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Whispers of the HILLS

PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

#PERSPECTIVE

MYMENSINGH IN MY DREAMS

The place haunts me, not in a scary way, but in a manner that is filled with a strong longing to go there again.

I have been to Mymensingh only twice in my life, and the two trips were enough to make me fall in love with the place.

My introduction to Mymensingh happened around a decade ago. It was a quick day trip where the history nerd in me explored some of the fascinating old buildings. The trip was short and yet so impactful that I vowed to go there again.

This year, a couple of my friends and I made an expedition, spending several days there. This second trip, where I had more time and opportunity to experience the wonders of this region, left me in a deeper awe than the fleeting day tour.

One needs to look beyond the hustle and bustle of the region. The elegant ghat at Shashi Lodge calls for a lazy chat. The small hills — lush with large trees that have spread their roots long and wide, as if to declare their claim on the hills — bring a sense of serenity.

A drive through the roads of Kalmakanda reveals nature in its majestic splendour, with the range of beautiful hills on the horizon — a dance of light and shadows, a game of colours with the blue skies, white fluffy clouds, and greenery.

And then there are the cheena matir pahar. Rugged, chalky, yellowish. It feels otherworldly!

Mymensingh feels like it's straight out of a dream. It haunts me, not in a scary way, but in a manner that is filled with a strong longing to go there again.

By M H Haider
Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel
Flip through Star Lifestylefor our tour map of Mymensingh!

#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Meet the woman who's shaping Bangladesh's 'INFLUENCER' MARKET

In 2018, the term "influencer" was barely part of the Bangladeshi marketing lexicon. While most brands relied on celebrity endorsements and traditional media, Breity Sabrin was already seeing the tremors of a digital shift. What others dismissed as fleeting content, she saw as the future of storytelling. And when the world came to a standstill during the COVID-19 pandemic, she didn't hit pause.

She built something that would eventually contribute to reshaping the country's digital branding landscape, "The Marvel – Be You," under the parent company, The Yours Truly.

When the world stopped, the idea moved

Her journey began with "Just Stories," a small content marketing initiative where she tested ideas, built relationships with creators, and identified market gaps. Her academic background in global marketing and her years in corporate brand strategy gave her the muscle. But then, COVID-19 happened, and forced everything into stillness.

"Within eight months of starting my first business, the pandemic hit. But it also gave me time to reflect, observe, and pivot," Sabrin recalls.

With the country locked indoors, content consumption exploded. TikTok boomed, YouTube creators became household names, and social media was no longer a distraction. Yet, what Breity Sabrin noticed was not just the growth of creators, but the randomness of it all. There was no system or strategy.

"Influencer marketing had started to rise worldwide, but in Bangladesh, it was still an undefined segment," she recalls. "There were no data-driven systems, no strategy — just scattered collaborations. That's when I saw the opportunity."

The Marvel – Be You: A platform, not just a project

The Marvel – Be You emerged from identifying a vacuum. Sabrin envisioned a platform that offered recognition and rigour. She launched the Marvel of Tomorrow Influencers Summit and Award, the first data-backed influencer recognition event in the country.

"We wanted to recognise creators not by follower count, but by impact," she explains. "That meant analysing their content, their reach, their influence on audiences."

Authenticity isn't optional

Despite the industry's growth, Breity Sabrin remains clear-eyed about its pitfalls. Brands, she notes, still struggle to understand how to work with influencers without stripping them of what makes them influential in the first place.

"Influencers aren't actors," she says. "People follow them because they're authentic. If a brand tries to change their tone or persona, the audience can sense it. That's when engagement drops."

On the flip side, she cautions influencers, too. "If an influencer endorses one phone brand this week and a competitor the next, it erodes their credibility. People stop trusting them."

And then there's the issue of compensation. Unlike global markets where influencer rates are guided by data

— cost per view, engagement metrics — Bangladesh's influencer economy remains inconsistent.

"The payment structure here is extremely fluctuating. It's not always justified by performance metrics. And that hurts everyone — the brands, influencers, and the platforms."

