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STRUGGLING through the RANKS

LOVE PINK?
NOT THE PINK TAX! P3

WOMEN AND WORKPLACE BARRIERS
GENDER PERCEPTIONS FOR GROWTH C

SPLENDID AND TRADITIONAL
JEWELLERY AT MRINMOYEE P12

CREATIVES: BIPOB CHAKRABORTY

An advertisement for Berger Viracare paint. On the left, a family of four (father, mother, and two children) is sitting on a bed in a bright, modern bedroom. The wall behind them is blue with a white hexagonal pattern. On the right, there is a large green and white paint can labeled 'BERGER Breathe Easy VIRACARE'. Above the can, there are several colorful, stylized virus-like particles. Below the can, there are three circular icons: 'Green Label SINGAPORE', 'Anti-Virus', and 'Anti-Bacteria'. The Berger logo 'BERGER Trusted Worldwide' is in the top right corner. At the bottom left, there is a 'FREE CALL' number '08000-123456' and a small Nepali text '१३३ संख्यामा छुट्टीको लागि सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्'. At the bottom right, there is a vertical text 'Unitrend BGR 4329/21'.

KUNDALINI RISING

SHAZIA OMAR

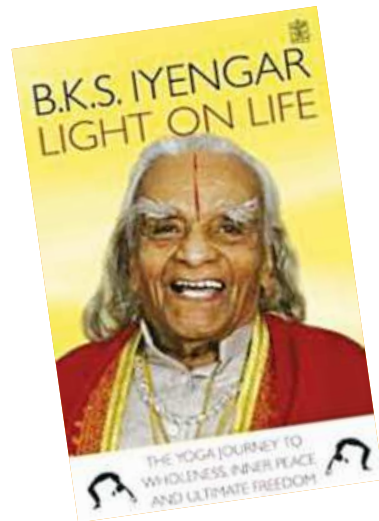
Writer, activist and yogini
www.shaziaomar.com

My five fave books on yoga

BKS Iyengar's *Light On Life*

Iyengar is a great yoga guru, student of Krishnamacharya, who died in 2014 at the age of 95. Though he was a sickly child, frail and weak, through yoga therapy, he was able to overcome his weaknesses and live a fulfilling and long life. In this book, Iyengar offers many insights on how to practice yoga in the most spiritual and meaningful way. This is my all-time favourite guide to yoga because it reminds me that I am a divine being and yoga is my art.

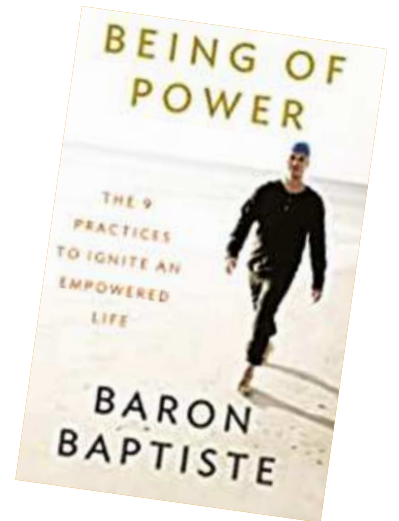
"A rigid body is like a stiff shell. Living in an inflexible body is like living in a straitjacket, cut off from the free flow of cosmic energy, and constricting ourselves from the infinite possibilities of the universe."



Baron Baptiste's *Being of Power*

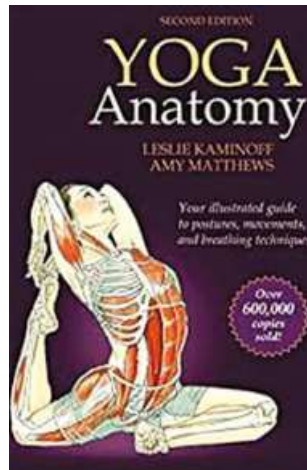
In this book, Baptiste shares insights on how to live an empowered life. He talks about how to transform your relationships with others and with yourself, how to align with your true purpose in life, how to break through holding patterns to heal. This book helped me think about who I am, about shedding my masks to live in the most authentic way possible.

"When you change your focus from limitations to boundless possibilities, from doubt and fear to love and confidence, you open your world in entirely new ways. You stop worrying about fixing what's wrong with you and start living from all that's right within you."



Leslie Kaminoff's *Yoga Anatomy*

A standard textbook for all yogis. I love it because after a few days of flipping through its illustrated pages, I started to visualise myself, and my students, as a collection of muscles. This helped me think about the physical aspects of yoga in tandem with the divine and psychological. Through years of practice, I have a deeply embodied knowledge of which poses will stretch which parts of my aching body, but this book gave me beautiful, coloured images that enhanced this knowledge. As yoga is a healing practice, I often have students who come to me with injuries from other sports or from their sedentary lifestyle. I recommend this to them.



Kaivalya & van der Kooij's *Myths of the Asanas*

The book is fascinating as it tells us the myths behind the various poses. After reading this, I was able to think about the more metaphorical purpose of each pose. For example, have you wondered what *halasana* – plough pose – is all about? Or *virabhadrasana* – warrior pose? How about fish pose – *matsyasana*?

On my YouTube channel, I have shared 15 of these stories and the associated poses – check it out: <https://www.youtube.com/J0FCcm6WzeT4FvMM5Nw7CCUNNEa>.

Michael Stone's *The Inner Tradition of Yoga*

Stone highlights some of the transformative dimensions of yoga. He explains how suffering continues in cycles. The turning of the wheel of suffering (*dukkha*) is called 'samsara,' which is a metaphor for meaninglessness. It refers to the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Each moment of experience, whether in stillness or reactivity, sets up

the pattern for the next consecutive moment (*karma*). As we take actions (*karma*), based on our habitual patterns, we reinforce in the mind and body those same patterns.

We are unable to experience the present moment without filters of perception. These feedback loops we create form our psychological and physical patterns (*samskaras*), as ingrained and self-perpetuating matrices that keep us bound to our conditioned existence, preventing us from experiencing each moment with freedom. With practice, we are able to transcend our patterns and meet each and every moment with openness. Then we arrive in the present moments of life, free to respond with an open and creative heart. Yoga is a path out of our present conditioning towards this freedom.

Shazia Omar is a writer, an activist and a yogi. To enjoy her classes free online, subscribe to: [YouTube.com/ShazzyOm](https://www.youtube.com/ShazzyOm).

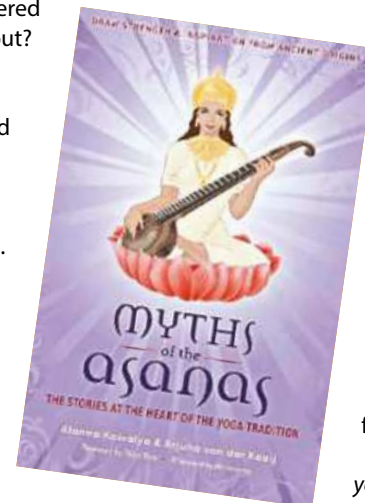


Photo courtesy: Shazia Omar

us on /Sandalina

ঐতিহ্যের আর এক নতুন আধুনিকতা
ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

অ্যান্ডালিনা

সোপ

রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য...

