

Embracing a new culture

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Some of them are NamKook Tree Plantation Project 2019, Iftar during Covid 2020 in collaboration with Shunte Ki Pao?, Project Boi Bondhu, and BTS 8th Anniversary Charity Project.

These projects include feeding children living in orphanages, planting almost a hundred trees in their vicinity, donating books for underprivileged children and providing items for relief during winter. Such services are extended to stray animals, too. Through BTS Army of Bangladesh's Project Pawmis, in collaboration with the Animal Welfare Club of Dhaka University, 45 dogs in the Dhaka University campus were fed and provided with free medical services and vaccinations.

A common misconception that lies among the masses is that only young women and girls listen to K-pop. However, a lot of men enjoy the music just as immensely. Imran Rahman, a 24-year-old corporate employee, discovered K-pop

as a teenager from Arirang TV, a Korean channel.

"Ten years ago, we would be happy to just meet up at a restaurant and talk about our favourite Korean bands and K-dramas. Now, K-pop is so huge. There are events every few months, from competitions to fan interactions to merchandise shops. It is honestly a delight," he said. When asked what he loved about K-dramas, he noted their interesting storylines and the chemistry between the actors.

Make-up is seen as a feminine accessory in most cultures. However, in the Korean pop industry, it is seen less as only a feminine tool and more as a form of art and expression. In South Korea, one's outward appearance is treated with immense respect and importance. Touhid Islam Ohi, a 21-year-old Bangladeshi computer repair professional working the US, spoke positively of K-pop artistes using make-up, irrespective of their gender. He said, "I believe this neutral usage influences fans to be more expressive and comfortable to show their own styles." K-dramas are one of the more obvious gateways for getting into K-pop. Anika Zaman*, a 22-year-old fan spoke about her experiences of getting into the music genre.

"I was in the eighth grade and my tutor was very much into K-pop and K-dramas. She gave me her hard disk and I took many K-dramas and music videos from it," she said. "I fell in love with the group, SS501, through their original soundtrack for the K-drama 'Boys Over Flowers', and have been into K-pop ever since."

Kamrun Nahar Neela, a software engineer in her late 20s shared similar sentiments. "One of my friends recommended a K-drama to me back in 2012, 'You are Beautiful!' From there, I discovered SHINee. I suppose, there was no going back from there," she said.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a difficult time for everyone. Fans admitted that K-pop and K-dramas really helped



BTS Army of Bangladesh celebrated the band's 8th anniversary, offering their hand in various charity work in collaboration with Bidyanondo.

PHOTO:
COURTESY OF BD
K-FAMILY

them cope with the situation. "I was glued to my laptop for the longest time, watching one K-drama after another, and tons of music videos. My consumption went up as a passive coping mechanism," Anika confessed.

K-pop groups have won many international awards. We all know how "Gangnam Style" by PSY became a phenomenon. However, a year before its release, in 2011, BIGBANG was the first Korean act to win Best Worldwide Act at the MTV Europe Music Awards.

EXO, one of the most popular K-pop groups of all time, has won multiple international awards for their contribution to the Korean pop industry. BTS has been nominated for close to 700 awards to date, winning 425 of them. They have won multiple American Music Awards, Billboard Music Awards, and are the first Korean pop act to have received a Grammy nomination. Groups like SEVENTEEN, GFRIEND, NCT, and

Stray Kids also enjoy immense popularity globally.

"Seeing a band you have loved for so long finally getting the appreciation they deserve is a great feeling. These artistes have worked so hard for so many years, and so, when they finally get the global limelight, it is rewarding for them, their fans, and the whole industry," said 25-year-old Shoaib Ahmed, a journalist by profession.

It is incredible to see the positive impact the Hallyu Wave has had on different people in Bangladesh. The stigma surrounding Korean culture has also begun to diminish, and we can only hope that soon enough, people will see K-pop and K-dramas for the joy they truly spread.

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A performer at 'Dhaka K Fest'.

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