

# A Change Maker's Journey

Back in the 80s a young woman in her early 20s used to travel regularly to different parts of Dhaka with a determination to establish her own business. Living in a conservative society, it was no easy ride for Sangita Ahmed. But she was determined to overcome the hurdles she was facing as a woman entrepreneur. Her courage and determination has finally paid off.

Sangita Ahmed, the former president of Bangladesh Womens Chamber of Commerce and Industry and currently, a Director of Janta Bank Limited, is the owner of a few of the country's most successful business enterprises-- Time Out Restaurants and The Sky Room Dining. Besides

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

running her own businesses, Sangita has been a prolific writer and activist fighting to challenge the stigma established in our society against women's emancipation and empowerment.

"At that time when I used to visit banks to explore the opportunities available to an entrepreneur, I found them to be unfriendly and disappointing," she says. "However, I had the dream and determination which are essential to become a successful entrepreneur."



Sangita Ahmed

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Sangita a multitasker by nature has also worked as an English newscaster for Bangladesh Television. She also finds time to look after her three children. She says, "I have given priority to my family especially my children over everything. It never hampered my work and efficiency. In fact, it makes me more of an efficient manager," she tells us.

"I would like to suggest young Bangladeshi women to go for entrepreneurship before looking for a job."

Sangita has been working to make it easier for Bangladeshi women to become entrepreneurs. Her advocacy as the President of BWCCI has led to the reduction of interest rate up to 10 percent from a staggering 22 percent. She is planning to launch a training academy for women entrepreneurs in the future.

According to Sangita, now-a-days it has become easier for Bangladeshi women to start their own business. "I would like to suggest young Bangladeshi women to go for entrepreneurship before looking for a job," she says. "Online marketing schemes, digital products and facilities have opened the doors for many."

In fact, a secret behind Sangita's amazing multi-tasking ability is that she is actually the master of her own time. Not only do her ventures make her financially empowered, but she also enjoys fixing her schedule to complete daily activities, including taking care of her family. Truly, she is an inspiration to both young men and women today, who prefer to go for start ups and create a world of their own. ■

ACHIEVEMENT



"Women are equal but different. In Surah Nisa, Allah has ensured their rights and honour. We men must respect their rights."

Md Hafizuddin  
A student of Govt Alia Madrassa

## THE VOICES OF MEN

Millions of men and women work and live in Dhaka. Like many cosmopolitan cities of the world, ensuring a friendly environment for female city dwellers and workers has been a challenge for the city's authority. Already, we have seen several steps taken to make the city female-friendly an example being special bus service for women. But these facilities are few, compared to the existing problems they face. These cannot be overcome without changing the mindset of their male counterparts. On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Star explores what men, in this mechanised city, think of women's rights.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



"In Dhaka women are very smart and intelligent. But I think men are cleverer than women."

Md Farhad HOossain  
A tea stall owner

"In my profession we treat men and women equally by their work not by their gender identity. I believe women have the right to be treated equally as human beings in all walks of life."

Shubro Das  
Architect



"I have been pulling a rickshaw in Dhaka for forty years. I treat my female passengers as I do my own mother and daughters."

Abdul Malek  
Rickshaw puller



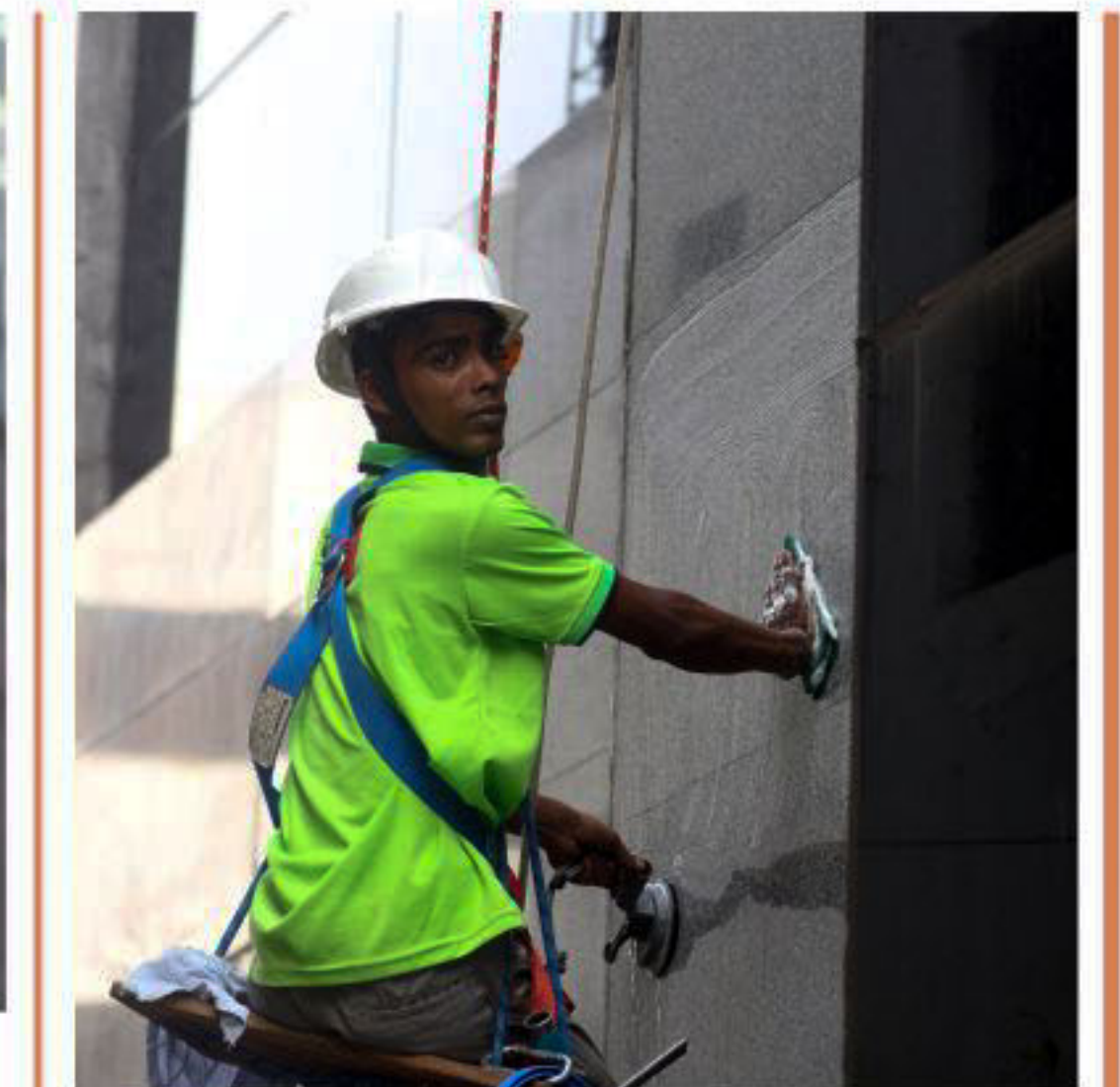
"In my village I have seen parents treating their daughters as inferiors. In some cases it has happened in my family as well. As I am now an earning member, I always try to take extra care of my younger sister. I think women need more support than men in our society."

Noushad Hossain  
Restaurant worker



"I don't think women are less capable than men on any capacity. Discrimination between men and women is manmade. There are physiological differences but that actually makes women more beautiful."

Tabriz Zubayer Sarup  
Medical student



"I am a proud father of a one-year-old daughter. She is very intelligent. I think if I can give her a proper education she will do far better than any man in Bangladesh."

Md Zakir Hussain  
Construction worker

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