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"Communicating between India and Bangladesh was a big issue" says Namrata. "We had to do a lot of back and forth consulting on sms and email about the colour blanket that we were going to use before we started successfully doing production. It was difficult but because of my previous work I was given full freedom and liberty without any interference. I could make my own decisions and was able to do things which were not otherwise done in Prabartana before in terms of designs and fabrics. For example, I used the Mirpuri weavers.

"Also it is important to remember that the design process is very complicated and requires a lot of thought. First of all you have to choose colours, materials, techniques, all the while keeping in mind what kind of design will look good with it. You have to have a visual image from the very beginning."



Namrata J. Shah

Working in Bangladesh has been an interesting experience overall for Namrata, who also designs in India. In comparison to the Indian fashion industry Namrata feels that while the fashion industry in India is much stronger, Bangladeshi fashion has come a long way from when she first came.

"Fashion awareness is growing in Bangladesh, and people are not wearing whatever you give to them," she says. "In addition there are many indigenous groups whose fabrics and style are very fashionable and I hope people will give more attention to these indigenous groups and their fabrics in the future."

Shamim feels that part of the problem is that the young people of Bangladesh are very influenced by the outside world, namely India, when it comes to fashion.

"Because of the internet, TV and music there is an overall international influence on the young population," he says "The dictation is coming mainly from the media. Our focus is to see the new trends around the world and try to make something different and more significant to our culture and who we are. We will try to keep the basics but experiment with the overall design in terms of fabric and techniques. The thing is that Bangladesh is much richer in fabrics and handloom, but India is more industrial and as a result, they are able to market their stuff better. We need to get to that point."

Although Bangladesh may have a long way to go, it is safe to say that stores such as Prabartana, which focus on promoting our culture and tradition, while also trying to move with the times, is doing a great service to our country. In addition to providing a getaway for those who need it, be it in the Adda Restaurant, or even the quiet, comfortable library on the third floor, it is also attempting to bring our fashion up to international standards, while staying true to our roots.