No gatekeeping, just guidance

Marvel's open-door policy is one of its most defining features. Creators don't have to pay to join the platform. Marvel earns through brands, not influencers.

"Influencers are our assets," Sabrin states. "If someone wants guidance on how to grow, we offer it — no charge. If we manage their profiles and get them brand work, only then do we take a commission."

This model ensures that both rising and established creators have access to a professional ecosystem, without being excluded for lack of funds or connections.

Flex: Monetising the everyday

While The Marvel – Be You is B2B, Breity Sabrin's latest venture, Flex, is consumer-facing. Flex targets young users who love posting on social media but don't always consider themselves 'influencers.'

"We noticed that even students or young professionals were tagging brands regularly, posting content, but receiving nothing in return," she says. "We asked, what if we rewarded them for it?"

With Flex, users with modest followings like 500 followers on Instagram or 2,000 on Facebook, can access offers, cashback, and perks by simply tagging brands in their posts. The Flex prepaid card, backed by Eastern Bank and VISA, allows these users to receive monthly rewards.

"It's about converting social currency into real value," Sabrin explains. "You don't need a million followers to matter. You just need a voice and consistency."

A woman in tech

As a female entrepreneur, Breity Sabrin doesn't lean into the label.

"I never wanted to think, 'my challenges are harder because I'm a woman,'" she states. "That mindset puts you in a victim role. Business is hard, period — regardless of gender."

She credits much of her success to her co-founders, especially Mahzabin Ferdous, a long-time friend and fellow entrepreneur. "Having co-founders who share your vision and complement your skills is vital. Execution gets easier when you're not alone in the trenches."

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs? Be brutally prepared.

"You have to be mentally, emotionally, and financially ready. Don't romanticise business. It's a battle, and you need the right team and mindset to survive it."

In a space often driven by hype and vanity metrics, Breity Sabrin stands out for her precision, her refusal to cut corners, and her deep belief that the future of branding is not built on ads, but built on people.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy / Collected

#LIFEHACKS

FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR CHILDREN

Why is it so important?

Growing up in the '80s and '90s, we never discussed money at home. My parents never discussed it with us, so I never knew how much a kilogram of rice or a dozen eggs cost. I also did not know how much we paid for rent or utility bills.

I did not know how much our family earned and how much we spent each month. Of course, we do not want to sit with our children with a spreadsheet and give them a headache, but it is important to discuss money management with children as they get older. This knowledge will help them make more informed financial decisions as adults.

Discussing money is often considered taboo, not only in Bangladesh but also in many other parts of the world. However, financial literacy is crucial to our financial well-being, which is closely linked to our physical and psychological well-being. I have seen people, friends, and family make poor financial decisions and sink into debt. I have seen how credit cards resulted in excessive spending and financial ruin. And I blame a lot of it on our poor financial literacy.

Financial literacy begins at home

Our teen daughter has been accompanying us to grocery shopping since she was just a few months old. It is also true that we did not have the option of leaving her at home with someone, so we took her with us wherever we went. This decision, however, proved beneficial for her; she learned new words, letters, and numbers during her grocery-shopping trips. As she grew older, she became familiar with the prices of the food items we bought. She also learned to compare prices between brands and varieties, and read nutrition labels to make healthy eating choices. Beyond food, she also gained an understanding of how much her clothes, shoes, and other belongings cost.

By the age of 10, she knew that earning money requires hard work and that it needs to be spent wisely and effectively.

At school

My daughter has a bank account, where she saves the cash gifts she receives from her parents and extended family on birthdays and other special occasions. When she was in fourth grade, her school encouraged her to open her own bank account. A representative from a local credit union went to her class and lectured on the importance of saving money from a young age. Here in the US, a minor can open a bank account with as little as $5. These accounts do not charge a monthly service fee or require a minimum balance.

As many as 30 states across America now require students to take a financial literacy course for high school graduation. The curriculum covers topics such as budgeting, personal banking, savings, taxes, credit, investing, consumer protection, and other financial concepts. Students can apply the knowledge gained through this curriculum for the rest of their lives!

Money is a sensitive and taboo subject to discuss in our society.