#PERSPECTIVE

Will the real chivalrous man please sit down

As woman's day dawns upon us, two arguments immediately break out: what about men's day, and look at how all the feminists killed chivalry.

On the surface, both these arguments seem to deserve some attention. Upon closer inspection, neither have any merit. Firstly, men's day is on November 19. It is the same day as World Toilet Day. Do with that what you will.

The more important discussion is the one revolving around chivalry. A simplistic observation is that chivalry was the military and over time, romantic codes of practice upheld by knights and European soldiers.

Today, the focus is more on the romantic codes, because why as South Asians, should we really seek codes of ethical warfare from Europeans? Not that we don't do that, either. Apparently one of the codes of

chivalry was "Thou shall make war against the infidel without cessation and without mercy." We all know who follows that.

But more importantly, moving onto the romantic aspect of chivalry, remember how knights always talked about treating the pious, virtuous maiden right? Notice the adjectives. Even back then, with the code and all, the onus was still on a woman to be a certain type. Only upon finding such a maiden would a knight try to win her over. Either those virtues were present, or she was a sight to behold. Fair, long hair, and all that.

The winning her over was also usually a very grand gesture. Think Shah Rukh Khan movies but with more blood and masculinity. A No was only a grand gesture away from becoming a Yes. And a No was not ever the right answer. So, a lot of men went about their way sending

bouquets even though she said she was not interested, constantly messaging even though she would not reply, trying to be her friend only to secretly love her and expect her to love him back one day, and so on and so forth.

In short, there was and has always been a fine line between a chivalrous man and a creep. Nestled between those two definitions has always been the overzealous lover. Because knights never learned to calm down and they made sure others did not as well.

Once having failed in the some of the above-described modes of pursuit, for lack of a better word, the gentleman would resort to other seemingly innocent gestures: holding the door open, giving a woman his jacket when she was cold, trying to hold her hand as if she was incapable of

doing things on her own. Basically, treating a woman like you would treat a child.

The chivalrous behaviour, upon closer observation, became a patronising one. And when some men realised that women could not be won over by gimmicks, this must have whipped them into a fury. And hence began the debate on how feminists killed chivalry and not about how chivalry had always been quite problematic behaviour.

All this gave birth to the Nice Guys TM. And what are those? Clearly, another discussion for another day. For this woman's day though, take the leaf out of nobody's book, be yourself, be a decent human being and if friendships blossom, then good and if not, just move on.

By Osama Rahman

The (hidden) cost of being a woman

The chronicles of women are strongly accentuated in various parts of history, more often so owing to the notable effort we have to exert in order to overcome the constant barricades thrown our way — opportunities that the opposite gender can take for granted, but which we receive as a "privilege."

Albeit the discrepancies that persist, women have made notable progress, whether by breaking the glass ceiling at work to some extent or by successfully highlighting their contribution towards the economy. The entire gender discrimination scenario finally seems to enervate —but is it really the case?

Truth be told, gender discrimination is not only limited to salary discrepancies, professional roles or promotion at work, but rather it extends its deadly grasp on rudimentary parts of an economy, such as price. Price discrimination exists in the form of pink tax — a tax unlike any other, which remains hidden within the price tags of products catered towards women.

No matter how much we women are told to be silent about this topic, justified by explanations that lack logic, one cannot deny that pink tax is indeed real. If you are ever at a supermarket aisle, try comparing the price of unisex products and you will notice that just because the female version looks more feminine, they are costlier with no apparent rationalisation.

Whether it is attributed towards capitalising on the naïve consumer perspective of females or just another way to remind us of female subjugation embedded in a patriarchal society, the pink tax is the unnecessary price we have to pay, simply for being a woman. Fun fact —marketers even have a terminology for this concept, which is known as "shrink it and pink it!"

Superficially, the difference in price may not seem like much, but the accumulation of slight percentages here and there really adds up to a significant amount. The pink tax is omnipresent, regardless of the category of products or age of the consumer. Starting from infancy to old age, almost all products women use throughout life come tagged with this hidden charge.

Ranging from everyday essentials including personal care and hygiene



products to services such as haircuts, the pink tax is unavoidable. And if you are thinking this is limited to only non-essential items, surprisingly you are wrong, because comparing the price of painkillers that are said to mitigate menstrual cramps with ordinary painkillers shall leave you amazed.

Unfairly, this is the extra price about half of the population pay every time they shop, which sadly often goes unnoticed even by the payer. Perhaps in our odyssey to attain

a greater degree of feminism by trying to overcome myriad hurdles, the pink tax has been overlooked for a while.

But all is not doom and gloom, as this increasing awareness may indeed be a harbinger of a complete eradication of the pink tax, much like the other milestones we have graciously achieved over time powered by the zeal and spirit of womanhood.

By Fariha Amber

"The phrase 'pink tax' emerged in the 2010s. Pink refers to the fact products targeted to women and girls are often, stereotypically, pink in colour. And because women's products are frequently more expensive than their male counterparts, the price discrepancy has been likened to an unofficial tax.

It's important to note that a pink tax is not explicitly mandated by governments in the way that a sales tax or property tax is. Instead, it's believed to be the result of systemic gender discrimination in society."

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Women at work

There are many issues that plague the development of women in Bangladesh. While the country is celebrating its 50th year of independence, we cannot for surely say that her womenfolk are fully liberated. And there are few pressing reasons to believe so.

First and foremost, education. It begins at home, starting with parents teaching children good family values, ethics and morals. It is not only the responsibility of the mothers alone but fathers too; parents should teach their sons and daughters the basic etiquettes of respecting women, at home, from the tenderest of ages.

While girls are taught to be docile and raised to be obliging to their fathers, brothers and then husbands, giving an upper hand to the boys at the family level; this attitude must change. Boys should also be taught to be kinder, respectful and helpful towards their mothers, sisters and wives. This core value, would allow them to see a woman with respect and face her eye-to-eye at every societal platform. We always fleetingly hold the mother accountable to teach her children social values and norms; but in reality, it should be the duty of both the parents.

"Education is the key to any attainment and now, women are police officers, army officers, pilots —society is evolving with them. At this age, if a woman is harassed in a bus, or prevented to move freely, then obviously we are going backwards. Just a simple example would suffice; when our girls go aboard for higher studies, they can rent a flat on their own, but here in Bangladesh, can a single girl rent a flat and stay on her own? It is difficult for a divorced woman with children to do the same. Until they are free to move, free to mobilise, I would say we did not achieve women's liberation," says Monira Emdad, Managing



Director of Tangail Saree Kutir.

