

BLUE BEYOND BORDERS

The brand exports to many countries, such as the USA, UK and many other European countries, Japan and others.

"Living Blue, which commenced as a project of CARE Bangladesh, spun off as a social enterprise and a textile label of CARE Enterprises, Inc. and Nijera Cottage & Village Industries, which is a community of dyers, quilters and farmers of Northern Bangladesh," Ahmad informs.

Placing Living Blue in the high fashion genre has its challenges. "The world knows Bangladesh for its readymade, mass-produced garments. Many do not fancy Bangladesh as a producer of haute couture fashion, despite the fact that our country has an incredibly rich history of textiles and weaving," Ahmad shared his experience.

Battling against odds, team Living Blue had secured position on the shelves of many upscale stores in the world. It has also taken part in some of the most renowned international fairs and exhibitions. "We participated in Greenshowroom, which is a part of Berlin Fashion Week," Ahmad elaborates.

The exclusive Greenshowroom features "... elegant designs and sustainable high-grade materials." Another illustration of Living Blue's success is its participation in Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. Not everyone qualifies for such shows; you have to go through a highly rigorous process to prove eligibility.

From the workshop located in rural Rangpur, the products continued to reach far-off destinations.

#RANGPURPARIS

It's not that while all these were happening Living Blue was not pursuing Paris. Indeed, France had been one of the export countries, but they were yet to get their 'big-break', to establish a firm Rangpur-Paris connection.

Then, they got the opportunity to exhibit their products in an upscale French department store; Galeries Lafayette houses the biggest fashion brands of the globe. It also has its own fashion label.

"In its Paris outlet, we exhibited our line

as a co-brand to Galeries Lafayette. This was launched in March 2016 and went on for some weeks," Ahmad informed. "We hope to work with them again in the future."

That was the first big step in the Parisian high fashion market. Another huge step would be to get invited by Maison d'Exceptions, which is an exclusive event held in Paris every year, where only the most creative and unique ateliers of the world can participate.

Living Blue applied in 2015 (for the year 2016), and failed to qualify.



THE HOUSE OF EXCEPTIONS

"Maison d'Exceptions is extremely selective. It is not enough to simply prove yourself as the master of a skill or technique; you also need to show varied applications and uses for it in the contemporary fashion world. This is probably where we fell short," Ahmad thinks.

The event is dominated by French, Japanese and Italian ateliers.

More determined than ever, they tried again (in 2016); this time, with a very creative and promising Paris-based fashion designer - Anais Guery.

Numerous miles away from home, a designer devoted two weeks in Rangpur,

working with local villagers, artisans and dyers.

"It was a magnificent exchange of ideas, knowledge, and technique," Ahmad reflected.

"We have skill, know-how, technique; indigo production, stitching, shibori. She borrowed these, used her imagination and intellect to create something contemporary and ultra-modern and chic." They applied to Maison d'Exceptions again. Recently, their selection had been confirmed!

"It places Living Blue among an elite



Living Blue' (a collaboration between Anais Guery's label and Living Blue) was featured in Designers Apartment Showroom, which is a programme of Paris Fashion Week that showcases works of emerging talents.

Living Blue also got invited and attended Emergences - in October 2016 - another show in Paris.

Through innovation, relentless effort and a culture of excellence, Living Blue has made its presence in the melting pot of fashion world. This, of course, is just the beginning.



Living Blue now must strive to survive long enough in Paris to establish themselves firmly. Now that is the next step!

By M H Haider

N.B. Living Blue's products are not generally available for sale in Bangladesh. However, you may purchase by contacting them directly. Email address: livingblue.nijera@gmail.com. Facebook page: www.facebook.com/livingbluebd. Website: www.livingbluebd.com

Photo courtesy: Anais Guery/David Barikder/Josh Estey/Living Blue
Location: Rangpur and Paris



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