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CAMPUS

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Ramadan in student halls

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

MOVIES

High hopes and chaos define Marty Supreme

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Josh Safdie's *Marty Supreme,* starring Timothée Chalamet as the central character, was preceded with excitement and social media hype. It was largely thanks to the movie's unorthodox promo campaign with Chalamet's unhinged fictional Marty Mauser persona taking centre stage, although a general anticipation was present considering a screwball comedy with ping pong sounds like a pretty good time as is. But if you're going into this expecting a regular sports film with a couple of laughter-inducing moments here and there, you're in for a ride. Several of them, actually, resulting in a crash more often than not.

Marty Supreme starts off in a fashion deceptively similar to a cookie-cutter sports film. Set in post-holocaust 1950s America, a gifted table tennis player is obligated to work in his uncle's shoe store as a salesman thanks to his persuasive, silver-tongued ways of raking in customers. Marty Mauser's dream of winning a championship is obstructed by innumerable hurdles, some more self-inflicted than others. Unfortunately, the tenacious Marty isn't one to let adversity get in his way, so we're left to enjoy the spectacle as he burns every bridge he crosses as he cons his way into funding his dreams, acting out with no regard for consequences. As a result, he implicates everyone around him, leveraging lofty promises with little regard. What follows is Murphy's Law in action and Marty's desperate clutches at contingencies.

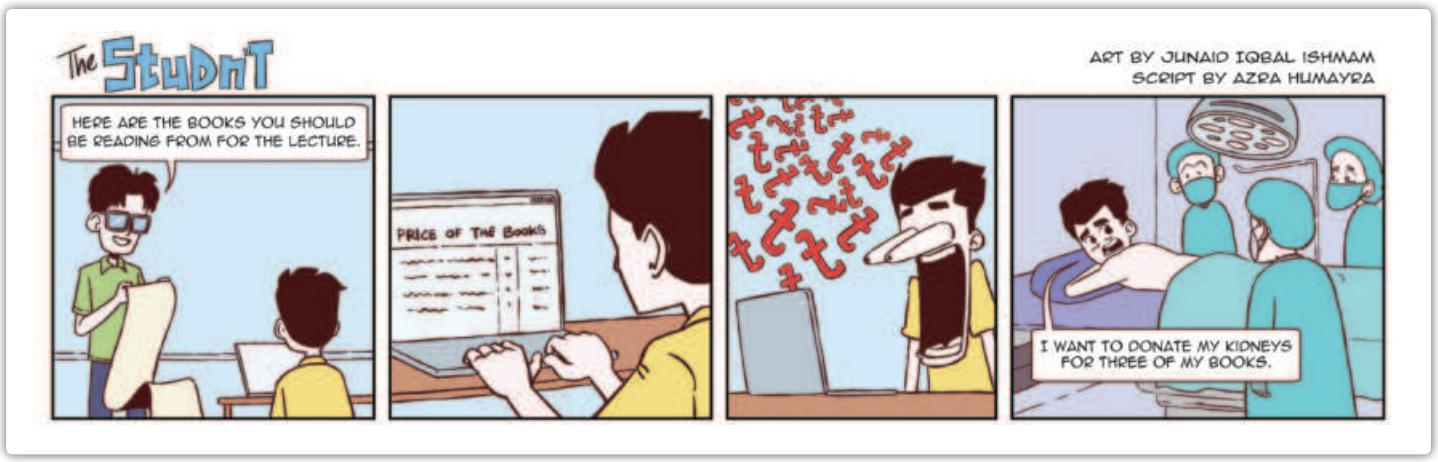
Despite its impressive two hour and 29-minute runtime, *Marty Supreme* moves through the chaos at a staggering pace, ensuring that you're never bored for a second. It's infuriating, at times, but never monotonous.

The movie comprises a star-studded cast, including Gwyneth Paltrow as Kay Stone, a retired Hollywood actress who finds herself in a messy entanglement with Marty Mauser; Odessa A'zion as Rachel Mizler, Marty's fiercely loyal friend and love interest; and even Tyler, the Creator, as Wally, Marty's friend who's a taxi driver struggling to stay afloat. The cast delivers intriguing performances.