However, this is not the way it should be. It is true that those of us who did not learn about money management at home or school, or those of us who did not study business at college or university, often find it challenging to understand various financial concepts and manage money effectively. Without knowledge of budgeting, savings, taxes, credit, interest, etc., we often make financial mistakes when we start earning money as working adults. The result? We spend more than we should, we fail to save (even for emergencies), or we fall into debt.

Scams and credit cards

In today's age of credit cards, financial literacy is more than just necessary. Many credit cardholders are oblivious to the fact that the money on a credit card actually belongs to the bank, not them. If they cannot pay it back on time, they will incur high interest charges!

We are also living in a time when financial scams are rampant. Without adequate financial literacy, we are more likely to fall victim to these scams.

Therefore, take some time to educate yourself about money management. There are plenty of free resources available on the internet. There are even free online classes on financial literacy. One highly informative and completely free Financial Literacy course is offered by Khan Academy and others. If you have friends or family who are finance professionals, you can also seek their expert advice regarding financial decisions and request them to educate you on financial concepts.

At the same time, we should start discussions around money at home with our children once they are 9 or 10 years old, so that our children have an understanding of how money is earned and spent in the family. This knowledge will help our children set realistic goals for themselves and have realistic expectations from us, the parents.

The earlier we understand the importance of financial literacy, the better for society. Like how it is being done here in America, schools in Bangladesh can take the initiative to educate their students about finances from a young age. Knowledge about savings, budgeting, credit, interest, taxes, and other financial concepts at a young age will help build a generation of young individuals who are financially literate.

Only a person who has experienced the toll of a financial crisis knows the burden it can place on themselves and their loved ones. Adequate financial literacy can substantially decrease the likelihood of experiencing a personal financial crisis.

By Wara Karim
Photo: Collected

#EVENTS

THE FLOW FEST 2025

Redefining wellness with purpose

The Flow Fest is an event that hopes to create transformative experiences through mindful movement, conscious nutrition, and authentic community connection. It is an attempt to discover the art of living and to nurture the journey towards holistic well-being. The first day of Flow Fest Dhaka 2025 at Shahabuddin Park offered a mix of activities, from group yoga to craft sessions, martial arts to music. But beyond the schedule, what stood out were the individuals and teams who showed up with a clear purpose and honest conversations.

Speaking up about women's health: Akiko's group session

In the Meditation Garden, wellness coach Akiko led a group therapy and sharing session focused on women's health, particularly menopause and related issues like vaginal dryness, low libido, and hormonal changes.

Her journey started with a personal conversation: "Two years ago, a woman told me she couldn't sit or stand comfortably because of dryness. She warned me it could happen to me too. That conversation made me start learning more," Akiko said.

She returned to school to study menopause and body changes in women and has since spoken in Bangkok, Singapore, Japan, and now Dhaka. She sees a pattern across Asia.

"People may be curious, but they don't talk about it because it's taboo. Someone needs to create that space. That's what I try to do," she explains.

Akiko is also the founder of Project Butterfly, a wellness community she launched in Bangkok to help women feel healthy, informed, and emotionally supported. She hopes to bring a similar space to Bangladesh.

"When people invite me, I'll come," she said. "These issues are real. And in 2025, we need to talk about them – whether we're doctors or not."

Deshi Fencers: Making space for an overlooked sport

The Deshi Fencers team gave a live demonstration of fencing, a sport rarely seen in public events in Bangladesh. The group's President, Ahnaf Niloy, said their goal is simple: make fencing more accessible and better known.

"Fencing gear isn't available in Bangladesh, and it's expensive. Beginners don't know where to find suits or equipment," Niloy explained. "Deshi Fencers was created to help people find clubs near them, based on their location and routine."

According to Niloy, fencing in Bangladesh is still far behind compared to other sports. Talented athletes are struggling to get recognition or sponsorship, and many cannot participate in international competitions because of a lack of support.

"We want to close that gap. If fencing becomes even a little more visible, we'll see real progress. Bangladesh can compete internationally—we just need the system to support it," he said.

The group's demo was fast-paced and disciplined. For many attendees, it was the first time seeing fencing up close.

