

E2 Farhana Shahnaz.aac

It had been far too long that I had taken a rickshaw ride for someone who immensely enjoyed them. There was nothing I loved more than breezing through empty streets on rickshaw, feeling the wind in my hair. But, you know, we had a pandemic raging across the world, which almost put the whole world to a stop so I couldn't really be blamed.

My world in COVID was different. Nothing like I had ever seen before or even imagined to see. My once crowded and bustling city now seem deserted with just a few people scattered here and there, nothing like how it was before, and most of these people had a mask on and almost all of them had fear in their eyes. So I hopped on the first rickshaw I could find but what marred my long cherished desire of taking a rickshaw after ages was one keen observation: the rickshaw puller did not have a mask on.

Now I had some idea about how the Infodemic was wreaking havoc across Bangladesh and multiplying the impact of the already devastating epidemic. So I casually ask the rickshaw puller, 'Why don't you have a mask on?' His reply was absolutely startling. He said he doesn't fear COVID and he's not going to catch COVID. And that was because he thinks he's a good man, He's a righteous man. And in some religious sermon online, he had heard that COVID is only affecting those who are not righteous and who are not good people.

Of course, I tried to do my part. I explained to him that it is a disease which is affecting everyone, regardless of their religion, their social status. And COVID is not a disease which discriminates and neither does it incriminate. But my minute long explanation was followed by a very poignant question. He asked, 'Are you a good person? And if you are, you don't have to worry about COVID, and neither do I'. And yeah, that to me really explained what impact the epidemic was having all over my country.