There's very little to say about how Chalamet immersed himself in the character of the egotistical, hyper-focused, and morally ambiguous Marty Mauser. Gwyneth Paltrow's refined coldness as Kay Stone is nothing short of charismatic as she continues calling Marty's bluff, yet never detaches herself from the inevitable train wreck. Odessa A'zion delivers an easily believable portrayal amidst the chaotic shenanigans she gets into thanks to her ride-or-die attitude.

Marty Supreme's soundtrack is a mix of classics like "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" by Tears for Fears, "Forever Young" by Alphaville, and "The Perfect Kiss" by New Order, with original scores that blend traditional sounds with modern electronics. The soundtrack is definitely one of the highlights of the movie, along with the somewhat gloomy, yellow-tinted, and warmly lit visual aesthetics.

If you're in the mood for a slow, sombre watch that'll leave a lasting impression on you, *Marty Supreme* isn't necessarily your destination. However, if you're in the mood to be entertained, amused, and a little annoyed, this is definitely a film that ticks all the boxes.



OPPORTUNITIES

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Study local, think global with UCBD's British Foundation Programme

A British degree has long been associated with academic rigour, global perspective, and professional credibility. At Universal College Bangladesh (UCBD), that experience is now available in Dhaka through a UK-accredited British Foundation Programme designed for students who aspire to earn a full UK degree while pursuing their studies at home.

Accredited by the University of Lancashire, an institution founded in 1828 and ranked among the top 7 percent of universities worldwide by the Centre for World University Rankings (2023), the programme follows a curriculum aligned with British higher education standards. The University of Lancashire's global academic footprint and long-standing reputation ensure that students who study at UCBD are working within a framework recognised internationally.

Delivered over eight months, the foundation programme supports students who have completed SSC, AS Level, or O Level as they prepare to study one of the University of Lancashire undergraduate degrees available at UCBD. Rather than focusing solely on subject content, it develops the habits and competencies required for success in a British university environment. Students learn to analyse texts critically, construct evidence-based arguments, conduct structured research, and communicate ideas with clarity and precision, easing the transition into a UK degree that prioritises independent learning and analytical thinking.

All students complete six core modules that strengthen academic literacy, mathematical reasoning, ICT competence, professional communication, and personal development. The emphasis on developing skills ensures that learners build confidence alongside competence through discussions, presentations, coursework, and practical exercises.

Alongside the core curriculum, students choose a pathway in Business or Information Technology. The Business track examines how organisations operate within changing economic and market conditions, while the IT pathway focuses on programming foundations, logical reasoning, and structured problem-solving methods essential for computing disciplines. This combination ensures that students enter undergraduate study with direction and clarity about their chosen field.

Such an academically structured curriculum requires an environment that can actively support it. At UCBD, the Gulshan Avenue campus is built with that purpose in mind. State-of-the-art lecture theatres, seminar rooms and laboratories equipped with contemporary teaching technology enable interactive learning, presentations, and collaborative work. A resource-enabled academic library, curated for higher education research, allows students to practise independent study in line with British university expectations.

This unique pathway in Dhaka also allows families to approach international education with greater flexibility. Completing the foundation and degree stages locally reduces overseas living and relocation expenses while maintaining full academic alignment with UK standards. Scholarships for eligible students and flexible instalment arrangements further enhance accessibility.

With intakes in January, April, and September, students can begin the foundation programme according to their academic timeline. Entry requirements are straightforward, while academic expectations remain aligned with British benchmarks.

The British Foundation Programme does more than prepare students academically. It shapes analytical thinkers, capable researchers, and confident communicators. The British foundation and degree pathway is grounded in international standards and supported by a campus environment built for modern learners, that gives students access to the best of international higher education in Dhaka.

STUDENT LIFE

RAMADAN in student hostels

Across small kitchens in rented apartments, students learn to form new bonds while dealing with the emotions of not being with their families during Ramadan.

TAGABUN TAHARIM TITUN

Every year, thousands of students leave their hometowns to pursue higher education in the country's bustling cities and university towns. For many, moving to a place like Dhaka means transitioning from the comfort of family life to the independence of rented messes or flats, and – often for the first time – preparing their own meals, including iftar.

The first day of Ramadan in a new place can feel quietly isolating – standing alone in an unfamiliar kitchen, staring at a bare counter, and knowing that if you don't chop the onions, no one will. There's no one calling you from the next room, no familiar odour drifting from a stove someone else is tending to. And yet, somewhere between the effort and the solitude, most find their footing, even if that first meal comes out slightly burnt or a bit undercooked.

