

JINET FATEMA - 2006



Proprietor of Jahan Metals

She is a self-made entrepreneur. She has been able to show how items deemed waste can be transformed into exportable products just through creativity and integrity.

This is Zinet Fatema, one of the most innovative woman entrepreneurs in the country. She owns Jahan Metal. And she has left a mark of outstanding performance in the domain of industrial periphery.

Springing up her factory of metals, tin, and glass materials in 1998, Fatema started exporting to Europe in 2000. Turning out metal garden accessories, bakery utilities, shoeboxes, umbrella and candle stands, vases, jugs and glasses, and bowls, Jahan Metal's products are uniquely attractive with a rustic and hand-hewn look.

Born in Chattogram in 1969, Fatema aimed to be a lawyer from her childhood. She said that she was attracted by the lawyer's apron during her childhood. But I had to change my vision, while I discovered myself to do something on my own.

After being married in 1991, her husband Md Zakirul Islam, a handicraft businessman, always inspired her to venture into business. But most of the time, Fatema refused his proposal, as she intended to start out on her own. The door was opened when her husband decided to put down his handicraft business. A self-made and independent woman, Fatema even

turned down a proposal of financial assistance from her husband and other family members.

When asked about how she copes with the greatest failures in her career, she remarks laughingly that her spirit of sportsmanship motivates her to venture into unknown areas that have potential.

She reveals she started her venture with a minimum amount of Tk 1 lakh. At one stage, she could overcome the financial crisis when one of her buyers came forward to finance her business and she established a glass factory near Narsingdi district. And her metal factory, established with Fatema's own finance,

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is located at Uttarkhan in Uttara, Dhaka.

Earlier, Fatema got some experience of making oyster jewellery and some other handicraft items when her husband was involved with such business. But she did not think that her metal and recycle glass item could be exported.

"I thought business is a matter of huge investment and huge return," Fatema said.

Fatema used to visit some international fairs as part of her husband's business. While visiting such a fair at Frankfurt in Germany, Fatema found that some Vietnamese traders

showcased recycle glass and tin made items for export purposes. Fatema was surprised to see the simple product at an international fair, which was widely available in the Bangladeshi market.

Upon returning home, Fatema visited some local glass and tin factories to get ideas about the business. With a little amount of money, Fatema started her venture of Jahan Metal. Her metal products became popular to some of her foreign buyers and she showcased some local recycle glass items to another international fair. She was depressed, as she did not get any spot order from the fair.

Several factors had drawn Fatema's attraction to such handicraft: firstly, this was not a field she was familiar with, secondly, she felt that this was an enterprise of something exceptional, which involves local and foreign clients.

Fatema is happy that her family life is not hampered at all because of her business, she can stand beside her children in case of their illness and help them finish their homework, as the office is set up in a part of her home.

Fatema's determination, passion, and commitment have made Jahan Metal what it is today. She has recently started supplying to the local market, although the bulk of the products are meant for export. The export market for handicrafts is very complex as the taste and requirement of consumers are always changing. Through participation in international trade fairs, Jahan Metal came in contact with the buyers directly and receives information about the present trends in the market.

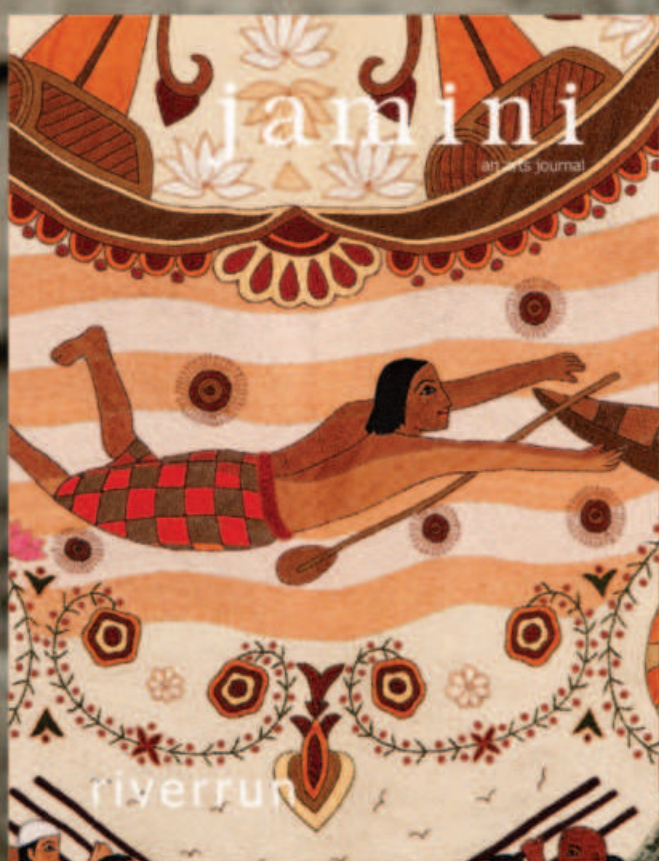
Fatema believes that professionalism is the pillar of growth and success. Her organisation is divided into four sections: marketing, procurement, production, and export. All the departments are supervised by respective managers, who directly report to her. When recruiting new people for her ever-expanding company, new incumbents receive hands-on training from the supervisors.

During the training or probationary period, candidates are kept under observation for sincerity, intuition, and working attitude. They also receive training on workplace safety, and first aid facilities are provided on time, as and when needed. Gender balance is a concern among the factory workers. The metal section employs 16 women and the glass unit employs 150 women. Some of the workers are from the minority communities.

Her efforts have been previously recognised and awarded by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and she received the Best Innovative Woman Award.

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