



ECHOES BY
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The Illusion of Success

I

One of the first things we're exposed to in school is competition. We first visit competition in the guise of grades. Grades soon become a part of our lives. Sometimes it's good results in an exam. Sometimes it's victory in sport or group activity. The outcome of these grades is one of the first things that gets engraved into our genetic coding: success. It's this success that we chase for the rest of our lives. It's this metric we're measured against.

Success is defined as an accomplishment we achieve and show to others. At the beginning of the year, we may have made a resolution to lose weight. The moment we achieve this target we want to "share" with others in social media. Our news feed is full of successful people sharing their success stories.

Our news feed is full of two other types of posts. First, posts of advertisements that induce you to learn an activity in seven days and be successful. You become encouraged to enrol in a course and get a certificate. Then there is the group of all successful celebrities in our lives.

We see how successful Djokovic, Nadal and Federer are. We see our own hero, Shakib Al Hasan, maintaining the number one spot of all-rounder year after year.

We see all these successful people and "look up in the sky". We ask ourselves: "Is it a bird, is it a plane, no it's Superman!". Success truly isn't what it is. Even Superman is very mortal and down to earth than we would like to think.



II

Success is an iceberg. What we see is far from the reality. The part of the iceberg we see is the success part. A big chunk of ice floating on the sea. We become enthralled. There's always more to the picture than meets the eye. We seldom see the hard work, the effort and the dedication that lies beneath the iceberg. We don't see the good habits one needs to boost their mental muscles to stick to a task.

What we may fail to see is the series of failures and disappointments under the iceberg. Success is the outcome only. The series of failures and disappointments is the process that lead to the success.

III

Matthew Syed is a British journalist, author, broadcaster and also a table tennis player. In his first book *Bounce*, in 2010, he writes, "When we witness extraordinary feats... we are witnessing the end product of a process measured in years. What's invisible to us... is the countless hours of practice that have gone into the making of the virtuoso performance." The most successful people, people we call a genius, didn't become so in our eyes over-night. Success wasn't gifted to them on a silver platter. Success required years of "insane commitment" to reach the face of the iceberg we see.

Michael Jordan is one of the most successful basketball players ever. He summed up why failure is the pillar of success, "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

IV

Success is two-fold. First to endure the pain to stand up. And then to endure more pain to keep standing up. In the end, success is doing something you love. You're happy doing what you are. That's the reward of success. Even if nobody acknowledges, you're happy with yourself. That's what counts more.

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Handmade Jewellery

Creative Feat of Small Businesses

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Online handmade jewellery shops have always existed, and there's been a surge recently. Their styles range from painted wooden pendants to anime-inspired chokers, and often come with pricing that young people can look into.

To understand what goes on behind the production process, I talked to some of the creators.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Starting off, production generally takes 3 to 4 hours and varies depending on the designs. The creator of @artsydaisybd is an A Level student who makes quirky pieces with polymer clay and acrylic paint and scrolls through Pinterest for pop culture references. While the creator of @caragach_ is another university student and creator from Chittagong who's been working since 2019, looks at local influences like rickshaw art and folk art on *nakshi kantha*.

THE RAW MATERIALS

Everyone I have talked to is a student, and faced the common hassles of sourcing materials and inconveniences during deliv-

ering the goods. Polymer clay is imported, and other materials like ribbons can be bought locally. It's better to do your own research regarding accessing as it's risky for small businesses to disclose their particular sources. Being a student also points to a lack of income needed to establish a business.

THE CHALLENGES

The creator of @caragach_ says they have dealt with customers changing their minds post ordering. Small businesses have a smaller rate of output and focus on creating specific pieces that are hard to sell if an order is cancelled. The cost of buying materials and the hours lost harm the owner more than it would a larger business that mass-produces uniform pieces. Unfortunately, this remains a frequent problem and some creators therefore choose to rely on advanced payments.

More on challenges, the creator of @clayomatic, who runs the increasingly popular shop with intricate clay ornaments, says, "Customers will often bargain, without acknowledging the effort that goes into details. This isn't the case with foreign



COURTESY: CLAYOMATIC

markets where similar products are priced double and more." While this is true for complicated bits of jewellery, most of them are extremely affordable, so you need not worry about them being out of your price range!

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

This is objectively important for societal and environmental reasons, so I asked the

creators themselves about some of the ways consumers can support them alongside making purchases. As the creator of @artsydaisybd puts it, leaving a positive review or just sharing their posts can be greatly helpful. Since they don't generate huge revenues, it's tough to invest in advertising. Recommending them to a friend can be beneficial for them to grow and overcome the algorithms of social media platforms.

Lastly, if you're reading this as a potential creator, you're asked to listen to your customers and not give up! When I talked about inspiration, @caragach_'s artist explained how they've only come this far because of their mother, who finds them that one small bead they're searching for and advises them on what looks best. The pieces are often made with a lot of care and love, tailored for you. It's never just about monetary support, but also helping these artists hold on to their crafts. So if you want the demon slayer earrings or an artistic mala - you know where to look!

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Mohammadpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com