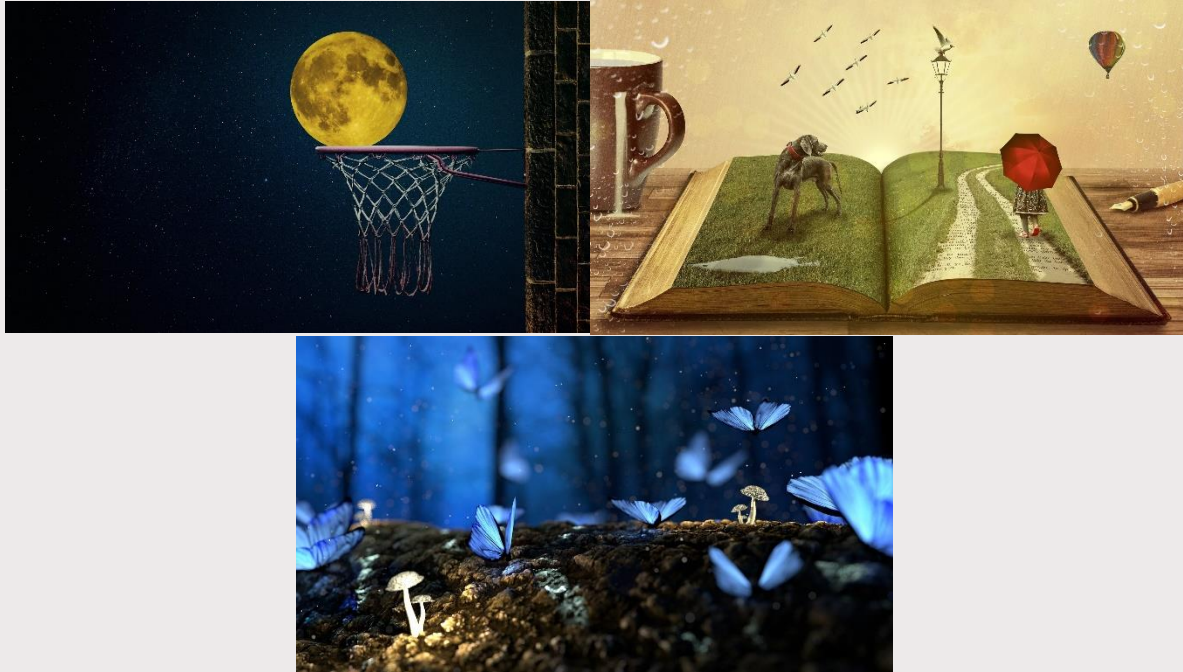


The power of dreams!



I have always believed in dreams - from when I was a little girl. I used to dream about things I wanted to achieve before I ever ended up achieving them. Day-dreaming was a favourite activity but I managed to restrict it to my long bus journeys to and from school. My schoolchild philosophy has always been - if you don't dream, how would you know that you can and have achieved it?

When I was young, one of the students in my school topped the state in her final year and her name was in the papers. Now, I was very inspired by this and started dreaming about doing this myself. (How foolish, you may say - but hey, I thought one should dream - and I was a bit of a Hermione Granger already). I really believed in this dream and started working hard towards it. Four years later I did achieve it and guess what, I did love the journey to get here too. Another dream in schoolchild days was to explore becoming a forensic expert (don't ask! I read a lot of murder mysteries). So, I decided to write to various agencies and the Indian forensic department to get a view of a career in there. And I did get lots of answers and advice. So much that I decided not to opt for this as my career. And when I see Midsomer Murders on TV, I am so glad I decided to opt out. And I fancied modelling for fashion magazines - so I went out and managed to get a couple of assignments before I got bored with that. And I wanted to be a radio jockey - so I went and tried that for a few years. Now, I wasn't more talented or gifted in any of these things than a lot of my friends - it's just that I really had a dream I believed in - and I went out and got it.

But as I grew up, I noticed that I started getting more scared of dreaming big. I started dreaming more realistically and avoiding day-dreaming all together. Why? Because it's scary and the older you get, the more risk averse you become. But I did feel I was losing my mojo. And one day I read a motivational

writer (I think it was Robin Sharma) who really advocated dreams. If people don't laugh at your dreams, he said, you're not dreaming big enough.