The Elite Dog Squad: More than just tricks

The Elite Dog Squad drew a large crowd with their demonstration of trained dogs performing scent work, obedience drills, and interactive activities. While it looked like entertainment, the session was part of a broader goal: to raise awareness of the potential of trained dogs and disaster response.

The crowd responded with strong interest. "This is better than some of the official drills I've seen," one visitor said after a successful scent retrieval demo.

The team is currently working on building more partnerships to expand their programme in Dhaka.

A day of practical wellness

The day continued with a full schedule – karate and MMA sessions for kids, open mic storytelling, physiotherapy demos, and movement-based wellness classes like Zumba and yoga. But what left a deeper impression were the efforts to address real-life problems like access to sports training, honest talk about health, and alternative forms of therapy. Whether through Akiko's direct approach to taboo topics, Deshi Fencers' practical vision for sports outreach, these participants used Flow Fest not just to perform, but to inform.

And that might be what wellness in Dhaka needs most – fewer promises of perfection, and more honest, visible work.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Silvia Mahjabin

#TRAVEL

THE COMPLETE MYMENSINGH TRAVEL MAP

Your go-to guide to local wonders

If you are planning your next trip, Mymensingh might just be the perfect destination. And when we say Mymensingh, we do not just mean the district; we have combed through the entire division to create a detailed tour map; essentially a bucket list that covers the best spots, foods, and experiences you will not want to miss.

Mymensingh may sound like a division with just a few foods or spots for the average tourist, but once we started listing, we were completely taken aback by the gems this land has to offer.

Generally speaking, when people think of touring at Mymensingh, only a few names come to mind, such as Muktagachha Zamindar Bari and monda, Shashi Lodge, China Clay Hills or cheena matir pahar, Kalmakanda, and Bangladesh Agricultural University.

But there is so much more!

This map is the result of research and exploration of the division's four districts: Sherpur, Jamalpur, Netrokona, and Mymensingh. We spoke to locals, flipped through books, made a trip there, and scrolled endlessly on the internet — all to create the map you will want to carry with you when exploring Mymensingh. Our goal was simple; to help you travel smarter and ensure you do not miss any must-visit places or local treasures.

The division is blessed with breath-taking natural beauty, and this map offers you plenty, from peaceful water bodies to the hills with their calm, misty charm. Mymensingh is also a living museum. Check out the map for edifices and institutions that echo stories of the past. And if food is your love language, our bucket list has plenty to offer in the gastronomic field as well.

Given the richness of Mymensingh, it was indeed a challenge to fit in so many names on the map. Therefore, we had to compromise by keeping only those that we found to be exemplary, historic, or strongly recommended by our sources (however, this is always subjective).

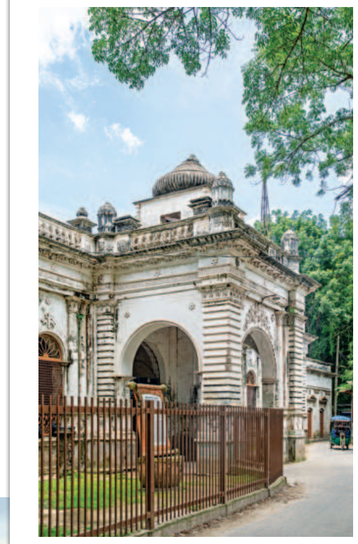
To illustrate, we opted for the culinary treats that have earned the Geographical Indication (GI) label and those that are embedded in the very pride or culture of Mymensingh, such as guli pitha, best enjoyed with bhortas or bottle gourd curry.

Hence, do not feel disappointed if you are unable to see certain points of interest in the map, from Mishti Kanon to Burimar Mishti, and from Panihata-Tarani Hill to Nakugaon Land Port.

One thing is certain; be it food, heritage, or nature, Mymensingh is a treasure trove for travellers. So, let our map guide you to the meaningful experiences, ensuring your trip is full of flavour, culture, and unforgettable memories!

