

Muslin story: a way it has never been told before

How fine was the Muslin fabric? So fine that an entire garment could pass through the inner circle of a ring! So exquisite that it had been romanticised that the fabric was spun 'by fairies with the thread of winds'!

Such is the magic of Muslin, that its memory still enchants us even after almost two centuries have passed since its demise at the hands of the British. And the Muslin-magic is engaging enough to include all the right ingredients for a brilliant graphic novel - legends and fantasy, heroes and villains, kings and queens, exotic travellers from far-off lands...

'Musliner Deshe' is a graphic novel produced by Drik's Bengal Muslin. An initiative of Drik, Bengal Muslin has been working to revive the long-lost fabric through intensive scientific research, weaving of high count cotton cloth and to spread awareness among all quarters of society on this heritage weave.

This graphic novel, scheduled to be launched at Dhaka Lit Fest 2016 (17 Nov-19

Nov) is part of their plan of raising awareness.

"We not only want to engage with today's audience, but with tomorrow's audience as well," says Saiful Isam, CEO, Drik (Bengal Muslin). "We need to spark an interest, speak in their language, use their medium so that our children are proud inheritors of Muslin, Bangladesh's most unique gift to the world."

In the graphic novel, the story of Muslin is portrayed simplistically, and of course, with strong, striking visuals. The narrative follows a little girl who listens to the story of this magical and glorious fabric, as told by her grandfather. Between flashbacks, dialogues and striking imagery, the Muslin story unfolds, to tell the readers of its glorious times and its tragic end.

From Ibn Battuta's fascination with Muslin to East India Company's rule which witnessed and caused to the fabric's downfall, the novel gives the reader glimpses of the past surrounding this world-renowned weave.



The graphic novel also comes with simple puzzles and games to make it engaging and interactive for the younger generation.

"The main target audience comprises children aged from around nine to fourteen,

but we believe teenagers of different ages will be interested in this too," Saiful, who immensely contributed to the book's concept and ideation, said. "The book will be made available at schools in cities and villages, and in different bookshops."

The planned price is kept low at about Tk 50 as Bengal Muslin's motive is to spread awareness.

"An e-book version is in the pipeline; it should be out by the end of 2017. Within this year (2016), we are planning to bring out the English version of the book."

"After this month's launch at the Lit Fest, we are scheduled for a second launch at International Kolkata Book Fair 2017, which starts in the month of January. And the book will also hopefully be available in Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela" in February"

By M H Haider

Comic embodiment: Arafat Karim.

Dialogue: Nabil Rahman, Tasmin Haque Tulin.

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