

CAMPUS LIFE

KHORSHED MAMA'S ICED TEA

A staple among BRAC University students

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What comes to your mind whenever someone mentions iced tea? For the students of BRAC University (BRACU), this beverage has a deeper meaning, and the one person who comes to mind is none other than Khorshed Alam, better known to the students as *Khorshed mama*, who has been serving his famous iced tea to students for years.

Khorshed found the transition from academia to entrepreneurship to be extraordinarily fulfilling and rewarding. He opened his shop during his student life, and continued with it even after completing his bachelor's and master's degrees.

Motivated by a strong desire to serve the community and business, Khorshed decided to establish his tea shop — "Ek Cup Cha" — near the BRACU campus. At the time, Khorshed had no idea that his choice would lead to the beginning of a tradition that thousands of BRACU students would appreciate.

Khorshed's start was not very easy. The usual nine-to-five jobs did not satisfy him, as the salaries he was getting were negligible compared to his hard work. So, he decided to continue with the tea shop. Even then, there were many other hurdles he had to deal with.

"My father ignored me for a week when I first started the shop," said Khorshed. He also said that there were times when the shop was ordered to be shut down, but this didn't stop him. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, Khorshed carried on with the shop.

Iced tea was first introduced at Khorshed's shop during a time when load shedding was common in Bangladesh. Lemonade had always been the shop's most popular drink, but on an extremely hot day, continuous power cuts left the blender unusable, making it impossible to prepare any lemonade.

That same day, a very thirsty customer arrived and asked Khorshed for something refreshing. Since lemonade wasn't an option, the customer suggested simply adding ice to some fresh tea. Khorshed served the drink, tried it himself, and was pleasantly surprised. The customer loved it as well.

Soon after, five more customers ordered the iced tea and were just as impressed. What began as a lucky accident soon became Khorshed's now-famous iced tea.

What makes Khorshed's shop truly unique is the bond of trust shared between him and his customers. Some of the customers — mostly BRACU students — even help out at the cash register or behind the counter from time to time, a gesture that reflects how close they are with their Khorshed *mama*.

To Khorshed, customers are far more than people who buy his iced tea. He trusts them just as much as they trust



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

him. They are his friends and supporters. Because of this mutual connection, his shop has become a gathering place where people come to talk, share stories, and feel a sense of belonging. Over the years, these relationships have supported him through both good and difficult times, with customers lending money or offering help whenever he needed it most.

"I don't see them merely as customers," said Khorshed. "To me, they are more than family. Even when I don't get full support from relatives, my customers are always there for me."

For students, Khorshed's shop has become a safe space where they are always met with a warm smile, a listening ear, and, of course, a good cup of iced tea. For Khorshed, nothing is more fulfilling than feeling a sense of unity with the BRAC University community.

"I love spending quality time with the students and chatting with them," he said. "I try to offer hospitality that

makes them feel at home."

Khorshed *mama* has been serving BRACU students for around 20 years. When the university moved from Mohakhali to Badda, he was the only shop owner from Mohakhali lucky enough to get a shop near the new campus location before the university had officially opened.

"My previous tea shop branch (the one in Mohakhali) is still running well, but I prefer to stay around the students, so here I am at the campus in Badda," said Khorshed. "During the first two to three days of opening the Badda shop, I used to wait outside so that I could grab students' attention. After that, students started to visit my shop as usual."

"I have been serving BRACU students for almost two decades," said Khorshed. "Many students have graduated and are doing great in their careers, but the connection is still strong."

Rittique Basak is a contributor for The Daily Star.




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