



Alamgir spoke of being intimately involved with all types of silk artisans and sharing their lives, joys and pains over the past couple of decades. Many of these artisans have since become part of the gradual but en masse exodus from the industry. Yet, many faithful and passionate people linger on.

"The first design centre we started was just a room in our home. The very artisans we began the Design Lab with, are still with us," he says with pride, and a touch of melancholy.

Bengal was known for producing at least three variations of silk - mulberry silk, endi silk, and tassar silk but almost the entirety of the industry is on the

verge of disappearing from Bangladesh.

The weight of the silk garment decides its level of fineness; the finer the thread and higher the count, the more opulent the silk. What we know as modern Muslin, is in fact pure silk too, in a different weave and with a stronger yarn, and is thus hardier than soft silk.

Most local silk producers are now fully dependent on imported yarn, as the demand far outstrips local production.

"More than 75 percent of the silk yarn now has to be imported," Alamgir says, and it costs about Tk 6,000 per kg. This has made local silk much more expensive compared to its foreign competitors, as most other producers like India, China and others utilise home-grown silk, much less expensive locally.

Moreover, the inherent barriers to entry and operation to the industry that is silk are quite enormous, and are made severe from the lack of a supportive infrastructure and policies.

"The younger generation is not interested in the industry for all the related complications," Alamgir says. And it is not only the ecosystem, but the production process itself that is rigorous, and takes deep dedication to minute details, and also remains vulnerable to the vagaries of nature.

The production of each piece of art that is silk cloth takes a long route to fruition. After the yarn is bought, it is set up onto bobbins, and beams and warp machines. The fabric is then woven, and dyes in a time-consuming process, which needs the artisans' exacting skills, perfected over many a yarn.

As per the veritable expert behind the counter at Doyel, a single 47-inch wide soft silk sari can have a resounding 4850 unbroken yarns!

After the weave is complete, the dye is set, and an ample amount of sunlight is necessary for the colours to gain the sheen and vibrancy associated with silk, and shades can vary very easily depending on the amount and quality of sunlight received! This is why the tiny silk industry in Bangladesh is heavily reliant on good weather.

The complete lack of care from successive governments, in providing any support to the various types of silk workers, is a major factor behind the decline of the silk industry. Of course, the breakup of Bengal by the British first curbed the eastern side's access and participation in silk, but thereafter neither the Pakistan government nor the Bangladeshi one has done much to rectify that.

Despite the setbacks and roadblocks to nurturing his passion for silk, the people behind Doyel, and most importantly the man synonymous to Doyel for all patrons, works tirelessly and with pride, along with his very loyal team, on all the creations that are offered.