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YARN SPUN

DILNAWAZ P4-5
THE DANCE DRAMA
SHADOWS OF A DARK PAST C
MARITAL DISHARMONY

PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN
MODEL: PARINAAZ LAMIA
FASHION DIRECTION & STYLING: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA
WARDROBE: AARONG
MUA: SUMON RAHAT & TEAM
LOCATION: INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL DHAKA



#PERSPECTIVE



DHAKA'S BIRDS ARE DISAPPEARING — should we be worried?

A poetic yet urgent call to action, the documentary, "Dhakar Pakhi: Chhoto Hoye Ahschey Akash," chronicles the quiet disappearance of birdlife in Dhaka — revealing not just what we are losing from our skies, but what we risk forgetting within ourselves.

For about 15 months, filmmaker Asker Ibne Firoz (Rusho) has been in pursuit of

filming a documentary that will showcase bird displacement to the people of our country. The documentary, currently being shot is hoping to depict in moving detail the fragile lives of birds in Dhaka.

Firoz points out that things are changing fast in Dhaka. The wetlands, grassy patches, and quiet groves that once provided sanctuary for hundreds of bird species are

now being wiped away due to urbanisation.

"If you look back at 20 years, the same grassy areas are not here anymore. Places like Purbachal, Rupganj, and other areas outside Dhaka still have some greenery, but that, too, is fading. If we don't act now, in 20 years, they'll look just like Dhaka," voiced Firoz, with concern.

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#FASHION & BEAUTY



Why summer fashion prefers a whisper

The hot and humid season is here in full force, and with it, a shift in our outfits. As temperatures rise, fashion leans into comfort without wanting to let go of elegance. This summer, style is less about making a loud statement and more about thoughtful choices with lighter fabrics, cleaner cuts, and a softer, more personal way of standing out. Whether it is the easy flow of kameez and saree, or the relaxed charm of a panjabi, summer 2025 is about pieces that breathe, move, and quietly command attention.

The everyday essential

The classic kameez remains a summer staple, but it's the structure and fabric that adds style to it. Think shorter hemlines paired with flared pants, sleeveless or loose full-sleeve designs, and breezy cottons that hold shape but feel weightless. While neutral tones set a safe base, careful pops of embroidery, block prints, and abstract geometric patterns add to the structured look -- a perfect combination for office and outings.

The lightest layers of the saree

Nothing says Bengali perfection like a

saree. However, summer demands a certain looseness in how we approach it.

Lightweight weaves like muslin, cotton silk, and khadi are the go-to choices. Sarees in solid colours like ivory, lemon yellow, and pale peach look striking and serene when styled with contrasting blouses or even a crisp crop shirt for a modern spin.

Handloom textures and patchwork remain at the heart of the trend with subtle borders or embroidered motifs.

This season is not about heavy embellishments; it's about breathing life into tradition with lighter, airier versions that can move from daywear to dinner with just a change of accessories.

Relaxed and refined panjabis

For men, the summer panjabi steps firmly into the spotlight. Gone are the overly formal versions reserved for festivals. Instead, light cottons, linens, and mixed fabrics in soft tones set the tone for everyday wear.

Very minimal chikankari work or subtle thread detailing is enough to make a panjabi stand out without

feeling weighed down. Paired with slim-fit pyjama trousers, shalwars, or even denims, the look is polished but easy-going.

Details that matter

Summer dressing this year is not about how much you can add, but how much you can refine. Accessories are kept to a minimum; a pair of statement silver earrings or a delicate chain around the neck. Sandals or ballet flats complete the look without competing for attention.

This summer, with the heat challenging every step of the way, you must give yourself permission to breathe. Choose pieces that make you feel like yourself, even when the sun weighs heavy. Whether you opt for kameez, kurti, saree, shirt or panjabi, make sure your statement speaks softly but clearly. Less noise, more nuance. And always, a quiet kind of cool.

By Nusrath Jahan

Photo: Adnan Rahman

Model: Parinaaz Lamia

Fashion Direction & Styling: Sonia

Yeasmin Isha

Wardrobe: Aarong

Mua: Sumon Rahat & Team

Location: Intercontinental Hotel

Dhaka

Dilnawaz:

A dance drama where love transcends the mortal veil

Drawing from Sufi philosophy and fusing classical and contemporary dance traditions, Dilnawaz offers not just a spectacle, but an experience of the soul's deepest longings. Produced by Shadhona and directed by Lubna Marium, this performance revives a forgotten fable from Urdu literature, bringing to life the story of a slave girl, whose journey through love leads her to spiritual transcendence.

Drawn from the lost but resurrected short story by Rahat Ara Begum, a writer whose pen was once silenced by political divide. The production charts the inner odyssey of a handmaiden in a royal court. Dilnawaz, the humble slave girl, traverses the perilous terrain of longing and surrender, her love for an oblivious prince becoming her gateway to spiritual transcendence.

