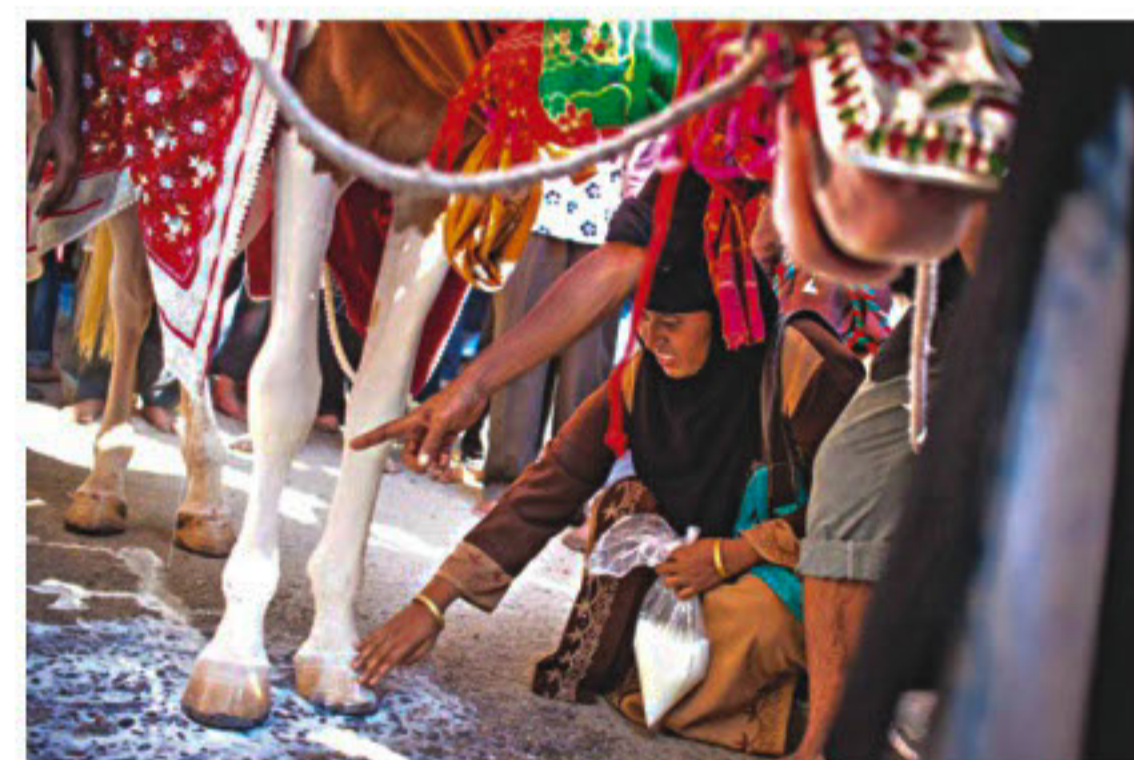


SHUTTERSTORIES



THE DAY OF ASHURA

PHOTOS: ANEEK MUSTAFA ANWAR
TEXT: NILIMA JAHAN

Ashura is marked by Muslims all over the world. However, Shia Muslims observe it as a major religious celebration, commemorating the martyrdom at Karbala of Husayn ibn Ali, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Ashura falls on the 10th of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar. People usually fast on the day of Ashura and assemble at mosques where sorrowful and poetic recitations are performed. In Bangladesh, Hussaini Dalan of old Dhaka becomes a centre of mourning and religious gathering on that day. Also, both Shia and Sunni followers bring out a mourning procession on the streets.



INTERNATIONAL

Due to its high quality, practical orientation, work life relevance, and digital technology based education system, Finland is increasingly becoming one of the favourite destinations for overseas students; including Bangladeshi who are willing to pursue higher education. One of the success factors of the Finnish Education system is the high standard of teacher's qualifications at all levels of the education chain. The minimum requirement for all teachers in Finland is the Master's Degree. This guarantees the homogeneous level of teaching from the basic education up to the higher education. People from Bangladesh had begun to come to Finland in the beginning of 1980s with different reasons; like higher education, business, family reasons and for asylum seeking purposes. Including students, first, second, third generation people, and families, there are currently over 7,000 people with Bangladeshi background living in Finland.

