

## A Journey by Plane \_ Jontu Miah's Sydney visit

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Recently I came across a very simple, ordinary and down to earth person who is visiting Sydney now for a **very special reason**. His name is **Jontu Miah**, in typical Bdeshi society/class system; he is nothing but a maid or a full-time caretaker of an elderly couple in Dhaka. He is living with Dr Ayaz Chowdhury's (Khokhon Bhai of Castle Hill) family for last 25 years.

**Jontu Bhai** is like many others in Bdes, working as a domestic aide from his childhood days. After serving the family for last 25 yrs with honesty, sincerity, dedication and reliability, he has established himself a permanent place deeply into the heart and mind of the Dr Khokhon's family. He is now considered a vital part of that family. He is living with his wife and 4 yr old daughter at the same house with the elderly couple in Dhaka. Now due to their old age, Dr Khokhon's parents are very much depending on **Jontu Bhai** and his wife's help/care for 7 days 24 hrs.

People like **Jontu bhai** can't imagine even going to another district in Bdes for holiday but to his wildest dream he is now in Sydney on a 3-month tourist visa with Dr Khokhon's parents. They (both Australian citizen) came to Sydney for treatment and for their help and full-time care, Khokhon Bhai decided to sponsor **Jontu bhai**. After few unsuccessful attempts, Jontu bhai was issued tourist visa on some strict conditions. I witnessed many documents by Khokhon Bhai as a Justice of the Peace (JP) to process the visa application. It made me very curious about **Jontu bhai** even before he arrived in Sydney. I was looking forward to meet him in Sydney with lots of interest and excitement.

Khokhon Bhai's parents are very closely related to my wife and I know Khokhon bhai for a long time as he is an ex-cadet of Mirzapur Cadet College (MCC).

After **Jontu Bhai** arrived in Sydney in April 2008, we went to see them and I met him for the first time with lots of curiosity. **Jontu bhai** impressed me very much from the very first day with his innocent smile and gentle behaviour. When I saw him first, I found many similarities between him and famous singer **Akbar** who was discovered by **Hanif Sonket of Ittadi**. Interestingly, they both have similar socio-economic and educational background. Though **Akbar** is very famous and rich now in Bangladesh. I have been fortunate enough to meet them both very closely in Sydney.



Nafsi and singer Akbar in Sydney – Oct. 2006



Nafsi and Jontu Bhai - June 2008

Though he came as an aide to the elderly couple, Jontu bhai entertained us with variety of food every time we visit them. I felt like I am in BdesH as we were served with yummy food instantly prepared by **Jontu Bhai** in the comfort of our lounge room. The most amazing quality of **Jontu bhai** is that, he always maintains an innocent smile on his face all the time. He loves my son **Nashwan** very much, may be because he is missing his 4 yrs old daughter back in Dhaka. **Jontu Bhai** is very popular among the kids of Khokhon bhai and his nephew/nieces as they were well looked after when they were very young and also when they visit Bangladesh for holiday.

Last week I took a day off and took **Jontu Bhai** for a ride in Sydney. Since he had to look after the elderly couple all the time he could not see much about Sydney. My daughter Nafsi also skipped school to be with us. I took him to **Sydney Olympic Park, drive through Harbour Bridge, Kirribilli Point, Sydney CBD and finally to Taronga Zoo**. Jontu Bhai was very pleased to see beautiful places around Sydney and he enjoyed most the native Australian animals i.e. **Kangaroos, Koalas, Emus** etc at the zoo. I discovered many interesting things about his simple life while driving. When I asked him how far he had studied, his honest reply was “**nothing at all, Bhaia**”. I was amazed at his straight forward answer. He was too modest and didn't hesitate to tell the truth. He seems very happy and satisfies with his present situation. But he said he would provide basic education to his only daughter.



Jontu Bhai enjoying Kangaroos and Koalas at Sydney's Taronga Zoo



From Bangladesh to Australia \_Jontu Bhai enjoying life in Sydney

After enjoying the day thoroughly, I took **Jontu Bhai** to our house for lunch. He was surprised looking at veggie garden at our backyards. It was beyond his imagination that we could grow pumpkin, bean (Shim), eggplants, chillies, tomatoes etc at our home while living in Sydney. He enjoyed good time with my son and daughter too.

He surprised me a lot when he refused to sit on the couch or sitting with us to have lunch together. But I insisted him to sit with us and take lunch. He seems to be very comfortable with his own status by his trademark smile on his face all the time.



Jontu Bhai sitting uncomfortably !! with Nashwan



Jontu Bhai reluctantly !! having lunch with us

In the evening, I drop them at Khokhon Bhai's home at Castle Hill. In the back of my mind, I felt very glad and happy that day and enjoyed the day very much. I will remember Jontu Bhai for his kind, sincere and smiling face with no complaints.

**Jontu Bhai** will leave Sydney on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2008. I wonder, whether he will be able to visit us again, only Almighty knows. I truly believe that we are heavily indebted to these kinds of people for our *"beautiful today"*, but unfortunately we sometime forget it or pretend to be so. Finally, I wish him all the very best from the bottom of my heart.

*NB: Jontu Bhai's story is dedicated to another person in my life whose name is **Shahid**. He is living with my mother for last 23 yrs. He is now married and a full time driver cum care taker of our house in Uttara, Dhaka. To my mother, he is her 5<sup>th</sup> son on the top of her other 4 sons. Now, when I go to Dhaka, it is **Shahid** whose continuous help and services make my stay very comfortable and enjoyable.*

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