

INTERVIEW

Tasneem Jarin's aspirations as a young architect

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Tasneem Jarin pursued her Bachelor's in Architecture from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). Some notable projects that she worked on in her academic life include the Munshiganj Launch Terminal, Residential and Commercial High Rise in Gulshan, and Rural Housing in Faridpur. Her final year thesis, titled "An Anamnesis: Reconstruction of a War-torn Community", was selected as the regional winner under the category of Architecture and Design of Global Undergraduate Awards. We recently caught up with the young architect to know more about her aspirations.

Tell us more about your final year thesis, which brought you the Global Undergraduate Award.

The design in my thesis shows a war-torn community in the process of reconstructing and integrating their neighbours in solidarity, while reclaiming their lost identity and healing from the distrust and trauma together. It is situated in Old Aleppo, Syria, and proposes a sustainable and flexible solution to heal from post-war conditions. I worked really hard on it for months, amidst the restrictions due to Covid-19. I am grateful to my supervisors, Dr Shayer Ghafur and Md Tariquzzaman, for their constant support and guidance.

What was your main idea behind this project?

This project is a tribute to the people of war-torn countries around the world. There are so many dreamers and believers out there, trying to find solutions to wars and their aftermath. I presented a participatory approach that ensures that communities are actively involved in the reconstruction of their land, and can heal together.

Since this society has a different social and economic structure from Bangladesh, I



Tasneem Jarin. PHOTO: COURTESY

carried out intensive research to understand the functional, emotional, and psychological factors of my chosen topic. The concept of memory, the register of the past, hope, and a way toward the future to rehabilitate people who are forced to leave their home played major roles in my thesis.

Is there any particular reason behind choosing Syria?

I got to learn a lot about the Syrian war after watching the documentary, "For Sama", directed by Waad Al-Kateab and Edward Watts. I also found the book, "The Battle for Home", by Marwa Al-Sabouni a brilliant Syrian architect. His work inspired me to choose this topic.

What are your future plans?

I want to finish my Master's degree and travel as much as possible. At the same time, I want to keep experimenting with different topics of architecture - I still have a lot to learn.

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

SPOTLIGHT

Balancing work and family amid the pandemic

SADIA TAHSIN

While the losses and challenges of the pandemic have been felt by everyone, the effect of Covid-19 and the resulting lockdowns have been particularly impactful on working parents.

Whether confronted with the challenge of transitioning to remote work, or continued essential work outside the home, the already difficult juggling act of parenting while working became significantly more difficult as a result of Covid-19.

Nasrin Akhter Rima, mother of a one-year-old girl, works at Standard Chartered Bank. "I never really got to differentiate between pandemic and non-pandemic life as a young mom. It was hard for me to cope at the beginning since the health and safety of my daughter was my first concern at any given time," she shared.

More recently, offices have cautiously opened on a roster basis, while many are following remote working hours completely.

Following her maternity leave, Rima could not work from home. "Your baby is constantly demanding your attention when you are at home, which can affect your work productivity," she asserted.

Ishrat Jahan, mother of an eight-year-old boy and a three-year-old girl, is an experienced freelancer. She is well-adapted to the work-from-home setting. However, she was concerned by the closure of schools for over a year, and how it might impact her children's confidence. "On the bright side, my relationship with my children are now stronger than ever, and I feel



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

many families underwent such moments of bonding during the pandemic, which would not have been possible otherwise," she added.

For Needa Sohail, who works at BAT Bangladesh, letting go of the company of her friends and family was initially tough, but she had to make difficult choices. "Every article suggests that newborns should be surrounded by people, in a friendly atmosphere, but the pandemic has restricted social activities," she shared. Nonetheless, the new mother is grateful to her col-

leagues for their support under all circumstances.

Nowshin Nur Pail, a mother of two, works at NIH in the USA. "As working parents before the pandemic, I had to leave for office first and my husband would go to his former office after dropping our kids at the daycare centre. I picked them up on my way home from work. It was not only difficult, but expensive as well," she shared. Now, Nowshin has adapted to working remotely, while her partner has switched to a job that allows him to permanently

work from home.

It is clear that with the arrival of Covid-19, and the subsequent shift to remote work that followed, working parents, especially mothers, were faced with even greater hurdles. Yet, as most of the mothers explained, they were able to find suitable ways to cope with the challenges.

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Students from the Purbanchal Swimming Club.

