



YOUNG ACHIEVER

Not just a pretty face: MASU AKE wins Global Undergraduate Award

Masuda Khan

PHOTO: COURTESY

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

With drawing, ramp modelling, and The Global Undergraduate Award under her belt, Masuda Khan, popularly known simply as 'masu ake' across social media, is a multifaceted person. Having changed school 13 times across three countries, she is no stranger to unprecedented changes. She fearlessly ventures into different creative fields.

"I decided to participate in Miss Universe 2020 out of curiosity. I like to collect experiences and meet new people," said Masuda. In the span of a few months, she became one of the top 10 contestants in the beauty pageant.

"Joltorongo", her Facebook page, started with short tutorials she sent her friends and cousins. Soon, it metamorphosed into a platform with thousands of followers. Her work channels a simple yet profound style and timeless splendor. "I grew up in a household that did not pressure me to study and instead, encouraged me to study from a point of interest. I taught myself to value the importance of education from a young age. So even when I multitask, studies are always my first priority," said the talented artist.

Much of Masuda's enduring creativity is rooted in issues that need to be addressed. "I have always been hyper-aware of environmental issues. I am eager to learn new things and seek to bring changes in the world however I can," shared Masuda, who is now a junior year English student at BRAC University. A year ago, she earned second place in Group B in the UNHCR art competition with her drawing that shed light on the Rohingya community.

This year, The Global Undergraduate Awards, also known as The Junior Nobel Prize, selected Masuda's paper "CDA on the Rohingya Crisis - Suu Kyi vs. Yunus" as the best in Asia under the category, Linguistics.

"The campus ambassador of awards, Israr Hasan, encouraged me

to apply. A few semesters back, a professor gave us an assignment to analyse any talk show's discourse," said Masuda. "I came across Dr Muhammad Yunus' Al Jazeera interview on the Rohingya crisis. His agitation was palpable to me. I decided to analyse and contrast Dr Yunus and Suu Kyi's discourses. They are both Nobel laureates who promote peace but view this massive humanitarian crisis from different viewpoints."

Since Masuda is only in her early 20s, she wants to explore and enhance her skills as an artist and a model and anything else that keeps her creative spirit thriving.

The author is a student of BRAC University, and a freelance journalist. Email: shanzaychowdhury@gmail.com.

INTERVIEW

Rafeed Elahi Chowdhury on winning INMA 30 under 30 Award

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Rafeed Elahi Chowdhury is the Lead of Content and Product Growth at *The Business Standard*. He won the title for Rising Star, under the Content category in the Global Media Industry 2021 at 30 under 30 Awards by International News Media Association (INMA). *Star Youth, The Daily Star* recently caught up with him to learn more about his journey.

How do you feel about being included in this year's INMA 30 under 30 list?
To be honest, I did not expect this result while applying. I was watching the award announcement ceremony just to see if someone from Bangladesh makes it to the list. When I heard them announce my name, I was surprised and delighted. I feel honoured and grateful that out of all the applications made all over the world, I am the awardee from Bangladesh.

Tell us more about your professional background.

I began my journey as a freelance journalist at *The Daily Star*. I also co-founded *Torun*, a youth content platform, with some of my seniors. As a part of my current role, I formed a youth network with university campuses throughout the country and co-initiated a few campaigns that would enhance the brand name of our company. Other than being associated with content marketing, I am also an author, with two published books, and a trainer.

What motivated you to apply for the award?

My current boss, Ehsanur Raza Ronny, and former boss, Md Tajdin Hassan, asked me to keep track of the projects I am working on, so that when the time comes, I can apply. I never actually thought I could make it, so my boss had to push me to apply and I submitted my application on the deadline day. I am lucky to be surrounded by such supportive people in my workplace, who believe in my potential and appreciate my ideas.

What was the application process like?

Following INMA's announcement, I filled out an application form, consisting of short essays that reflect my work, vision, and contributions to my field of work. A recommendation letter from my boss was also required. INMA adds a bunch of nominated professionals to a number of slack groups. We need to communicate with everyone in a friendly, professional, and fruitful manner. INMA assesses the nominees through that conversation.

How did you develop a passion for content marketing?

I pursued my undergraduate studies in Marketing from North South University and was always passionate about writing. Content marketing was a merging point for my interest and academic background. So, the desire to be a storyteller and my passion for writing and marketing brought me where I am today.

What are your future plans?

I intend to come up with more courses on content marketing and branding. I also plan to write more books. Two of my books are expected to be launched in the Boi Mela next year.

The author is a medical student and a freelance journalist who likes reading, scribbling, and blogging. Email: mislammonamee@gmail.com.



Rafeed Elahi Chowdhury.