If you see the comment section of any Facebook or YouTube post of a girl, you would know the extent of degradation social morals and principals have undergone. In fact, it is at the level of creating a nuisance for society; and who are the ones commenting in such an undignified way? It is our sons. This is definitely a conjunction of lack of proper education and good family values.

"In religious schools or general schools, the children are learning things that doesn't get along with the rest of the society. The conflict of fundamental or conventional way of thinking, and actually seeing the world moving in unconventional modern ways create hatred in these children and they take it out on the society. They are taught to think lowly of women, they misinterpret modern ways with atheism. These are results

of ignorance and half-hearted teachings," she feels.

Then there is the factor of how a woman should dress or behave. Sari, pant suits, shalwar kameez, and skirts are as decent a garb as jeans and tee-shirts or pants and shirts, the question of improper dressing is objectionable.

Child marriage is another issue that should be vetoed. Every parent must have the security to raise their daughters decently till a certain age and not think of them as burdens. Marriage puts the young girl in harm's way and makes her life miserable rather than being a social solution in regards to her security.

And every thana must have a women's corner to launch a FIR or complaint for their grievances. These will go a long way in the end.

"Only a handful of us feel safe in our skin, rest of the people in others cities or urban slums are as vulnerable as they are insecure. Bangladesh is just not Dhaka, the rest of the country matters and backward thinking poses as a problem," she feels.

Good education should start from the primary level and at home. To create gender awareness in their children, fathers should start valuing the contribution made by his wife and show how the efforts of every woman should be respected. Only then, men's attitude towards women would mend.

Thus, considering the lifestyle changes in the lives of Bangladeshi women in the last 50 years, the progress made are plenty, but the problems that remain are no less important.

-RBR
Photo: STAR Archive

HOROSCOPE



ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Insincere gestures will occur this week. Channel your energy into moneymaking ventures. Travel will be highly successful. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Upheavals are very likely. Pay attention at the home front. Keep a distance from difficult people this week. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Don't waste all your money. Take a short business trip. Problems with skin, bones, or teeth may arise. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Do something for yourself. Make time to travel. Avoid being overindulgent this week. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Things at home can be rocky. Take advantage of opportunities. Children can get difficult this week. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Get into creative hobbies. There could be some estrangements this week. Family get-togethers will be interesting. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Be certain of your feelings. Spend time with your partner. Family members may put you in trouble. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Make plans to travel. Don't get riled up regarding work. Don't let your partner take advantage of you. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Avoid individuals looking to get you into trouble. Don't let your worries overwhelm you. Spend time with loved ones. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Restrictions will dampen your relationship. You may make personal mistakes. Try some creative writing. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Children can be stressful this week. Take care when dealing with large institutions. Make time for family. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Check everything before committing. Your doubt could lead to insecurity. Don't spend on unnecessary luxuries. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

NIGHAT ARA
Psychiatrist, Counsellor,
and Therapist



Is post-partum depression real?

Post-partum depression is no longer recognised as a condition by its own right in DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders, fifth edition) but can still be recorded as a specifier if the onset of depression is within 4 weeks of childbirth. However, some clinicians are already finding this time limit to be too narrow and are in favour of further widening it to 6-12 months of childbirth.

These changes in classification do not make post-partum depression unreal at all.



This mental condition, although rare, does exist. Current protocol is to record it as a depressive episode, which is commonly part of Unipolar and sometimes part of Bipolar illness. This attempt by DSM to regroup previously called post-partum depression under another umbrella term is probably an acknowledgement of its close similarity to mood disorder and lack of enough reasons to give it a separate entity. Eventually, this is supposed to guide clinicians to investigate and acknowledge the complexity and intersectionality of this mental health condition.

Like any other evolving field of health science, mental health diagnosis also constantly changes based on new research findings to ensure evidence-based service and quality of comprehensive care. Scope and practice of psychiatry have been rapidly expanding with the use of newer assessment tools developed with the help of latest knowledge, experience, and statistical data gathered in the clinical field.

Baby blue or maternity blue (feeling moody, vulnerable, stressed for a few days after childbirth) is far more common than post-partum depression across the world. Women who experience more severe symptoms (e.g. sadness, fatigue, restlessness, agitation, difficulty in making decisions etc.) which impact their daily functioning level, are at higher risk of developing post-partum depression and are also likely to have depressive illness



outside the context of childbirth. There are psychological, social, and

biological causes of depression. New mothers with genetic predisposition to depression become more susceptible to it because of childbirth-related hormonal (e.g., oestrogen, progesterone, thyroid hormones etc.) changes. Chronic stress (which eventually affects stress circuit of brain and body) of family dysfunction, additional caregiving role, lack of respite care and financial hardship etc. can make things even worse. Depressive episodes in post-partum period is found to be independent of number of childbirth or previous history of it.

It would be worth exploring any history of domestic violence, marital discord, if the baby was wanted or not, history of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, or if the baby is of special need etc. to chalk out a comprehensive treatment plan.

Psychotherapy is often recommended to address underlying psycho-social issues to restore mental health. Addressing any underlying attachment trauma or self-esteem issues, focusing on stress management skills, exploring self-care options etc. might be useful. Organising a "circle of care" composed of family members, neighbours, friends, and professionals might be necessary to ensure proper child-care. It is also important to remember that physical health and nutrition of mother often gets neglected in a stressful family environment. Treatment plan might include prescribing antidepressants after a proper assessment.

Photo courtesy: Mere

Why every woman should give Menstrual Cups a chance

All of us women dread that time of the month, and we all know why. But since I've come across menstrual cups, my dread has deadened quite a lot. They've made my periods, and my life, a lot better. And today, I'll share with you why, so that you too are converted.

Forgetting you are on your period

Compared to pads, with the constant concern of impending doom, cups turned out to be a miracle. Once I grasped how to wear it right and got comfortable with the process, I became oblivious to the usual discomfort that came with navigating the day (and night!) wearing a flimsy pad. Depending on your flow, you don't have to think about changing anything for 6-12 hours. You practically have to think about it once or twice a day.

Little to no leakage issues

There's very little possibility of leakage while doing almost *anything* if you wear your cup right. You can swim, stare at your laptop from your bed, exercise, dance, toss and turn when you sleep and you won't have to remember to be especially careful.

However, you have to learn to get the cup insertion right. This will take a few tries with a cup, but the struggle will eventually pass. You can wear a pad during your transition to the cup at first. But trust me, switching to a cup will be one of the happiest decisions



you ever make. Read manuals and check out YouTube videos to understand better.

Feeling more connected to your body

While this sounds new age-y, wearing a cup has allowed me to understand my mind-body connection during the cycle better. Okay but why is that relevant? Simply because our female bodies are miracles and feeling connected to it and understanding exactly how much blood you lose makes you hate this important time less. You can also figure out what activities you'd like to engage in, or just switch off and rest if you want. Also, you're likelier to get a better night's sleep, because you won't have to think about changing for 6-12 hours!

At the risk of too-much-information, I'd also like to encourage women who might

feel irked by the thought of wearing a cup up their base. I was weirded out too, at first. But the process of learning my body and my reproductive area has helped me learn and appreciate it better.

No more hiding or changing plans

Picture this; it's been a few hours on your second day and you're in a public place, and you wish to discard your used pad. You head for the nearest washroom, but to your dismay, there are no trash cans inside. With cups, it's only about the hassle of emptying and washing it and putting it back in—and not for hours at a time. You won't have to feel like you should change or power through hectic travel plans or activities because your cup will carry your worry, literally! Fun personal fact, I taught myself swimming in

my adulthood on a trip wearing a cup!

Imagine never having to wonder how many tampons or pads to take with you when you go out or travel. Because you only need your ONE menstrual cup — for that extra space in the bag and a peaceful mind.

Saving money, time and the environment

You don't have to replace a cup for years. You just have to boil it with water before and after your period. Imagine the time, money, and energy you save on each of your periods because you won't have to buy new pads any more. Also, pads are terrible for the environment. My biggest motivation to ditch disposable period products was to help cure the environment. After I learned that disposable pads are non-degradable (made of up to 90 percent plastic) and will stay in the environment for about 800 years, I wanted to give this sustainable alternative a try. Made from reusable medical silicone, menstrual cups last up to 10 years and as you only need one, you can only imagine how much of waste you can spare our planet, and your own headaches, to dispose with discretion.

So are you ready to give menstrual cups a try?

By Dibarah Mahboob

Photo: Collected

Dibarah is an artist and nature-lover.



Being denied our hearts' desires is a shared human experience, one which can be assumed has at one time or another afflicted every human being, no matter what age, gender or income group. As people grow up and start to understand the world and its realities, they accept that some desires or dreams are just unattainable, perhaps for luck, or nuances of time and everyone's unique situation.

Looking in, through THE GLASS

But being denied an attainable dream, simply for your gender, or some prejudice enshrined in cultural heritage and traditions, can often feel terribly unfair and discouraging. One common manifestation of this phenomena can be termed as the glass ceiling, an amalgamation of the invisible and irrational barriers to women's growth in the work place.

A simple glance at the top management positions in various companies reveals the unbalanced gender ratios, even in mid managerial positions, and the scarcity of females in leadership roles is plain to see. According to an ILO report from 2015, women held only 5.4 percent of leading positions in the surveyed organisations.

This phenomenon actually manifests not just at the top, rather right from recruitment of fresh graduates, where female applicants are either overlooked despite better performance, and asked impertinent questions like whether they plan to get married soon, or they plan to have a child soon, or are they even serious about pursuing the jobs in the long term as "family responsibilities" will spring up. This attitude against the female employee, or the perceived inefficiencies even before they join, persist throughout their working lives, and is reflected in the salaries that women get. According to the ILO, the estimated global gender pay gap ranges between 16-22 percent in 2018/19.

"One of my recruitment interview questions was whether I was going to get married in the next couple of years, blatantly adding that if I were, it would make me a bad investment decision," a private sector employee said. These perceptions of low efficiency or lack of seriousness toward work also impede women's ability to command fair salaries. Research by Grout, Park & Sonderegger reveals that the glass ceiling can manifest in various ways, including women working harder at similar jobs to

justify their worth, lower average salaries for women in the same jobs. Things like being questioned or judged for being ambitious in their careers, and being forced to work under less skilled supervisors are also common issues women face. On the home front, larger proportion of child and elderly care duties, a significantly larger share of household chores, and the mental fatigue of making all household decisions day in and day out, are challenges common to most working women.

"These prejudices won't be overtly reflected in policies, as policies are now often standardized, but you'll see the proportion of women is critically low, more so in the non-typical female functions like anything except HR or customer services," said a mid-level female professional at a leading mobile operator in the country.

"And when you look at senior management levels, the number of women falls drastically, as after same time commitments and effort levels, women just don't get promoted, get frustrated and move elsewhere," she added. Some companies do take tokenistic initiatives to decrease the gender disparities, but these rarely have any real effects, and often the inherent problems of gender-based performance assessments," she said.

"At my last company, my supervisor was given the senior role despite being visibly incompetent, and even though I had five years of experience in the same function over them. All my suggestions were brushed off, and warnings unheeded. The scene somewhat changed when a very public work-related blunder by the supervisor could no longer be covered up," said a mid-level female worker at a well-known NGO. She then left for greener pastures, with a better pay and promotion.

In the public sector, promotions and salaries are more or less structured, so the gender pay gap does not exist, neither

does the glass ceiling per se. But in terms of preferential treatment, men get easier access to various opportunities that helps to prove a worker's calibre, like challenging postings. Also, in terms of symposiums and such, men get preferential treatment for being "more available for field work," even if women show interest or good capabilities, said a mid-level employee of a government bank. "I feel that some women themselves also have confidence issues, or may misuse the leniency granted for their gender, by not taking up challenges," she added. This also creates a problem for those who do want to work and excel.

"I was chastised for talking too much at meetings at my last work place, the complainant specifically said why did I need to talk so much being a woman, and that I should remember my place when the guys are talking," a female journalist said, she was at the time, working as the team leader of that function.

In Bangladesh's best celebrated industry, the RMG sector, which is often lauded for created a paradigm shift in female emancipation through jobs for low skilled women, there are very few women in supervisory positions. On the other hand, women globally still account for just 12 percent of the boards of the largest companies.

It appears the ceiling is not just a barrier to the top, rather, it exists for practically all women, regardless of their current position in the hierarchy. But perhaps that is why women at large are increasingly becoming more and more intent on breaking these barriers, and through the ages, that is how pioneering women in every field have shattered these walls, rising to heights of success and glory.

By Sania Aiman
Creatives: Biplob Chakrabarty

Women in technology: beyond the cliché

As the Iliad depicts, people used to worship Athena, daughter of Zeus who was known for her wisdom, warcraft, and handicrafts. It was Athena who wielded Zeus's aegis in the battle of Troy. Therefore, there should be no doubt about her ability and worthiness.

Likewise, there should be no doubt about the abilities of all the women in our country who has been putting in their time and effort to make a place for themselves. We have Athena in every one of them.

It's a man's world — that's what the song used to say. That was more than fifty years ago. You'd think times have changed, but not as much as one would have hoped. The number of women in certain sectors is still limited to a point that just reminds us of the infectious stereotype that people still hold, not just in our country but all across the world. One common cliché is that women are not good at technology. While reality tells a whole different story.

The prejudices held against women are just that, prejudices. Everywhere they have ascended, they have proved themselves. Take Ruby Paul for example.

"I had always been good at math and enjoyed working with technology. So, when the chance presented itself, I got myself

admitted in SUST. Today I work in the field that I love," said Ruby Paul, a programmer at the head office of one of the leading banks in Bangladesh.

Faizah Farzana is another sagacious presence who found her passion in working with robots. She is the Vice President and founding member of UIU Robotics, and even she had to digest words like 'Girls are just trouble.' Faizah responded with her work. She's already worked on line follower and maze solver robots and a number of other projects that command applause.

"People see you as a girl first, you have to make them see what you are capable of," she said pointing out that it's disheartening but not impossible to make your mark if you are determined.

If you think you must have a university degree to work with technology, you are mistaken. As Farhana Rahman, Senior Vice President of BASIS (Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services) points out. If you are interested and truly want to be part of it, you can study yourself and still make a difference. Farhana Rahman is also the first woman in the country to reach such a position at BASIS and she was very articulate about her journey.

As the CEO of UY Systems, a software company, she has been in the tech world for almost two decades. If you think you are having a difficult start, think again. Farhana Rahman started her journey in the tech world in 2003. Back then, it was a herculean task to take such a leap for a man. Imagine her struggles as a woman.

"We've had confirmed clients declining our projects simply because our company was owned by a woman. They didn't feel confident that I will survive in the industry," she recalled. But despite all these discouraging events, she never gave up. "It's always been challenging for women. I urge the younger generation not to give up."

The younger generation is often discouraged by what people say about the tech world, but Farhana Rahman thinks it's the opposite. "I think the Tech World is a better suiting field for women. They can actually do better and the working condition is much more convenient for us. More so in the modern world. You are already using a lot of technology. You just have to step up and stay updated. It's much easier these days. I had to start with a poor Internet connection that barely worked."

"It's seems challenging to start, but once you pass the initial challenges, it offers endless possibilities. As long as you don't give up, you can achieve great things," says Sumaiya Afrose Suma, who's currently working as a lecturer of Civil Engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. "Everyone was sceptical when I got myself into engineering. But I have proved myself and all those scepticisms have turned into support and pride," she added gleefully.

The stereotype itself is just silly if you think about it. The first programmer, Ada Lovelace was a woman. And let's not forget a certain Marie Curie while we are at it. Or Margaret Hamilton. Her code got humans on the moon after all!

There are plenty of examples all around us, one only has to look. What everyone involved and successful in the tech world does agree on is that there's absolutely no reason why the cliché should linger in the modern world. If one has the knowledge and willingness to fight for the position, one can mark their spot and eventually rise like Athena herself.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro

#PRESS RELEASE

Magical Threads commemorating Bangladesh's 50 years

In a brilliant move to glorify the artisanal skills of the craftsmen of Bengal and to commemorate Bangladesh turning 50, House of Ahmed, an ethnic luxury couture, has teamed up with Bibi Russell, fashion icon extraordinaire, to host the fashion show of the year.

In an outdoor press conference held by the gazebo on the cool afternoon of Thursday, 18 February 2021, the idea of Magical Threads Runway 2021 was revealed at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden. Headlined by Bibi Russell and House of Ahmed, expect the fashion show to be just as iconic if not more. In fact, expect it to be a true testament to Bangladesh's heritage and ethnicity, which is the entire vision of this endeavor.

Marking Bibi Russell's comeback in the fashion scene, Magical Threads will feature the heart and soul of Bangladesh. "I want to portray the magic and incredible work of the artisans of Bengal. It's fascinating to me how just a single thread can be intertwined with another, and another still, to create immaculate clothes and designs," muses Bibi, an artist renowned for her patriotism shining through her designs and a true conqueror of international fashion weeks, not to mention the founder of Fashion for Development. "Celebrating this ability while showcasing my honest work is what



Magical Threads hopes to accomplish and we're sure we will be triumphant in our efforts," Bibi further shares.

In a bid to appreciate the label "Made in Bangladesh," Ahmed Tuhin Reza, founder of House of Ahmed explains, "Bangladesh is known for its diversity and heritage. Its legacy translates beautifully on tapestries, weaves and designs that are quintessential only to Bengal. At House of Ahmed, we are purely motivated to revive this dying art and preserve the true essence of our culture. Magical Threads is simply a concerted effort shooting for the same stars."

Behind the glitz and glam of the fashion show, therefore, stand a much bigger picture – to multiply the economic value

of Bengal's artisans, uplift their lives and celebrate 50 magical years of Bangladesh.

Standing parallel to this initiative and among the attendees of the press conference were Tanzila Elma, Co-founder of House of Ahmed, Alexander Haeusler, Managing Director of Radisson, and Farzana Shakil, a household name that demands no introduction and the esteemed makeover partner of Magical Threads. Other partners include Sunsilk, Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden, Mutual Trust Bank Limited, FB Footwear Ltd and the event planner, Enchanted.

Magical Threads Runway 2021 is slated to make history on March 5, Friday.

By Ramisa Haque

Aarong launches 'Spring Rewards' campaign!

Aarong is announcing its 'Spring Rewards' campaign for its My Aarong Rewards and Club TAAGA members. Members can enjoy TK 500 off instantly on any apparel purchase of Tk 5000 or more. Moreover, there is a limited time offer for customers to become a My Aarong Rewards member by spending only Tk 5000 or more during this campaign period. The campaign ends on 6 March, 2021. Aarong is a social enterprise of BRAC, the largest non-government development organisation in the world.

LOVING AND LIVING WITH PLANTS
LAYLA KARIM



Rooftop gardening ideas

After a long COVID break, I returned to the column receiving a request from one of our readers, Tusher from Narayanganj, who wrote — “I have a big roof that I want to decorate with a garden. I’d like your suggestions in this regard. I basically want to know about plants that would grow on the walls of the roof’s railing, plants that would be a great choice for growing in pots, and tree beds. It would also be great if you could mention the names of the plants that I can find from a nursery.”

So, first, hello Tusher and thanks for your interest in rooftop gardening. How lovely that you have a big space to make your dream come true! First, let me tell you that I am not a professional in this field. As I have a personal interest like you, and have love for plants and green life, it is my mission to share my personal learning with others and learn from others too. Following your request, I shall try to share my experiences on overall roof gardening issues that might help you to some extent.

Let me start with the view of my next-door neighbour’s garden — in a not-so-



large space, but I found it relevant to this topic.

There are some critical issues of roof gardening — availability of sun light, and a proper drainage system as well as the load bearing capacity of the building; and then designing the space in a practical manner. At this stage, it would be good to get professional help for landscaping — designing the entire space and engagement of a professional ‘mali’ or gardener to do the real leg work. This consultation will help you in the long run, to have a well-planned garden to feel proud of. You may also go at it alone if you have the time. As an owner of the roof, the choice is plenty. You may grow all season flowers for a decorative garden or fruit bearing plants for a round-the-year fruit supply. You may also create a greenhouse for orchids you like, a small pond for water lilies, a grass bed under

an umbrella — ideal to have tea in the evening.

Before you make up your mind, you need to start with the very first question — how much daylight your roof gets — all day, partial, or for a few hours? Your plant choice will mostly be depending on those, say for fruit or flower-bearing big plants, sunlight and natural showers are necessary along with a good drainage system to get rid of the extra water from the roof.

For selection of the plant beds, I would suggest you to go permanent type for all types of plants according to the size, lifespan of the respective plants. Usually, the bigger plants get the wall and others are organised following the same rule.

You may engage the mason to construct the plant holders — long with deeper depth to grow big plants — medium height beds for the medium

range plants and so on. This way, you will be able to create layers of plants which will make the view nice too. Here, I would suggest you to go for the permanent type — cement-made holders with legs so that it saves your roof from damage. There should be some gaps at the bottom of each container to allow regular cleaning of accumulated clogs and most importantly, prevent your garden from becoming a home for rats!

As I said earlier, the general rule for a roof garden is to have big plants with longer life near the walls, such as for mango, orange/malta, guava, lychees, pomegranate or drum stick/shojne etc. I am in favour of creating a row of plants, but all depends on the length of the space and availability of sunlight in the area.

The next level is to create for semi-permanent type plants like papaya, lemon

or dragon fruits and such.

On the other side of the roof, especially the front side of your roof walls/railing, you may consider all-season low maintenance flowering plants like bougainvillea in a range of colours to create a year-long view.

You may also grow drop down creepers to give a greener look to your building. Beside the regular type, you can create a green roof with the help of a civil engineer by curating that part of the roof.

A roof garden allows us to try so many things — with big plants, evergreen grasses, shrubs and flowering plants. I personally prefer the *deshi* look than the curated garden. Rooftop gardening comes with so many options which have to be decided based on the availability of time, money and interest of the gardener/owner. As you have a large space, you have more options.

You can create a colour scheme of your garden after visiting a few nurseries and upon discussions with the associated people. You also need to ensure a steady water supply, for example by installing a portable pipe. In addition, engagement of a person who has interest, basic knowledge and love for plants will be essential. Your regular visits will ensure overall wellness of your garden.

Please note that rooftop gardening has its own uniqueness, as well as everyday challenges. There will be surprises and disappointments or heart breaks too. You need to be a plant lover for life to truly enjoy it!

Photo : Laila Karim

Please feel free to send me an email to share your thoughts, feedback, and photos of your garden, or to tell your story; or ask a question on gardening. Email: lifestyleds@yahoo.com



FUSION FLAVOURS
CHIANGMI TALUKDER
LENA



Hearty soups and stews

A bowl of soup warms us right up from within, giving us a core warmth that is sure to spread to every part of the body. Since soups, stews or broths are mostly liquid, they are a great way to stay hydrated and full. They give our immune system a boost and helps to stave off cold, flu, or any kind of seasonal discomfort as they are a great antidote for times when we are sick.

Most soups are loaded with disease-fighting nutrients, especially if we load up with fresh garlic, onion, ginger along with colourful vegetables and savoury herbs and spices.

Here are some fabulous soup and stew recipes to keep you warm and healthy this season.

PHO GA

Pho is Vietnamese soup made with 'Ga'/chicken or beef broth, rice noodles, various herbs, and thinly sliced meat, tofu or poultry. Due to its nutritious ingredients and high

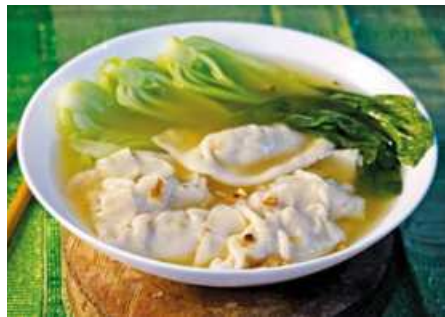


protein content, it may offer several benefits, including reduced inflammation and improved joint health.

Ingredients

To make the broth —

- 1 large onion
- 1 piece thumb-sized ginger
- 2 pods star anise
- 1 long cinnamon stick
- 4-6 black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- Salt to taste



- 1 whole chicken
- 2-3 litres water
- 100g rice noodles
- For garnish —
- Chopped onions
- 1 spring onion
- Red/green chilli
- Lemon juice
- Bean sprouts
- Basil leaf/cilantro/culantro
- Crispy fried shallots

Method

Toast cinnamon, star anise, and black peppercorn in a dry skillet over medium



Chakma tribe from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, known as 'amile-huro-juice'.

Roselle is a perennial shrub herb that has many amazing health benefits and has been used as a therapeutic plant for centuries. The sweet and tangy taste of roselle leaves and fruits makes the chicken broth more flavourful, delicious as well as nutritious.

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken
- 2 large onions chopped
- 1 tbsp garlic minced
- 1 tbsp ginger minced
- 1 tsp crushed cumin powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 4-5 sliced green chillies
- ¼ cup oil
- 1-2 litres water, according to your chicken size
- 10-15 pieces roselle fruit
- Salt to taste

Method

Cut the chicken into small pieces and transfer into a large pot, along with onion, ginger, garlic, salt, oil, turmeric, cumin, chillies. Mix well by hand and heat the pot in high-medium flame and stir it for a few minutes until water gets dry and oil comes out. Then pour water, cover with a lid and start braising in medium heat until the meat gets well-cooked.

When meat gets tender, add roselle fruit, cover the lid and simmer for another 3-5 minutes in low heat. Adjust soup quantity by adding extra water or heating for a few more minutes.

KIDNEY BEAN SOUP

Ingredients

- ¼ cup kidney beans
- ¼ cup chopped carrot
- ¼ cup chopped cauliflower
- ¼ cup chopped tomato
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- ½ tsp cumin powder
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt to taste
- 1 litre water
- Chopped coriander, for garnish
- 1 tsp butter, or clarified butter
- ½ tsp paprika powder

Method

Soak kidney beans overnight. Heat a large cooking pot in medium heat with oil. Sauté chopped onions and garlic until a nice aroma is released. Put drained beans, turmeric, cumin, salt, water and cook for 20 minutes. Then put carrot, tomato, cauliflower and cook for another 20 minutes.

Adjust the soup quantity with extra water if needed. Blend beans and vegetables using a hand blender and make smooth creamy soup. Transfer into a serving bowl. Garnish with chopped coriander and paprika oil.

Tip: To make paprika oil, melt butter/ghee in low heat pan for a minute, put paprika into hot melted butter, stir quickly and garnish on top of the soup.

Food and Photo: Chiangmi Talukder Lena

heat to release their aroma, or about 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer and set aside.

In the same skillet, place whole onion, ginger, and roast them over high heat until they are blackened outside and oozing their juice, or about 5 to 10 minutes.

Remove from heat, slice ginger, and peel onion and remove onion's tip and root.

In a large pot, place chicken along with water, fish sauce, salt, sugar, roasted onion, ginger, toasted spices, and bring it to boil. Hard boil soup for 10-15 minutes, and



meanwhile skimming residue off the surface of soup carefully. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 1 hour and skimming as needed.