PHOTO: STAR

NURTURING DREAMS

Young students in Jhenidah making strides through swimming

AZIBOR RAHMAN, FROM JHENIDAH

The Purbanchal Swimming Club in Jhenidah was established in 1998 at Bhutiargathi Govt Primary School. Since its inception, it has played a vital role in training underprivileged students in swimming, for free. Many of the students are now in the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP), while others are serving in the Bangladesh Navy and Army.

Saikot Hasan, Afia Khatun, Rabia Khatun, and Poly Khatun, swimming students of the club, are enrolled in the BKSP. On the other hand, Sonia Khatun and Jakiaria Islam, who were trained at the club, have jobs in the Navy. Mim Aktar, Tanny Khatun, Sumi Khatun and

Anisa Khatun from the club joined the Army in 2013.

At present, there are 38 trainees at the club, who practice regularly at the Begboti River.

Rabia Khatun, a student of the club, comes from a low-income household. Her father, Rashedul Biswas, earns BDT 350 per day, as a mason. For her admission at BKSP, Rabia's father sold the three decimals of land he owned in Bhutiargathi village. Rabia has brought home six medals after competing in different events by the BKSP.

Saikot Hasan, another student, shared that his father is a day-labourer, who had left home for two years due to a family feud. Saikot got admitted to the

BKSP when he was in the sixth grade. His mother, who works at a jute mill, manages all his fees with her income. Saikot was inspired to learn swimming by her maternal uncle Sohel Rana, who was a student of the Purbanchal Swimming Club.

Swimmer Poly Khatun's father, too, is a day-labourer. At the time of her admission at the BKSP in 2017, Poly's father sold his two decimals of land for the fees. Poly, a seventh grader, has won 30 medals from different competitions by the BKSP.

Tarikul Islam, the secretary of the Purbanchal Swimming Club, intends to train underprivileged kids for free for as long as he can. He is proud of the success of his students.

YOUTH IN ACTION

Championing the importance of mental healthcare

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

REVIVAL, a youth organisation that aims to promote the importance of mental healthcare, was established in 2019.

The organisation's founder, Tazreen Mehrab Khan, a student of North South University, was selected as one of the Sir Fazle Hasan Abed Ashoka Young Changemakers for 2020.

Tazreen was inspired to start REVIVAL because of her own struggles with depression.

"It takes courage for someone to talk about their mental health. When they are not supported, they lose the urge to talk about it," she asserted. "Instead of providing relief, this neglect can often result in triggers for many," she asserted.

When Tazreen opened up about her struggles to a friend, she realised that she was not alone in her battles. Initially, she raised her voice through a Facebook post, where people welcomed the idea of talking about mental health issues.

REVIVAL collects and shares stories from people who are struggling with mental health issues, with proper consent. "People relate to the stories we post, and know that they are not alone in their struggles. That is how we aim to navigate conversations about mental health," explained Tazreen.

According to a survey conducted by Tazreen in Dhanmondi, very few people seek out professional help for their mental health conditions. Upon researching the causes, she found out that financial constraints play a central role in this matter.

"Through our platform, I wanted to provide affordable mental healthcare. Initially, our psychologists conducted free therapy

sessions over Facebook Messenger," said Tazreen. As they had to stop this service due to the pandemic, the organisation now redirects people to places where they can avail free or affordable therapy.

By gaining education and awareness, people can understand some of the issues surrounding the topic of mental health and illness. The organisation strives to break down the barriers of mental health and create a discrimination-free and stigma-free society that also aims for a healthy mind for all the people.

REVIVAL hosted several awareness webinars and workshops, closely working with Dr Mahjabeen Haque, Chairperson, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, Dhaka University, and Umme Kawser Lata, Assistant Professor, Educational and Counselling Psychology, Dhaka University.

The organisation also conducted live sessions on mental health-related topics with renowned personalities like Dear Alyne, Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Rafsan Tabab, and Orchita Sporshia, where they touched upon topics such as relationships, communication, and causes of traumas.

In January 2019, REVIVAL hosted 'Anupnan - Enliven', an art exhibition, where they held an interactive session with psychologists Rahnuma-E-Jannat and Tahneena Mehreinn. The event, attended by around 400 visitors, also offered brief counselling sessions.

Moving forward, members of REVIVAL plan to publish a book on self-care, set up a helpline, and work closely with educational institutions to raise awareness about mental healthcare.



Team members and volunteers of the platform.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF REVIVAL