

## **Teens in Bangladesh respond to questions submitted by students at ODW's Astoria School in Oregon**

### **First Response:**

Dear brothers and sisters of USA,

You have sent us some queries. We are very happy to know that you want to know about us and about our lifestyle. Here are the answers to your queries -

#### **Question-1: What clothes do teenagers wear to school?**

Answer: Usually the boys wear trousers and shirts with shoes and socks. Different schools have different color combinations. They call it 'School Uniform'. It is mandatory for them to wear this uniform at schools. For example, one school follows a combination of navy blue trousers and white shirts with black oxford shoes and white socks. Another school prefers white trousers also.

Likewise, in the same school the girl students also have a dress like navy blue pyjama/trousers, white school frocks/chemise, black oxford shoes and white socks. They wear a V-shaped folded scarf which is crossed at the back with a belt at the waist. They can wear a head cover too if they like. Other schools may have a reverse combination like white pyjama/trousers, navy blue school frocks/chemise, black oxford shoes and white socks. Again some schools may prefer yellow or ash or green school frocks and white shoes.

But many of our very poor schools do not have any such rules because the parents cannot afford to buy their siblings such school uniforms.

#### **Question-2: How do teenagers fix their hair?**

Answer: For the boys, long hair is not allowed. They must have a cut regularly. For the girls long hair is usually encouraged. It is our culture. At school our girls use black thin clips, white/black ribbons or white/black bands to fix their hair. If any girl wants to cover her head then they can do so with a white piece of cloth but still they have to use clips/ribbons/bands for managing their hair.

#### **Question-3: Do teenagers work and go to school and if so where do they work?**

Answer: In the middle income families (say US \$ 5 per day for a family of 5-6 members) the teenagers help their parents in household work. They keep the house clean, help mothers in cooking, take care of their younger siblings, etc. In rural areas and in poor families, girls in addition usually fetch fuel wood and collect drinking water from a distant place; and the boys work in fields and feed the cattle. Thus they get less time for their study.

#### **Question-4: How are girls treated as compared to boys?**

Answer: In poorer families, be it in a rural or urban area, girls are usually neglected. They eat less food and get less nutrition. They have to work more and get less time to play.

**Question-5: How long is a school day?**

Answer: Usually 6 hours a day with a half-an-hour interval. In urban areas, usually classes start at 8 AM and continue to 2 PM. But in rural areas, as the students have to work in the morning and due to lack of communication, classes start at 10 AM and continue to 4 PM. Usually Friday is a holiday. But in some English-medium schools, Friday and Saturday are the weekly holidays.

**Question-6: What kind of food do they eat?**

Answer: Our teenagers usually eat rice, fish, vegetables and lentils as staple foods. They also eat meats (beef, chicken, mutton), eggs and milk but these are expensive both in the urban and rural areas. They like sweets and candies, sweet-sour pickles & condiments, chocolates, etc. In urban areas, ice cream, cold drinks and burgers are very popular but these are quite expensive. In urban and rural areas, teenagers also like different sort of local cakes very much.

**Question-7: What do they do for fun?**

Answer: Bangladesh although a poor country, has a rich cultural heritage. They have many local games which they enjoy during their leisure time. They also like to play football, cricket, hockey, badminton, volleyball. But cricket, hockey and badminton are very expensive and thus not played by poorer groups.

Very popular local games are Kabadi, Bao Chi, Monkey & Color, Ice Water, Golla Chut, Meat Thief, etc. All these are mainly 'touch and run' type games with some variations. Saat Chara is another game where a tennis ball and seven earthen pieces are required. All these local games are very popular amongst the urban and rural students.

Carom Board, Table Tennis, various Puzzles, etc., are also frequently played by them.

In general, our teenagers like drawing and painting very much. It is a great fun to color them.

Our teenagers are very much fond of sight seeing too, but only a few families can afford it. Picnic is very popular but cannot be participated by poor teenagers.

**Question-8: How Bangladesh Independence Day is celebrated?**

Answer: 26<sup>th</sup> March is our Independence Day. That is a national holiday. Students gather in the school premises in the morning. They hoist the national flag and sing our National Anthem in a chorus. The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides parade through the compound or the locality. School authorities distribute sweets amongst all the students. Cultural programs are held which includes patriotic songs, poetry recital, acting, traditional dance, etc. Sometimes Football, Kabadi or Volleyball matches are held.

In urban areas, selected schools are invited to join rallies and parades in the stadiums or big fields.

