

Connecting the mind and body



ANIKA HOSSAIN

Our current generation has become increasingly health conscious. Many are joining gyms, running in parks, taking up aerobics and more recently, yoga. Ulfath Kuddus is one such member of our youth populace who embraced yoga not only as a form of physical exercise, but for its spiritual aspect as well.

Ulfath studied at Sunbeams School and then at Webster University in Thailand, where she studied International Relations, and Management, after pursuing several career options she now works for Pixieland School. She took up yoga around the age of sixteen, “I was struggling with my weight and developing body image issues,” she says. “At that time my mom used to do a lot of yoga and aerobics, and she is the one who suggested yoga as nothing else was working for me. From day one I was hooked.”

Initially, Ulfath learned yoga from a book, called The Yoga Book, published in the 80’s. “Last year, I needed a break from everything and I decided it was time I went and got certified, so I went to an ashram in

Nepal called the Ananda Ashram, right outside Katmandu, and I studied Hatha Yoga. The ashram was a very quiet nice place and part of practice was contemplation. We would sit for hours thinking about life, I learned to breathe there. When I came back, I was overheard at a dinner party talking about my experience. The next day I was offered a space at the International Club (IC) in Gulshan 2, to take a class.”

Ulfath started at the IC, three days a week (Sundays through Tuesdays, TK 300 per class) and is also starting classes at a creative space called Inspire, which is in DOHS Baridhara. “I am very excited about this class and hope to include an older crowd, because I believe it’s a population that really needs to be tapped into,” she tells us.

“People in their 50’s pushing 60, are starting to develop arthritis, osteoporosis, diabetes and other age related conditions. These are things that can be controlled through exercise and yoga etc .Our generation might be into looking after ourselves but our mothers aren’t, so it would be great if we could create a platform for them, where

exercises as simple as bending their fingers and bending their toes, etc can help them,” she continues.

In her class, she teaches a type of yoga called Hatha Yoga which concentrates on individual asanas, as opposed to the flow, the vinyasa. “Ha means sun, it’s the active energy, the heat and Tha is the moon, the receptive energy, the whole point of this type of yoga is to balance the two,” says Ulfath.

Ulfath informs us that from a medical point of view, yoga helps control blood pressure, anxiety and depression. It helps with weight loss and it makes the skin better. “It also helps with stomach problems because it works on your internal muscles, and organs,” she says.

“My class is not typical, we all talk and laugh and listen to music, I want people to have fun so they get hooked on to it,” Ulfath explains. “I’ve been doing yoga as a form of exercise for many years and now, finally it has become more than that-it has become a way of life for me. So that’s what the ultimate goal of my class is.”

Coming from Grace Land

APURBA JAHANGIR

From being one of the best singers of this generation to creating the first online music Distribution Company and record label of Bangladesh, Armeen Musa has proved to be one of the leading ladies of our music industry. Recently she made it into Berkeley College of Music’s Dean’s list for remarkable academic accomplishments, “To be honest I was shocked. I never studied for grades- as long as my scholarship was intact I was happy just to be learning. But now I feel proud to be on a list with people whom I consider great academics at my school,” says Armeen.

Armeen’s voyage towards music started from a very early age. “I was born into a musical family. Every one is into music, even if they are not doing it professionally or at all times,” says the musician. Armeen’s first break was when she got to sing a rendition of Radha Raman’s ‘Bhromor Koiyo Giya’ with producer Fuad Al Muqtadir which went viral on YouTube reaching over 4 million hits. “At the age of 19 I made my first album ‘Ay Ghum Bhangai’ after which I realised that I was meant to do this full time- so I decided to study music and got admitted to Berkeley College of Music,” says Armeen Musa.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Though studying at Berkeley was not a lap of luxury, Armeen got to study under the wings of some of the best musicians and music teachers in the world. “Even though it was a university, the performances were held and directed at a professional level. We had to audition to get into certain classes and also attend rehearsals on weekends. The theory part of it was very challenging for me as I didn’t play any chordal instruments,” says Armeen. With her part time job as an ESL tutor, Armeen struggled a lot for couple of her classes. She also adds, “I have to admit, I have never worked as hard and as long as I did these four years. But not for a second did I not enjoy it- it was a blessing to go to this school.”

According to Armeen, the person who inspired her most to be a musician was her mother, Nashid Kamal. “What I got to learn from her is that in all of her and our ups and downs, she always used to somehow connect it with music which showed me the pride and the spirituality of it,” Armeen.

To end her Berkeley life, Armeen is partaking in a concert with the Oscar winning singer A R Rahman. She is also recording her 2nd album “Simultaneously” which will be released next month.



NAZIBA BASHER

Between The Squiggles

Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy started his schooling in Government Laboratory school and then went on to City College and then London Metropolitan University to major in Computer Science.

“After I finished studying at City College, I sent some of my work to Unmad to get a job there and continue with my passion of drawing, and when Ahsan Habib, legendary cartoonist and editor of Unmad, saw my sketches, he gave me the opportunity. I had no prior training before that,” says Tanmoy.

When Tanmoy was younger, he was very interested in art. “But painting and most other forms of fine art send very subtle messages. I realised that cartoons will help me directly pass on a message visually. Understanding abstract art is difficult, but understanding a cartoon is not. It is something that a child will understand and so will her parents, or something that a lawyer will understand and so will a tea vendor,” says Tanmoy.

Tanmoy also gained some experience at The Daily Star and then at The Daily Sun from there. Now, he is a full time editorial cartoonist in Dhaka Tribune, while still maintaining his job at Unmad at assistant editor. So far, Tanmoy has touched every field of cartooning and his worked ranges from satire, strip cartoons, political cartoons and comic books, to children books and cartoon shows on television. He is also working on a graphic novel.

In 2008, Tanmoy won a special award in the South Asian Cartoonist congress held in Nepal. In 2009, he was selected in the 16th visual art festival in Iran, and has also recently exhibited his work in the UK. This year, he had his first solo political cartoon exhibition in Edward M. Kennedy center. Recently, Tanmoy and fellow cartoonist, Sadatuddin Ahmed Amil held a political cartoon exhibition at the Nordic Club. “But my most interesting achievement so far has been quite recent. It wasn’t anything I won. It was much bigger for me. Recently a minister had insulted journalists and upon hearing it, I drew a cartoon then and there and had it uploaded on our online version of the paper, before it came on print. Within 12 hours, that cartoon had become viral through out social media and the cartoon was used in banners that were used to protest against that minister! That was very exciting for me!” shares Tanmoy.

Even though Tanmoy believes that Bangladesh’s history of political cartoon is very rich, he thinks the community is still very small. “For the future, I want to work on expanding the community and create an institution for cartoonists. We already have the Bangladeshi Cartoonist Association, but we still have very far to go with it. That is the dream I have for cartoonists. My dream for myself is to make more graphic novels where I can tell the stories of my city and my time.”

PHOTO KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO