

The Ohé Way of Things @ Khadi Festival

When anything creative is initiated 'just like that,' good things are definitely bound to follow. Nelun Harasgama, a reputed Srilankan fashion designer invited as a participant to Khadi Festival 2017, discusses her brand.

"I embarked on the venture with Ohé Island based on the principle of having fun, appreciating love, sadness, friendship, fear or no reason at all, just 'ohé'- without a thought or an agenda."

While Ohé in Sinhalese means 'just that'; Ohé Island embraces the free-spirited life of an individual. "To me, Ohé Island symbolises a path that takes you anywhere without any pre-carved notion."

Bold and random collections of raw silk, batik, patchwork saris, clothing and accessories in hand-woven cotton and silk pile up the racks at Ohé - everything is handmade and purest forms of organic fabrics are used.

"Every few days we make something new, depending on what we feel like when our feet hit the floor! We like to call our creation wearable art pieces," admits Harasgama.

On her inspiration to join the Khadi Festival 2017 in Bangladesh, she said, "Once invited, I became immensely fascinated with the show because it particularly deals with my specialisation; I use a lot of hand-woven fabric for all my designs at home. Furthermore, I have exhibited paintings in other countries of the world, but this is my first fashion show abroad. I am explicitly thrilled."

Many people refer to Khadi as an outdated fabric, often popularised by politicians and freedom fighters and thus remain skeptical about its return to the mainstream fashion arena. When faced with such a statement Harasgama frankly disagreed, "My Goodness! Freedom fighters were so stylish! Look at Mahatma Gandhi or Che Guevara. Seriously, if they were dull men, they would not be having such an immense fan following. These people

dressed to knockout the world. The same thing can be said about the great style of the righteous and courageous men like Nelson Mandela and Dalai Lama. Maybe they didn't think about fashion at all but they were surely individualistic in their dressing style."

Harasgama during her conversation stressed that the dressing style mattered the most, insignificant of the fabric. In order to gain more insight into her collection for the Khadi festival 2017, we asked her about the collection; she let us in on her plans; "The Dhaka collection features muted tones of ecru, ash and pure whites with touches of scarlet and is inspired by art from ancient temple paintings to Matisse. Ohé has used batik and beeralu handmade lace in all creations and even hand-woven banana fibre fabric."

This year the rumor is that many talented international artistes have been invited for the fashion show, in addition to a striking number of reputed 'deshi' fashion designers.

Enquired on her thoughts on this global approach to promoting the Khadi, she alleged "This sort of initiation will definitely increase the popularity for Khadi. An added benefit is that globally consumers are looking for hand-made things, slow fashion and a slower pace of life but with great quality. Hence, this is a great opportunity for hand-spun fabrics like Khadi."

Along our rendezvous, we wanted to know whether the designs for the festival were experimental or she planned on showcasing them at her store in Srilanka, Harasgama beamed "For Ohé Island, we only make one-off pieces of clothing. So the saris and dresses that I showcase in Dhaka will be available for



sal

e too."

Super excited about this year's Khadi Festival and the opportunity to do a show in a foreign country that she admires, Harasgama concluded the conversation by referring to the Nobel Laureate and his love for the natural realm, that is Bengal. "This is the first time, I am visiting Bangladesh and I know I will love it!"

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Nelun Harasgama

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কালার গার্ড

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