

English translation:

Gulshan (G): And I like watching the news a lot, and seeing what is happening in the world. Like the current situation in our country, where a lot of problems are occurring.

Irena (I): When you watch the Bangladeshi news, do you think that it... say like a few days back, the situation was really bad. There were political strikes. It was showing on the news that no one can come out of their houses, and people were going through a lot of difficulties. So living here, do you think that the news gives a true depiction of what is really happening? Or do they exaggerate things or tone down the situation?

G: No, not really. They show what is really happening, but watching it makes us feel very bad that my country is going through so much. There is so much fighting going on, and people have to go through so much pain. Will they have any solutions to this? I used to think about all this while watching the news. Now the situation is kind of better. There is peace in the country.

I: When there was a strike, you did not have any problems if you stayed inside the house, right?

G: No, there is no problem if you stay at home. Even if you go out and you use the smaller alleys and back lanes, then there won't be a problem. You just shouldn't go out to the main roads. People throw things. Police may throw tear gas. There are riots. If you watch the current news, you will know about all this. We were in Narshingdi during the strikes. The whole of Bangladesh was in a difficult situation at that time. Now everyone has a sense of consciousness about the political scene. Now the country is under a state of emergency. Now things are fine. People are really happy now. The price of commodities has gone down quite a lot. There is no fighting. I want this state of emergency to last for some time. Then maybe things will get better. Otherwise there is constant trouble caused by the two parties: BNP and Awami League.

I: In other countries, they are showing that Bangladesh is going through a very problematic time. One of my friends from America saw this and got very scared. She thought that everyone was getting hassled for unnecessary reasons. But the rule here is that you will only face problems if you go out during strikes; otherwise you're safe.

G: Yes, exactly.

I: Since there's so much going on in the country, they have set a sort of curfew, right? And you can't go out during that time. The way they showed it in the news....

G: That was an exaggeration. That was just to create fear amongst the public. But then people started realizing that it is not as bad as it was being portrayed. Say, like, from 11

a.m. to 4 p.m., the police barricaded the streets and there are all these riots that take place. But it cools down after that. It's not as bad as they show in the news abroad.

I: So why do they...?

G: They just exaggerate everything and that spoils our country's image.

I: Yes, they say, look at the people. They have no electricity, they suffer so much.

G: No, no that is not true. All countries have their problems. The countries around us have problems too. But it is not as bad as it is portrayed to be so.

I: You've never been to America, right?

G: No.

I: So what is your impression about America, based on the news you see, about the Bush administration, about the current situation, etc?

G: Can I say anything about Bush?

I: Yes you can. No problem. There are lots of people there (U.S.A.), who do not support Bush. And people who do support Bush think that people from abroad, especially people from Muslim countries, hate them unnecessarily. They all think that "We've always helped them, we've given them financial aid, but they have all this unnecessary animosity against us. We want to help them but they don't see that." When Bush says this to people, they all feel angry. That is why the people feel....

G: Bush actually fabricates a lot of things.

I: That is why they think that Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans and all other Muslims hate them.

G: The main thing is that Bush fabricates things a lot. Lying is inherent in his veins! Muslims are not as bad as they are portrayed to be. And all this is started by him. He does this to sell his weapons and he "creates" criminals. Then he "helps" them and shows how compassionate he is. This is not right.

I: Yes. This is the reason they are having so many problems.

G: If Bush makes up things and tells it to his people, there will be some that will obviously believe him and start hating Muslims.

I: Bush has put it in their heads that the foreigners are bad, and that is why American people don't like them. And he's let the foreigners know that we (Americans) don't like them. So if there comes a situation where the foreigner and the American interact, there is

a lot of backlash that occurs. A lot of people who know me tell me that “You’re not like how they portray [your people] to be in the newspapers.” They become very amazed and say that we are good and not selfish and ultra conservative as opposed to our image in the media.

G: Yes. These are actually complete lies. Muslims are not that bad as people. These are such conspiracies created by Bush to make us look bad and to destroy our people.

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