University life leaves little room for elaborate cooking, and for those juggling part-time jobs or tutoring commitments, it gets harder still. On the busiest days, students fill the gaps with items picked up from nearby stalls – whatever it takes to get everything on the table before the *adhan*.

For the uninitiated, the student messes or rented apartments are places of beautiful chaos. It is where you learn that time management, especially in Ramadan, is not just a skill but an elite sport. During Ramadan, the window between afternoon classes and Maghrib prayer is a frantic one – a stretch of time that never seems quite long enough, no matter how early you start.

For Nafis Ibn Obaid, a Biotechnology student at BRAC University, the greatest struggle is the high-stakes commute through the Rampura bottleneck. He jokes that he has mastered the acrobatic feat of peeling a banana while the university bus dances over potholes. This war against blandness is a universal theme in his mess life. "Sometimes the bus is our dining room," Nafis shares. "You haven't truly experienced student life in Ramadan until you've broken your fast in the middle of traffic, borrowing water from a stranger."

Many students living independently in rented apartments or messes have house helps to aid them with day-to-day chores, especially cooking. Over time, however, the house help's menu begins to feel like a repetitive loop of institutional sustenance. In moments like these, creativity becomes the most valuable ingredient.

Sanjana Akter, a final-year student at Southeast University, residing with her six friends in a hostel at Tejgaon, has perfected a secret weapon to deal with her house help's repetitive and uninspired meals: the humble instant noodle masala. "To make the food tasty, we use sachets of instant noodle masala in everything," says Sanjana. "We don't really cook much and usually start preparing iftar after coming back from university."

For Sanjana and her friends, their kitchen is not just a place to eat but also a hub where the day's stress is vented over a plate of iftar. It helps Sanjana turn simple, pre-prepared ingredients into a fun shared meal for everyone every day.

While some battle against their iftar's monotony with spices and seasoning packets, others try to cut back on oil and choose healthier alternatives. Ahsan Habib Khan, a private university student in his final year, is one of them. Ahsan avoids the glorious, crunchy "oil bombs" most of us crave during iftar. "I try to finish my iftar with raw chickpeas and sour yoghurt as I prefer healthy food," he says.

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

Of course, like most young people living away from home, Ahsan, too, sometimes gives in to simple cravings and experiments with quick, comfort drinks. "One day, I made a concoction of lemon flavoured, powdered drink mix, and sugar together in a blender. It was very tasty," he recalls, proving that even in a sodium-fortified apartment, one can still seek small moments of pleasure alongside healthier choices.

When living away from one's family, one cannot ignore the emotional weight that sits at the edge of every mess table. There is always an empty chair there in our minds for our homes that we have left behind.

Kamal Ahmad, a final-year student of the Bangla department at Southeast University, talks about the homesickness that creeps in during the quiet moments before breaking the fast. "Eating alone feels very bad," Kamal says. "Having Iftar with those in the mess, however, helps a little in allowing you to forget that you are doing this without your family."

The communal plate remains the ultimate healer of FOMO—Fear Of Missing Out—for many students living in messes and dormitories. Mahmudul Hasan Sumon, a public university student residing in his university dormitory, firmly believes that the collective presence of friends makes even the most questionable food items feel like a feast.

"The food may be subpar, but the collective presence and sharing experience make the moment," says Sumon. "Having iftar with everyone is more like a shared cultural experience."

"Any food tastes better when shared together," says M Farhan Ishmam, a fourth-year student of Dhaka University. "The best part of my fast is to prepare a big bowl of *muri-makha* and glasses of *sharbat*."

Of course, like most young people living away from home, Ahsan, too, sometimes gives in to simple cravings and experiments with quick, comfort drinks. "One day, I made a concoction of lemon flavoured, powdered drink mix, and sugar together in a blender. It was very tasty," he recalls, proving that even in a sodium-fortified apartment, one can still seek small moments of pleasure alongside healthier choices.

Ishmam feels that being part of this chaos is better than having iftar alone. Of course, not every student can find comfort in the communal rush of a mess during iftar. Saiyara Rahman, a second-year student at Chittagong University, defined her experience by a different kind of quiet.