Her journey, told in seven movements that echo the seven stages of Sufi love, is anything but servile. Attraction (hub), Infatuation (uns), Love (ishq), Trust (akidat), Worship (ibadat), Madness (junoon), and finally, Annihilation (fana) — each stage strips away another layer of self, until only pure essence remains.

Through a deft fusion of the Mugham dance traditions, Indian classical Kathak, and the sinuous rhythms of contemporary jazz, the dance drama embodies the universal yearning for union; not merely with the beloved, but with the Divine.

It is no accident that Rahat Ara Begum — herself a practicing Sufi in 1940s Kolkata — wove this mystical thread into her



only foray into mythic storytelling. And it is fitting that her granddaughter, Lubna Marium, would spend ten patient years nurturing this vision, culminating in six intense months of rehearsal to bring Dilnawaz to the stage.

"Not a dry eye in the hall," Marium recalls, but she stood firm for the story, and

demanded nothing less than total devotion.

Mubashira Kamal Era, who embodies Dilnawaz, delivers a performance that goes beyond dance; it becomes ritual. Her portrayal captures heartbreak and ecstasy in equal measure, her body a vessel for emotions that words cannot contain.

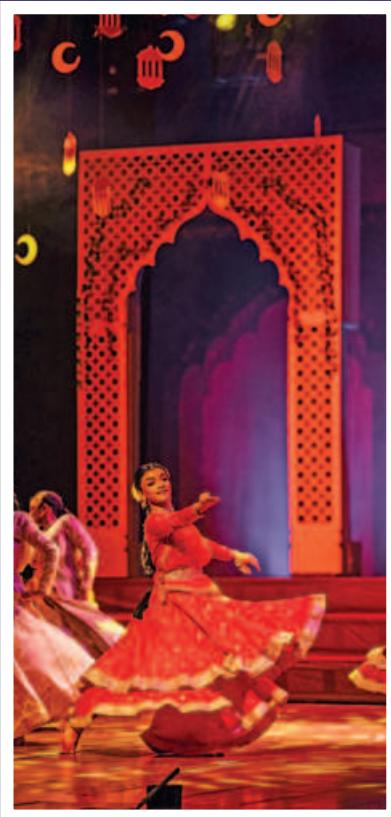
"For a whole 10 minutes, I just spun," she says. "I was in a trance. The claps, the awe in the audience, I could feel them, though they didn't reach me. My body was just in a trance, something I felt from within."

That moment, a solitary figure spinning, lost in divine madness, became the



production's heartbeat. Era's own journey adds another layer of poignance: once driven away from dance by bullying, she returned years later to stand before an audience of over 700, everyone on their feet, caught in collective rapture.





Dilnawaz is not content with mere narration. It communicates, blending classical rigor with contemporary freedom, weaving South Asian and Middle Eastern traditions into a single fabric. Each movement, each gesture, is charged with the sacred duty of conveying the ineffable. It is this alchemy that has left audiences spellbound and hearts unguarded.

As Lubna Marium puts it, "Performance transcends the world through art. With Dilnawaz, we present a story of love, devotion, and mysticism, weaving together

South Asian and Middle Eastern performance traditions."

At a time when art is often reduced to entertainment, Dilnawaz reclaims the stage as sacred space. It reminds us that love, in its truest, most transformative form, is both the path and the destination. Like the Sufi seekers before her, Dilnawaz dances not for applause, but for annihilation. And in doing so, she invites us to shed our own layers, to spin until we too, touch the eternal.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Courtesy



How unresolved childhood trauma haunts marriages

A child's mental map of the world is shaped by the emotional pain they have been through, like seeing parents fight, being abandoned, being treated unfairly, or being verbally neglected. Individuals often view the world through the lens of their "core beliefs," which stem from the nature of the childhood disciplinary process, be it proper or improper.



For them, the mental map, which was meant to help them deal with the unstable nature of their first relationships, shapes how they later understand love, trust, and loyalty. This mental map does not just go away when they become an adult. They come back slowly but surely, trying to fit the complicated nature of marriage into patterns set up decades ago, often when the mind was too young to fully understand the world.

EARLY MARRIAGE

The initial stages of marriage are often perceived as a period of optimism by couples. A honeymoon period; the culmination of dreams, plans, and endless conversations, during which it appears feasible to build a future that is untainted by the past. However, untreated old wounds slowly but surely return.

A partner speaking to their colleague may spark disproportionate anxiety. Over time, this conveys to some that their partner has stopped choosing them. That childhood fear of being left behind comes back without knocking.

A minor disagreement over dinner plans could suddenly escalate into a defensive argument. What to others may seem like trivial misunderstandings, to someone carrying unresolved childhood trauma, feels like the terrifying possibility of rejection, abandonment, or loss of identity all over again.