PHOTO: COURTESY

NURTURING DREAMS

Mrittika's expedition to Mount Kilimanjaro

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

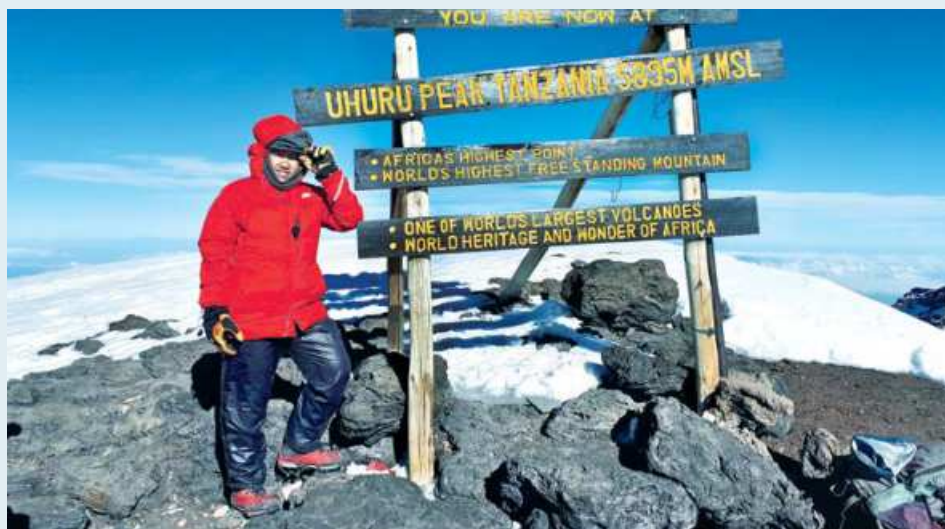
We all remember Mount Kilimanjaro from our general education books as Africa's tallest peak, and the world's tallest free standing mountain. For Mrittika Barua, however, it proved to be much more.

While she was in the eighth grade, Mrittika climbed Bogalake in Bandarban with her cousin Moinak Kanungo, who is a professional mountaineer. "I regretted it because he teased me about my falls and being unfit, but I had a purpose, which I never revealed to anyone," Mrittika recalled. Later on, she climbed Bogalake again with one of her friends.

Mrittika studied Computer Science with a minor in Development Studies from Asian University for Women in Chattogram. She enjoys humanitarian work. Currently, she is a consultant for Workplace Culture in the World Food Programme.

Mrittika travelled to Tanzania for work in December 2020. She stayed with her former colleague Sheila Makindara, who lived in Moshi. At the back of her mind, Mrittika knew she was closer than ever to Mt Kilimanjaro. "I felt at home with Sheila's family. Nicole, Sheila's daughter, had a lot of faith in me regarding my journey to Kilimanjaro," Mrittika recalled.

Moreover, she contacted the company Joining Safari, and met Frumance and Porter-Farmer, who guided her through the expedition in early 2021. The mantra she was told to remember was, 'Pole Pole



Mrittika Barua at Mount Kilimanjaro.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Kilimanjaro' or slowly, slowly to Kilimanjaro. Mrittika heard the name Kilimanjaro at a young age. Although she did not know where it was, the name stayed with her, and life eventually took her there.

"I had one cook, two porters, a guide, and his assistant with me. I thought I was set for a sole journey, but I had five people to help me reach the top!" Mrittika laughed.

"The first day was an eight-hour journey to a rainforest; it was raining. We reached a hut in the evening."

"The guides and the cook took care of my meals rather luxuriously, despite my loss of

appetite," she added.

On the second day, Mrittika had to cross quiet, muddy and rocky roads. She also faced a hailstorm. "The guides told me that these journeys are always different for each person. It is how the mountain tests your integrity. Those are the times when you start to question your decision, but I enjoyed the challenges," said Mrittika.

Her third day was at Kibo, which is the basecamp. "There is also a peak called Kibo. As we started walking towards the peak, it appeared to move further. The roads were rocky and dry. The altitude sickness hit at this

point. I had a few steps to go, but I began to throw up. Not only did that break my confidence, but I also saw fear in the eyes of my guides. It was also freezing cold and I could not sleep," said Mrittika.

"We began the journey at 11 in the night. I was slow, taking one step at a time. I saw others surpassing me, and I had zero energy. While I was still climbing, others were on their way down. I felt the pressure, but they were encouraging, and told me to keep pushing. I learned that small appreciations can help a person go miles."

For anyone who aims to climb Mt Kilimanjaro, Mrittika recommends renting equipment from local stores in Moshi because the community thrives on tourism. The climbers can also donate their equipment to the stores.

Mrittika's former supervisor Sheila Grudem, Senior Emergency Coordinator,

World Food Programme, Cox's Bazar, provided her with much needed encouragement and practical suggestions. "She is my go-to person for any advice. She gave me an emergency kit and a jacket. I am grateful to her," said Mrittika.

"I had no doubt that Mrittika would reach the top. If she sets her mind to something, she gets it done," said Sheila, who climbed Mt Kilimanjaro herself when she was posted in Tanzania.

Mrittika is also thankful to her brother, parents, and former boss Peter, who had similar emotions about Mt Kilimanjaro as her. She wishes to support and sponsor mountaineers, as it will not only help them climb mountains and fulfill their passions, but also help entire communities that depend on mountaineering.

"Once I reached the zenith, I felt empty," she reflected. "This was something I wanted for so long, and getting to the top meant the end of it all."

Her regime included regular physical activity like walking and swimming, which also kept her mentally strong. On her return, her skin was dry, tanned, and scarred— but Mrittika did not mind the scars. "You cannot stay at the top for too long because the weather is too harsh. I had the realisation that success in life stays for microseconds, and you must move on to your next journey," she concluded.

The author is an art researcher and writer in the making. Email: priyanka.chowdhury@gmail.com.

"I had one cook, two porters, a guide, and his assistant with me. I thought I was set for a sole journey, but I had five people to help me reach the top!"