



SPOTLIGHT

Sharing the Kolors of Kathmandu

Kolors of Kathmandu is an online jewellery store that started when three friends – Zahid Sharif, Nargis Chowdhury and Nusrat Luja – decided to visit the beautiful capital of Nepal, Kathmandu. They were amazed at the beauty and history surrounding the city and fell in love with its people. "If you go to Kathmandu, you'll see that the city is still stuck in the 70's and the older parts look like they are from the 13th century. Something about Kathmandu resonated with us and eventually it became our shangri la," said Nargis.

During their initial visits, they were surprised at how exquisite and unique Nepalese jewellery looked in comparison to other places. They were very colourful and Nargis noticed that most of the jewellery had some sort of philosophical inscriptions in them such as the eternal knot, the Buddhist concept and such. "I was amazed at how different they were so I brought some home and when I wore them, I was getting a lot of compliments and that's where it all started. Zahid and I decided to go back and bring in some jewellery with the intention of selling them," added Nargis. In September 2012, they attended a fair in Drik gallery where they shared a stall with a designer friend and displayed the jewellery for the first time. The response was huge and it was very well

received by the public. That's when Kolors of Kathmandu was born.

Soon after, they opened a Facebook page and named it "Kolors of Kathmandu." "We chose this name because the jewellery that we brought were always very colourful," said Zahid. With the slogan, "dive yourself into the colours," Zahid Sharif, a marketing graduate and Nargis Chowdhury, a teacher, started their first ever online venture. "When we started this shop, we never thought of bringing in just jewellery but rather, wanted to introduce different ethnic things. We wanted to target a specific audience who had a love for the exotic and these kinds of products were not available back then and the few places that had them would always overcharge. The basic business idea was to make these accessories affordable to more people," added Zahid.

The Nepalese jewellery market is a very old and ancient market known for having Tibetan jewellery, Tharu jewellery as well as

jewellery from Nagaland and Afghanistan. Kolors of Kathmandu brings in some different kinds of jewellery including semi-precious stones, corals, turquoise and lapis. They are also trying to introduce some silver items to their already colourful inventory. The owners strive to match the demand for both traditional jewellery pieces as

well as bringing in newer trends. Brass jewellery made out of white metals and beads are also available in the online store.

"Because Nepal is making these kinds of designs for a global market, we don't have to work too hard to be updated on the new trends and styles. At the very beginning we used to bring in traditional jewellery only. But when we started bringing in more exotic designs, we got an even bigger response. Our customers like wearing them with sarees. Every time we bring in these "statement pieces" they sell out really fast. It's great to see that the taste is changing and people are experimenting with different things," added Nargis.



Because of their high demand, Kolors of Kathmandu has successfully expanded and established two wings in Boston and Kansas City and they are not ready to slow down. Zahid added, "One of our clients reached out to us and took the initiative to sell our products in Boston. We shipped some products to her and she's been running the Kolors of Kathmandu Boston Wing. We have already sent her three shipments so far and the sales and response both have been positive. Our plan is to expand as much as we can and maybe even enter the European and Australian market someday,"

Despite their high demand, Kolors of Kathmandu has had its share of problems. "Frequently flying to the Valley to get the exclusive products from the dealers and wholesalers sometimes hampers our family as well as our professional lives. We are also going through daily adjustments to keep Kolors of Kathmandu at its regular pace" says Zahid.

Kolors of Kathmandu is a passion project for Zahid Sharif and Nargis Chowdhury. They started their journey with one simple idea: they wanted to share the beauty of Nepalese jewellery with the people of Bangladesh.

By Naveed Naushad

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Jewellery: Kolors of Kathmandu