Dr Abdul Hamid, a noted psychotherapist at the MONOBIKASH Foundation, explains this phenomenon through the lens of "mental mapping." According to him, unresolved trauma quietly steers emotional reactions, often at a subconscious level.

"People try to adjust the new relationship to fit the old mental map created by past experiences," he says. The trauma of yesterday finds new battlegrounds in today's marital disagreements, pushing couples into cycles of conflict that feel strangely familiar, yet painfully confusing.

The struggle is not always apparent from the outside. In a city such as Dhaka, where societal expectations are significant and the extended family's opinion can frequently intrude on the seclusion of a couple's relationship, acknowledging emotional vulnerability can feel similar to conceding defeat.

A significant number of individuals continue to persist, concealing their increasing distance behind the mundane responsibilities of daily life, such as keeping face in front of relatives, doing household chores and paying bills, and taking children to school.

Emotional isolation is frequently the result of the mute character of these struggles. Not out of a sense of distrust, but rather out of a desperate, almost infantile need for reassurance, one partner may demand access to the other's social media passwords and phones to achieve hyper-

transparency.

Mouni, a boutique owner, shares her dismay, "I never asked for much from Ali (husband), we were getting by and were quite comfortable until his new job came in between us. He became different, and I felt like I was no longer his top priority. We fought on repeat. I had to assert my right over him as his wife. The day I gave him an ultimatum is the day we separated."

After their separation, Mouni sought professional help for depression. "It shatters me to admit that I harbour severe abandonment issues. The way I clung to the paranoia, the need to be everything to him, all of it traced back to that moment my mother left. I was still that child, only older, louder, and

more desperate. I tried to hold Ali close to me as much as I could; my childhood-induced insecurities drove him away," she orates.

The other partner, who is oblivious to the invisible wounds they are handling, may withdraw, perceiving these behaviours as controlling or suffocating.

Dr Hamid points out, "control, transparency, or hyper-visibility in the relationship becomes proof of love" for those battling insecurity rooted in early life abandonment or neglect. What begins as a plea for closeness turns into a war zone with locked phones, cold stares, and long nights where both partners sleep inches away but worlds apart.

IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD

In Bangladeshi society, trauma faced as an



adolescent is far from rare. The sources are many — financial instability, natural disasters, gender-based discrimination, and the entrenched patriarchal norms that colour so many family dynamics.

Many children grow up internalising the idea that their needs are secondary, their voices are insignificant, or worse, that their very existence is a burden. These emotional scars, if left untreated, mature quietly alongside the individual, only to surface with ferocity when the person tries to build intimacy in adulthood.

Such ingrained beliefs can lead to a persistent fear of abandonment or a compulsion to seek validation in adult relationships. This is especially clear in those who observed parental disputes during their formative years.

In certain instances, parents may express sentiments such as, "I would have left already if we did not have children," or "I sacrificed my career to care for our child" during arguments.

Although not meant to hurt, such statements can leave deep scars. These words often get hardwired into the child's emotional memory. To a child's ears, it doesn't sound like love. It sounds like blame wrapped in affection; a quiet

reminder that they are the reason for someone else's loss. The child, unable to comprehend the complexities of adult relationships, often assumes blame, leading to deep-seated guilt and a distorted sense of self-worth.

Dr Hamid explains, "They begin to believe that they are the root cause of their parents' suffering and sacrifice. They obsessively try to understand the reason behind the conflict, and every time, they conclude that they're to blame."

Monsura, a service holder, shares her struggles, "I've always been left behind. It can happen again. The emotional toll of facing that is agonising to say the least. It's like the moment someone stops seeing eye to eye on anything, texting back on time or forgets I exist in a room. I feel this unbearable weight in my chest. I panic."

She convinces herself that her partner does not care anymore; that she's not enough.

"So, I walk away first. It is better to walk away before I get hurt. I've done it three times now. Marriage, to me, has always felt like a test I'm doomed to fail, probably because my father never stayed long enough to validate my affection and efforts towards him or teach me what love without conditions looks like," she avows.

This is where the fear of "being lost" or benign abandonment begins. Individuals start to lose their own sense of self-worth and identity. Over time, this perception becomes their reality. This unresolved trauma may resurface in romantic relationships later in life. They may experience an intense dread of abandonment or a strong desire to exert control over the relationship. Beneath their behaviour lies a wounded child, still terrified of being the reason someone leaves.

GENDERED EXPERIENCES

Bangladeshi women, often subject to body shaming, colourism, and stricter social expectations, face a different set of emotional hurdles than men, who are socially conditioned to suppress vulnerability under the pretence of strength, and be the provider to their family, even if it means putting their lives on the line. This suppression becomes fertile ground for emotional unavailability in marriage — a wall that neither partner knows quite how to tear down.