In rural areas, patriotic movies are screened and students enjoy them without any entry fee.

**Question-9: Why did Bangladesh separate from Pakistan?**

Answer: Before 1947, the whole of Indian sub-continent was a colony of the British. In 1947, this sub-continent got independence and two states called Pakistan and India were formed. The majority of our people were poor. But the lands were very fertile and the people were very hardy. They fought against the British for their independence and as the majority of our people were Muslims, they opted for creating Pakistan. But after its creation, Pakistan continued the same type of exploitation against our people. They started to take away all the earnings to the west wing of Pakistan. Whereas, the people of the eastern wing (current Bangladesh) could not get their proper share in higher education, business, industrialization or government jobs. They started to become poorer again. This exploitation continued and they were not allowed to form the government even if they won the majority seats in the Parliament. This discontent culminated to an armed liberation war in 1971. During that nine-month long liberation war, Pakistan army killed 30 million people, raped 200 thousand women and destroyed roads and bridges. The liberation war started on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1971 and the Pakistan army surrendered on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971. Thus Bangladesh was separated from Pakistan.

We are very proud to respond to queries from our brothers and sisters from USA. We would appreciate any further query.

We are fine. We are going to school and do our home-works regularly.

God be with you.

Yours sincerely -

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**Second Response:**

**What clothes do teenagers wear to school?**

In Bangladesh most of the schools have uniforms for students. Colors may vary for different schools but the style is same. The uniform for the girls consists of three parts: Salwar (loose type pant), Kameez (it can be described as an in between design of a frock and a shirt), and Orna (a piece of cloth set in “V” shape covering the chest area). Orna is

supported by a belt made of the same material as the Kameez. Some of the schools make it mandatory for girl students to wear a scarf to cover their (students) head. The uniforms for the boys do not vary that much for different schools. Mostly it is white shirt and blue trouser. However, there are some schools where medium of instruction is English and they follow the curriculum of either English or American schools. These schools do not have any uniform code, so their students, who belong to the affluent class of the society, can wear traditional or western clothes.

### **How do teenagers fix their hair?**

In Bangladesh majority of people have black hair. In general the girls have a tendency to keep long hair but there are numerous number of Saloons where girls are able to style their hair any way they want. Coloring is uncommon among teenagers, but some do color it brown or red. Among teenage boys again there are a variety of hairstyles that they can choose from. For instance hairstyles of popular movie stars of both Eastern and Western countries have a wide following among the teenager boys as well as girls in Bangladesh.

### **Do teenagers work and go to school and if so where do they work?**

Working teenager students are more common in rural areas than in an urban setting. In urban areas their parents support majority of the teenagers. Still some teenagers do work after school, mostly as a tutor to junior students. Since access to computer is limited in schools, teenagers also work in computer training schools to teach various programs. In urban areas teenagers who works for full time only do so because they cannot afford to go to school. In rural areas it is more common that a teenage child would work full time for their parents or for somebody else. Therefore the government and various non-profit organizations work in those areas to bring more teenagers into classrooms by providing monetary and material assistance to teenagers in rural areas.

### **How are girls treated as compared to boys?**

It depends entirely on the family environment. Since teenagers live with their parents, the teachings and ideas of the family reflect on the teenager as an individual. But in general girls are treated nicely because the social culture perceives female as a subject of admiration and respect. Teenage boys enjoy more freedom than the girls do, but boys are also more likely to get into trouble with their parents.

### **How long is a school day?**

It is seven to eight hours long.

### **What kind of food do they eat?**

Teenagers usually eat traditional popular foods at home like rice, curry (fish and meat), fried vegetables, dal (lentil/peas soup). But when at school, they eat snacks like Chatpati (curry of chickpeas and potato), Fuchka (similar to puffed pastries), Jhal muri (puffed rice mixed with spices), Kabab Parota (Kabob with fried flour bread), different types of peanuts etc. Western food such as Burgers, Pizza, Fried Chicken, French fries, etc: are also very popular among teenagers in urban areas.

### **What do they do for fun?**

After school they play variety of games like Hockey, Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, Tennis etc. Cricket and Football are widely popular but unfortunately they are still confined within the male domain for various reasons. There are some traditional games such as Hadodo, Kabadi, (mostly “catch me” games etc.) which are very popular in rural areas. Other than sports, television is a major medium for recreation especially in urban areas where playgrounds are becoming scarce with the development of high-rise buildings. In urban areas Computer games, VDO games, concerts, fashion shows, and eating out in fast food restaurants has become major source of recreation. However there are also book clubs, debating clubs, theater schools, where teenagers spend their time after school. They also visit each other, sometimes accompanied by their parents, and discuss gossips including stories, dreams and fantasies about opposite sexes.

