

INDOMITABLE

Adamya Medhabhi scholarship empowering disadvantaged students

You wake up one day to the reality that you have to walk 5 kilometres to and from your educational institution every day. Your day starts before the sun rises; you have to help out at the store or the field for hours, you have to do your schoolwork, and live under the constant uncertainty that your journey towards learning can come to a halt because of financial constraints.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



Runa Laila



Abdul Kader



Anwar Islam

NAZIFA RAIDAH

It might intimidate most of us to comprehend the sheer determination and spirit it might take for someone to avail a basic right such as education, but this is the reality for many in this country, even in the year 2017. Education for them has turned out to be more of a privilege than a right – a privilege they have to fight for.

To aid these individuals in their pursuit of dreams, Prothom Alo Trust first provided Adamya Medhabhi scholarships to 21 meritorious students with financial constraints from all over the country in the year 2007. In 2010, BRAC Bank joined the venture and together created the BRAC Bank Prothom Alo Trust which has provided financial assistance to 741 students till date. The Adamya Medhabhi scholarship is provided to students – coming from impoverished background – who have achieved GPA 5 in their Secondary

School Certificate examination, to help them continue their education onwards. This financial aid has inspired and encouraged more individuals to excel in education and continue their pursuit to success. On October 14, 2017 SHOUT had the privilege to talk to a few of these bright individuals and learn more about their incredible journeys.

The Adamya Medhabhi scholarship has changed several lives. Take Mahfuza Akhter for example: Mahfuza has worked all her life to make sure that nothing can stop her from achieving her goals. She raised pigeons in order to afford her education. Her brother was supportive of her dreams and offered her support by being a rickshawpuller in Dhaka. This year, Mahfuza competed with thousands of individuals from all over the country and secured her position in Salimullah Medical College. Now she plans on becoming a doctor and help individuals who cannot afford proper medical care.

More often than not, we take our physical abilities for granted. It's quite impossible for an able-bodied person to imagine how a visually impaired individual in Bangladesh can attain great success, given the very limited options available for them professionally. That, however, didn't stop Md. Saifuddin, who is on his quest to break every barrier society puts in his way. He couldn't afford Braille, so he attended and recorded every single class, worked day and night to ingrain the lessons in his mind, and has now rightfully attained his dreams of becoming a doctor.

But these tales of optimism and hope come with the saddening reality of how hard one has to fight if they are not amongst the privileged that have easy access to education, with so many windows of opportunity open to them. For most children and youngsters in rural Bangladesh, the educational journey is still dictated by their social and financial background. Being born poor means education is a

luxury, a privilege that only the fortunate ones have access to. As a result, most children, who dream of becoming doctors or engineers, see their dreams burn to ashes due to the realities they didn't get to choose.

Although a similar reality was decided for Anwar Islam, he wasn't ready to give up just yet. Anwar had to quit his education in fourth grade due to his family's financial problems, and help his father in their shop. When he saw other children walk to school every day, wearing their crisp uniforms and shiny shoes, it filled his heart with great sorrow that he couldn't do the same. But his heart was stubborn and he knew he had to fight for his dreams and defy every challenge. He walked to school every single day which was a few kilometres away from his home. He couldn't afford a meal during the school hours, so he tried to pacify his hunger with water. Tragedy struck the family again, when his brother suddenly passed away. The brother was one of the

earners of the family. It was time for Anwar to take on responsibilities on his little shoulders and start providing for his family.

"It was a very difficult time for my family. I was almost at the brink of quitting on my dreams, finding them too unrealistic to attain due to the financial pressure. Thankfully, that was relieved after I received the Adamya Medhabhi scholarship and was able to tutor a few students," said Anwar. He is currently completing his Masters in Accounting from Dhaka University. His road to success has been nothing short of extraordinary. When we asked about his greatest motivation in life, he mentioned Shahena Akhter, his college teacher, who not only bore the expenses for university admission but also helped him get his ticket to Dhaka. Anwar's goal now concentrates on creating a better world for individuals who have to give up on their dreams due to poverty.

Anwar is one of the few individuals who have managed to change their lives due to their undying passion for learning regardless of their difficult circumstances. Other examples are Joyonti Ray and Runa Laila who have completed their Masters with the help of the Adamya Medhabhi scholarship programme.

Stories of the Adamya Medhabhi scholarship recipients have one clear message: nothing can stop you from pursuing education, if you have the will to work for it. These individuals are the epitome of perseverance, grit and passion – striving to make the world a better place for others who are forced to endure the same reality as them. They have defied every odd to make sure that no one can dictate their lives for them. However, we must make sure that more measures are taken to make education a more accessible right for children coming from different strata of the society. After all, education should be a basic right for all and not a privilege.