By Jawwad Sami Neogi, Ashif Ahmed Rudro, and M H Haider
Illustration: Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel

Special thanks for providing valuable insights — Humayun Kabir Tutul (admin of 'Amader Sherpur' Facebook group), Kamrul Hasan (admin of 'Jamalpur District Team' Facebook group), Hasibul Islam (admin of 'Mymensingh Helpline' Facebook group), Abu Talha Mohammad Zubayer (a travel enthusiast from Mymensingh sadar), and Jaydul Islam (The Daily Star's Netrokona correspondent). 'Tourist Attractions in Bangladesh: Mymensingh Division', published by the Bangladesh government, also aided this article.



#FOOD & RECIPES

7 mouth-watering BBQ recipes to heat up your winter nights

As the days grow shorter and the nights colder, the promise of a warm grill and good company becomes irresistible. Winter may cool the air, but a good BBQ can warm the heart and the appetite in the most delicious way. The chills of the season almost seem to demand the smoke billowing out of a grill with a group of people standing around it, drawn by its warmth and, of course, delectable offerings. You could simply buy some burgers and hot dogs, invite some friends over, and call it a BBQ party, or you could go a little further with some essential

preparation and a carefully considered menu and surprise your guests with your culinary prowess.

The following are some tried-and-tested recipes to make your next family-friendly BBQ truly memorable.

BBQ MUTTON RIBS
Ingredients
500g mutton ribs
2 tbsp papaya paste
1 tbsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric powder
2 tbsp BBQ masala
1 tsp all-spice powder
½ tsp crushed black pepper
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
4-5 tsp oil
Salt to taste

Method
In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients, except the mutton ribs. Make a thick paste. Put it on the ribs and mix well. Cover and keep aside for 3-4 hours. Heat your griller to high. Place the ribs on the grill and cook until tender, golden brown and slightly charred, 7-8 minutes. Turn the ribs over and continue to grill 5-6 minutes for medium-rare (an internal temperature of 135° F).

When done, transfer to a plate and serve hot.

GRILLED BEEF STEAKS
Ingredients
4 rib-eye steaks
½ cup oil
6 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp garlic, minced
1 onion, chopped
2 tbsp salt
1 tbsp pepper
1 tbsp crushed dried rosemary
3 tbsp steak sauce

Method
Combine oil, soy sauce, garlic, onion,

pepper, salt, rosemary, and steak sauce in a food processor. Process until well blended. Prick steaks on both sides with a fork, and place in a shallow container with a lid. Pour marinade over steaks, cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours or overnight. Preheat an outdoor grill

for medium heat. Remove steaks from marinade, and discard the marinade. Lightly oil the grilling surface, and place steaks on the grill. Cover and grill the steaks for about 10 minutes on each

BBQ PROMFRET
Ingredients
300g pomfret (clean and put some deep slits on both sides)
1 tsp chilli powder
A pinch of homemade dry herb powder
½ tsp garlic paste
1 tsp ginger paste
½ tsp garam masala
¼ tsp coriander powder
¼ tsp cumin powder
5-6 curry leaves
2 tbsp lemon juice
Salt, to taste
Method
Mix spice powders, ginger-garlic paste, and salt. Add lemon juice to make a paste. Cut the curry leaves into two and add them to the paste (do not make a paste of curry leaves). Apply this to the fish. Keep aside for at least 1 hour.

Heat the charcoal and grill the fish until it is cooked.

all ingredients with the liver. Toss well, coating with the marinade properly. Cover and rest them for 3-4 hours or let them refrigerate overnight. Heat the grill to medium. Thread the liver onto a skewer and cook for about 15 minutes or until cooked, spreading the leftover marinade occasionally.

SPICY GRILLED SHRIMP
Ingredients
500g shrimps, peeled and deveined
1 large clove of garlic
1 tsp paprika
½ tsp black pepper powder
2 tbsp lemon juice
Salt to taste
Method
Preheat the grill for medium heat. In a small bowl, crush the garlic with the salt. Mix in pepper and paprika, stir in olive oil and lemon juice to form a paste. In a large bowl, toss shrimp with garlic paste

side, or to your desired degree of doneness.

