



MODERN deshi

The Bengali belle is no longer walking down a street lined by hasnahena trees, as poetry will have you believe; today, she is not only a wife and mother, but an intellectual entity, an artist, an entrepreneur, an officer. She is half the nation's workforce, the country's asset in every sense.

FASHION is a reflection of the life and times of its existence, and the Bengali woman's fashion today is no different. Fashion is an anthropological lesson in itself. Despite what runways lead you to

all quite important to her.

One of the main elements of this makeover is the magnanimous variety found in accessories. Quirky jewellery is making the rounds on both the runways and the roads, especially statement necklaces. Feathers, shells, beads, braided fabric, chains, buckle - every craft material in existence has been thoroughly experimented with in jewellery. In most cases, the outrageous statement neckpieces actually suit traditional looks more than a modern jeans-T-shirt combo.

A lavish choice in fabrics and patterns for designing blouses or adding some personal touches to the sari are also at everyone's fingertips thanks to the mushrooming of fabric stores in the city. It is easier than ever to make the blouse the star of the show and transform an otherwise uncomplicated sari. The blouse is also an important component of making saris, that otherwise would be normal, more "fun".

Current hairstyles also reflect the tastes and preferences of young women today, leaning towards more Western hairstyles which are easy, fast and yet still soft and feminine. Hairstyles that have been adopted by the previous generations miss out because of their inconvenience. Stiff chignons take too much effort and are ageing, pigtales are too childish, and keeping your waist-length hair down is not always practical in a professional environment. Instead, ladies prefer side plaits, fishtail plaits, messy buns, high ponytails and shoulder-length hair with bangs or twists at the front.

Makeup today, rather than being the bane of one's existence, is a delight. Natural looks are in, and foundation and powder is used to smooth out the flaws in the complexion, not change the colour of the complexion entirely. Those with dusky skin tones are playing up their naturally warmer glows with bronzer and blush, not cakey powder. Lipsticks are bold, bright and meant to draw attention.

Perhaps the best accessory of the Neo-traditional Bengali belle is her self-confidence. Society is slowly but surely changing its ideas of what a woman should and should not do. Today's woman knows her worth, and is aware of her great potential. But she is also taking part in a fight every day, to establish her rights in a society that will try to shirk her at every turn. These small hints of rebellion are evident in her fashion, as she chooses stylish convenience over china-doll perfection.

believe, practicality is a huge factor in wearable fashion today, and the iconic 'deshi' sari is now the old wine in a new bottle, catering to the Neo-traditional Bengali woman's tastes.

Traditional looks are often perceived as ageing and stiff, without any pizzazz. Perhaps a huge reason for this was that historically, Bengali women stayed at home and did not like attracting too much attention, leading to hefty stocks of off-white Tangail taant in their closets and a thin gold chain which was part of her trousseau. Besides, she spent much of her time doing housework and preferred plain clothes that were washable. There weren't any air conditioners or even fans for that matter, leading to the preference for old, comfortable cotton.

These days, the same deshi saris are more vibrant. Fun elements are used to play up the look, while still maintaining the sovereignty of the deshi sari.

Younger people are trying to adopt traditional looks despite the blurry haze of foreign fashion, and they are seeking more practicality and bolder statements at the same time.

The modern Bengali woman requires a more elegant wardrobe. Although the need for comfort still remains, a little more colour, some use of patterns and other interesting elements in her outfit are

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