The size of the Bangladeshi community in Finland is expanding all the time –



FINLAND – A COUNTRY OF CURIOSITY

SHAIDUL KAZI and CARITA PROKKI
PHOTOS: COURTESY



August-September, 2016 alone a large number of Bangladeshi students came to different Finnish universities. Though Bangladeshi people are scattered in all of the major Finnish cities but their highest concentration can be found in and around the capital city of Helsinki and the education city of Tampere. The Finnish people themselves, the culture, society- and its climate are completely different from those of Bangladesh. Consequently, knowing these before coming to Finland might help to get adjusted quickly to Finland and thereby avoiding reality shock.

Finland calls itself "the land of the thousand lakes." In fact, there are altogether 187,888 lakes in Finland – in order to enjoy swimming in Finnish lakes, one should learn how to swim before coming to Finland.

Three-fourth of the country is covered in forests. Therefore, from almost anywhere, one may enter into forest by walking just 5-10 minutes. An interesting feature of Finnish forest is that one may own the forest but cannot forbid others from picking up of berries, mushrooms or

herbs. Most of the well-off Finns have two homes; one is urban dwelling and the other one is summer cottage located amid forest and far away from the urban area. Finns love sauna, which many consider as a holy place; in old time Finns used to give birth in sauna. A Finn visits sauna usually twice in a week. Sauna is a place to relax; get own-self fresh and warm up; discuss about daily issues with family members and friends; and also making decision for solving critical problems. One may consider sauna as an integral parts of Finnish life style. In a country of 5.5 million people, there are 3 million saunas in Finland.

The country is two and a half times bigger than Bangladesh but has a population of only 5.5 million which makes the country one of the most sparsely populated countries on the planet. Population growth rate is very low which is only 0.42 per cent according to the statistics published in 2014. Consequently, immigration is an increasingly important driver of population growth in Finland. In 2015, immigration accounted for 76 per cent of

the population growth. Finns are very shy people; it is highly uncommon that a Finn would start to talk to a stranger first. However, Finns are very honest, helpful-caring- and hardworking people - do not hesitate to ask a Finn if you have any question while in Finland.

Individualism is the cultural dimension of Finnish society. People live in nuclear family; comprises of parents and their immediate children. Family typology is of egalitarian nuclear type where kids are treated equally regardless of their gender affiliation. In family, kids are grown up to be self-dependent, carrier-oriented and form own household once they reach to adulthood. Consequently, children usually leave their parents after the age of 18/19 years and starts their own household. In Finland one would have three homes in his/her entire life cycle; childhood home with parents, own home at adulthood and in the old age elderly care home.

Most interesting feature of Finnish society is its emphasis on human rights; by law discrimination by gender, age, religion, or ethnic ground is strictly prohibited and enforced with punishment

to violators. Children start to go to daycare centers or kindergartens mostly at age two or before and grows up with a sense of gender equality. Consequently, one may consider Finland as one of the most gender neutral countries; men and women equally participate in household work, business activities, politics and everyday working life. In higher education, women have gone ahead of men long ago. Therefore, it may be seen that a PhD holder, high ranking lady official is married to an ambulance driver or a doctor (woman) is married to a welder (man).

Finns do not like bargaining and do not talk much. If they tell something, they really mean it. There is strong correlation between words and deeds among Finns – Finns seldom promise, if they do, they keep it. Women are usually more extrovert than the men. Finland is one of the peaceful and less corrupt countries in the world which stands always on top of the five most less corrupt countries' list. Public service functions very well in

Finland – that is one of the most important reasons why foreigners fall in love with Finland so quickly.

Finland has a beautiful, sunny- and short Summer (June-July); a touchy Autumn (August-September); a long, dark- and cold Winter (October-February); and a shiny Spring (March-May). The country does not have much mineral resources but abundant human capital. Consequently, Finland a tiny country has become home for many global companies; Nokia, Kone, Kemira, Wärtsilä, Fortum, Stora Enso to name just a few - these companies and many more may be potential work place for Bangladeshi students graduated from Finnish universities. However, proficiency in Finnish language is very important for getting a job and becoming part of the Finnish society – a foreigner should start learning Finnish language from the day one of his/her arrival to Finland.

The writers are PhD Senior lecturer, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Tampere, Finland and PhD Director, Business Operations, TAMK EDU, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Tampere, Finland, respectively.