### **Instructions for Playing Youth Games in Bangladesh**

**Submitted by Archi and Ruchita (see first response above) – at the request of ODW’s Broad Meadows Middle School in Massachusetts**

#### **Ice Water**

Requirement: At least 3 players and one playground of moderate size.

How to play :

By the use of very rhythmic verses, one player will be elected as 'Ice'.

The Ice will count loudly and steadily up to 10. During this counting, other players (known as 'Water') will run to a distance. After finishing the count, the Ice will start running to touch any Water. If the Ice can touch any player (that is Water), then he/she becomes the Ice and the erstwhile Ice will become Water.

The new Ice will sit in that place where he/she was touched. The new Ice will start counting up to 10. After counting, the Ice will run to touch any Water to convert him/her to Ice.

If one player is touched three times, then the game finishes. New game starts after excluding that player because he/she is very weak.

## **Monkey and Color**

Requirement: A group of players and a playground. But better if it is in the school compound.

How to play :

The Monkey will be elected. Others will stand at far from the Monkey. They will say, "Monkey, Monkey what color do you choose?" The Monkey will reply a color, say, Red. Then all the players will run around the ground to fetch and touch any red color. It can be a red building, a red wall, anyone wearing a red cloth, even a red flower will do. They will have to in touch with that red color and this will save him/her. But if any player cannot find a red color, the Monkey will run after that player to touch him/her, and after touching he/she would become the new Monkey.

Others will again ask him "Monkey, Monkey what color do you choose?" And the monkey will say another color. Thus the game rotates.

## **Bao Chi**

Requirement: At least 8 players and one playground. No tools are required.

How to play :

Total players will be in even numbers so that they can be equally divided in to two teams. But this division will be done through a process of choice. Two Baos (meaning 'Bride') will be selected. They will be the leaders of their respective two teams. The rest of the players willing to play will come in pairs. They will select two colors, one color for each of them. Say one is Red and another Green. But they must be careful so that others would not know their color identity. They will come together to the two Baos and ask one of the Baos, "Which color do you like, red or green?" The Bao will opt for one color and the respective player will become a member of his/her team. The other one will become a member of the other Bao's team.

Then another pair of players will come by deciding, say, one as Yellow and the other as Blue. They will ask the same question to another Bao which color he/she would like. The Bao says one color and the color will go to his/her team. Thus the selection of team members is complete.

Then a toss will occur with a coin. One Bao will opt for head and the other for tail. Say, head wins. Then the toss-winner team will go to a line drawn at the end of a playground. A circle will be drawn at the middle of the playground. The distance between the circle and the line should not be less than 20 meters. The toss-winner Bao will sit in the circle. The toss-loser team along with the toss-loser Bao will stand in a scattered way throughout the field.

Then one player from the toss-winner team will hold his/her breath and utter the word 'Chi-i-i-i' loudly and will run to the circle to meet the Bao sitting there. After reaching there they will have a handshake and will return to the starting line. If his/her breath ends during the run, he/she cannot utter the sound 'Chi-i-i' anymore and if any player from the other team can touch the returning player, the returning player will be 'dead' and will be out of the field. The dead one will not participate in this round anymore. But if he/she can return successfully, he/she will remain alive and can continue to participate.

After that the second player will start from the line holding his/her breath and with the sound 'Chi-i-i-i' will run towards the players of the other team to touch one or two or three of them. So those players will become dead and will go out of the field. But during the course, if he/she is out of breath he/she will sit instantly in the field. He/she will be 'frozen'. Then the Bao will help the frozen player of the team by sounding 'Chi-i-i-i' and the frozen player will run to return to the starting line. If Bao's breath is exhausted before returning (of the frozen player) to the line and if someone from the other team touches the frozen player, he/she will be dead and has to go out of the field.

Then the third player will start from the line holding breath and with 'Chi-i-i'. Likewise he/she will try to kill as many players as possible and to return successfully.

If you want to make the game longer, allow each player a maximum of 7 breaths.

In this way the game will continue and at one time all the players of either of the teams will be killed. This dead team will be the loser and the winner team will earn one point.

Then the second round will start. The toss-loser team will stand with the line and the toss-winner team will be scattered in the field. The toss-loser Bao will sit in the circle. In this way the game continues.