



Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed  
 Model: Farzana Shakil  
 Wardrobe: Living Blue, designed by  
 Sharmin Rahman  
 Location: Pan Pacific Sonargaon

# LIVING BLUE

## an ethical marvel

Living Blue, a stalwart local brand, making major advancements in the world of haute couture and exhibiting extraordinary Bangladeshi craftsmanship all over the world, goes beyond its usual jurisdiction to value its artisans.

Born out of a governance project, and as a result of providing means of work to the ultra-poor of the northern region of Bangladesh, Living Blue has witnessed success in numerous fronts. However, no matter the extent of the accomplishments, it has always remained humble to the craftsmen, the dyers and the farmers, dedicating all its successes to their hard work and perseverance.

Putting it simply, Living Blue is a true-blue, fair trade, fashion brand that follows ethical practices and organic fashion, through and through.

Living Blue is just about to unveil their latest project, and Star Lifestyle brings to you an exclusive sneak peak of this new venture.

**MISHAEL AZIZ AHMAD,**  
CEO, LIVING BLUE

**Meet the man behind the home-grown ethical fashion brand.**

Based on Ahmad's narration, Living Blue started off as a governance project of CARE Bangladesh. The idea was to empower men and women in the northern region of Bangladesh, and provide them with leadership training.

Prior to Living Blue's activities, people there were not even aware of their basic rights. Plus, these people were in dire need of proper jobs, and Living Blue was looking at myriad ways to better their livelihood by giving them work, when one day, it chanced upon the mystifying Indigo plant.

But the initiation had not been that arbitrary!

According to Ahmad, the story goes somewhat like this:

An Indian designer called Tushar Kumar helped in establishing quilt making as the northerners' forte, and then went on to discover an unusual local plant called *maal-gach*, identified by the locals as an excellent nitrogen fixer, or a natural fertiliser, and later re-discovered by Kumar himself as the legendary Indigo plant.

But that was not all Kumar did; he also trained the locals in the farming process and the extraction method of the colour, and then went on to teach them the

techniques of *shibori*, by mastering it all by himself at first.

Over the next few years, Living Blue became self-sufficient by producing home textiles, scarves and quilts, and exporting them internationally.

The globally recognised fashion brand became even more prominent through working with celebrated names in the field of fashion design and winning plenty of accolades over the years. But no matter what the triumph, Living Blue always remained grounded and dedicated to its artisans, its major reason behind the fame.

However, that was all in the international front, with a de facto absence in the local market.

Ahmad believes that Bangladeshi people were not ready to pay hefty prices, even for exceptional handmade quilts, because of their acquaintanceship with cheaper copies of the same product, and since Living Blue did not experiment with 'desi' clothes, there was no unwavering reason for the upscale fashion brand to exist locally.

Finally, the wait is over, as the famous ethical fashion brand is now opening an online store with an exquisite collection of deep-dyed, *shibori* dyed saris by designer Sharmin Rahman, solely developed for the fashionistas of our country.

**SHARMIN RAHMAN,**  
FASHION DESIGNER  
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT,  
CREATIVE, ASIATIC JWT

**The lady who envisioned the aesthetics of the first-ever, local collection by Living Blue.**

She has spent a large part of her life since her student days in the fashion industry. With a passion for creative flair, Rahman loves all sorts of experimentation with designs, but when she faced a designer's block a few years back, with major restrictions to 'thinking out of the box,' she left the fashion industry to pursue advertising. However, in the meantime, her zeal for designing never perished, as she continued to make clothes for close friends and family.