

EDITOR'S NOTE

From today we begin a special page focusing on some extraordinary people setting inspirational examples through their life's work. Every Saturday, we will bring a number of such people who are making remarkable contributions to the society and the economy, changing Bangladesh and inspiring us to do the same.

CREATING EMPLOYMENT

Jaago Foundation's Sewing Centre



When Jaago Foundation lost 18 students from their school to the workforce, due to their need to support their families, they decided to help impoverished parents become financially stable by creating employment for them.

SUMAIYA AHSAN BUSHRA

When Jaago Foundation had begun its journey a few years back, the school had lost 18 of its students after returning from a summer vacation. These students belonged to extremely poor households and had to settle at a location where they could work to support their families. The foundation realised that they needed to come up with a plan which would help keep such families rooted to their locality (Rayerbazaar). Jaago Foundation set up a sewing centre, where they encouraged the parents to train, by giving them

a stipend. As time went by, this motivated more parents to work for the sewing centre. Results were significant; more people could now afford to send their children to school and less were being deprived of their basic rights. Four years ago, a young Australian volunteer, Amanda, came to Jaago for a month to help eradicate the problem of education inequity. She initiated a business proposal which would further benefit the underprivileged. She showed the workers a sample that she had designed, and asked them to replicate it. After seeing that the test sample was a great turn-out, she ordered bulk for retailer stores in Australia

under the label 'Bachhara.' The first line of products came out under the name of some of the students, 'Rana', 'Sonia' and few others, sharing their life stories. "The cost per piece of production amounts to 1000-2000 BDT, and is sold at a reasonable price at various stores in Australia," says Korvi Rakshand, founder of Jaago Foundation. The money that the foundation now receives goes toward sponsoring some of the children of the school. In addition, a part of it is used to pay the workers' salary. If new workers require training, then a small amount is paid to them as well through this allocated fund.



A Devoted Folk Artist

PROMITI PROVA CHOWDHURY

65-year-old Haripada Pal believes that his work helps him establish a strong connection with God. Pal is a veteran sculptor who has been representing Bangladeshi folk art in the world arena. Renowned folklorist and emeritus Professor Henry Glassie highlighted him in his celebrated publication series, 'The Potter's Art' (1999). Jointly published by Material Culture, Philadelphia and Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Glassie highlights the modern masters of traditional ceramics from the



United States, Sweden, Turkey, Bangladesh and Japan, in his book. A sculptor from Shakhribazar at Old Dhaka, Pal has been making exquisite statues and models of different Hindu deities from a very young age as part of his family business. In 1964, he decided to branch out and open his own shop and workstation 'Shimuliya Bhashkor Shilpalay,' in Shakhribazar. In 2002, Haripada Pal represented Bangladesh in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival held in National Mall in Washington DC, patronised by Henry Glassie where his work was internationally recognised and lauded. "Sometimes I get so involved in my work that I hardly feel anyone else's presence around me. It feels like I unite with the Gods at the time. I have devoted my life to sculpting and also, I earn a decent living with it," says a content Haripada Pal who worships through his work. His choice of medium is soft clay and straw. However, he occasionally likes to work with cement, plaster and brass as well. He works tirelessly and with great care, to give the sculptures a perfect shape and finishing. Around six people work under Haripada Pal. His business profits most during the seasons of Puja, and during off-seasons he takes orders from various individuals and organisations.



A Voice for the Animals

NAZIBA BASHER

Kashtanka, a local breed, was Rubaiya's dog. Upon her return from America in 2006, after graduating from The University of Texas majoring in IT, Rubaiya Ahmad had to face an unthinkable trauma. She had witnessed Kashtanka's body being pulled out of Dhaka City Corporation's office after he was brutally murdered during one of their 'dog culling projects'. Kashtanka's death had sparked a fire inside Rubaiya that led her to establish Bangladesh's first animal welfare organization, Obhoyaronno (O-BAWS). Obhoyaronno is working to end animal cruelty through advocacy, education and humane programme implementation. Obhoyaronno was established in 2009 and registered as a non-profit charity with the Joint Stock Companies and Firms in 2011. Through Obhoyaronno, Rubaiya has sent vets and paravets to Jaipur, India, to get proper training in sterilisation and other procedures.



PHOTO: COURTESY

To eliminate the rising risk of Rabies, the local authorities killed thousands of dogs every year all over Bangladesh. "I have been working non-stop to save animals and thankfully, we have finally stopped dog culling, an act that has been going on for almost 60-70 years now, on the 1st of January, 2012," says Rubaiya. "We have also opened our own Clinic with modern surgery procedures and have lots of street animal rescue projects," she elaborates. Since then, Obhoyaronno has been running the country's first CNVR (Catch-neuter-vaccinate-release) programme in Dhaka with support from Dhaka City Corporation, Humane Society International and FAO. The success of the programme has won Rubaiya and her organisation several local and international awards including the "Humane Society International Animal Advocate of the Year" award in 2012. Obhoyaronno has been working tirelessly over the past four years to eradicate rabies, vaccinate and sterilise dogs all over Bangladesh. Rubaiya continues to work closely with this organisation while also holding and conducting workshops in schools where she teaches children the importance of kindness towards animals and proper pet-care.

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO