Starting Something New

Elita Karim

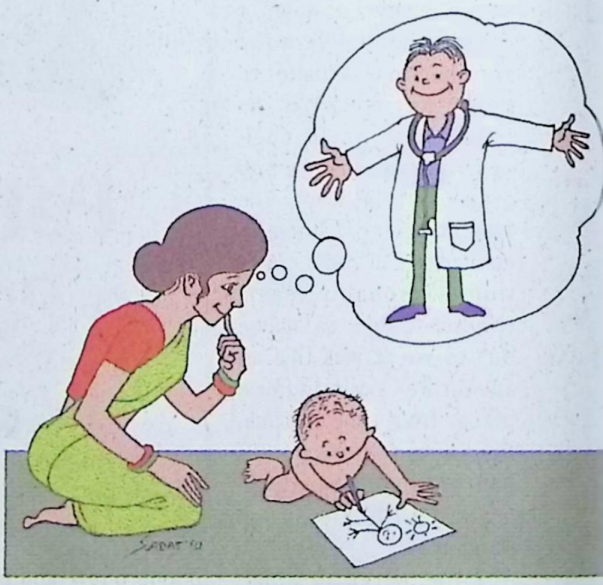
Illustration: Sadatuddin Ahmed Emil

"*BHABI*, your daughter will also be a doctor! You wait and watch!" hearing this statement rendered gleefully and rather enthusiastically, I turned around to find a group of women sitting outside the local school and talking amongst themselves. With biscuits, tea and chocolates bought from the shop right next to the school, they were having quite a picnic by the waiting cars and autorickshaws, which were there to pick up the senior section children. Groups of women waiting by the schools to pick up their children, is a very common scene all over the country. A special touch to this particular group was the exhausted little girl dressed in red, sleeping on her mother's lap. Clearly a kindergarten student, the child had her school bag by her mother's side. As per the conversation, the child's mother was flaunting her daughter's dedication towards her studies; how she would study extra hours with her tutors and would not stop even when she is done with her homework. The night before, according to her mother, the child had studied for 8 hours at a stretch, only getting up a few times to go to the bathroom (and twice when she was distracted by the 'noise' that the children her age were creating next doors. They were watching cartoons on TV!) "She is very young but works very hard just like her older brother," boasted her mother to the other women. To this, one of the women in the group concluded that the little girl would definitely be a doctor, just like her father (and also her 6th grade brother who was studying to be a doctor as well.) "You should create a family of doctors!" the woman went a step further. "Get your children married to doctors as well! You will have a doctor son-in-law and a doctor daughter-in-law as well."

"Oho *bhabi*!" beamed the mother modestly. "*Ki dorkar?* Where is the need for so many doctors in a family? Let's see if God wills..." and so on.

As much as the conversation was entertaining me, I could not help thinking as to how 'being a doctor' was automatically taken as a major compliment exchanged between the mother and the woman, respectively. Having no malice towards doctors in particular (or the other professions that parents like to see their children involved in, namely an engineer or a lawyer), I must say that career options have come a long way in Bangladesh. Today, young people have so much to choose from. Despite the fact that lack of resources in the country, not to mention inspiration and motivation, prevent young people to pursue with their dreams, I have been lucky enough to meet several young talents who broke the social barriers and currently living their dreams and thereby making a difference in the country.

In the last one year, I came across young writers, musicians, filmmakers, scriptwriters, camerapersons, social workers and businesspersons as well. However, the one element that was common amongst all these unconventional professionals was their urge to start



something new and completely different. In spite of the fact that we do showcase quite a number of young talents in our country, Bangladesh is still a growing nation. However, because the country is still growing, we have an option to come up with new ideas and implement them accordingly to start something new. We still have the scope to dream of something absurd, and turn it into something exceptional. Instead of giving children options, which already exist, maybe we can start making things a little more exciting and inject the idea of 'starting something new' inside them. Who knows? In the next decade or so, we might just become a nation famous for simply being open to new ideas and appreciating foreign concepts. That would not keep us far behind for too long!