

English translation:

Sarah: My name is Sarah Ahmed. I am a junior [third year student] at the Independent University.

Irena: What subject are you studying?

S: I am a Finance major and Environment minor.

I: And where do you stay?

S: I live in Dhanmondi.

I: Dhanmondi is in Dhaka?

S: Yes in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

I: Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh. You introduce her.

S: This is my older sister, Ishrat Ahmed, and she is my mother, Gulshan Ara Ahmed.

I: Talk about the concept of *daaknaam* [nicknames]. Everyone in Bangladesh has a nickname. Why is it like this?

S: Everyone has a nickname here. It's just the norm.

Gulshan: Nicknames are usually short names, and it's easier to call people by those names. That's why.

I (to S): What's your nickname?

S: My nickname is Poornima.

I (to Ishrat [I2]): And yours?

I2: My nickname is Auhona.

I (to G): And your's is Pinu.

G: Yes. My nickname is Pinu.

I (to I2): Okay, so where do you stay [live]?

I2: I stay in Bangladesh, in Dhanmondi.

I: But after getting married, where do [will] you stay?

I2: In Canada.

I: Okay... so let's start with... favorite food. You all live in Bangladesh, so you obviously eat Bangladeshi food. What's your favorite Bangladeshi food?

S: Rice. Rice is every Bengali's favorite food. It's the staple food of Bangladesh. And other than that, watery lentils, curries, fish. Fish is a hot favorite among all Bangladeshis. We have this other fish item called *shutki* which is basically dried fish. A lot of people like that too.

I: Bangladesh imports a lot of their fish, right?

S: Yes, yes, specially pomfret and tilapias.

I: In China and Japan, people use chopsticks to eat; in America they use forks and knives, but in Bangladesh

S: We use our hands, because it is very difficult to eat rice and lentils with spoons and forks, so we use our fingers.

G: And it's also a habit. We're used to eating with our fingers and feel more at ease when we eat that way.

I: So, when you go to a restaurant, such as a Chinese restaurant or even in an Indian/Bangladeshi restaurant, what do you do?

I2: Oh, then we eat with spoons and forks.

I: What's the difference? Do you like eating with cutlery or...?

S: I prefer to eat using my fingers.

I: And so what is the rule? Do you eat with your right hand or your left hand?

S: We eat with our right hands. We eat everything using our right hands. We use our right hands, because that is the Islamic way.

G: Oh... that's a valid point that we eat with our right hands, because it is the Islamic way.

I: Yes, but aren't there some rules involved? I've heard that there are some rules....

S: Yes, this [the palm] part of the hand cannot come in contact with the food. You can only use your fingers to eat the food.

I2: Actually this is not a hard-and-fast rule. Some people follow this rule, some don't.

G: It's because, if the food touches the palm, one can't eat properly and people make fun of him/her saying, "you can't eat properly." See, our hands are like forks and knives and spoons by themselves.

I: So, how do you eat?

G: You put your fingers like *this* and then eat like *this*. So that this [palm] part of the hand is not covered [with food].

I2: People make fun if you eat in the improper way. Normally, people eat like *this*.

S: Let's show it to her practically [laughing].

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