Software Engineer, Reza has always been dubbed as a stoic individual. Despite his nature, he struggles to maintain communication or show affection to his spouse. "Showing affection or being emotional in general was never my strong suit. This trait of mine came in handy in many instances in life, but never in relationships."

He expresses further, "It was ingrained by the adults around me, showing emotions was a way of exposing myself. If I cried, I was called soft. If I reacted with anger, I was labelled violent. When I asked for a hug from my mother, I was yelled at for being too clingy."

Expressing his emotions, the skill itself was made to be faded by Reza himself. "I struggle now, even to show affection to my wife, whom I really love. But she believes that I do not care for

her. I am incapable of being emotionally available. I find it difficult to empathise with someone who is experiencing pain."

"I expect them to do what I do: walk it off or bury it deep down until it does not bother me. I never fathomed that something so natural, like loving or being caring, could be so daunting and elusive. I don't know how to show or express it, but I really do love my wife."

Yet, the irony remains: while the world outside celebrates marital milestones with glossy photographs and cheerful captions, many couples suffer quietly behind closed doors, tangled in past hurts they have

speak differently, not with accusations but with curiosity, not with defences but with honesty.

Sometimes, it means recognising that the tears and anger in front of you are not truly about the missed anniversary dinner or the harsh word in the heat of a fight, but about a scared inner child asking not to be abandoned again.

Dhaka, with its ever-shifting skyline and slow, but steady cultural evolution, marriages, too, are evolving. The old ways of bottling everything inside, enduring rather than understanding, are being questioned. Couples are beginning to



never had the space to name, let alone heal.

The communication gap widens not just through arguments but in silence as well — missed glances, unspoken resentments, affectionate advances withheld not out of hate but hesitation and in between, life moves on like a play where both actors forgot their lines but keep performing anyway.

In a society where mental health is still often seen as a luxury concern, seeking therapy becomes a radical act of self-preservation. But the stigma remains stubborn. Vulnerability is misunderstood as weakness: therapy is often dismissed as unnecessary indulgence.

TOWARDS HEALING

Dr Abdul Hamid stresses that real progress begins when couples stop seeing each other as enemies and start seeing the real adversary — the unresolved wounds both are carrying. Healing involves learning to

realise that love alone is not enough if the soil it's planted in remains wounded and parched.

There is no single cure, no easy checklist. The journey of healing marital relationships affected by childhood trauma is messy, nonlinear, and deeply personal. It demands honesty not just with a partner, but with oneself. It asks each person to mourn the childhood they deserved but never had and to relearn, with a loved one, how to trust, be safe, and be seen fully, scars and all.

Because in the end, marriage is not just the meeting of two lives. It is often the meeting of two pasts. And until those pasts are acknowledged and embraced, the future remains hostage to ghosts that refuse to rest.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel

**Names used in this article are aliases to keep the identities of the subjects hidden.

CHHANAMUKHI

The sweet taste of Brahmanbaria



When you think of Brahmanbaria, one name that immediately comes to mind is its iconic sweet, chhanamukhi. This small, cube-shaped sweetmeat, with light sugar coatings and soft chhana inside, have been winning hearts for nearly 200 years. Its long history and unique taste make it a treasure of the district.



A taste; a legacy

The oldest shop in the area, Mahadev Mishtanno Bhandar, located at Mahadev Potti, has been making chhanamukhi for almost 180 years. The story begins with Mahadev Panre, the founder of this famous sweet. He moved from Kashi to Kolkata with his brother, Durga Prasad. There, he began working in his brother's sweet shop and quickly became popular.

After his brother's death, Mahadev moved to Brahmanbaria in search of work, where he found shelter at Shibram Modak's sweet shop. When Mahadev arrived, the fame of the shop grew.

Before his passing, Shibram passed the shop to Mahadev. As a Brahman who never married, Mahadev later gave the shop to a nearby temple before his death. Today, four generations later, the shop is managed by Narayan Modak, continuing the legacy.

The secret is in the consistency

The shop's recipe for chhanamukhi has stayed the same throughout the years. It is made with the same care and attention as it was in the beginning. This consistency has helped Mahadev Mishtanno Bhandar retain its reputation as one of the best sweet shops in Brahmanbaria. The shop is surrounded by other confectioneries, many of which are run by the owner's relatives or close acquaintances.

While chhanamukhi is the star of the show, Mahadev Mishtanno Bhandar is also

known for other specialities including taaler bora, roshmalai, jafran bhog, rajbhog, and ledikeni — a sweet with its own rich history, though it is no longer available.

Sujit Madan, an employee working at the shop for 25 years, shares, "Chhanamukhi is the best seller here. Our taaler bora and

dip them in sugar syrup," Sarkar explains.

