



On the trail of **BANGLADESHI** fashion



With a rich history, Bangladeshi fashion goes back a long way in the past. Through this article, we have discussed the legacy of Muslin, Khadi and Jamdani. No one is alien to the rich history of the famed Bengal textiles. There is also the Nakshi Kantha with at least 500 years of history attached to it. The Nakshi Kantha is a unique weave popularised by the rural women of Bengal where they narrated the story of their lives through both simple and special types of embroidery.

While most forms of art are considered elitist, Nakshi Kantha is a craft that has a down-to-earth touch and feel attached to it; developed by hard-working straightforward people and their undemanding lifestyle and dreams. Many designers today are working exclusively with the rural women to bolster the practice of the traditional art form and legacy.

The latest line of the uniqueness is continued by our very own globally renowned fashion designer Bibi Russell, with her creative work on the Gamchha and Grameen Check. Almost everyone knows about the incredible position of the humble Gamchha and how she singlehandedly made it popular in fashion. Because of Russell, the Gamchha has entered the prestigious high fashion market of the western world. Celebrities and international figures like Antonio Banderas and the Queen of Spain endorsed the material extensively.

The designer reveals in one of her interviews, "Our country is full of gifted people; our weavers are one of a kind with extreme talent and mastery over their field of work. We also have the abundance of some of the most unique textiles in the world - the 'Gamchha' being one of them. The Gamchha is like a national symbol for our country. There is not a single video or documentary of freedom fighters, where they are not wearing the special material as an accessory, tied in a knot around their waists or as a head covering. How can such a relevant material die out with time? Why should we let it? And hence my struggling endeavours to revive the Gamchha industry."

Passionately speaking, the maestro let us know that Bangladesh has numerous possibilities, especially in the fashion industry. According to the eminent designer, while we are set on the trails to revive the legendary Muslin, we could also popularise the comfortable and modish Gamcha and Grameen Check into the global arena.

Jamdani is a royal weave, most sought after, figured Muslins of Bangladesh. The Jamdani belongs to Bangladesh. Sometimes there is a saying that the Jamdani is too precious and pricey for regular people. It is not meant for the mass in the first place! It is a precious art form, an heirloom product that every family must strive to own for posterity.

MAHEEN KHAN

The Kantha art represents the serene and joyous self-expression of a race of creative women artists whose watchwords are thrift, beauty and sound craftsmanship. In their creations we find a combination of a keen power of observation and profound feelings of sympathy to life and nature.

GURUSADAY DUTT

PLAGIARISM IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Talking with the renowned designer Humaira Khan, we were delighted to learn that plagiarism in fashion did not bother her at all. "To me, plagiarism will always exist in the creative industry. People will be inspired and they will want to copy and put their inspiration to work. However, successful designers do take inspiration from others, but they also do not forget to put in their own ideas into the final sketch. Within every creation, there must be some sort of uniqueness and that uniqueness is what separates it from downright copying."

Designer Maheen Khan introduced us to the different aspect of plagiarism. "Existent liberal policies in the creative sector and the absence of patents and protection of intellectual property rights are what mainly cause plagiarism and the

flight of consumers to neighbouring countries for purchase of fashion produce. However, the creative industry can save itself from the loss to plagiarism and the flight through the development of supreme quality and competitive work. It is possible, that when high quality fashion textiles are introduced, consumers will be more interested in their own country's products and authentic designer wear. You can't deceive clients doing low quality work and expect them to buy! That's just not how consumerism works. The high-quality work must also be globally trend-setting and people will further appreciate it."

While we stress on plagiarism and the flight of consumers to neighbouring countries, we must also recognise the importance of marketing, where media takes an important role. All applicable tools must be accessible to reach the audience in due time.

Most designers comply with the fact that a sense of nationalism must be created. The consumers and public in general who are also the consumers must be introduced to the heritage story of the nation imbuing a sense of nationalism. As Maheen Khan said, we must inform our customers that the story is ours and significant to the spirit of Bangladesh, only then will we all learn to appreciate the rich heritage of the textiles.

International fairs, symposiums, exhibitions, films, design stores, fashion journals to rocking ramps, the Muslin, Jamdani, Khadi, Nakshi, Kantha, Gamcha, etc. have come a long way from where they began. All of these are art forms indeed - the art of extravagance, the art of frugality, creating a stronger, warmer tradition that lasts for generations.

There is one thing common between all these forms, they are all a significant part of fashion and a symbol to our glorious past; a



beholder of our rich cultural heritage and most importantly, magnificent contributors to employment and empowerment in Bangladesh.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury

**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Riba and Mashiat
Wardrobe and Jewellery: Aarong
Location: Aarong, Uttara**

**Model: Meghla and Raj
Wardrobe: Mayasir
Location: Lotus Etang**

**Makeup: Farzana Shakil's Makeover Salon
Styling: Isha Yeasmin**

To view the companion video, keep your eyes on 'Star Live'—the official YouTube channel of The Daily Star.