CHICKEN TANDOORI
Ingredients
1 chicken
1 tbsp ginger paste
1 tsp garlic paste
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tbsp red chilli powder
1 tsp almond paste
1 tsp kabab masala
¼ cup yoghurt
3 tbsp mustard oil
Salt to taste
Method
Cut the chicken into four pieces. In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients with the chicken, cover and refrigerate for at least three hours. Preheat the grill. Thread the chicken pieces onto the skewers and brush oil over them. Grill for 15 minutes or until cooked properly. Turn frequently while grilling.

LIVER BOTI KEBAB
Ingredients
500g liver (either beef or mutton)
1 tbsp ginger paste
½ tsp garlic paste
1 tsp red chilli powder
½ tsp turmeric powder

1 tsp papaya paste
½ tsp kebab masala
½ tsp coriander powder
½ tsp cumin powder
3 tbsp mustard oil
Salt to taste
Method
Cut the liver into cubes/dices, not more than 1-inch. Combine

until evenly coated. Lightly oil the grilling grate. Cook shrimp for 2-3 minutes per side, or until opaque. Transfer to a serving dish, garnish with lemon wedges and serve.

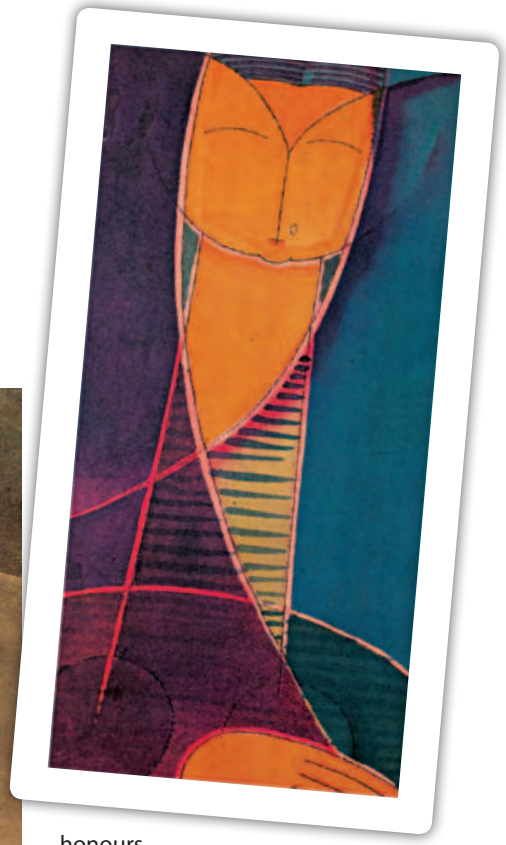
GRILLED MUSHROOM SKEWERS
Ingredients
500g mushrooms, sliced ¼-inch thick
2 tbsp vinegar
1 tsp soy sauce
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tsp thyme, chopped
1 tsp black pepper powder
Salt to taste
Method
Marinate the mushrooms in the mixture for 30 minutes. Skewer the mushrooms and grill over medium-high heat until just tender and slightly charred, about 2-3 minutes per side.

— **LS DESK**

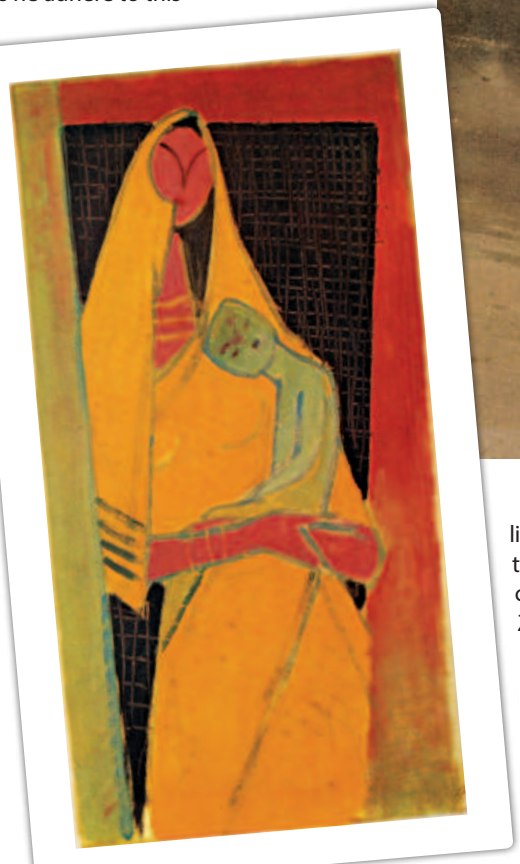
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#REVIEW