One kilogram of chhanamukhi costs Tk 700, which reflects the purity and effort involved. Sarkar adds, "It takes 20 kilograms of milk to produce just 3 kilograms of chhana, which is why the price is high, but what you get is pure as a result."

A taste that defines a town

Mahadev Mishtanno Bhandar is a busy



roshmalai are also fan favourites."

Made with milk and mastery

Gopal Sarkar, the skilled moira (the community known for making sweets) who has also been with the shop for 25 years, explains the process of making Chhanamukhi. He explained that the journey starts with fresh milk collected from village farmers.

"To make chhana, we boil pure milk, and about half an hour later, the curdled milk is separated, placed in a cloth, and tightly tied up to remove excess water. Once the chhana hardens, we cut it into pieces and

shop, operating from 7 AM to midnight. Despite many shops in the area, this shop continues to stand out as the birthplace of chhanamukhi. Simple yet rich in flavour, it continues to be a timeless favourite, enjoyed by generations. A visit to this iconic shop is a must for anyone wanting to explore the region.

An interesting fact about chhanamukhi is that it has received Geographical Indication (GI) status in 2024, which means it is officially recognised as a special item from the region of Brahmanbaria.

By Jawwad Sami
Photo: Jawwad Sami

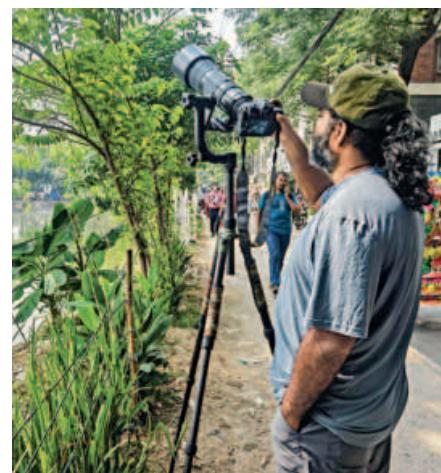
DHAKA'S BIRDS ARE DISAPPEARING — should we be worried?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 02

That is a chilling prediction, however, the story is not just about birds. It is also about us. This becomes a tale about what we stand to lose along the way, and how distant we have become from our own environment.

Hardly anybody knows that more than 200 bird species call Dhaka home. So, the question begs, should we not be a little more aware of our environment? After all, every animal plays an equally important role in balancing nature. Wildlife is not only about beauty, but also about mutual survival. Yet, we seem to forget that.

Firoz questioned, "The several species of birds in and around Dhaka are one of our most underrated natural resources. But,



how can we possibly protect that which we don't even know exists?"

The documentary is aimed at opening the hearts and minds of the general people, especially the children of tomorrow. This is because the future relies on what they choose to do with the knowledge of the documentary — will they protect the birds or forget them?

"In human films, there are roles, timetables, structure," Asker Ibne Firoz explains. "But here, nature writes the story. You might wait three to four days just for a single moment. You might sit in rain, heat, and complete silence, just for a glimpse that might change your perception of things."

A memorable scene was when the crew, drenched and huddled in raincoats, filmed

a mother bird feeding its chick, which was struggling due to the rain.

"The baby bird needed warmth from food to survive. We watched as the mother tried again and again, in the downpour. That's the kind of love and instinct you can't script," Firoz recalls.

Ultimately, there is no pinning down or moralising in this documentary. Rather, there is an invitation instilled with passion. An invitation to see, to feel, and, finally, to do. In an evolving world, this film offers an opportunity to step back for a rare moment.

The documentary is due to be released in February 2026.

By Samayla Mahjabin Koishy
Photo: Courtesy

SIP THE SEASON:

Cooling juice recipes with a twist

When the heat rises and your energy dips, nothing revives quite like a tall glass of something cold and homemade. These fresh juice recipes bring together the earthy sweetness of fruits, the sharp kick of ginger and chilli, and the timeless tang of citrus. Whether it's the smoky charm of pora aamer sharbat or the subtle elegance of watermelon juice laced with honey and sea salt, each recipe here celebrates the art of cooling down!



WATERMELON JUICE WITH HONEY AND SALT

Ingredients

8 cups watermelon cut into 2-inch cubes
1 tsp raw honey
1/2 tsp kosher or sea salt
1-2 sprigs of fresh herbs, such as mint or basil (optional)

Method

Place a fine mesh strainer over a large bowl and set aside. Place watermelon, honey and salt in a blender. Blend on high until no chunks remain. Depending on the size of your blender, you may need to do this in two batches. Pour into the strainer and press the pulp with a wooden spoon to extract all of the juice. Pour the juice into a container with a tight-fitting lid. Chill.

When ready to serve, shake vigorously (because it tends to separate) and serve with a sprig of herbs, if using.

