When we think about what it means to be homesick, we think it means missing home – missing the comfort of your own bed, waking up to a filling breakfast, and spending time with your friends after classes or work. Yes, all that is true. But sometimes, you don't miss much of home and instead, you hate the conditions of your new abode which makes you feel homesick.

ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

Homesickness isn't just missing HOME

PUJA SARKAR

It's only been a few weeks since I came to the United States for my master's. Let me tell you, I hate it here.

I love the freedom, I love that no one's constantly banging on my door, and that I'm left to my own devices. I don't miss home but there are certain things I hate about my current accommodations that make me miserable at the end of my day.

For one, I really do hate how it's always cold and raining here, even though it's summer. Don't get me wrong, I love winter but it's supposed to be summer. Summer in Bangladesh is about sweat, restlessness, and heat. I don't mean to romanticise this incredible and unbearable heat, but that's the summer I'm used to. Every time I find the smallest patch of sunshine, I find myself going into full plant mode and undergoing photosynthesis for as long as I can. I don't think I've ever hated the cold so much.

Then comes the food. I never really liked the food back home nor was I ever into street food. I like to think my food requirements weren't high maintenance – I have a low spice tolerance, I'm sensitive to texture, I despise sugary tastes but have a sweet tooth, one sip of milk and my mouth is covered in canker sores, and most importantly, I'm vegetarian but I don't like fruits and only prefer cruciferous vegetable. So yes, very not-high-maintenance.

Here, everything tastes the same – fresh and bland. The only condiment or spice prevalent in any food or snack is corn syrup or sugar. Either that or the food colouring is insane. To further allude to how this country simply pretends to be healthy is how the first ingredient listed for gummy vitamins is glucose and sugar. So, make of that what you will.

Lastly, I hate the small talk. Back home, every interaction felt personal. Maybe this is a cultural thing but every interaction I've had here with locals seems a tad superficial. Every conversation I've been a part of outside my classes revolved around the coursework or something about the Hudson Bridge. Even if the conversation topics feel shallow and surface-level, it's not. Everyone genuinely seems like they want to socialise after classes and engage in fun conversations. Maybe the group I'm talking about isn't compatible, maybe it'll take more time or maybe, I just don't fit in.

Aside from everything I hate here that makes me miss home, I do miss some things about Bangladesh – my friends, the coffee, the conversations, and my bedroom walls that absorbed my overthinking out loud. It's not easy being homesick and not entirely knowing how to overcome it, and yet, it's something you have to push through.

Puja does nothing but read Gaiman and drinks unhealthy amounts of coffee. Send her cat photos at fb.com/pspspspspspspspspspspuwu/

No safe space FOR GIRLS

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

Once out of the many times my mother went about demeaning my girlhood, I allowed my quivering young soul to protest. Her response, instead of belittling my hurt as she had perhaps intended to, revealed a deep-seated wound in solidarity with mine.

"You find this hurtful? Do you know what your grandmother used to say to your aunts and me when we were just children?"

She shared, how after getting caught while stealing a few coins to buy *hawai mithai*, a lengthy beating was accompanied by remarks on how today she steals from her parents, and tomorrow, she'll steal from her husband.

To my grandmother, it was the only natural thing to say. It shaped my mother's view of the world and herself. It led to her attempt at perpetuating this as the norm to me.

What greases the wheels on this vicious cycle? My guess is that, after navigating the world outside of the home as the second sex, our humanity humiliated, having to overcompensate to maintain the same positions and run an extra mile to prove the same levels of competence, we come home to find no escape. There is no mercy anywhere, no space that is safe.

Maybe, internalising and accepting it is the only way out of the torment of fighting an idea that everyone seems to agree with, but feels wrong only to you.

It starts early, from disciplinary scolding used as a tool to ingrain internalised misogyny into our tender young souls, to facing victim blaming when you're too young to understand the vile accusation. The conclusion that authority over our bodies is held by anyone but ourselves follows closely.

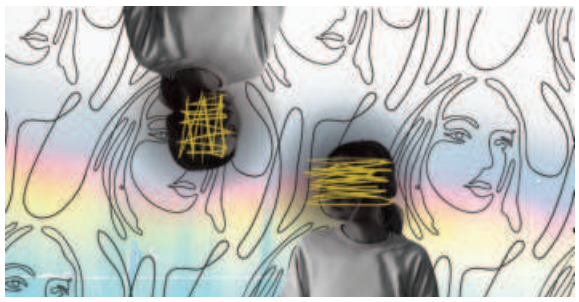

ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

When we are young, our parents are the most knowledgeable people on the planet. If we had witnessed the use of their infinite knowledge at work to belittle and tear apart women who had dared to ever prioritise their personal goals, happiness, and well-being, is it too unlikely for us to sell our whole lives short to the patriarchy?

If there is any mercy in this world, we can still run home to the loving embrace of our family for reassurance when outsiders reduce us to our appearance, and then insult its supposed flaws. But what on earth are we to do if these "flaws" had already been picked apart at home and left bare for vultures to pick apart?

A girl raised in a household where her brother's education was prioritised over her own, where her wings were clipped before she could take flight is less inclined to object to hiring discrimination against women for qualified positions. She is less inclined to believe that she is capable and deserving, and more inclined to allow her intellect and labour to be exploited her whole life.

If misogyny is deep-seated in the way we discipline our children, we leave our women with nowhere to turn to. We do them the atrocious injustice of making them believe in the righteousness of perpetrators. We make their lives a living hell, with no voice and no human rights.

Amrin's ceaseless confusion is really getting in the way of her happiness. Email home remedies to amrinrafa@gmail.com