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FASHION REIMAGINED

Sami Alam creates waves in French fashion scene

On 23 October the fashion capital of the world, Paris, was left in awe as it was treated to an immersive journey showcasing Bangladeshi craftsmanship at its finest. The orchestrator of this brilliant spectacle was none other than Sami Alam. In his two-part show, "Made in Bangladesh", he highlighted Bangladesh's rich heritage and blended it with French fashion.

Not many Bangladeshis can captivate their audience like Sami Alam. His vision and his ability to articulate ideas into creations swayed the often hard-to-please French audience. This, however, was not Sami's first show in France. He has previously enchanted the Parisian crowd with his talent during his Master's Programme at the International Fashion Academy but this time he did it again on a grander scale.

"My first show was a conceptual academic collection which was showcased amongst other designers," Alam explained. However, this time around the spotlight was completely on him. "The show was fully curated by me. I am not just talking about my collection but also every detail of the show."

Of course, this was a huge task to pull off and Sami had to pay a lot of attention

to every detail. He had teams from both Bangladesh and France working together to make everything happen and described the experience as amazing and stressful at the same time.

"The most challenging part was to balance both cultures in one frame as the cultural elements are very different from each other," he elaborated.

Alam might be a fashion designer by profession but he considers himself more of a storyteller and uses fashion as his language. His storytelling abilities were on full display in "Made in Bangladesh" rather than being just a fashion show. He presented a fictional journey where the clothes, poetry, styling, music, and choreography all combined to tell one unified universe containing elements of Sami's Bangladeshi roots and his love affair with French heritage history and style.

The collection had 20 looks in total divided into two phases: "Weaver's

Prophecy" and "Culture and Love" and Sami walked us through the entire show in great detail.

"The show starts with lines of "Nakshi Kantha Math" by great poet Jasimuddin which leads to the first phase, Weaver's Prophecy. This phase was heavily influenced by Bangladesh's rural landscape and featured blue and green dresses with embroideries of Bangladeshi villages," he stated.

This phase made full use of Dhakai Muslin, Jamdani, Nakshi Kantha, and Tangail Tant Sari and Sami reimagined versions of typical rural characters like krishok (farmer), bou (wife), baul, zamindar (with a homage to Rabindranath Tagore) and added his unique twist to them.

"Nakshi Kantha is blended with suede leather; a vest of gamcha made with leather detailing with extra flared shredded lungi-pants; a corset is made of gabardine with handmade Krisnochura flower over it and the phase culminated

with a Jamdani gown," he described.

In the second phase, the set began with lines from "Le Petit Prince" and featured French culture draped in Bangladeshi zest. "We began the second phase with a reimagined look of the character Victor Hugo on a top and skirt made of French style tweeds".

At the show's climax, Sami entered the stage with a model sporting the red, Jamdani gown. He ended the show by revealing the words "Made in Bangladesh" written on the back of the gown in gold and white pipes to a standing ovation.

Sami is a designer who is heavily inspired by literature, poetry, movies, music, pop culture, politics, generational thoughts, global culture, and nature. He wants to continue playing with different textiles and express his thoughts to the world through his collections.

Not many Bangladeshis can captivate their audience like Sami Alam can and the reception from the often hard-to-please French audience is a testament to that.

By Irfan Aziz
Photo: Courtesy