PORA AAMER SHARBAT (CHARRED GREEN MANGO JUICE)

Ingredients

4 raw mangoes
1/4 cup fresh mint
1/2 roasted cumin powder
1/4 tsp roasted dry red chilli powder

1 cup sugar
2 tsp black salt
6 cup water

Method

Wash and dry the raw mangoes. Using a fork, prick it all over. Roast the mangoes over direct heat for about 10 minutes. Peel the skin and let it cool. Using your hands pull out all the pulp. Take the pulp in a blender. Add sugar, black salt, roasted cumin powder, roasted red chilli powder, mint and blend to make a

paste.

Add water and blend again. Refrigerate for about 2 hours. Pour the glasses and serve chilled.

CARROT JUICE WITH APPLE

Ingredients

4 carrots
2 apples
2 tbsp honey/sugar (to taste)
3/4 cup to 1 cup water

Method

Scrub carrots well and wash them; peel off the skins if needed. Peel off 2 apples and chop them into small slices. Chop the carrot into small cubes. Take it in a blender, add water little by little and puree it smoothly. Now strain this through a fine strainer, you can strain this using a clean cloth. Blend the apples separately; strain. Now add honey and apple juice to the carrot juice and mix well.

Chill this for an hour. Serve cold.

FRESH GINGER LEMONADE

Ingredients

1 large piece of fresh ginger (about 3-4 inches)
4-5 lemons (freshly juiced)



cheesecloth, and press or squeeze it to extract the juice. You should have around 2-3 tablespoons of fresh ginger juice. Squeeze the juice from the lemons and strain it to remove seeds or pulp.

In a large pitcher, combine the freshly

squeezed lemon juice, ginger juice, and cold water. Stir well to mix. Add honey (or your preferred sweetener) to taste. Stir until it's dissolved completely. If you want a tangy flavour, feel free to adjust the amount of sweetener.

Pour the ginger lemonade into glasses filled with ice cubes (optional).

COCONUT COOLER

Ingredients

5 cups diced watermelon
3/4 cup raspberries
2 cups coconut water
1/4 cup lime juice
2 tsp sugar
Handful of mint leaves

Method

Firstly, dice up a watermelon to attain 5 cups of it. Blend this to get a fine juice and then strain this through a fine mesh sieve. Get rid of all the seeds and fruit pulp so that you are left with thin and translucent watermelon juice.

Next, cut raspberries into halves and puree them in a blender. After getting a fine puree, pass this through a sieve to get rid of all the seeds and solid substances. Add in 2 teaspoons of sugar to this and mix well. Squeeze a couple of limes and remove their seeds to get a 1/4 cup of lime juice.

Combine all these prepared ingredients together in a blender along with 2 cups of coconut water. Pulse them for a few seconds until you get a clear and homogenous mixture. You can adjust the level of sweetness by adding more sugar according to your taste preference.

Lastly, chill this in the refrigerator and garnish with a sprig of mint before serving to add a pop of colour and a burst of freshness. This tastes best when served cold.



Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

PERIMENOPAUSE AND MENOPAUSE

Understanding the hormonal journey

Menopause is not a singular event. It is part of a broader continuum of change that begins years before the final menstrual period and continues long after. Understanding this passage, beginning with perimenopause, can turn confusion into clarity, and fear into empowerment.

Across Bangladesh and much of the world, women often enter the perimenopausal stage of life with little awareness and even less preparation. Conversations around it are scarce, cloaked in discomfort and cultural silence. Yet this transition — a complex hormonal and emotional shift — touches nearly every aspect of a woman's life, from her physical wellbeing to her psychological stability and sense of identity.

"My sleep was a mess, I kept forgetting things, and my heart would race for no reason. For months, I thought I had an anxiety disorder or early dementia. It never crossed my mind that it could be perimenopause"

Menopause doesn't arrive all at once. Dr Syeda Husna Akhter, Senior Consultant Gynaecology and Obstetrics at Super Specialized Hospital, Dhaka, explains, "There's a transitional stage called the climacteric. It includes perimenopause, the early shift, and post-menopause, which follows after periods have permanently stopped."

"I was snapping at my children for no reason, crying during meetings, and waking up at 3 AM every night. I thought I was just burned out."

Many women initially misattribute their experiences, describing it as a period of "emotional short-circuiting." In truth, they are going through a biological transformation that affects every woman, yet is rarely explained well.

The range of symptoms can be broad and deeply personal. From sudden heat in the face and chest — hot flashes — to insomnia, depression, vaginal dryness, brain fog, digestive trouble, and loss of libido, the body starts to send signals that many find hard to interpret.

"Hot flashes are a hallmark symptom," says Dr Akhter. "They usually last two to three minutes and cause the face and upper body to flush. For some women, they're barely noticeable; for others, they disrupt sleep and work. Stress and lifestyle factors can worsen them."

Psychological symptoms are just as common. Mood swings, irritability, or even unexplained grief can descend without warning. Hormones regulate the reproductive system and the brain.



priorities, and embracing maturity with strength."

