"I knew that I had to move to Dhaka if I were to make a name for myself in sports. But people around me were extremely discouraging. They would say that I would be a "ruined" woman if I moved to Dhaka, implying that I would somehow lose my character if I were to follow my dreams," says Champa.

Despite all odds, Champa persevered, and her patience and hard work bore fruit. Champa now plays cricket as well as football for the national teams of Bangladesh. "I have no regrets," she says. "At least I've shown my dissuaders that a woman can do anything if she sets her mind to it."

For Farjahan Rahman Shawon, marriage seemed like the best step to take to forward her life. She was 22 years old when she eloped and married the love of her life. At that time, Farjahan believed that this was the only way she could be united with the man she loved.

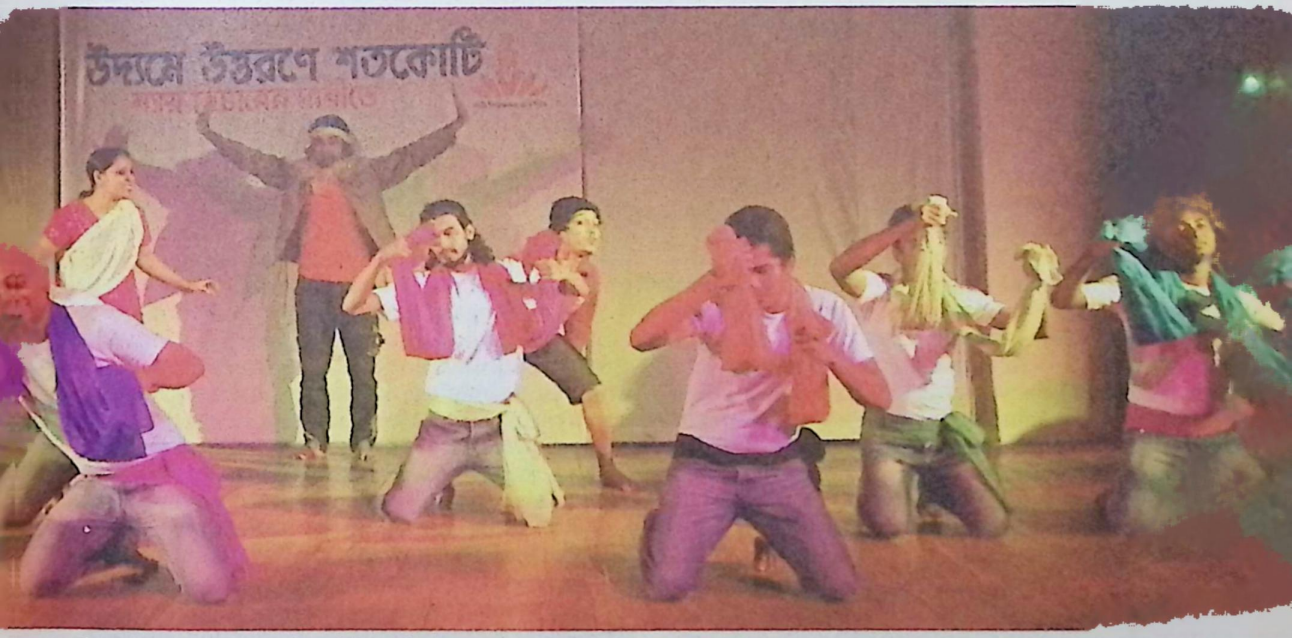
"My to-be mother in law grilled me with incessant questions about my family, how much money we have, our source of income, so on and so forth,"

is Woman

Mutual friends, however, managed to convince her then boyfriend to rebel against his mother and they married some days later. Seven days later, on the day of their reception, Farjahan received a nasty shock in the form of a divorce letter sent by her husband. Going against one's mother's wishes was a *kabirah gunah* (a great sin), he said by way of explanation. Finally, after a lot of meetings and talks, she was finally accepted by her husband.

"Where was my self- respect, you might ask. Why did I allow people to push me into a relationship where I was clearly not wanted? There was immense social and familial pressure on me to return to my husband. My father and other relatives kept telling me that I would bring shame to the family name and no one would want to marry the girls of the family because of me. I began to believe that if my husband didn't accept me, I would be doomed and so would my family," says Farjahan.

The torture began almost immediately after Farjahan was "allowed" into her husband's house. Her mother-in-law and husband would leave early in the morning, locking her in the house to complete all the household chores. Her mother-in-law started taunting her, saying that she would never amount to anything and that she was worth nothing. After sometime, Farjahan too began to believe that she truly was not of much value.



A performance at the One Billion Rising programme at Shilpakala Academy.

says Farjahan, who had meekly answered all the questions. "The next day my to-be mother-in-law called my father and broke off the engagement. The reason being that I was dark complexioned and that I was from Noakhali. Her son too went along with his mother, stating that he couldn't go against her wishes," she adds with a wry smile.

Finally, after years of physical and mental torture, Farjahan decided to separate from her husband after she got a job at the International School Dhaka, and knew that she could take care of her two children.

"Our society treats divorced women like untouchables. Even my lawyers, who I have