

## PROFILE

# Young aspirations

*"I feel extremely privileged in the way I was raised, but I feel that, at the same time, it is important to make sure that whatever I am part of, particularly the company and brands that I am creating, that same ethos is followed"*  
—RAYANA HOSSAIN; DIRECTOR, DEKKO ISHO GROUP

Clothing line Klubhaus and Japanese restaurant Izakaya need no introductions, but the face behind them is Rayana's, who also heads the latest furniture company 'Isho' which is a part of Dekko Isho Group.

To have gained so much in less than two years was not easy, yet amidst her struggles, a strong work ethic, ambitious aspirations and a go-getter nature is what has let Rayana to achieve so much. "The struggles I faced when I started to set up my own business became very real when I realised that different people don't necessarily share the same work ethic," she says.

Her clothing line, Klubhaus which has a branch of initiatives under it, just finished their first season of Klub Sessions; a platform set to promote young and unique musicians.

"I gave myself a crash course in fashion history in order to develop a design team who would be able to grasp my vision for the line. Klubhaus now operates under the process of identifying how to incorporate

international fashion trends into the current Bangladeshi scene."

On the other side, her furniture company, "Isho" is made up of five sub brands that provide a range of traditional, contemporary and smart furniture.

While Rayana has just entered the world of business, she credits and acknowledges the way her family raised her. "Growing up as the only girl with three brothers and a joint family, I was never treated differently from my siblings." When asked about how she deals with situations in which she could be seen as lesser for being a woman, Rayana said, "I am fortunate to not have faced this issue. I do realise that many women in our country and around the world aren't so fortunate. My advice to any young woman starting out is to always be completely and consistently professional. Even if someone starts off prejudiced, you can win their respect eventually."

Her degrees in art, architecture, and landscape architecture with the Harvard seal of approval meant that she could work anywhere in the world, but she still chose to come back. "The entire reason I wanted to study architecture was to give back to my country. Bangladesh has exhibited the highest economic growth rate, globally, and I knew I could add more to that through my areas of expertise," she says.



Clothing that people can feel good in, at an affordable price," explains Rayana.

As a budding entrepreneur and a director at Dekko Isho Group, Rayana is aware about the struggles women in Bangladesh have to face on a regular basis, especially in the workplace, for which reason, she implements a fifty-fifty gender employment in all her businesses, as well as zero tolerance to any kind of gender disparity related practices. She feels that having been surrounded by strong women, especially professionally, she has learnt to be resilient. "I see a lot of women struggle and not being allowed to do something, although a man can, working in the same position. In some cases, it is due to societal issues. Despite the way people are, being resilient and part of a progressive movement is what will bring changes to Bangladesh. It also allows women to become more courageous," she concludes.

Raised in a family filled with successful entrepreneurs for three generations, Rayana Hossain is the next fresh young face set to make changes in the future in the world of entrepreneurship and business.

Designs can be interpreted based not just on its engineering sense, but artistic expression as well. Conceptualising any design is not a cup of tea regardless of what field it is. "Art is personal and an expression, but design is for the people with a purpose. This is intrinsic in all the three ventures that I have. In Klubhaus, particularly, it was important to establish that with the design team.

--LS Desk

**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**  
**Model: Rayana Hossain**

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# Nurtured with love

All around us are strong women who have taken their passion and love for something to create strong legacies, and one such lady is Ms Naseem Iqbal --more often recognised as just Iqbal Miss by her students over the years-- administrator and founder of the Universal Tutorial school.

The school started off in 1978 with just 3 students, two of which were her own children. The campus, tucked inconspicuously behind a plain gate to a seemingly old house on the main road approaching Bangla Motor intersection from Moghbazar, has been home to Universal Tutorial for over 30 years, holding many a now-grown-up's cherished childhood memories.

"I always thought that I should have a school, since childhood," Iqbal said, adding, "when we started, this was the only English Medium in this area."

The school is still quite small in terms of the size of the student body, which stands at 150, even though it used to be larger, and has the capacity to accommodate at least thrice the current numbers. Iqbal says the competition has been getting tougher, since the introduction of English Version schools, at the junior level, and from coaching centres at the senior. "Senior level children now prefer the freedom and complete lack of school discipline that the coaching

centres allow."

"But my O and A Level batches, though small in number, are doing well, and I am happy," she added.

There is no discrimination in student intake as well, as students of varying levels of capabilities are all taught in the same classes, only with extra care, whenever needed, she said.

"We currently have about 36 teachers on the staff, and the teacher to student ratio is very healthy," Iqbal said.

The curriculum offered at Universal Tutorial is quite well rounded, with English, various papers of Maths, Sciences, Accounting, Computer Science and Bangladesh Studies. The students also have extracurricular clubs like debate, karate, sewing, arts and dance.

Asked about how she balanced her roles as administrator and teacher at the school, and raising three children, and making a home for her family, Iqbal said her husband had always been very supportive of her endeavours.

While visiting the campus, which includes a sizable yard and secure space for the youngsters to run around freely, we came across some children running around happily. When asked the cliché but obvious



added, on Iqbal's continued determination to keep the school running despite the current challenges.

Iqbal said that most of her teachers had been with her for long periods, and turnover is really low.

Some students have come back in new avatars, and currently teach at Universal Tutorial, like Fauqia Baig, who has been working there for 6 years. "Iqbal Miss is my inspiration on how to be a perfect person, she is like a mother hen. The workload she takes even now is very commendable."

The entire school, students and teachers, also go for an annual picnic to different places outside the city—always an opportunity for some extra fun and de-stressing.

Iqbal Miss has another passion apart from her precious school—that of growing exotic orchids. She is the founder and president of Orchid Society of Bangladesh. It appears she nurtures her school children the same way she does her delicate blooms—with utmost care and dedication.

question of their favourite subject, a surprising answer was "reading time," a specially designated period where the children take books from the in-house library and sit down to read. Students can also have each book issued to them for a week.

"Our aim at Universal Tutorial has always been to provide quality education," said Mueenuddin Ahmad, Iqbal's longstanding colleague of two and a half decades.

"Her perseverance is praiseworthy," he

--LS Desk

**Photo: Collected**