Hossain puts it best: "I thought menopause would mean life slowing down. But instead, it gave me clarity. I stopped worrying about monthly cycles and started focusing on myself. I only wish I had known more about what to expect."

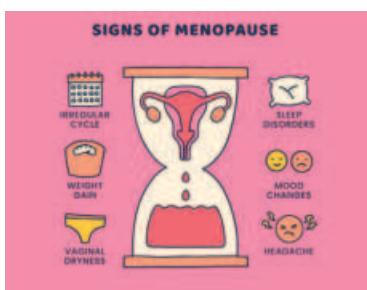
Perimenopause and menopause are not medical tragedies; rather, they are deeply human transitions. With education, support, and agency, women can reclaim this stage not as a decline, but as a redefining of their lives.

"Menopause is not a disease," Dr Akhter emphasises. "It's a phase. With the right tools — physical, emotional, and social — women can move through it with dignity."

In a country like Bangladesh, where health conversations are still layered with stigma, breaking the silence around menopause is not just necessary — it's liberating.

Because every woman deserves to understand her body, and every woman deserves to feel whole, even as she changes.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected



Perimenopause typically begins in a woman's early to mid-40s, though some experience symptoms earlier. It can last anywhere from a few months to over a decade. During this time, oestrogen, the hormone responsible for regulating the menstrual cycle, mood, and reproductive health, fluctuates unpredictably. This hormonal imbalance affects the brain, heart, bones, and even digestion.

"You might have irregular periods, or go two or three months without one, and then suddenly get two in a single month," says Dr Akhter. "The ovaries begin to reduce their hormone response, but not all at once. That's why the symptoms can be so erratic."

As oestrogen drops, women can feel mentally unbalanced, like they're not themselves anymore.

"I thought pregnancies cannot happen if periods are months apart"

One common misconception is that once periods become irregular, fertility ends, but that's not necessarily true. A largely unspoken aspect of this life stage is its impact on intimacy and sexual health. Vaginal dryness, discomfort during intercourse, and reduced desire are all common but rarely addressed.

"After oestrogen declines, the vaginal lining thins and loses elasticity," explains Dr Akhter. "This can cause painful sex, urinary discomfort, or even cystitis. Many

"I would cry in the shower and then walk into the office like nothing happened. I didn't even know it was hormonal"

For those without access to specialists, the first line of treatment is often understanding and reassurance. "The role of psychological support is huge," says Dr Akhter. "Sometimes, women just need to hear that what they're experiencing is normal and that it will pass."

Despite its inevitability, menopause remains a topic shrouded in discomfort. In South Asian households, where women's identities are still tied closely to reproductive roles, this transition is viewed as a loss rather than an evolution.

"Menopause doesn't mean a woman's value has ended," says Dr Akhter firmly. "It's a time for reflection, for shifting

Threads of tradition, patterns of progress: Maheen Khan's artisanal vision

Coinciding with the Bengali New Year, the Baishakhi Festival exhibition at Bay's Edge Gallery in Dhaka celebrated the rich cultural and artisanal heritage of Bangladesh. Curated by renowned designer Maheen Khan, the event showcased a stunning collection of handwoven silk garments, including saris, jackets, and embroidered quilts (nakshi katha). Sponsored by Hyundai, UCB, and Berger, this exhibition highlighted the country's vibrant craft traditions and their relevance to new age fashion.



Maheen Khan's journey into the world of artisanal craft and design began early.

"I started right after college at 21, in 1986," she shared. "For nearly 16 years, I worked in a more institutional setting, focusing on product development. That experience helped me understand grassroots craftsmanship and appreciate the incredible skill of local artisans who have preserved our cultural heritage across generations."

She explained that Bangladesh's traditional arts — needlework, weaving, embroidery — are deeply ingrained in its history, shaped by centuries of cultural influences from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and colonial powers such as England and Europe.

Her collaborations with handloom weavers from regions like Rajshahi and



Chapainawabganj played an important role in her understanding of traditional techniques.

"Our handwoven silk is very durable, strong, and tactile," she said. "When designing heirloom-quality products, the fabric must be of exceptional quality—resilient enough to last for generations."

Through her collections, she aims to balance respect for tradition with modern tastes. Over the past two and a half years, she has developed a collection of silk sarees inspired by Bangladesh's diverse history, integrating traditional motifs with contemporary design elements.

Maheen Khan's collections are heavily inspired by Bangladesh's layered cultural influences, including Islamic geometric patterns, Arabesque motifs, and indigenous Bengali designs.

"Bangladesh's history is a melting pot — Dutch, Portuguese, English, and local Sultanate influences have all shaped our aesthetic," she explained. "Despite its small size, our country's art and craft carry the weight of a thousand years of cultural synthesis."

