

STAR PEOPLE



THE MAN WHO NEVER GAVE UP

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

On the streets of Banani, one of Dhaka's busiest commercial areas plies a tiny cycle rickshaw which has a difference when compared to the thousands of these human powered three wheelers that we see every day. Due to this difference, people, even in this busy area, often stop to have a look and experience a shock to see how this rickshaw is moving alongside rushing buses, trucks and speedy cars. The uniqueness of this cycle rickshaw lies within its driver, Mohammad Mostofa, who has only one leg to pull this 145 kg vehicle ahead, with passengers. Mostofa, an elderly man of 60 years, has been pulling it with only his right leg for more than two years, on the busy streets of Dhaka.

"My left leg is cut off from below knee. This amputation could ruin my life. I cannot walk without a pair of crutches but I have learned the skill to paddle the rickshaw with only my right leg," says

Mostofa, who has overcome the most difficult obstacle with sheer resilience and willpower. For Mostofa, life was never easy even in his home at Malanchipur village under Madhupur upazila of Tangail district. There, he was a landless farmer who had to subsist on labouring in other people's farmland.

"It was a life of hardship but I was always hopeful. I have three daughters and I have adopted a son. In the midst of hardship, I have arranged marriages for all my children," says Mostofa. "They are all well educated, and my youngest daughter is currently in class six," he adds.

However, the hardship became even harder when the fatal accident changed Mostofa's life forever. "One day, while working in the field, a chop of my spade mistakenly fell on my left leg. The wound was severe and nobody could stop the bleeding. After taking to the hospital, the doctor declared that my left leg had to be

amputated from its knee," says Mostofa. After this amputation, Mostofa did not want to be a burden on his adoptive son's family. "My wife advised me to move to Dhaka, where as we thought, she could manage a job as a housemaid to earn a living," he says.

With the help of a friend, Mostofa soon learned to paddle and pull a rickshaw with only his right leg. However, for him, getting a rickshaw was quite tough. "The mahajons (owner of rickshaws) did not want to give me their rickshaws as they could not believe in my ability. However, after many requests, I finally got one and it has been more than two years I have been pulling this rickshaw without a single accident," says Mostofa.

"Every day I give my Mahajon 150 Tk from my daily income, like all other rickshaw pullers", adds a confident Mostofa. After pulling the rickshaw for around twelve hours a day, he earns only four to five hundred Taka. "At this age, I

sometimes get very tired of this backbreaking task. I wish I could have a small shop or an auto-rickshaw that could relieve my body from such strenuous work. But that needs capital that I do not have," he says.

For Mostofa, the easiest and most probable means of livelihood was begging. However, this resilient and honest man chose a life of dignity and hard work. With his wife and youngest daughter, Mostofa lives in a shanty at Karail slum. He is trying to save money for his daughter's future and for his dreamed shop. "I don't know how long I could pull a rickshaw with one leg, but the thought of my daughter's education and a bright future for my children take me to the streets of Dhaka everyday with my ramshackle rickshaw, says Mostofa, the personification of resilience, integrity and determination.

Mohammad Mostofa and his family can be contacted at 01706 927 708.

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

SHUTTERSTORIES



CAPTURING PRECIOUS MOMENTS

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED
TEXT: NAZIBA BASHER

Strolling through the parks of Dhaka city, you will come across many groups of people- friends, families, couples, children, making memories worth cherishing forever. How they make sure the memories never fade is by taking photographs – lots and lots of photographs. Scattered around the area, in different corners, you will see cell phones whipped out, stylish poses, and people capturing precious moments to keep in their hearts for the rest of their lives.

