



SPOTLIGHT

In the right state of being

The year 2020 is not shaping out to be in the world that we wanted — within just three months of the year, it has been one soul-shaking wakeup call after another, environmentally, politically, and health hazard-wise.

The expression “A butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazonian jungle, and subsequently a storm ravages half of Europe,” (from *Good Omens*, by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman) is more appropriate than ever for the globalised world.

Then again, no matter how overused the word globalisation seems, for those living in this corner of the world, the material signs and gains have been outstanding. It’s quite fascinating to see one season of U.S. or European fashion now being followed within weeks of its exhibition.

Blockbuster movie openings are enjoyed almost at the same time as the rest of the world in Bangladesh. And let’s not forget how fast brand name smart devices and gadgets have entered the market throughout the last decade.

This continuous flow of global ideas and products are meant to better the situation of a country as a whole. Yet, behaviour-wise, we are getting more sarcastic, mean, and unkind. The ugly gremlins of skin-colour bias, zero-tolerance towards gender identity and orientation, sexism against women, and total disregard towards mental health issues are as rampant as ever.

Is it not time to really think things through as to where we stand as proper human beings?

Beyond the colour of the skin

There is no easy way of putting this, but skin colour bias in the Bangladeshi mind-set is not going away anytime soon. Fair is beautiful — this is still an unfortunate belief for many.

Fairness overrides a person’s other

aspects as well, with little to no regard for one’s achievements and struggles; the fair skin tone stands as the first benchmark for success. It is still a faraway achievement to look beyond one’s skin colour and see the person as they are.

To be truly cosmopolitan and part of the world, it’s high time to correct anyone who feels that the colour of one’s skin is their first identity. Speaking up against narrow, small minded views every time is the best first step to reaching the globalised identity that we seek and want to portray.

Frontier of gender identity and sexual orientation

Two to three decades ago, coming out was seen as a fashion sported by celebrities. The way the whole thing was projected seemed like a fad that can come and go. However, once we look into ancient history that laid the foundation of modern thoughts, governance and financial practices; the social structure of old was not the rigid, linear, heteronormative picture that has been painted.

As sad as it is, the ever-growing alphabet acronym of LGBTQPA+ simply is not helping a lot of people to wrap their minds around the history, struggle, and the inevitable change. More often than not, the media — which has been the key to addressing these issues — tends to flatten the outreach instead of projecting the whole issue with its peaks and valleys.

Heteronormative behaviour and thinking have been ingrained into us for such a long time that there is simply no way of easing into the flow. Even for the socially aware, there are still instances where insensitive comments tend to slip out.

At the end of the day, for those who are still figuring out their identity and orientation, they only have a very small group of people to truly open up to. If their confidants are not supporting and

understanding, there is little to no space for these individuals.

Every woman counts

Feminism, as it stands and as it is seen, is not the “proper” way to achieve equality for woman; and this is one unpopular opinion many women are standing by. What is it about women’s rights and equality that rubs policy makers and the general populace the wrong way?

Gender pay gap, and pink tax are still holding strong with women not being acknowledged for their efforts and ideas. It is even truer for a country like us, where rigid beliefs still have root in our everyday lives.

Associating anything weak, indecisive, and inconsistent with women is the de-facto standard for just about any discussion. It will not kill anyone to not treat women as less intelligent beings, and yet, it is one of the hardest things for well educated people to do. And worst of all, violence targeted towards women keeps rising without any permanent cure.

Despite all of these societal shortcomings, independent, strong women all around are fighting hard and holding on to their achievements. It’s time to break away from backhanded compliments and stand for every woman that you know.

Mental well-being is part of health

Depression, general mental illness and the rest are simply labelled as attention seeking habits. Part of being truly educated is to see these issues as they are, and being aware of how much a person who is suffering through it has to sacrifice just to have a seemingly normal day.

Close acquaintances often drop out from association, fearing that their presence may cause things to go downhill. Also, there is no point in trying to act like a know-it-all from reading popular psychological journals, as every person who has mental

issues suffers from it differently.

The best that one can do is to not bring the issue up under any circumstance. It takes a lot for someone to open up and seek treatment; if you want to help, be there for them, even when it does not look like there is nothing going on.

The balancing act of staying right without being wrong

Despite all the knowledge and positive aspects of every culture being available right at our fingertips, public behaviour as a whole has gone down exponentially. On the one hand, there are people who are trying their utmost to fit in and adapt to new world mannerisms that make one a better person. And then there is the rest of populace, speaking first thinking second, or not at all.

Striking a balance between these non-intersecting groups is a mammoth task, and the key to it lies in the simple concept of accepting changes for the better. In most cases, these will seem disruptive and against the flow.

As simple as it is, change is something the world needs desperately to counter the phobic, inconsiderate, and thoughtless behaviours that have been ingrained into our psyche through centuries of unchecked practices. Yet, with the ongoing ‘infodemic,’ one lifetime is not enough to simply process all these changes and transformations.

Instead of latching onto every single new social concept, it’s best to take it in small strides in one’s own comfort zone. At the end of the day, being the best person that one can be is the only way create a truly colourless, identity fluid and harmonious world for the generations to come.

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