

"Bom Dia!" from the east coast of Africa

FARAZ E ISLAM

The name Mozambique comes from an Arab trader, Mussa Bin Bique, who first visited the country around the time of Vasco da Gama. It was July 2016 and I was moving from Dhaka to Maputo, Mozambique. That was the moment we embarked on the most unique adventure of our lives.

Exiting the airport gates, it felt like a different world. At first glance, there was the stunning blue sky, unrivalled by any other sky I've ever seen. The fresh, clean air and the light breeze from the Indian Ocean running through my hair. It was crazy to think this would be the place I would call home for the next three years. Maputo was such a unique place with amazing food inspired by the Portuguese, South African, and Indian cuisine. Driving through this coastal city, you can still see the architecture from the Portuguese era. Mozambicans are very warm and hospitable and will always greet you with a smiling "bom dia" (good day).

Mozambique was where I became aware of conservation issues. I learned about the devastating effects of climate change and the simple choices that we can make for



PHOTO: SHIHAB ANSARI AZHAR

a big impact. How the material of your soda bottle, be it glass or plastic, affects the ocean. Maputo being right on the coast, the bay was heavily overfished and the lives of the local fishermen got harder and harder. I also strove to find solutions. With friends, we sold plastic to a company that recycles it into furniture and we used the

money from that to donate to a local soup kitchen to help the hungry.

I went on safaris and saw amazing animals, from the majestic lions and the abundant zebras to the giant elephants and rare rhinos. Once after sunset, when we were driving, a lone elephant approached us out of nowhere and our vehicle skidded

to a stop. Upon seeing the elephant, fear had grasped me for a second before sheer wonder and respect settled in at the beautiful creature before me. Our guide whispered, "Don't be scared. They are more afraid of you than you are of them." That was such a touching moment for me. How could these giant animals be afraid of us? What could we as humans have done to cause this? The answer is saddening. An estimated one hundred elephants are killed every single day. We stared in awe at these beautiful animals, looking so dignified where they're meant to be, in the wild where they belong and not in zoos for human entertainment.

From our stay, I have learned that there are so many things that we have yet to learn, how diverse and magical the world actually is, and that we have urgent environmental problems that we must work together to match with solutions. I was incredibly sad to leave Africa behind but I was equally excited to meet the new adventures that our new home would bring. My time in Mozambique was truly a memorable one.

The writer is a grade 8 student at British International School Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

The Prejudice Against Black Pets

MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

As dramatic as it sounds, but there's literally a cat living on the fifth floor of a building right next to ours, all alone. The building isn't finished yet as its construction stopped midway, and a mother cat lives there because we feed her. I, along with my family, am absolutely drawn to the cat and whenever we talk about it to some people, they find it amusing too until they see the cat. Why?

Because the cat is black. Prejudice against black animals and choosing them as pets have been prevalent for a long time, so much so, that we often can't even pinpoint it.

The colour of the fur of an animal plays a huge role when they are picked as pets. When it comes to cats, most of the people steer clear from black ones due to the superstition that they bring bad luck and are connected to witchcraft and evilness. Aside from that, people hold a misbelief that black cats are more aggressive and are not well behaved.

All these wrong ideas lead them to barely opting for black cats as pets, or even generally adoring them. And when they are taken as pets, some people will even see it as a disgrace and try to criticise it.

Medha Tarannum, 18, shares her experience, "I had adopted Kale when he was a baby. I was afraid to bring him home at first. With time, however, my parents started liking him but even then whenever any relative would come over, they would repeatedly criticise me for choosing Kale."

Rifah Nanjiba, first year student at North South University, tells us the same about her pet rabbits, adding how the negative behaviour shown towards animals affects them. "Among my four bunnies, there's a black one: Phoebe. I adore her just the same as the other three. But whenever my friends or family come over, they adore the white ones and ask me with disgust why I picked the black one too and pass negative comments about her. It breaks my heart since after they've shoved her off, it takes a lot of time for Phoebe



PHOTO: @JJI.ONTHEBEAT

to become normal," she shares. A lot of time people even think that black pets are less photogenic and don't go for adopting them.

With people being aware of colourism now and coming forward to uprooting it from society, it's also important to identify this aspect of colourism shown towards animals and trying to break through the barriers of adopting black pets.

Stories like that of fellow SHOUT writer Fatima Jahan

Ena's little gorgeous cat Jiji show that people are slowly but surely coming across the opposite side of the spectrum too. "Whenever I post pictures of Jiji on my Instagram, people always appreciate him. Even when people come over, after they are past the initial dismay of his black fur, they actually say he is cool like a little panther," Ena tells us. "And that sort of mentality is really important for us to break the stereotypes and adopt black pets and love all animals in general."