After 1 hour, simmer, remove chicken from soup, make thin slices and set aside. Meanwhile, prepare rice noodles by following directions of the package you are using.

In a serving bowl, place cooked noodles, sliced chicken pieces, chopped onion, spring onion, chopped chilli, basil, cilantro or any herb. Pour enough hot soup to cover the noodles. Sprinkle fried shallots right on top and lemon juice as required.

DILL FISH STEW

Ingredients

- 200g rohu or any fish, cube cut
- 100g dill
- 2 medium sized onions, chopped
- ½ tsp chopped ginger
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- 2-3 green chillies, sliced
- Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp oil

2 cups water

Method

In a large cooking pot, place fish cubes, chopped onion, ginger, chillies, tomato, salt, oil, turmeric powder and give a good squeezing mix by using a clean hand.

Pour water, cover with a lid and stew it in medium-low flame for 8-10 minutes. Add dill and simmer for 1-2 minutes in low heat with covered lid.

WONTON SOUP

Ingredients

- 200g ground meat
- 2 tbsp chopped spring onion
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp oyster sauce
- ½ tsp sugar
- Salt to taste
- ¼ tsp white pepper powder
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 egg white
- 1 tbsp corn flour
- Wonton wrapper
- 1 litre vegetable/chicken stock
- 2-3 baby bok choy

Method

In a large mixing bowl, put ground meat, spring onion, soy sauce, oyster sauce, sugar, salt, white pepper powder, sesame oil, egg white and corn flour. Mix well by hand for about 2-3 minutes to combine all the ingredients to make a smooth wonton filling.

Take a wonton wrapper and put about 1 teaspoon of meat filling in the centre and damp all edges with water by pressing a wet finger all over to seal the filling. Fold or wrap the wonton as preferred.

Heat the stock in medium-low heat. Place wonton into the boiling stock one by one, make sure not to overcrowd the pot. Simmer wonton for about 10-15 minutes. Once the wontons are floating on the pot, it means they are well cooked. Cut all baby bok choy in half and place inside the soup pot and simmer for 2 minutes with a covered lid. Transfer into a bowl and garnish with chilli oil.

ROSELLE CHICKEN JUICE

It is a traditional braised chicken soup of the

Slow is better for the world: Broqué founder talks slow fashion

In a world of “buy more, buy new, get it FAST, throw it faster,” what is slow fashion and should you care?

Today’s consumerist culture beckons us to consume at a faster rate than ever before. Thanks to mass production, we can afford to simply discard products we no longer want, and replace them instantly with minimal impact on our wallets. While around 80 billion new garments are produced globally each year, currently 80 percent of all clothing produced eventually ends up in incinerators or landfill sites.

In Bangladesh, we not only manufacture the cheap textile, we consume it as well as discard it at a similar pace. Don’t believe me? Plan a trip to Kamrangirchar and you’ll see vast mounds of discarded textile, tannery leftovers, and plastics, fomenting hell in the environment.

Slow fashion is a sustainability movement which challenges social cultures surrounding the fashion industry and encourages both retailers and consumers to take a more ethical approach to fashion. As the industry continues to accelerate, and with it, its carbon footprint, there’s never been a more important time to reconsider your purchase choices.

Slow fashion is a lifestyle movement. It’s something that requires its believers to slowly, but consciously, make eventual lifestyle shifts which accumulate to betterment of the world around us. The world is slowly moving towards sustainable lifestyle practices too. The value of the ethical clothing market increased by 19.9 percent in 2018, according to Ethical Consumer magazine.

Today, Star Lifestyle talks to visionary and founder of slow fashion retailer, “Broqué,” Mahenaz Chowdhury. Broqué is the first and only upcycling fashion innovation lab in Bangladesh. The Broqué circular business model functions on curating quality vintage clothing, garments surplus and wastes, and is one of the first public advocates



of second-hand clothes in Bangladesh. Mahenaz is also a fashion-designer, artist and an environmentalist. Her design philosophy is ensuring zero wastage in the value chain.

What is upcycling?

Upcycling is taking old, discarded, or unused clothing and transforming them into something which is better than the original, by design and value additions.

Tell us a little bit more about the unique approach of Broqué.

Broqué is the first and only high-end upcycled, bespoke specialist that designs one-of-a-kind wearable art in Bangladesh. As an artist, I enjoy creating through deconstructing and I love translating my art into apparel designs. This is how each piece I make is unique. It’s rather a statement piece to symbolise freedom of expression, of a rebel rising unafraid of taking a stand for what is right. This is my slow fashion movement.

Broqué has been building a community of fashion and environmental advocates. Over the last two years, it has hosted clothes swaps, plastic recycling workshops and collected over 800 kgs of garments waste and second-hand clothes. It held Bangladesh’s first online clothing auction during the early months of the pandemic lockdown to support the tea garden workers of Sylhet, and it was a big success!

Tell us more about the sustainability process at Broqué.

Broqué is a conscious design innovation

lab that repurposes, reuses and recycles from the collection point to delivery to disposal and back to collection of used/ garments surplus. While I maintain a 70-90 percent recycling rate, there is still a need for new materials, but I strictly thrive on the supply chain made in Bangladesh.

Most sustainable street-wear labels are regarded as Western. Is heritage and cultural linking important to Broqué?

When I consider creating a piece, I want



to keep my culture and heritage on the forefront of everything I do and I want to uplift the communities I am a part of. Broqué is an exploration and a reflection of an urban ‘90s tech glazed *deshi* girl, connecting back to her rich roots as a 21st century Bangladeshi independent woman. In this ‘glocalised’ culture, the linkage lies in not just the look of the clothes, but also through the stories of the garment creation process, people involved, craftsmanship inspiration and so much more.

Tell us a bit about the international and national collaborations you are doing with Broqué. How do they raise the platform of Bangladesh or promote our people and heritage?

Recently, I was part of a sustainable fashion design exchange program for Bangladeshi and German designers, hosted by “Local International,” a joint collaboration between Art academy of Berlin, BGMEA, National Crafts Council of Bangladesh. This platform connected me to fascinating

artists and renowned photographers and videographers and musicians to create my exhibition materials.

Locally, I have partnered with Basha Boutique and Garbageman BD where I am designing a unique line of recycled accessories by using their waste. Their accesses to foreign markets and international forums are great platforms to promote Bangladesh as a sustainable champ. Another engagement is with Pet Rock Vintage, an authentic vintage store in Bangladesh run independently by Juneyna Kabir.

We have hosted our first online cloth swap event on 26 September, the first of its kind anywhere. Our aim is to build a community of active fashion-conscious members that loves sharing their stories of second-hand clothes and swap amongst the group across borders.

You’re doing a project on upcycled masks — How are Broqué masks different and how do you ensure safety?

Broqué is an activist, a rebel with a cause! The purpose of Broqué producing masks was to support marginalised communities of Bangladesh during the pandemic. So, I started my #mask4mask campaign and I’ve donated over 100 masks and a percentage of sales went to various other marginal communities.