THE FACELESS STRENGTH OF WOMEN IN ZAINUL'S ART



They appear with indistinct facial features. Rather than having doe eyes and full lips, the eyes and the mouths are often reduced to bear lines. Clad in the most traditional of sarees, these women are seen to engage in activities that define pastoral Bengal. Still, they are anonymous, almost faceless. Zainul Abedin was a master of drawing. Then, why does he adhere to this simplistic notion while painting women? The answer probably lies in the fact that indistinct should not be confused with blankness or lack of entity. These apparent simplistic drawings are indeed filled will meaning that goes beyond art!



In rural Bengal, women often lead lives marked by obscurity, where their lives and works and endless contributions go grossly unnoticed. Zainul somehow overshadows that stark, social invisibility and gives women in general a platform. Many would go to claim that the by omitting details, Zainul Abedin was in fact reinforcing the identity of the women. By making their faces and features blank, he was making them more real.

She could have been our mother, grandmother, or sister…an identity open to interpretation. With careful examination, it is easy to understand that he was not trying to draw the individual rural women. He attempted to paint the universal Bengali experience. The paintings turned every other rural woman of Bangladesh into a global symbol that went beyond portraits.

Painters are often accused of imparting a sense of sentimentally in the depiction of pastoral topics. Zainul, however, is free from this prejudice. In his art, he not only romanticises the subject he draws but also honours their resilience without diminishing them to mere decorations. He honours their privacy, and dignity, and allows viewers to focus on their strength and actions, not their individual beauty or emotion.

His simple but moving brushwork added rhythm to the imagery rather than expression. Shifting attention from the faces, Zainul makes the body language of these women his focus. The bent back, the long neck, or the weight of a load on her head spoke more powerfully than eyes or lips ever could. It is, however, not just the social commentary of the series that leads to their immortality. His art bear semblance of folk art that presents figures in symbolic, non-individualised ways. Abedin widely drew from these sources and blended their forms with modernist interpretations.

The women Zainul Abedin drew rarely speak and in their silence, there is profound meaning, for he depicts the quiet endurance of women of the countryside not their outward beauty. By not giving them detailed, expressive faces, Abedin lets their silence speak louder. And it is up to the audience to give them individuality, if they wish to. And this is exactly what makes these portraits of rural women so powerful.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Photo: Collected

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Pregnancy is harder than marathons, science shows

In a groundbreaking 2019 study published in "Science Advances", a scientific journal published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), evolutionary anthropologist Herman Pontzer of Duke University compared the metabolic strain of pregnancy to some of the world's most extreme endurance feats like the Tour de France or a gruelling ultramarathon. The result? Pregnancy outlasts and outpaces them all.

Pontzer's research found that pregnancy demands approximately 2.2 times a person's basal metabolic rate

(BMR), which is the energy required to keep the body functioning at rest. That's nearly double the usual energy output, sustained not for a few hours or even days, but for nine continuous months!

In comparison, elite endurance events such as the Tour de France (a physically demanding cycling event of global repute) push the body to about 4.9 times BMR, but only for a few weeks.

Pregnancy, in contrast, offers no such break. It's a continuous, slow-burning effort that reshapes a woman's physiology from the cardiovascular system, kidney function, hormonal balance, to the immune system, supporting the development of a new human being.

