

LEARNING BASIC HOUSEHOLD CHORES



ILLUSTRATION: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

AAHIR MRITTIKA

My results were due in a month and I had to guarantee my survival during those difficult times. Thus, I went on a quest of educating myself about every household chore I could possibly find, as any 'ideal child' should do. Here's my journey.

COOKING

For some reason, the idea of cooking seems to be slicing onions gracefully like a professional while something delicious sizzles on a pan nearby. However, the reality of Bengali cooking is crying over a *boti* while dishes pile up randomly. This is worsened by the fact that we have a highly complex ways of cooking our food. We can't just boil some fish and eat it, no; we must fry the pieces, cook the spices, achieve the perfect consistency of *jhol*, mix it all together, garnish, and then hear a family member (who has never entered the kitchen in their lifetime) complain about the lack of seasoning in it.

And the pans did sizzle, not creating harmony, but creating blisters and burns on my hands.

I eventually realised that I would be a nightmare cook in a *deshi* household, for my rice was never the perfect softness, and my *rotis* were maps from atlases.

DOING THE DISHES

Here's the thing: washing one plate is fine, but washing sets of cutlery after a family meal is absolutely horrible and disgusting. It's unfathomable just how much waste we produce and how much washing needs to be done. Plates and spoons no one had seen for the last five years would show up greasy and used.

Leftovers would stick to the plates like they were part of the design and grease filled up my fingernails as I cried over the sink of debris. Sometimes I'd cry because I didn't know if I could fulfil the ultimate goal of my life of being a dishwasher.

WASHING CLOTHES

This was actually a lot of fun to learn because I could make the bathroom a playhouse with bubbles flying all over the place. That also meant I tripped on the slippery floor enough times to break my bones. My bones were also broken when I mixed my parents' white clothes with my red t-shirts in a bucket of detergent. Needless to say they didn't like my idea of washing clothes in the entire house to have slippery floors and bubbles so we could play around in our now pink clothes.

CLEANING THE HOUSE

The image I had of cleaning the house

looked like Cinderella sweeping floors gently while she sang songs of love and joy – not of back pain.

Trying to clear nooks with a broom where cockroaches thrive, is an extreme sport. There was a lot of screaming, and even more crying. But more importantly, running away from those terrifying creatures helped me become more fit.

CONCLUSION

Somewhere down the lane, I began to see some benefits of this "bad decision" I had taken. Mindlessly working was actually therapeutic for me as it allowed me to unwind after a day of stress. I also liked knowing that I was of some help to my mother, who runs a house alongside an inhumane work schedule. But mostly, I became more self-reliant.

All of these tasks can be learnt by anybody. The challenging part is to make a habit out of it. I'm now much more confident about living alone, or handling a change in situations, because I know that I'll be able to manage and survive by myself.

There are actually countless other skills to learn: sewing to mend clothes, ironing clothes properly, gardening, taking care of books and clothes, storing food, etc. All

of these sound very casual but most of us don't have a strong understanding of how to rightly carry these out.

Completing your own bit is doable and not even remotely difficult. In comparison, taking care of an entire household alone is tremendous hard work and beyond tedious. We still leave a lot of things around the house to be done by others; especially the women in the house. It's not only inconsiderate to do so, but blatantly unnecessary because household chores are something we can all make time for.

While lending a helping hand, you can also spend time with others. I've seen boys cooking with their mothers and talking about their days. I've seen fathers narrate real life experiences to their daughters while cleaning store rooms together. It's a great way to learn the sharing of responsibilities, and to come closer.

At the end of the day, everyone should have a practice of contributing to taking care of a home. You don't only become a more active person, but also help out your family a great deal.

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Moham-madpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaaahir@gmail.com