Saiyara lives with four other students in a small rented flat. The families of her roommates live in the city, nearby. Hence, they often visit their families during Ramadan, leaving Saiyara alone.

Elsewhere, Siyam*, a student in his last semester at North South University (NSU), says that though he doesn't mind doing iftar alone, he struggles to communicate with his parents back home in Narayanganj. Siyam lives near his campus with three other flatmates. For the past four years or so, he has had to spend almost the entirety of Ramadan away from his family.

"Every time *ammu* calls, before or after iftar, she asks me about the food I am consuming," he says. "No matter what I ate, I could always sense a worry in *ammu's* tone. To her, nothing I consume is healthy or tasty in any way. All that worried my mother during those conversations was the fact that I wasn't having any of her homemade meals or my *abbu's muri-makha* for iftar."

Living in a mess or hostel during Ramadan is a life lesson that no textbook can provide. It is a journey that starts with the sadness of missing home but quickly turns into a story of personal growth and deep friendship. While the food might sometimes be too oily or the kitchen too small, the memories made around those crowded tables are the ones that students carry with them long after they graduate. These years of "shared plates" teach us that home isn't just a place with a specific address. It is wherever you find people who will share their last date or their secret sachet of seasoning with you.

**Name has been changed upon request.*

Tagabun Taharim Titun is a content executive at The Daily Star.

OPINION

THE PERILS OF OUR NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

Encountering mere headlines while scrolling does not provide the context necessary to understand political decisions, legal rulings, or policy debates. What it does is produce a surface-level familiarity with issues that are complex in nature and demand sustainable engagement.

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

The transition from intentional news seeking to algorithmic news consumption among younger demographics represents a significant shift in the media landscape. For young people, news has become less about the deliberate act of tuning in to scheduled broadcasts and more about the passive consumption of algorithmically curated fragments and abbreviated headlines on social media platforms. It is far less likely that you will catch your twenty-year-old self leafing through freshly printed newspaper columns as opposed to your parents or grandparents. This shift is clearly visible to us, but how does it matter?

According to the 2025 Digital News Report, published by the Reuters Institute, over half of under-35-year-olds in the United States, 54 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds, and 50 percent of 25 to 34-year-olds now say that social media and video networks serve as their primary sources of news consumption. News distribution now appears to be embedded within entertainment feeds and is shaped by algorithms designed to maximise engagement rather than understanding.

Previously, news consumption was largely intentional. Older generations were more likely to seek out their news, instead of merely coming across it. However, with the rise of the internet and the advent of online platforms, traditional journalism now struggles to compete with an endless stream of short-form content that is easy to consume and goes hand-in-hand with an alarmingly declining rate of attention spans.

In recent years, bite-sized news outlets across social media platforms have grown immensely popular amongst the youth. Such platforms feature chunks of information, usually presented in the form of eye-grabbing headlines and postcards. They also feature excerpts of the related piece of discussion doled out in the caption or follow-up slides.

To us, while it may appear to be efficient, this style of news delivery prioritises immediacy and shareability over depth and context, reducing complex issues to consumable fragments that often lack nuance. And the reason why it matters is that the way news is delivered shapes how it is understood.

Not too long ago, a headline was making the rounds on the internet that generated public criticism. It had been suggested that the High Court had ruled that women's consent was no longer required for a second marriage. This was framed as a sudden rollback of women's rights, implying that legal safeguards had been removed overnight and that the courts had effectively endorsed unfettered polygamy. In reality, the judgment had actually dismissed a writ petition that had previously aimed to challenge the existing law under Section 6 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961.

I had seen many of my friends and classmates express distress over the news, without necessarily having a clear understanding of the legal complications involved. This is precisely what warrants closer scrutiny of the media through which news is being disseminated. It is concerning because of their tendency to flatten news and make it shallow.

I say this because, in contrast to earlier modes of news consumption, which demanded criteria such as reading comprehension and focus, algorithmic delivery removes intentionality from the process. What is read, when it is read, and how frequently it appears are all determined through systems designed to maximise retention. To keep users hooked, they are confined within informational environments that mirror their already existing beliefs, narrowing exposure to different perspectives. This begs the question: Where does it leave us?