So, the next time someone shrugs off pregnancy as simply "part of life", remember that behind every pregnancy is a body working overtime, nonstop, doing what science now confirms is one of the most sustained feats of human endurance ever recorded.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

HOROSCOPE

ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)
Minor health problems may develop if you're over-stressed. You are best to work at home if you can. Face emotional problems head-on. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)
Don't break any promises with children. Someone around you might not be trustworthy. Ask family members for help with projects. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)
Don't neglect your family. Avoid being overly opinionated to prevent disapproval. Travel will stimulate your need for excitement. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)
You'll be popular and attract attention easily. Romance may develop through work activities. Take time for writing or journaling. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)
Use your charm to get your way. You can make pleasing changes at home. Plan carefully, but don't relying on others. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)
Group endeavours will entertain you. Help elders organise their personal papers. Be cautious while travelling. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)
Rely on co-workers to support your objectives. Avoid being too antagonistic with your partner. Meeting deadlines will earn your boss's approval. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)
Consider residential moves carefully. Keep an eye out for future trends. Deal with government or institutional matters calmly. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)
Luck is with you. Don't push your partner if you want harmony. Handle friends and relatives tactfully. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)
Control your emotions and things will align. Your partner may test your patience. It's a good time to tackle home chores. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)
Make key decisions about your career path. Secret affairs could cause disruption. Be creative and outspoken when defending others. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)
Someone influential is observing your efforts. A loved one might be displeased with you. Heart-to-heart talks will clear misunderstandings. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

Star LIFE Style

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#DECOR

Turning the living room into a family haven

Spending time with your family, once considered integral for our previous generation, now feels almost extinct, and it seems like there is nothing we can do to bring it back. Be that as it may, there may still be one move left in your quiver: designing your living room layout in such a way that your family members would want to sit together in a cosy setup.

The key is to get a sofa set, accompanied by other living room furniture set that ties your living room together and makes your family members want to slow down, stop by, and create memorable moments there together. There are various layouts and designs of sofa sets out there, but to pick the right one, you first need to assess your own needs and priorities.

If you want a sofa where you can snuggle, sit back, and relax your feet while enjoying quality time gossiping with your family, opt for a Nottingham three-seater sofa. However, if you prefer something more elegant for the same purpose, a modular sofa offers a classier look.

Consider a formal-looking set if you entertain guests more often. On the other hand, if your extended family members visit you more often than guests, opt for an informal-looking set. Alternatively, you could even opt for a furniture set that balances both styles. For instance, you could consider placing one-seater accent chairs on both sides of the three-seater sofa, which gives more of a formal look.

To complete your seating area and give your feet a place to rest, you can also add an ottoman, which is generally considered informal.

For serving tea and snacks to your visitors, place a tea table right at the centre of your seating area. A glass-top tea table not only adds elegance to your living room but also makes cleaning easier. However, glass tops are not exactly child-friendly, so if you have kids at home, a wooden centre table would be a safer choice.

If you plan to keep a TV in your living room, opt for a cabinet, otherwise known as an entertainment centre. Just remember that, like the sofa sets, TV centres also come with all kinds of varieties and looks. With that in mind, opting for a TV cabinet with bolstered compartments would be a prudent choice, as it will help you utilise the space more efficiently.

The colour of your living room walls is definitely worth noting. Whether you have light-coloured walls or walls in other shades, an oak-coloured wooden TV centre would be a versatile choice. Place it facing your seating area so everyone can enjoy watching TV together, rooting for their favourite player in a game or character in a show.

To make your living room reflect your personality, add a multipurpose shelf near the seating area. Along with your favourite books, you can decorate it with collectables, showpieces, family photo frames, and even awards, thus creating a space that truly embodies your family's essence.

With the deteriorating air quality of the city, keeping greenery and indoor plants in your living room has become a necessity and not merely a lifestyle decision. That is because indoor plants help improve air quality by filtering out toxins and increasing humidity in your home atmosphere.

An indoor plant in your living room can reduce your stress and elevate your mood. Choose a low-maintenance indoor plant that survives even with limited sunlight, such as English ivy, peace lily, or aloe vera.

Lastly, it is understandable that getting a new sofa set for your living room may seem like a big financial investment for you. However, remember that it does not necessarily have to put a dent in your wallet. Simply, look for a furniture brand that allows you to pay in Equated Monthly Instalments (EMI), making the payment option more manageable and affordable for you.

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Photo: Hatil