I strictly maintain the CDC guidelines. Safety, comfort and fit of the masks has been the priority. I have been able to replace over 32,000 single-use masks over a period of three months by producing long-lasting reusable masks. Triple layered with a non-absorbent layer and adjustable cloth straps and optional elastic; it reduces use of polyester. The masks cater to clients’ needs, preferences and sizes. Because I love painting, I do custom masks as well. Each piece becomes a wearable art!

By Dibarah Mahboob
Photo: Broqué

**সাদা
আব এক
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ফাস্ট ওয়াশ**

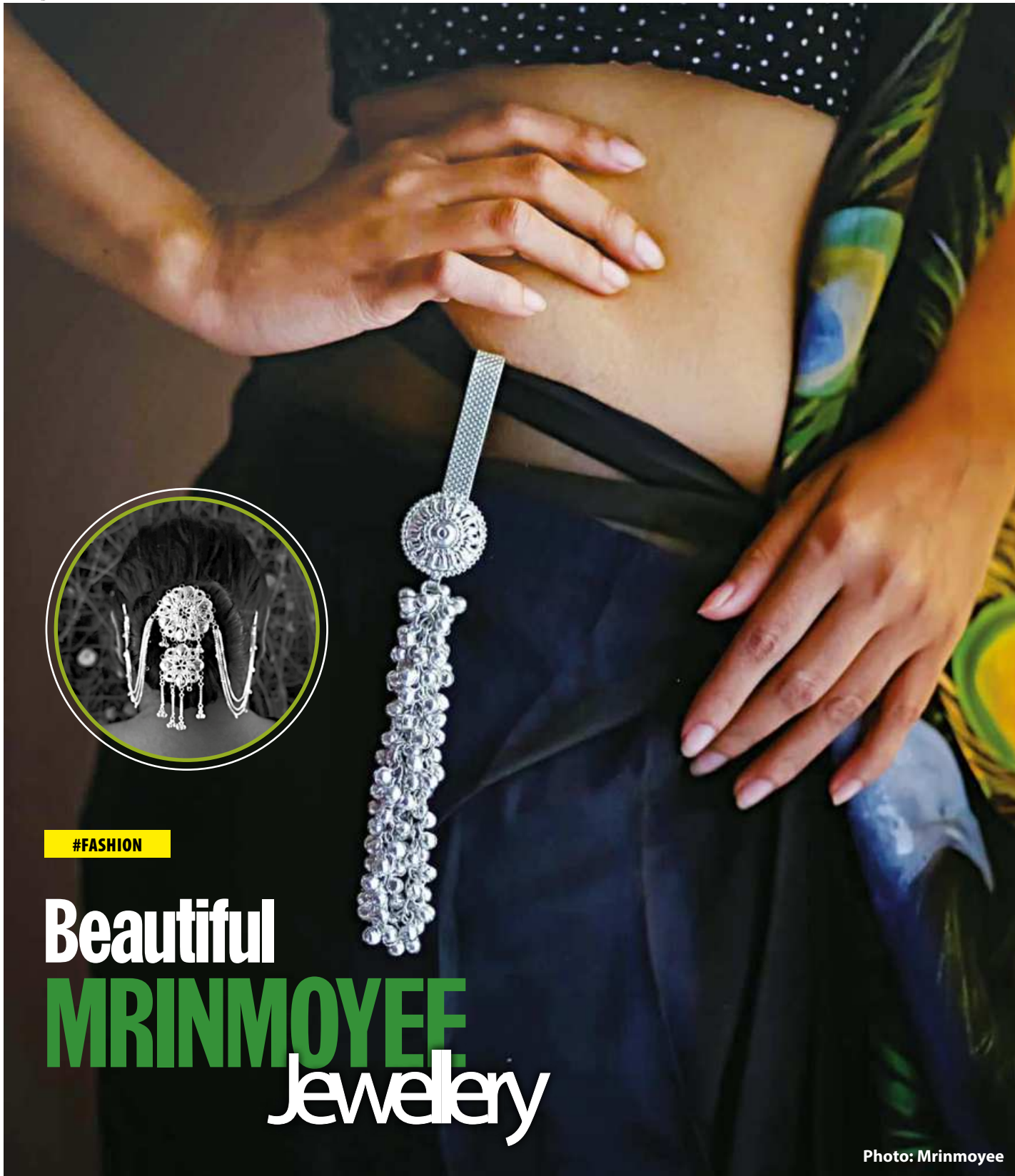
Fast wash
DETERGENT
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Multi-Booster
কাপড়ের যে কোন দাগ ময়লাকে নিমিষে দূর করে

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#FASHION

Beautiful MRINMOYEE Jewellery

Photo: Mrinmoyee



Two friends, Samia Rashid Hai and Rakshanda Mabin, both jewellery enthusiasts, decided to start a company back in 2016. The reason was clear and simple — they wanted to share their love for jewellery with everyone, including friends and family.

"I used to order bespoke jewellery all the time; some of the designs were manufactured based on inspirations while others were jotted down on spot. Later, when people began to appreciate the creativity, inquiring about the sources, that's when the idea 'to start a jewellery business popped up,'" revealed Hai, co-founder of Mrinmoyee.

Both of the friends decided to name their line after the central character in one of noted novelist Humayun Ahmed's, popular books. "The name Mrinmoyee is very close to our hearts," said Hai.

Rakshanda Mabin, the co-founder, also spoke about the unique selling point of their brand. "We want to portray Mrinmoyee as an affordable jewellery line which evokes the feeling of nostalgia. Our items are marked at

a reasonable price and can be easily procured by everyone, including students. The inspiration behind each design is based on our age-old traditions, and heritage inspired," Mabin said.

And true the entrepreneurs were to their words; every piece at Mrinmoyee is unique, the *chabir gocha* is Mughal inspired, the *khonpar kata* is an exact replica of what our grandmothers used to wear during their times. With a mix and match of extraordinary designs that are both timeless and innovative at the same time, Mrinmoyee promises to provide jewellery that is unique and yet very much relatable.

So where does the Mrinmoyee team wish to see their little venture in the future, especially when their brand has already won the hearts of many?

"We want to go global," confided Hai.

She continued to say, "There's a huge demand for our silver and antique-gold, coated brass jewellery abroad. And we want to capture this clientele and provide them with tasteful pieces that are entirely 'Made in Bangladesh,'" revealed the beaming entrepreneur.

To show the innovative Mrinmoyee team some love, I have already ordered an eye-catching pair of danglers from them. What are you waiting for?

By Fashion Police
Photography: Rumki Rahman
Model: Sobia Ameen
Jewellery: Mrinmoyee
Essentials:

<https://www.facebook.com/mrinmoyee>
<https://instagram.com/mrinmoyee.dhaka?igshid=ivc6dy4azpgx>
 Contact: 01740-159709