

# How to be a better BANGLADESHI

TASNIM ODRIKA

This city we call "home" still finds itself on the list of "least liveable cities", and our beloved country has been ranked 115th on the Happiness Index, according to UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's (SDSN) 2018 World Happiness Report. As Independence Day approaches, why don't we all take a moment and ask ourselves, "Where are we going wrong?"

Of course, we cannot change everything overnight, but what we can do is incorporate small changes at home, work, school, in public space, and hope that our collective efforts would lead to a major shift.

## AT HOME:

Let's start small. Look around your house. Surely you would notice a lot of things that you can change for the better.

Most families have domestic help. In our day to day struggles, we sometimes tend to forget that they too are human beings with needs, wants, challenges, aspirations and feelings. Like the rest of us, they might make a few mistakes as well. Speaking for myself, I know I'm always pushing my deadlines for sending articles for this very job, but I can't imagine how I would feel if my employers treated me the same way we sometimes treat our domestic help for making mistakes. A few sincere, kind words can go a long way. These people work their entire waking hours just to get some food on the table. Letting them know that their work matters and that you appreciate what they do for you would certainly make their day.

I know us teenagers are busy people. We have class, coaching class, exams, and trends to follow on social media. But I'm sure, if we want to, we can spare some time to help around the house as well. We have all seen the meme that says, "When your mom comes home and the atmosphere of fun and relaxation is ruined". But think for a second; does anyone ever get mad for no reason? Maybe she asked you to help with something and you completely ignored that. Try to be a better son/daughter.

## AT SCHOOL:

Changing things around the house is simpler than changing things around school or work. These places include a lot of people, and therefore involve more diversity. It's impossible to get along with everyone and sometimes we might become a bit unkind to the people we don't agree with. In our minds, it might seem as though the person deserves this, but let's keep in mind that rude words can never help you make a new friend. If you think that it's an issue that can be ignored then just ignore it; if it requires attention then be sure to correct the person you think is wrong, instead of throwing around unkind words or spreading rumours.

Bullying is a serious issue in schools and sometimes the authorities fail to tackle the situation in an apt and timely manner. But if we address the root cause, teach kindness to the children and help them understand that people are different and difference is not always a bad thing, maybe we wouldn't have so many cases of bullying.

## IN PUBLIC SPACE:

Changing things in public places is the most challenging. Let's start with the biggest complaint. Our footpaths are not clean and often not pedestrian-friendly. We could blame the city corporations for not employing enough cleaners, but consider this: trash does not magically appear on the streets and footpaths. Not throwing that empty chips packet out the window of the car/bus, and teaching others to not do this as well is a good start. Our drainage system is overburdened and monsoon season manages to turn Dhaka into Venice every year. If we collectively stopped littering our streets, imagine the change it would bring.

The next big complaints are our traffic situation and pollution. Solving these problems is more complicated because Dhaka is one of the most densely populated cities in the world. There are too many cars on the road. The solution to this isn't really in our hands but we can at least try to walk or bike to nearby places. Currently, the average traffic speed in Dhaka is 7km per hour – slightly above the average walking speed. If we started walking or biking, we would reach our destinations faster.

Some people might argue about the extreme weather but when it's not raining or the heat is not overwhelming, what's the point of sitting in the bus/car/CNG for hours?

Lastly, just like our domestic help, we sometimes tend to forget that the rickshaw pullers are also fellow human beings. They are dragging another human being, at times in extreme weather. We seem to think it's outrageous if they ask for 10 taka more. Yes, a lot of times we might be on a budget. In that case, we can politely bargain instead of yelling at them or cursing them out. From my own experiences, I've learnt that when you calmly explain the situation – for example, that you need the rest of the money to get home – they actually understand.

There are a million other small ways in which we can make our country a better place to live in. It's not possible to change the system or our country in one day

but we can at least try and become better versions of ourselves, and by being nice to the people around us, we can inspire them to change for the better.

## Reference:

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*Tasnim Odrika is having an existential crisis at the moment and doesn't really know who she is anymore. Send her compliments at [odrika\\_02@yahoo.com](mailto:odrika_02@yahoo.com)*