So, slowly but surely, I started gathering my courage to dream again. And now, thanks to my dreams, I have decided to leave my really nice job in a corporate environment to take out some time to focus on publishing my book (fiction and fantasy for young adults). I also want to explore screenwriting and travelling at the same time. After I've had fun doing this for a while, I may choose to return to the corporate world (which I do love by the way) but wanted to spend some time and energy while I still can do this. But for adults who fear dreaming, I also thought of writing up some ground-rules which may make you feel more in control when you dream. Hence this article. So, what are these ground rules?

1. **Choose a dream that really resonates in your gut:** Don't dream for the heck of it - it needs to mean something; it needs to matter, and your gut will tell you if that's the case or not. So, my dream about authoring this book was not just about being an author, it was telling stories from Indian mythology (I grew up loving these) and about Indian classical dance (more on this below). I knew writing about this meant a great deal to me - so it wasn't just any book - it's a product of my love and passion.
2. **Dream big and add a tempering of realism as you go along:** As adults we hate being laughed at - and would always want to sense check if it's realistic. But that's not conducive to dreaming. As a child, you are always much more adventurous. So, dream like a child. But before you decide, review how you can achieve this dream to fulfil that desire. For example, I was a classical Bharatanatyam dancer once, but I stopped dancing in my twenties and got terribly busy with work. My Guru turned 80 a few years back and she asked me to come and dance on stage (nearly 20 years later). This was scary - I was fit (as I do yoga) but nowhere near where I would have been if I had continued dancing all these years. So, my tempering of realism was to pick a dance item that was focussed on story-telling (they call it "Bhava" in Bharatanatyam speak). This worked very well - and was quite different from the rest of the items at the event. So, it was about doing something scary (dancing on stage after 20 years) but tempering it with realism (picking a less strenuous item). Of course, I still practised hard for 4 months before I went on stage as you can't achieve anything without the effort.
3. **Find alternate means of fulfilling a dream:** Being in the UK, I often dreamt of making people here understand and appreciate Indian classical dance as it means so much to me. But going on stage after 20 years and watching how my fellow-dancers were so brilliant, I knew that I cannot do this by dancing myself - am just not at the right level of fitness and practice. So, I wondered how to fulfil this in an alternate way. And that's when this idea of my book started taking shape. My book is based in an ancient Indian dance school, and I am publishing it here in the UK - so hopefully, I will do my bit for spreading knowledge about Bharatanatyam out here. Another one - I had always dreamt of studying in Oxford University. And never really got the chance. Even when I was exploring options for my MBA, I did consider Oxford, but they didn't have the kind of course I was looking for. So, this dream never really got fulfilled. Recently, when I found out that I could go for weekend school at Oxford in Corpus Christi college to do a course, I jumped at the idea. And it's not like graduating from Oxford but it was amazing all the same and filled a little part of that dream.
4. **Dreams don't work without you working at them:** There is an old Sanskrit saying which says that deer doesn't just walk into the mouth of a lion. Which means the lion must get up and work for his prey. And it's the same with dreams. When I dreamt of doing my MBA, I was extremely excited by it (I told you I am another version of Hermione Granger). But I knew it



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was a big investment (financially and time-wise) and it meant a lot of arduous work. So, I contracted out with my husband before I plunged into this. And for two years, we had an extremely limited social life and he supported me by taking away all the household chores so that I could focus on studying. So, before you embark on a dream, see if you are up to doing the work for it - and at times, bringing in your loved ones to support you as no one is an island.

5. **Nothing ventured nothing gained:** Finally, if you've gone through the last four points and ticked them off, then take that risk and go and do it. If your heart's palpitating when you're about to set-off, great - that means you are ready. Now, if it's sending you into a dizzy state of stress, review the last four points again - as you're not yet ready.

These guidelines really helped me recently making my big decision this year. And who knows, I may or may not succeed. But someone told me that people's greatest regret is that they never took that risk - so here I go with a palpitating heart.

I would love to hear about your dreams and how you've set about them. You may say I am a dreamer, but I am not the only one!