

**WISDOMTOOTH**

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# Bangladeshi traits

There is a long and proud history of each nation (mostly) and we as Bangladeshis are strangers to taking pride in ours. Nothing wrong in that. But there are also some quintessentially Bangladeshi character traits that could be seen with a touch of humour or inquiry, if I may.

**Everybody is a poet**

While there is nothing wrong in trying to be a writer or writing poems, it does not mean everybody who can string two sentences together is a creative writer. There are people who have wanted to publish "collections" of their Facebook statuses, without a backstory or context, into books. Others have self-published books which I found at the Ekushey fair, and still rue the minute I decided to pick those up, for the lasting and traumatic images of romance in my head.

**Loud is what we are**

Bangladeshis cannot be quiet. In any group large or small, the noise level is likely to be large! Be it the loud honking, music at weddings, greeting someone known from across the street, or enjoying a sunset, there will be NOISE.

**Where is the courthouse?**

We as a people have a penchant of abusing the protection that the law is supposed

to give us. Being litigious needlessly and often maliciously is a very well-known trait, such that there is a local curse in the south-western region of the country which goes like "tor ghor e mamla poruk," which means may you suffer from someone filing cases against you.

**Glorify poverty**

People of Bangladesh have long struggled against the forces of nature like floods and cyclones, as well as the unfair structures of society. While there is grace in maintaining dignity during all roubles that life throws at us, there is no justification to glorify those struggles. Glorifying poverty is akin to allowing policymakers leeway of letting things be, rather than being moved to change it.

**The self-aggrandization**

The Bashundhara City shopping mall is the largest in the world/Asia. Or, the marine drive road in Cox's Bazar is the longest road in the world... etc are just two examples of how we ascribe the "best/greatest/largest" adjectives to anything that strikes our fancy, simply because we have not seen any better.

**The dodo tendency**

The term "hujug-ey Bangali" is often applied to us, for it seems we are always

ready to jump on the trending wagon, regardless of whether it is or is not sensible or applicable to us.

**What traffic rules?**

There will be people crossing roads at every minute of the day regardless of the traffic lights. There will be hose running like chickens, those who simply put up a hand expecting vehicles to screech to an immediate halt, and those who are driving these said vehicles without any training or even licences.

**Tumi Jano Ami K?**

Translated "do you know who I am?" is an often herd phrase in various social situations, most of them downright unpleasant. This is generally thrown/bellowed towards an adversary, presumably to intimidate them, and often works simply because the other person would rather not want an unwelcome surprise of the awful person being related to somebody powerful, which can mean a host of problems in this country.

These and such aside, there are some cute characteristics associated with Bangladeshis too... our love for the sari and panjabi, for the roshogolla, muri and fish, the national love affair with kohl, and of course the zest for life. But that is for another day!

While intimately aware of our flaws, there are some endearingly typical aspects of Bangladeshis too. The fondness for rice and muri (in its various preparations) for meals and snacks, the adoration for fish curries and fries and *bhortas*, the absolute love for 'Biyer Kacchi' or the food served at weddings and the 'alu' therein, still beats the hankering for burgers and pizzas hands down. And what beats a pudding? Steaming, soft, and crowd-favourite roshogollas!

The Bangladeshi love affair with books has led to a thriving publishing sector with millions of books of all types. We talk about politics and celebrate literature over numerous cups of tea at the makeshift tea stalls peppering every nook in the city. We turn out in droves, dressed in the same colours, to participate in festivals full of zeal for life. We adore our saris and panjabis, and miss no occasion to don them, and line our eyes with dark kohl. We like our colourful glass bangles, and the flower crown in our hair. We love our jhola bags, and writing diary entries, and nurturing our plants.

Best of all, we form deep and lasting bonds and relationships easily—all older people become mama-khala's and chacha-chachi's by default, with respect, be it the corner shopkeeper, or the neighbour we lived beside 20 years ago. We are resilient as a people, surviving and thriving in spite of the dark, corrupted and scary systems that governs our lives.

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