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The strong bond between the women of the subcontinent and their cotton saris dates back in history. Archaeological excavation has revealed the remarkable fact that the use of sari can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilisation (3300–1300 BCE; mature period 2600–1900 BCE), where women, especially priestesses wore a three-piece cotton ensemble, resembling the present day five-to-nine yard drape.

There are multiple reasons behind the unconditional love for cotton. The fabric was popular in this region long before silk was introduced. And as the nature of the fabric suits the climate of the region, its popularity transcended social class.

Bengal was once famed for the exquisite Muslins and Jamdani, which were primarily in cotton. As khaadi and taant came into being, it got readily accepted and added to the glory of our land.

Long gone are those days of the regal past, but the love remains the same for the stylish cotton fabric. Besides gaining a cult status, the cotton sari has many advantages. Any kind of embroidery – zardozi, karchupi; even prints complement the texture of cotton, adding to its universal appeal.

Even though cotton saris can be high maintenance and require some effort in “pulling it off,” once worn the crisp material, the vibrant hues, and the perfect pleats overpower all the apparent negatives.

The legendary Muslin of the Mughal era might not be available today, but the closest version available does not fall short either. The khaadi, made popular by the Swadeshi movement, still remain as one of the best political by-products symbolising the mental strength to fight against the mighty British Empire.

Once worn mostly by politicians to prove a point of self-reliance, khaadi eventually broke all boundaries to become the avant-garde fashion statement.

The Dhakai saris and taant are also favourites amongst many, especially because of the special embroidery and the lightness, and vibrancy of colours on them.

Gyananada Devi, Tagore's sister-in-law, once introduced the sophisticated draping style to the upper class Bengali ladies. Since then there has been many changes in the variations, which ultimately came down to the modern day pleats below the navel and drape along the left arm, with matching petticoat and blouse.

Saris like chiffon, georgette, silk, or even velvet can be contrasted with different colours of blouse and petticoats, and can be draped in myriad fashion.

Whatever the story of the cotton maybe, writers and poets of Bangladesh simply cannot picture their heroines donning anything other than cotton. The quintessential image of any modern Bengali novelist, Humayun in particular, is a simple girl, in a no-fuss cotton sari, flat sandals and a bun!

Although times have changed, and it shall continue to change but that image will be with us till eternity.

—Fashion Police

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha

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Shoes: Chondon

Wardrobe: LS

Make-up: Farzana Shakil's Makeover Salon