

**Woman 1:** Throughout last year and even this year, the political situation of the country has been tense and inharmonious. However, in the past three weeks, the state of affairs has been pacified. What are the prospects for the country if the current political environment exists in the future?

**Woman 2:** If the current situation remains, it will be very good. If the care-taker government gets one year to work effectively, then the appearance of Bangladesh will change even more. Especially, the most harmful issue was regarding terrorists. Terrorism has been controlled so effectively that at this point that it does not seem like... we cannot understand whether we are in Europe or America or the U.K. It feels like we are in a better country; the environment is so peaceful; there is peace all around.

**Woman 1:** There is no fear.

**Woman 2:** Nowhere. Even I have not had as much liberty in other countries as I have now in the context of going out. Essentially, there are two types of satisfaction: one is mental peace, and the other is worldwide peace. In this country, we have mental peace. People all over the world know that we are a poor country; however, within this poor country, we get peace, happiness, and satisfaction from our limited earnings. Can any other poor country obtain all that? Can any individual in a poor country give so much time to his/her family? The time that all of us take to have conversations with others, spend time with others, take care of others... what do we achieve from that? This helps us to maintain a healthy mind, enjoy our life and time; if the mind is healthy, the body is healthy; and if the body is healthy, we can work efficiently; and if we work efficiently, our children can be happy and the family can be beautiful. Can any other country in the world give this time?

We also live abroad and we can understand the hard life that one leads. The whole day is work, work and work; you come back home and work. You cook, you feed your family, you have a job, you shop, you clean your house, you take care of the children, [and] you take care of your parents if they are alive. Since we are a Bengali family, an Asian family, we live together with our parents, and we take care of everyone. We are obliged to do all that, but Europeans (and Westerners) live on a “his, his, whose, whose” style; they look after themselves. The children separate from their parents once they turn 18 or 19, and they call once in a while to ask the parents to visit them. But we are together all the time; our children look after us, and we look after our children, and we do not have a problem with that. With our minimum earnings and wealth, we are much happier than most big and wealthy countries in the world, *InshAllah*.<sup>1</sup> Every single Bengali says the same thing. The less affluent individuals who work and live each day from the day’s

---

<sup>1</sup> *InshAllah* or “God willing” is an Arabic term evoked by Indonesian, Arabic, Malay, Wolof, Persian, Bosnian, Turkish, Urdu, Hausa, Bengali and many Muslim English, German, and French speakers to indicate hope for an aforementioned event to occur in the future.

earnings do not separate the children from the parents. The children also do not leave out their parents and lead their own lives.

In London, I had a neighbor who was very old, almost 90 years. One day, I saw her coming back from the grocery store with a market bag; she was hunching, and I could tell she was suffering. So I went up to her and asked, “May I help you?” and then she just stared at me without saying a word. I took the bag from her, and she had shopped quite a bit. Then the two of us walked and chatted until we reached her house, a distance of around half a mile from Sainsbury to my house in a particular street in London. We were exchanging stories when I told her, “We respect women of your age very much. For example, we have mothers, grandmothers and in-laws; when we get married and move into the husband’s family’s house, we never make our in-laws do any work. The new brides always take on the duties of the household. This in a sense lets the in-laws retire and spend quality time with their children or grandchildren, or relatives who come over. Or they may go to their relatives’ houses. They do not carry out the responsibilities of the household, but all of us, the children and the grandchildren, always take care of them; we look after them, their food, their clothing...we take care of everything. And look at you. You are 90 years old and you are carrying such a heavy bag back from the market, and there is not one person to help you. You have children [who are probably in different parts of the country], and if you fall down or die on the road, the ambulance will come and pick you up. There is no one to look after you. We cannot imagine such a situation in Asia.” Then she asked me, “Where are you from?” I replied, “Bangladesh.” Then she said, “Oh, that country which is always flooded? I have donated money to that country, a lot of money in fact. I took out money from my pension and gave it to the country during the floods.” Then I said, “Thank you. You did a very good thing. You helped Bangladesh, and that is why I arrived at this moment and helped you. You have done a good thing, so your God, my God has sent me to you to help you.” Then she hugged me and said, “Are you an angel? Are you an angel?” Then the two of us walked along, and I carried all her things to her house and told her that the next time she goes to the market, to call me and that I would help her.

**About CultureTalk:** CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use everyday. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

© 2003-2009 Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, Incorporated