The way we learn to interpret our surroundings has implications for democratic participation. Democracy relies upon an informed population capable of understanding laws, policies, and institutional processes. Young adults today follow the news less closely than any other age group. But here's the thing. Even if you don't actively go looking for the news, the news still finds you.

Instead of traditional forms of media such as print or broadcast channels, we access news through for-you pages, influencers, podcasts, tweets, and so on. However, passive exposure does not always equate to informed awareness, if at all.

Encountering mere headlines while scrolling does not provide the context necessary to understand political decisions, legal rulings, or policy debates. What it does is produce a surface-level familiarity with issues that are complex in nature and demand sustainable engagement. When information is consumed in fragments, interpretation is shaped more by emotional framing than by factual substance.

For this reason, the responsibility to remain informed cannot be delegated to digital platforms. The solution for this is simple. Young people must move beyond algorithmic convenience and adopt more intentional habits of interacting with what's happening around the world.

This could include cultivating reading habits and engaging with longer-form content. In the absence of such effort, democracy risks being shaped by impressions rather than by informed judgement.

Punomi Rahman Titir is a contributor at The Daily Star. Find her at punomirahman@gmail.com.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

FORMULA IUT

advancing student-led motorsport engineering in Bangladesh

TASFIAH LIAKAT

Engineering education in Bangladesh is mostly theory-based, focusing more on textbooks than real-world innovation. In many countries around the world, universities actively support their students to participate in international competitions like Formula Student, where teams design, manufacture, and race Formula-style cars. As these experiences help create better and industry-ready engineers, it is high time Bangladesh followed suit and started doing the same.

Marking a step forward, the Formula IUT team from the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) has designed, manufactured, and run its first Formula-style race car after three years of effort. It is powered by a KTM Duke 390 engine, built on a stainless-steel space frame chassis with double A-arm suspension, and runs on 91-octane fuel.

In late 2021, the team began with the growing interest of a small group of students who were enthusiastic about motorsport. Now, it has grown into a cross-disciplinary team of over 90 active members for the 2026 season, with students mainly from Mechanical Engineering (ME), Industrial and Production Engineering (IPE), and Business and Technology Management (BTM) programmes.

The team came face-to-face with issues while building the car. "Our biggest challenge has been the unavailability of Formula Student quality parts and inadequate workspace facilities," Farhan Ibtahsum, current team lead of Formula IUT, shares. "High-volume engines, slick tyres, and carbon fibre – none of these are readily available in Bangladesh. Foreign teams have their own dedicated workspace with necessary manufacturing equipment for seamless production, which we also lack."

Since 2022, around BDT 12 lakh has been spent on designing and manufacturing the car. The majority of the cost was borne by the students themselves. The team received some support from sponsors, such as Uttara Motors Limited, as well as alumni who contributed during the team's international participation.

PHOTOS: **FORMULA IUT**

The Formula IUT team has managed to prove itself in multiple international competitions. In October 2025, the team participated in Formula Student China, finished eighth in the Business Plan Presentation, and earned three technical recognition stickers. Before that, they placed seventh in Formula Imperial 2024 and third in Class I of Formula Bharat 2023. They were also selected as a finalist in Formula Student UK 2022.

The 2026 car is currently in the design phase. "We want to significantly reduce our car's weight while maintaining the torque output of the engine," Farhan reveals. "We are also working toward improving the standardisation of our car."

They are currently competing in the IMechE Formula Student Sim Racing Series, featuring 73 teams from 19 countries. The team has officially become the first Bangladeshi participant to achieve a double-point finish in Round two of the championship, advancing to 55th position in the overall standings.

"We plan to expand into electric and autonomous vehicle categories and have already launched several small-scale projects in these areas before moving toward full implementation," Farhan expresses. "We aim to make our team a benchmark of engineering performance in Formula Student in Bangladesh, something every automobile enthusiast student can look up to."

OFF CAMPUS

Delving into Bangalee folklore through THE WORLD OF GOHEEN

PHOTOS: **COURTESY**

SARA KABIR

There is a certain irony in the fact that one of the most culturally rooted card games to emerge from Bangladesh in recent years began not with a grand mission to preserve heritage, but with a casual evening in the woods.

Mubasher Hasan – the creator and designer of "Goheen" – was visiting his nanabari during Eid in 2024, wandering through a patch of forest with his cousin and revisiting the ghost stories he had grown up with when the idea for the card game was born. Later that night, while unpacking board games he had brought along on the trip, he thought: what if these very stories could live inside a deck of cards?