She stresses that traditional craft is not just art — it is a livelihood. Many artisans

rely on needlework and textile arts as their primary income, making their support crucial.

In Jamalpur, she works directly with artisans, training and upskilling them to ensure that their craftsmanship remains relevant and sustainable.

"We aim to create slow fashion — garments crafted with patience, designed to be treasured and passed down," she said. "Colour choice is key. I love ivory because it's timeless and versatile. For summer, we select pastels that evoke serenity and freshness; for winter, jewel tones like deep reds and emerald greens. Every decision is thoughtful, from the fabrics to the motifs."

Her inspiration from traditional Bengali designs like shitol pati, terracotta patterns, and woven geometric motifs is evident in her work.

Maheen Khan also explained that every piece in her collection tells a story. "It's a journey from the raw yarn to the finished garment," she said. "Every stage bears human touch — done by hand — making each item unique. I carefully curate the details, from embroidery to finishing."

She credits her collaboration with master curators like Shaibal Shah for maintaining

the authenticity of her work, trusting his spontaneous judgment to bring her vision to life.

Looking forward, Maheen Khan's primary goal is to elevate Bangladesh's textile and craft industry globally.

"We need more support and investment. Our traditional crafts are sustainable, slow, and rooted in culture. The world is increasingly focused on sustainability, and our artisanal practices fit perfectly with that movement," she said. "By showcasing our heritage, we can build a valuable niche on the international stage."

Beyond commercial aspirations, Maheen Khan emphasises cultural pride.

"Our heritage isn't static," she said. "It's a living, evolving story. I want our craft to be recognised worldwide, not just as traditional art but as a modern, sustainable industry that empowers local artisans and preserves our identity."

She believes that with more exposure, investment, and strategic partnerships, Bangladesh can shift from being primarily known for readymade garments to being celebrated globally for its handcrafted textiles, too.

Her vision extends beyond individual collections. She aims to foster a global appreciation for Bangladesh's artisanal wealth and to ensure artisans receive fair recognition and support.

"Supporting local artisans isn't just good business — it's a moral obligation," she asserted. "When artisans succeed, they become ambassadors of our culture, and their work helps us preserve our heritage while creating meaningful economic change."

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Courtesy

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Transform your dining space before Eid arrives!

Eid-ul-Adha is just around the corner, and while many of us are busy checking off the usual to-do list: finalising the Qurbani budget, stocking up on essentials, and revisiting those cherished family recipes, there are certain important details that often get overlooked until the last minute, like decorating the dining space.

This is, after all, the heart of Eid gatherings — the place where dishes are served and memories are made. So, this year, why not give it the attention it deserves and make it truly festive?

Start now, and your future self will thank you! Why? Because the curtains will smell like flowers instead of dust, the tablecloth will not feature that suspicious stain, and your fancy cutlery will actually sparkle, rather than giving off accidental "vintage" vibes.

Knock out these low-key chores first: declutter the cabinets, wash your curtains, polish any wood surfaces, and give the rarely seen tableware its moment. These little changes will make the entire space feel fresh and festive, without denting your wallet.

And don't forget the lighting. It plays a surprisingly big role in setting the mood. Swap out harsh overhead lights for softer alternatives. Floor lanterns, fairy lights, or a cluster of candles as a centrepiece can change the atmosphere entirely! For good! Pair this with a few indoor plants in the corners for a touch of nature. These small changes not only highlight your food beautifully, but also create a cosy, inviting environment.

Now, let's focus on the dining table itself.



The literal centrepiece of your dining room. If you have been contemplating an upgrade or addition, Eid preps might be the perfect excuse to explore options.

Love a clean, modern vibe? There are minimalist designs that champion "less is more"—like Scandinavian-style rectangular tables with light wood finishes or sleek tempered glass tops that bring an airy, elegant feel to your space. They are not just beautiful — they are practical, especially for smaller dining rooms.

But, if you are looking for something with a bit more presence, an ornate table in dark

wood or marble can add a touch of luxury and bring a classic, refined feel to your room. They are perfect if you love entertaining or want your dining space to feel a little grand. You may consider adding a sofa or couch in the corner if you have more space. Though space is rare, especially in a city like Dhaka.

So, if making room is your major concern, consider extendable tables that grow when guests arrive. Some contemporary sets even include built-in storage, which is perfect for maintaining space. Round tables, on the other hand, foster style, intimacy, and conversation. You can go for them as well.



However, if you are concerned about the budget, you do not have to compromise — the furniture brand Hatil is offering 5-10 per cent discounts. They also offer EMI (Equated Monthly Instalment) plans, so you can upgrade your space without paying everything upfront.

It's a good way to invest in quality while keeping your budget in check. So, if you have been eyeing that gorgeous table, now is your time to go for it before Eid!

By Jannatul Bushra
Photo: Courtesy

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