

# OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

## WOMEN WHO INSPIRE US BOYS

FARAH MASUD

*Growing up, we come across certain people who inspire us, or simply, change the way we think. This week, we asked boys and young men to talk about females (real or fictional), who have left a mark in their lives.*

### FRIEND

*Mustakeen Bari, 17*

The general laws of relativity don't apply to my best friend, almost as if time is oblivious to her existence. She's the sort of girl who'll somehow manage to cram in hours of Organic Chemistry into her study routine and still have enough time for 3 episodes of her favorite DC shows at night. She spends all of her day at school, spends her evening at her tutor's and eagerly spends the rest of her night listening to my incessant rants about the mundane struggles of an everyday teenage boy. She will wake up the next day, still smiling mind you, and very much prepared to do it all over again. How does she do it? Well, she's just one of those miracles yet to be acknowledged.

*Turjo Alam\*, 22*

When I first met her over a year back, I didn't know she would be so important to me. She inspired me to be hardworking, patient and more optimistic. From a regular university slob, I became someone more composed, more controlled. The struggles she had to face in her life motivated me to give my best at every field in my life. Each time I did something stupid, she made sure I bounced back. Thank you, Miss Malta Cha! On a side note, I've become a lot braver as well. Brave enough to become the Mr. Malta in her story.

### MOTHER

*Raiyan Haider, 21*

I particularly admire my mother for her dedication and strength. She began working in a less female-friendly era, being 1 of the 3 women amongst the 30 employees in a bank. She constantly fought for her goals and eventually attained the position of a manager. Her ability to stay motivated and grounded baffles me at times. But that's just how amazing she is. It can be said that my mother's hard work is the foundation of my character. After my father's death in 2001, she was the only one I looked up to. If she had given up at that moment, life would not be as pleasant as it is for me.



### PUBLIC FIGURE

*Sadman Sakib Rahman, 21*

I'm inspired by her work ethic more than anything. But her poise, her grace and the way she carries herself is extraordinary. She's such an intelligent and empowering individual who always strives to improve not only herself but others around her. I'm talking, of course, about Michelle Obama.

### STRANGER

*Farzad Khan\*, 21*

I saw her running from one end of the field to the other with two bags of packaged food boxes in her hands. It was a Ramadan evening, and my friends and I volunteered for distributing iftar among people living on the streets. She was in charge. She took the initiative, and later on I found out that this wasn't her first time. A passion for helping others is rare. Not many can keep up altruism for very long in this day and age. Her actions made me reflect upon myself and made me want to be more empathetic towards others.

### TEACHER

*Shihab Sharar, 20*

I was done and dusted with the subject, Economics. I hated it. At one point, I decided to go down the line of science as I thought I couldn't make it through. When I went to Mrs. Fawzia to drop the subject, she insisted that I remain patient and personally taught me the concepts of demand and supply. Five years later, I am majoring in Economics, work for an Economics based forum, and recently became the runner-up in a speech contest on Economics. Economics today

is my passion.

### FICTIONAL CHARACTER

*Rifat Samin\*, 16*

Just like any other Potterhead, I grew up reading and rereading the Harry Potter series. Although most guys could directly relate to Harry, Ron or the Weasley twins, I couldn't. The character I could relate to the most was Hermione Granger. Not only was she relatable, but she also an inspiration to me. I have always been the nerdy kind, the one who is the first to raise hand. But I was also the shy one when it came to socialising.

I was 15 when I reread the series. And since I was more mature, I got to truly understand the complexity of Hermione's character. She was a nerd, but she was also adventurous. She was caring and sensitive towards her friends. And even though Harry and Ron weren't nerds like her, she was a part of their group. That was an important lesson for me. I consciously started putting myself out there. I began to share my thoughts with people more often and they began to accept me as a part of the circle. I have Hermoine to thank for that.

### MUSICIAN

*Sameen Alam, 21*

The first Janice Joplin song I heard completely changed what I thought about the role of women in developing rock and roll music. Previously,

I used to think that the rise of Rock n Roll was largely attributed to men – The Beatles, Elvis Presley etc. However, after listening to her songs, I realised that women could make rock legends too.

### VIDEO GAME CHARACTER

*Shakil Mahbub, 20*

Ellie from 'The Last of Us'. Man what a game that was! I fell in love with the characters – specifically hers – that I ended up playing the whole thing twice. I remember, after the first time I finished it, I just sat on my couch, quietly thinking about how amazing of an experience I just had. Ellie to me is the perfect example of a female character done right in a video game. Her development from the beginning to the end feels extremely relatable to me. She's living in this post apocalyptic world, a harsh environment for a young girl to grow up in. She's been hardened by all of it. We see her hunt rabbits and deer, fight bandits on her own and even take care of Joel (a male character) when he's injured. To me the most special parts were when we saw her vulnerable side. Those small moments were really touching. Seeing her play the guitar and sing, hearing her talk about her dreams as a girl, all of this felt personal and real.

### ARTIST

*Akram Hossain, 21*

I watch a lot of twitch. It's this streaming site where people play video games and do all sorts of things. There's a 'creative' section of twitch

that's a relatively small community but really tight knit. I absolutely love it. This one streamer I used to watch consistently was Panda, a 20 year old girl streaming from Canada. She would do digital art and answer questions the viewers had regarding the medium. At the time I was getting into digital art. I had just bought my first drawing tablet. She helped me a lot. Without her I wouldn't have learned how to use photoshop effectively and the numerous drawing techniques. So if I had to name one female who was a huge inspiration to me, it would be her. I owe Panda a lot.

### ANIMATED CHARACTER

*Riyadul Islam\*, 15*

I love Studio Ghibli. I will never forget the first movie by the studio that I watched – "Spirited Away". That movie kick-started my fascination with anime and the industry in general. I was a kid when I saw "Spirited Away", so I didn't remember much. Years later when I watched it again I realised just how inspirational Chihiro (the protagonist) is as a character. She is this young girl that had just moved to a new town with her family. Around the time I had watched this movie, I too had just moved; so, it struck a personal chord. She ends up in this mystical world full of spirits and back

then I was terrified of spirits. Her character, however, was strong and determined. Her courage is what kept my younger self from hiding under the blanket.

*\*Names were changed as per interviewees' requests.*

*Farah Masud is a humanbean and that is all you need to know about her. Please don't try to*