From that simple thought, Goheen materialised. It is a fast-paced set-collecting card game built entirely around characters and creatures from Bangalee folklore. At a glance, the premise sounds simple: players collect cards, build sets, and earn points. Yet, the gameplay quickly reveals its teeth. Cards can be stolen. Carefully built strategies can collapse in a single turn. Alliances shift. Tension lingers at the table.

Mubasher's background as a gamer heavily shaped the mechanics, as he drew inspiration from a range of existing tabletop systems, reshaping and redefining the rules to form something distinct and unique to Bangalee culture. Interaction and unpredictability sit at the core of the design. Rather than passive point accumulation, the structure encourages stealing, counterplay, and constant recalibration. Even the rulebook offers variants, allowing players to choose how aggressive they want the experience to be.

Mubasher Hasan

Thanvir Ahmed Rio

Arafat Wasi

However, what truly makes the game stand out is how closely its mechanics are tied to the folklore itself. The characters are not there merely for decoration; rather, their powers reflect their stories. For instance, Behula can revive a card from the discard pile, mirroring her legendary journey to bring Lokhindar back from the dead. Similarly, Shakchunni can steal a male supernatural card already in play, echoing her role in folklore. In this way, the abilities do more than reference myth; they actively shape gameplay, placing characters we know from Bangalee folklore at the core of the experience.

Designing the deck, however, required difficult choices. Bangalee folklore spans centuries, from early literary traditions to contemporary urban legends, and a single card game cannot contain all of it. The list had to be narrowed while maintaining a balance between narrative significance and playability. Assigning lore-appropriate powers that still worked within a fair system was, therefore, one of the most challenging aspects of development.

Meanwhile, the artwork took considerably longer to finalise. Illustrator Thanvir Ahmed Rio worked on 33 pieces over roughly sixteen months. Character designs evolved through experimentation: colour palettes were adjusted, visual details refined, and certain figures replaced when they did not feel quite right. The title lettering, on the other hand, was designed by Jewel Das, who crafted the visual identity of the name itself.

One particularly interesting creative challenge involved the character of Boga. The difficulty lay in the fact that traditional descriptions are vague. The final design blended serpentine features with elements inspired by native fish like the Shoal fish, tying the mythical being back to Bangladesh's delta landscape. This approach reflects Rio's own commitment to reinterpreting folklore visually rather than simply copying established fantasy tropes.

Interestingly, naming the game turned out to be one of the most challenging portions of the design process. After discarding numerous possibilities, "Goheen" was suggested, representing a dense forest where these fabled creatures reside. The word captures both the physical setting that inspired the game and the metaphorical depth of the culture it draws from.

When the prototype was first assembled, it was entirely DIY: printed names and powers taped onto borrowed cards. Early playtests compared multiple rule variations before settling on the more interaction-heavy version that now defines the experience. Across sessions involving corporate professionals, university students, schoolchildren from Bangla and English-medium institutions, families in urban homes, and relatives in villages, one pattern emerged consistently: the game brought out everyone's competitive side. More importantly, it sparked conversations about folklore.

Arafat Wasi, co-founder of Playground Inc. and production lead of the project, sees Goheen as part of a broader momentum within the Bangladeshi tabletop space. Titles like "Polashi" and "Pyachforon" have already demonstrated that Bangla language, local humour, and regional history can shape modern tabletop experiences in compelling ways.

While the ecosystem remains smaller than global markets dominated by games like Uno or Bridge, the scene is slowly evolving from hobbyist enthusiasm into something resembling a creative industry. Releasing Goheen in Bangla is therefore not a limitation but a deliberate choice.

Ultimately, the game is about gathering around a table and engaging directly with cultural memory through play. It transforms familiar figures into strategic tools without stripping them of their narrative weight. Within a wider resurgence of interest in Bangalee cultural memory, Goheen offers something distinct: an interactive experience. In a market saturated with imported dragons and borrowed legends, it makes a clear and confident proposition: our local stories are more than cultural background; they are living worlds meant to be touched, tested, and triumphantly played.

Sara Kabir is a dreamer, writer, and literature lover. She's currently a lecturer at North South University. Find her musings on Instagram @scarletfangirl.