

The story of Manas

For few designers, it is no longer about fashion, runway, or even fame. It's about creating a legacy, and leaving a better world for the consumers; and while on the journey if there are a few thousand followers on Facebook and Instagram then —why not?

One such brand is Manas by Faiza Ahmed, a popular name in the Bangladesh Sustainable Fashion Arena, a brand that has already marked itself as a torch bearer to establishing change.

"Manas means 'Mind Power', in Sanskrit," reveals Faiza Ahmed, the proprietor and the creative head of the sustainable fashion brand.

"I was always a fan of *deshi* products including fabric, motifs, craftsmanship, and artwork. However, when I looked for something new to wear, majority of the times I did not like what was being offered in the market, and this very fact encouraged me to make my own clothes," said a determined Ahmed.

While we know that many designers are influenced by the ongoing trends because sales become easier, when things go viral, Ahmed swam against the tide.

"I never conformed to styles that were taking the world by storm. I only produced designs that the creative inside me found interesting. From the very beginning my thoughts and ideologies were to revive the old-age customs of the society, to revive artwork, literature etc., which people almost forgot with time. I wanted my fashion label to mirror the classic and the intellectual heritage of the world," reflected Ahmed.

And based on that notion, Manas produced unique lines associated to Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Quamrul Hassan, and even Mark Knopfler on handloom saris and textiles. "The idea at the beginning was to promote global legends, both national and international, but considering the legal and the ethical aspect I had to put a halt to the idea, because of legal complicacies regarding

permission and officialisation. Later, I began contacting the closest acquaintances of the renowned names and continued only with lines where I could take a formal permission. In the future, I wish to work majorly with Bangladeshi artistes, and promote them to the local plus global audience," said Ahmed.

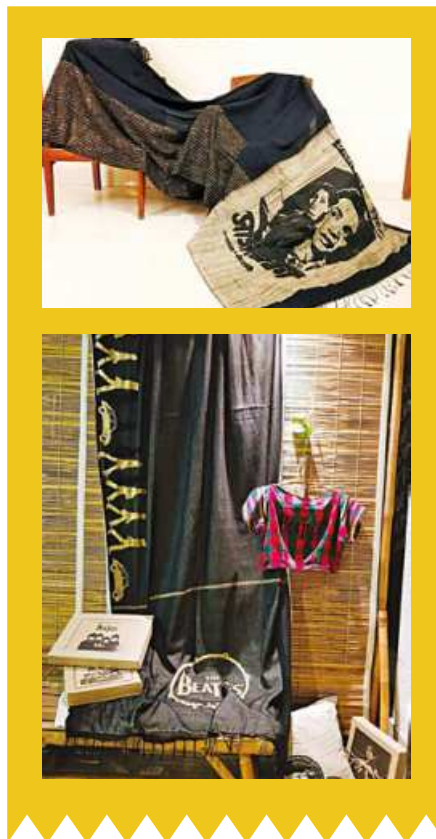
Just when we thought Ahmed would stick to one particular idea, she informed us of several others. Promoting artists, novelists and poets were not all she was thinking about. Ahmed wanted to make huge impact with Manas, in the arena of fashion activism.

"It may not be very popular in our country today, but it is quite popular elsewhere. I want Manas to tell the stories that we usually refrain from discussing," said the self-proclaimed fashion activist.

She continued, "And based on my experience, a six-yard-sari is the best alternative to being vocal about a subject-



matter or even penning a topic of concern. This encouraged me to begin my work with 'Crimson Pride' where I discuss menstruation, and how it is a matter of pride for every human being. Menstruation allows us, women to embrace motherhood, it is a respectful and very much natural- biological process, why must we act as if it's something to be ashamed of?" explained the designer.



literature, and music. No one is bothered about wearing expensive clothes, shoes or accessories, the main theme is to enjoy an evening with substance that impresses our souls, instead of being fake and materialistic," said the diva.

Along with Manas, Cha Chakra and many other brands that Faiza Ahmed single-handedly promotes, one thing was clear; Ahmed wanted to revive the Bengali heritage, traditions and culture. Through all her initiatives, she wants us to come closer to nature, our own souls and be more educated about the heritage of our country.

"It was never just about clothes and fashion, it was always about something bigger, something that makes us more human," concludes Ahmed.

By Mehryn Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Manas, by Faiza Ahmed

Launching her latest collection – Crimson Pride, at one of the most talked about sustainable fashion exhibition of the year, Ahmed received a lot of praise, encouraging her to go global with her special lines and initiating similar creative projects in the future.

Meanwhile, while collaborating with handloom artists from the periphery of the country and weaving handloom cotton and *deshi* silk saris with an intellectual twist, she also initiated few other projects at her quaint little store in the 'tri-state' area.

"Staying busy with our lives have made us forget about the get-togethers that we once used to enjoy. The COVID situation is unique, but even apart from this, many of us refrained from being social even when things were normal; the pressure of dressing up and spending lots of money for a simple get-together simply got on our nerves!"

"At Cha-Chakra, we encourage everyone to be their plain simple selves, where we have get-togethers, over a cup of tea and light snacks, discussing poetry,



HOROSCOPE



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Your bankbook will suffer. Restrictions will put a damper on your relationship. Don't overspend on luxury items. Changes in your home are apparent. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Catch up on any correspondence you've neglected. Take time to listen to children. Be careful; you may say something you'll regret later. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Your emotional reaction will be dependent upon your partner's responsiveness. Don't let your emotions interfere with completing your chores. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Try to curb your bad habits. Good friends will give you honest answers. If you have to deal with large institutions, be careful not to make waves. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

You can make money. Don't hesitate to voice your opinions. Try not to lend or borrow money this week. Friends may not be completely honest with you. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Opportunities to make advancements are evident. You may find it impossible to get the rest you require. Lovers may prove unworthy of your affection. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

You need to take a good look at all sides of an issue. Matters pertaining to work must be completed before you leave. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Be extra careful with your valuables. Your outgoing nature might work against you this week. You can ask for favours and get sound advice. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

A romantic dinner at home should be most satisfying. Re-evaluate your position and make decisions about your future goals. Stick to your guns. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

You could be your own worst enemy. Your diplomacy will be of utmost importance this week. Avoid being intimately involved with colleagues. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Think of changes to your home that will please and add to everyone's comfort. Put aside any decisions concerning your position at work. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Discuss your problems if you wish to rectify them. Call friends or relatives you don't get to see very often. Helping children may be rewarding and challenging. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.