



#ADI

An inspiring workplace: Aadi BD

“Working hard is important, but there is something that matters even more believing in yourself.”

These very words were uttered by Harry Potter when he was addressing his peers in the Order of the Phoenix. Those words were valuable to anyone who was striving to succeed back then and they are just as important in today's world, especially for each and every one of those women who are working day in and day out to make their presence known to the world.

Sure, it's the modern world — it's the 21st century, where rockets land themselves; but has our society really changed as much as we'd have liked? The workplace is still not as smooth for women as it should be and one can't just ignore that fact. In the midst of that, Aadi holds an example that shows a ray of hope.

The idea for Aadi (www.aadi.com.bd) blossomed in 2017, and the company started its journey in 2018. Even though it's an online marketplace, it's a bit different from the rest. Aadi allows the local artisans, brands and manufacturers to sell their

products across borders. Local artisans, brands and manufacturers, particularly women, have a chance to make their brand's presence known to the rest of the world.

While there are a lot of businesses in our country still reluctant to let women into key roles, Aadi is having none of that. Their CEO, Fatima Begum, had some insightful words



to say. “In our workplace, we prioritise to consider humans as professionals, not stereotype them as men or women. We believe in fair and equal chances in leadership,” she said, pointing out that she wanted to launch Aadi as an icon of empowerment as well.

Nusrat Jahan, another woman in one of the key roles at Aadi, who handles the legal affairs and Human Resources, thinks women should be more vocal in our country to make their voice heard.

“Girls should be brought to the front line; don't just leave them in the back,” she interjected, referring to the prejudices still existing in our country. “When a person starts working, they need to feel valued and girls are often deprived of that,” she added, saying that Aadi is very open to hearing all they have to say and she's learning here.

You ever wondered if you are pursuing two dreams? Or feel like it's too difficult and you can't do it? You really shouldn't, and Maswiyat Iftekhar is proof as to why. She plays Basketball for Bangladesh National Women's Basketball team. She's also studying architecture at North South University and at the same time, working part time at Aadi. Sure, there have been difficult days with her commutes, but she's been with Aadi from the beginning and the friendly workplace certainly made it easier to cope.

Aadi is still a start-up and a start-up is usually more demanding than your average business. It asks for longer office hours, doing a lot of research on the market, building a new team and ensuring that there is a balance in everything. When you put all that together, it ends up being an eco-system and like any eco-system, you have to maintain the balance or it might fall apart. Aadi thinks a balance of women in the team will not only maintain that eco-

system but will boost it.

Teams are human beings working together, like the cogs of a wheel, and every now and then, a team member might need some support. But it's worth it.

Take Bijoy Lakshmi, head of Marketing at Aadi, for example. She is a mother and has to take on the challenge of maintaining her family and her job at the same time. Aadi understands that and is very flexible. Lakshmi on the other hand, appreciates the support and makes up for it with her work.

“Our HR has policies making the work hours flexible for new mums and giving them time to take care of their children, something that many organisations still do not think about, but here at Aadi, we offer that,” she said, pointing out that Aadi is very supportive and focuses on empowering women.

There used to be a time when women in crucial roles were only found in fiction; those days are long gone. Women are proving themselves in every sector and they have left ample evidence that not only are they able to handle leadership roles, they are good at it. Aadi holds no prejudice in their workplace, and its time this culture became commonplace all across the country.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro