

#FASHION & BEAUTY

The dazzling Jamdanis of Rabindranath Ekhane Kokhono Khetee Ashenni



The cover of the book gave me an early introduction to Mushkan Zuberi; her deep-set eyes lined with pitch black kohl, olive toned skin, and an attractive red dot in the middle of her forehead, and somehow everything else fell into place from that point on. Srijit Mukherjee, the director of REKKA, and Anindo Banerjee from Hoichoi gave me more details and this made me understand Zuberi better. To recreate their ideation, I dressed myself in my mother's old cotton Jamdani and sent them a picture, and there was simply no turning back from that point on!

— Azmeri Haque Badhon

I watched the web series for three main reasons — my undying affection for thrillers written by Bengali writers (this particular one also had a hint of supernatural thrown into it – talk about luck!). For the protagonists of the series, played by favourites (colossal fan of Azmeri Haque Badhon and Rahul Bose). And last but not the least, a particular set of wardrobes, particularly that of the character Mushkan Zuberi, also played by Badhon.

Yes! Can't be glad enough that she was clad mostly in exquisite pieces of Dhakai Jamdani all throughout the series. The oozing splendour just made me fall in love with the craftsmanship all over again.

At times, when people have been experimenting with the regal Jamdani and almost stripping it off its authenticity with additional (read: unnecessary) embellishments, REKKA proved once

again the sophistication behind simplicity, especially when it's Jamdani, it means there's simply no space or even need for experimentation.

The web series begins with scenes where Zuberi is clad in a daisy-white Jamdani with paisley motifs and tiny red dots, a modern-cut blouse, antiquated silver jewellery, and a maroon-red shawl, the gorgeous Bengali girl shines like a pearl in her wardrobe. Had I not read the book by Mohammad Nazim Uddin earlier, it would have been hard for me to focus on the storyline because my eyes would be wandering in glorification of the apparel.

The second shot with Zuberi had been equally enthralling because this time, she was wearing a special Jamdani with wine-coloured motifs, a *mangalsutra* style neckpiece, matching lipstick and a tiny red dot on her forehead as *teep*.

Right when I thought nothing else could elevate the character more, Zuberi enters the screen in an emerald green Jamdani and an exquisite pearl necklace and the character immediately transforms into a

real-life person with her own thoughts, feelings and convictions.

Badhon playing Mushkan Zuberi proved once again that Bengali women, with their attractive olive skin tones, didn't need much to impress, except for the right attire, simplicity and a whole lot of confidence to revamp their looks any given day.

After the first few shots, there were not many wardrobe changes in between, maybe a plain ivory-white silk sari and speckled beige silk to carry through, but then the producers offered to make the ending trump the entire wardrobe collection.

Zuberi shines like a star in this particular scene, clad a white and Chartreuse yellow Jamdani. To be more precise, the screens simply lit-up as she moved about in the classy sari with poise and élan.

Speaking about the styling magnificence, it seemed only justified that we speak to the actress herself. And Azmeri Haque Badhon, along with her infectious smile, had a lot to share with her ardent fan.

"The wizardry happened because of extremely creative people like Sanchita Bhattacharjee, our costume designer,

Somnath Kundu, makeup artist and Sima Ghosh, hair makeover artist. These people are no less than magicians; they helped me bring Mushkan Zuberi alive along with the script, direction and acting," opined Badhon.

Thanks to her approachable nature, we did get a lot of information on styling from the lead actor, but a major information had still been missing. We were yet to be familiarised with the source of the magnificent Jamdanis and Badhon was only 'all smiles' upon inquiry.

"Thank God you asked, I am a big fan of the brand Zaaya, it's a local Jamdani house with an active online presence. I asked the owner for several Jamdanis, right before leaving Dhaka for the part, and she willingly reached out in an extremely short time and the rest of the spellworking is visible on screen," said the revered actor.

Yes, we certainly did witness the magic on-screen. And what a 'special blend' it was! Something to etch into our memories for a long time to come.

While the story behind REKKA was all about a scheming woman who seduced men to do her bidding, it was mostly about her wardrobe and choice of styling for many of us. The backstory of the mysterious 19th century Bengali elite added to the plotline just made it ten times more interesting. After all, what identities would we have sans the unique stories of our past, our lineage and heritage crafts?

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Collected – Azmeri Haque Badhon / Hoichoi

