When the Self Always Rules

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Relationships are complicated. In fact, why go as far as relationships? People are complicated. The more I see of the world, the further convinced I am that there are very few people out there who can be called friends, or even well-wishers. Experience teaches us to be weary and untrusting of people, lest we get hurt when someone manages to pierce through the thick skin we have acquired for their own selfish reasons.

But all this would not be so hard to deal with if everyone was open about their selfishness. We come across a few people like that -- people who openly admit that they are looking out for 'number one', people who do not care if they look bad when they openly vocalise just how selfish they are -- and although they are a far cry from being a breath of fresh air (we avoid these people at all costs and often like to think of them as socially retarded), the truth is that they are the lesser of two evils.

You see, as unpleasant as these people are to be around at least they are honest. At least you know where you stand with them. While they will, at any chance they get, stab you in the back if it means getting ahead, you know not to expect any better from them, and that they are not friends.

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The real dangerous people are those who pose as friends, but will not think twice about selling you out if the opportunity proves to be fruitful for them. These are, unfortunately, the specimens that you come across the most often. Sadly, although you will find people like this all over the world, in my experience the highest concentration of them is found in our beloved hometown of Dhaka.

To be fair, perhaps the reason for this are our surroundings. After all, with all the corruption and greed surrounding us, why would people learn to be good to one another? If you were to see all around you that the only way to get ahead in life is by leaving all the small fries behind, stepping on them on your way, if it is needed, then why wouldn't you do so? If Dhakaites are nothing else, they are survivors. Collective memory and experience has taught us that while keeping the moral high ground and maintaining a strong value system is very fairy-land-idyllic and provides the fuzzy feel-good factor for us, it doesn't get anyone anywhere. Ours is a nation that clawed its way to independence, shouted themselves hoarse in riots in order to speak their own language, started crippled with barely any intellectual power whatsoever. To this day, our nation has still not been able to pick itself up and brush off the dust from the aftermath of 1971, and why? Because those who have 'made it big' have done so by -- let's face it -- stealing, cheating and lying, while those who haven't and are still surviving will either become corrupt or go broke at some point in their lives. It is no wonder that people in our nation do not make friends unless the friendship may present some opportunity at one point or another. Which is why I come back to my original statement -- that relationships are complicated.

I say relationships because this type of betrayal and using other people is not only found in friendships. Rather, it is found in all forms of relationships be it between siblings, spouses, significant others, and on the rare occasion, parents and children. Nothing is sacred anymore. No relationship is safe because we have all become so jaded, so ready to move ahead without thinking about the person next to us, so unwilling to realise that we have become a bunch of monsters.

Not to say that I am completely exempt from all these accusations. I am sure I may have inadvertently hurt someone or many someones, rather, for my own gain, because it is human nature to do so. Making a habit and a lifestyle out of it, however, is unacceptable. We live in a world where we have learned that the quickest and most painful way of dying is by trusting another human being. We learn that sometimes, taking the moral high ground exposes us to ridicule and humility. We find that there are no such things as friends, or if there are, they are few, causing even more isolation among us. And while there are selfish people with no moral standing all over the world, it is sad that often in our society, they seem to be the majority.