



# The legacy behind TANGAIL SAREE KUTIR

Three years ago, the prominent Tangail Saree Kutir flagship at Dhaka's Bailey Road added a posh extension where high-end handcrafted saris were displayed in a setting that almost resembled a handloom 'gaddi.' Today, the elegant Monira Emdad, owner of the renowned fashion store, sits in a far corner of the cleverly decorated extension, overlooking the daily proceedings as she has been doing since day one, almost three decades earlier.



Nothing about Tangail Saree Kutir was planned in advance — "Its success is a coincidence of place, time, and hard work," Monira Emdad admits.

According to Emdad, she always planned to be a homemaker. In fact, it was her husband who encouraged her to take an intensive training in the travel agency business, helping her to attempt managing one later. Few years into the business, Emdad realised it was not her true calling, and was looking to diverge, in case better options were available.

That's when destiny smiled, and on her way to Pathrail, Tangail to visit her sister-in-law, Emdad stopped to take a brief look at the taanti village. Since that fateful day in 1982, it has been 36 years and she still loves working with the taantis with all her heart.

Today, when highlighting the pioneering ladies of our nation for Women's

Day, we selected Monira Emdad, because she certainly is a visionary and a beacon of hope for the almost dying handloom industry, and the surviving taantis of our country.

"When I saw the saris in Tangail, I was simply awestruck by the beauty of it all. But strangely, most of the saris were small in size compared to the regular six yards that we are used to wearing.

"The taantis made saris for rural women, and had almost no connection

with the city. Call it an epiphany or not, but I realised that this is what I felt passionate about, and hence my journey as an entrepreneur began," recalled the fashion icon.

Conversing further, we realised the fashion guru did not only prioritise work, but her family too, saying, "My husband has always been my friend. Before I nosedived into this new venture, I discussed everything with him. Plus, I used to take my son along with me whenever I went on business trips. I would never leave him behind, in case he felt lonely or neglected."

Emdad believes that to truly succeed in life, parents must always prioritise their children over anything. She stressed on the term parents instead of mother, because raising a child is both the parents' job, according to the visionary.

It was certainly interesting to hear a handloom sari connoisseur talk about the importance of family life over business.

"But that is the most important thing really! When I started my business, I was married, with children to look after. And I was also passionate about my work. To succeed on both fronts, I had to look after both, equally!

This is a message I particularly want to spread to today's women. 'When there is a will there is always a way' — juggling maybe hard work, but it is certainly necessary for success. An unhappy family life does not allow anyone to move forward in peace," the successful entrepreneur reiterated.

Discussing further, Emdad spoke repeatedly about family harmony and setting priorities right. "Yes, I may sound a little old-school, but that is how you can succeed in life," the visionary said.

We wanted to know what else led her towards her immense success, "Passion," she replied.

"As I have mentioned before, my journey begins with enrolling into the travel agency business, which I did not enjoy at all; but to sari designing, I was naturally ingrained towards. The root for this is probably from my younger days, trying to mimic my mother and khalas, and their trend of wearing saris that got me hooked up. So everyone needs to discover their forte or mojo, and follow their heart, and success will eventually follow."

Emdad certainly stressed on the importance of financial freedom for the female community of the society. She feels it is very stressful for women to completely depend on others for their upkeep.

"I felt very uneasy asking for money from my parents or my husband after marriage, especially for the little things in life. That is why I believe every adult should be able to earn on their own and be given the opportunity to experience financial freedom," she said.

Speaking about women's revolution for equality and status in the 21st century, she seemed very positive.

"I introduced the concept of female salesperson back in the '80s. If we women don't give each other chances, who else would? We must all help each other to reach our potential and the future would automatically change towards an equal front," the pioneer designer added.

We concluded the session on a positive note; the ever sophisticated Monira Emdad did not forget to bid us adieu in her classic way by being a gracious host.

Perhaps this elegance and sophistication comes from the fact that she is experienced and proud to be the possessor of everything practical and sensible.

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**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**  
**Location: Tangail Saree Kutir**