

HOLDING ON TO YOUR **D R E A M S**

ANISHTA KHAN

In this chaos of what we call life, we have all asked ourselves time and again what we really want to become before our time stops. Before we fall, what will be the last shade of colour on our flickering butterfly hearts? What are we all really doing here? Making the best/worst of it? So you must have encountered this question, throughout the pits and rises, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" referring to what professional line you want to take up to earn enough, live right, leave a mark. If I only speak for myself, as time moves forward, my ambitions become more muddled – I want to be a doctor and save people, I want to paint and store sunlight in jars, I don't entirely know what I want to be but I still want to save people and want to save myself from being governed by silly restraints humanity imposes on itself – time, money.

So, can I be a dreamer? Is that money-sufficient for you, Ma? Is it status-sufficient, Abbu? Can I be what I really want to be because it makes me happy, but might not make big bucks to store in the bank account? I know many people who want to be artists – poets, musicians, writers, painters, dancers, sculptors, filmmakers. I have friends who dream of playing in the national football

team, participate in the Olympics. Too impractical? These sprouting dreams dissipate when we are faced with, "Will your profession pay well?" The obvious answer is probably not. Because, like wise men say, to really be renowned in such fields, you have to be five steps ahead of the average good. Only then you'll be recognised enough to earn that decent sum. It isn't about the money only; it's the pressure too. Can you handle rejection and not being good enough?

Nuzhat, 16, is crazy talented. Her sketches come alive. And Nuzhat has her fair share of artistic dreams, "I would love to be a professional artist but the problem is that there are thousand other talented artists out there waiting to be famous. You need to go to the right places and shake the right hands but that opportunity comes about rarely. So right now I draw because I need to, because it makes me happy and it will always remain that dream which the world does not appreciate."

There are dreams that haven't even found ground to land on. They have been thought of and quickly dismissed because of what others might say, what the parents might counter-argue with. Karim*, 18, wants to play the drums and wanted to pursue something real. But he had never gone that far into even telling

his parents about his interests because, "Honestly, I don't think that it is expected of us to choose our own career path. Is it not chosen for you by society? My parents are doctors and what a shame it would be to have a drummer son. That's how society will react to it. My parents are all up for it, if there's a big diploma on the living room wall and a 'renowned' career to back it up. I don't even let my dream go far because of what others will say about me and my family."

One mother is quick to answer the question "Why will you not let your child pursue higher education in art?" "Will you pay for him and shelter him when he's out of money and we can no longer provide? I know how talented he is, and I also know how talented others are. If you can guarantee my son a proper livelihood, I will let him study what he really wants to." Regardless of the harsh tone, the mother does have a point. In a money-matters society, who will support you if the job doesn't? Another concerned father explained his side of the story, "Parents know and understand the cold societal truths better than their kids. And we just want to protect our children from rejection and hardship."

If the main villains here are MONEY and SOCIAL REJECTION, what if we can withstand this? An adamant individual,

fueled by his dreams, is studying ceramics at Faculty of Fine Arts, Dhaka University while earning enough from work outside and from university chores. He says, "To me, the money really doesn't matter. I eat and drink enough, so it's quite alright. I'm surrounded by what I love to do! What's better than that?" He is well-acquainted with rejection, "Rejection doesn't matter, achievement does. I am satisfied with how far I have come."

This is not a hopeless case. But at the same time don't grab your brushes and make a run for it. Samirah's mother understands her daughter's passion for writing and is willing to let her pursue it further. The next parent might not. Shoumik wants to have a job to sustain his family whilst having a writing career which he would not be financially dependent upon. Kirtee Ramgopal, renowned Indian Bharatanatyam dancer, is a software engineer; she performs and runs a dance school simultaneously. If it's a dead end, then try finding an alternate route. The point is: you have to really believe in yourself to make others believe in you. Do you think you're up for it? You may not be. There is always a place for dreamers who don't quite realise their dreams. They let their dreams loose; let them fly up like helium filled balloons into nothingness. Try not to be that person.

