

But with the problem of the city's air quality not being addressed at any level, I wonder if there is any solution to this.

When talking about air pollution, we must understand that several contributing factors are at play. All these contribute to frequent problems in breathing and, in many cases, premature death. While dust and smoke are obvious culprits, a more scientifically accurate reading of the air quality may be assessed by looking at the Air Quality Index (AQI). This analyses the air quality based on five polluting particles – the small particulates of PM10 and PM2.5, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, and ozone particles. In addition, nitrogen oxides are also taken into consideration as they can vehemently damage the human body.

My friends and I frequently joke about how our lungs are on the brink of collapse whenever we take off our masks. This morbidity has shaped our lives and threatens anyone with less than stellar lung performance. In fact, at an AQI score of 101, the World Health Organization (WHO) typically recommends wearing a mask for anyone with sensitive lungs. Many countries like the US also recommend using masks whenever the AQI value crosses 130. At anything around 180 to 200, it becomes harmful, and values even further beyond end up in the hazardous territory.

So, where does this leave Bangladesh?

For starters, the Bangladeshi Department of Environment (DoE), in their most recent report, states that the average AQI of Dhaka is around 132, whereas Gazipur and Narayanganj, home to a lot of factories, see an average AQI of about 169 and 154 respectively.

But this isn't all. One of the biggest threats to our lungs is the fine particles of PM 2.5 matter. These are small enough to



penetrate masks and cause lasting damage to our internals. WHO announced a safe dosage of PM 2.5 to not exceed the value of 25 micrograms per cubic meter. In the case of Dhaka, 2022 alone saw the PM 2.5 level arrive at an average of 65 micrograms per cubic meter. A drop from previous years, sure, but still far and beyond any range of acceptability.

The problems expand from here on. Bangladesh does not have any specific policy in place to combat any of these issues. While there have been laws targeting environment conservation and brick manufacturing kilns in the past, they have not been put under practice all too thoroughly. And it's not like the issues here are somehow new to us. Air pollution has been a concern for over a decade, so what gives?

Anytime I head outside, I make a mental note to wear a mask. On the off-chance that I forget to bring one, I feel a constantly prickling pain shoot through my lungs. No matter where I am in this city, the air is always heavy and thickly

laced with pollutants that harm me in many ways. The torment is everlasting, and I know I am not alone. All around me, poorly managed construction sites bring red dust from bricks, copious amounts of sand, and emissions from chemicals and machinery. Clouds of air that can permanently damage even a passer-by form regularly across the city. I can only wonder how severe the effects may be on those at the heart of the mess.

On a broader scale, it is the entirety of the population of this city that is at the heart of the mess. While constant yet somehow constantly poor management of construction sites results in the release of many small particulate matters, the DoE reports that other factors like ill-suited machinery and vehicles release poisonous fumes into the air. With how densely populated the city is, there are plenty of such vehicles to be seen, and other machinery is commonplace in factories around and on the outskirts of Dhaka. On top of this, brick manufacturing kilns are perhaps Dhaka's

biggest source of pollution, making up about 58 percent of the overall emission of PM 2.5 particulates for the entire city.

All this begs the question – how did we get here? How mismanaged must our infrastructure be for us to be in this position and still have no real laws to actively respond to this issue?

It does not take too long to analyse and find the root cause of the problem, yet, in our current landscape, it becomes difficult to suggest solutions that may actually make a difference.

If anything, the root of the problem must be addressed with the enactment of proper policies to reduce coal emissions and allow construction to happen in a managed capacity. Yet, are our lawmakers listening?

According to a 2019 article published in Daily Sun, brick kilns must also be situated further away from cities and given a proper emissions limit. To this end, brick manufacturing companies must also find alternative fuel and technology that produces less emission. Yet to even carry this out, these factories require support not just from brick-producing companies, but also from the government at large.

Inaction for issues that already have plenty of economical and efficient solutions available is not simply inaction but neglect. But how long can we neglect an issue as ubiquitous as the very air we breathe?

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Raian is sacrificing sleep but refusing to finish his assignments. Remind him to get to work at IG @raian_is_burning

