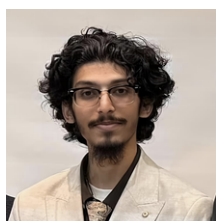




Maheen Shabir *Craft Artist and Entrepreneur*



Abdul Nafey Syed
*Head of Administration,
Umran Green School*

Abdul Nafey: What led you to study Home Science at Kashmir University, and how did it shape your communication skills?

Maheen Shabir: I initially chose Home Science, expecting a more manageable curriculum than technical subjects like mathematics. However, the program required extensive field surveys across rural communities to evaluate local infrastructure and social needs. Interacting directly with residents helped me develop both formal and informal communication abilities, which proved essential in building my independence and self-confidence.

AN: How did you navigate social scepticism surrounding your hearing impairment and personal hardship?

MS: When others questioned my educational prospects due to my hearing impairment, my mother encouraged me to let my accomplishments speak for themselves. Managing household responsibilities following her passing required significant resilience. Despite initial job rejections tied to my disability, persistent effort and support from close companions helped me demonstrate that personal capacity is not defined by physical limitations.



Maheen Shabir is from Gojwara, Srinagar, and has completed her Bachelor's Degree in Home Science from Women's College, M. A Road, Srinagar. She has developed various crafts and designs from paper and degraded waste materials. She is an autodidactic craft maker.



INTERVIEW

Maheen started her creative path by making a detailed handmade card for a friend. This initial act amazed her relatives and friends, turning a small present into a deep love for paper art. She began fashioning unique home decor pieces before displaying her talents publicly.

AN: How did your venture, Paper City by Maheen, transform from a creative pastime into an established business?

MV: During a local lockdown in 2019, I made a handcrafted card and a cardboard storage box as a birthday gift using basic paper materials. The encouraging feedback, along with a suggestion from an acquaintance at Pratap Park, prompted me to launch a dedicated social media presence. That initiative expanded into Paper City by Maheen, offering customised paper arrangements, explosion boxes, and calligraphy, which has since received multiple community recognitions.

AN: What motivated you to join the Chotay Taray Foundation, and how do you structure vocational training for specially-abled youth?

MS: Working with specially-abled youth was a personal goal of mine. At Chotay Taray Foundation, I serve as an instructor and vocational trainer. I break down crafting activities into clear, manageable steps—such as constructing stick pen holders—tailored to each student's learning pace. This approach helps students foster patience, practical skills, and confidence in their creative abilities.

AN: What message do you have for aspiring women entrepreneurs and individuals facing physical challenges?

MS: Focus on your personal goals and trust your own instincts rather than external opinions. Dedication to your passion is key to progress. Staying grounded in faith and maintaining confidence in your abilities provides the strength necessary to overcome obstacles.

