

## The Path selected by Dreams

By Khadija Tul Kubra

People choose a path for their dreams, but my dream selects where I ought to be. In a community where it was impossible to think of getting an education, I daydreamed every second about going to school where the male members of my family were going. On their arrival from school, I listened to their school stories about what they learned and the kinds of games they played.

I lived in a fantasy world where I would join them in a high-standard school. It remained just a dream until the fifth standard. I am not a superstitious person, but I do believe in miracles. I quickly learned that to make my dreams come true I had to act flexibly. The biggest miracle of my life was gaining admission into the sixth standard in Layyah. However, that dream quickly disappointed my mother after my teacher said, "Your daughter doesn't even know how to read. She will fail in her very first exams." My family thought I would stop going to school in a few months.

**"If you have a mother, you have everything."**

I have two role models in my life, my mother and grandmother. They motivated me to keep going. She removed all the thorns on my way, which were blurry. She always said, "One day, you will be in a good place." I was blessed because I didn't lack support from my family. I was doing what was assigned to me with passion and love. The love to learn and the magic of new words unlocked a world where my dreams could flow smoothly. I passed my matric exams well.

I enrolled in University and the Covid-19 pandemic hit Pakistan. When many companies were closing, and educational institutions migrated to online learning, a massive sense of hopelessness spread everywhere in that difficult situation. I remained optimistic. I tried my best in my studies as a literature student. While all the institutions were under lockdown, I had to wait at home, trying to find the positive signs, which were not arising from anywhere. This was when I met Warda Noor.

Warda leads the Khudkaar house, a community center that teaches students valuable digital skills. I later joined the center and improved my content writing skills. I have a passion for reading, and during the lockdown I used to bring books to the center and read them. This activity was a gateway to my writing profession. I wrote a few paragraphs and lengthy pieces until Warda told me I had good writing abilities and helped build my skills further.

I started assisting with other activities at Khudkaar, including packing and loading ration bags. I had one thing on my mind when packing those ration bags: another Khadija in the far area is waiting for this to satisfy her hunger, and another mother like me is striving for her daughters. It would be my little contribution to lessen that hazard. We distributed clothes, ration accessories, and other necessary items to help them escape the worst. If I hadn't come to Khudkaar on those difficult days, I wouldn't be who I am today.

**"The difficulty is nothing; the reason behind difficulty is to avail yourself of what you have."**

Soon after I completed my bachelor's degree, I wrote two novels within a year. I didn't hold myself back; I believed I could, and so I did it. I managed to get through this without access to technical gadgets like computers or laptops. I achieved all this with the use of a mobile phone I used to share with my brothers.