

#PERSPECTIVE

WEDDINGS, WEAVERS, AND HERITAGE

Choosing taant to support Bangladesh's artisans

As the year winds down, Bangladesh's neighbourhoods come alive with the anticipation of yet another wedding season. Homes are adorned, alleys sparkle with lights, and the air buzzes with excitement as families prepare for celebrations. In our search for vibrant sarees and panjabis, it's worth pausing to consider the hands that weave these garments.



The country's taant (handloom) industry — a vital piece of the nation's cultural and economic fabric — is currently struggling under the weight of economic challenges. This season, our support for these artisans, who breathe life into traditional garments, is more important than ever.

A LABOUR OF LOVE AND HERITAGE

Bangladesh's taant industry has deep roots, extending back through centuries and interwoven with the nation's cultural identity. The industry's resilience has withstood wars, economic downturns, and political upheaval but today it faces a more insidious threat — consumer disinterest and limited local support.

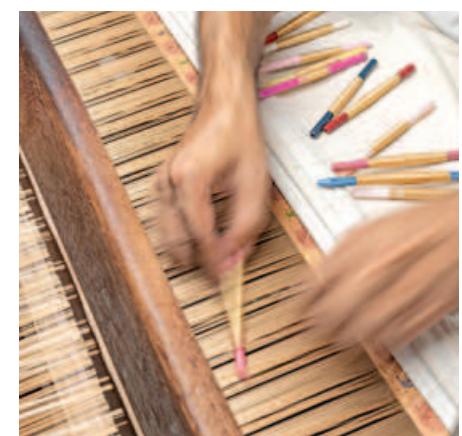
Kutub Uddin, a weaver at Benaroshi Polli in Mirpur 10, who has been weaving since his childhood, reflects on how his career began out of necessity in the years following Bangladesh's independence. His family, hit by poverty, relied on weaving

to survive.

Over the decades, he watched as demand for handloom Benaroshi sarees fluctuated, with recent years seeing a noticeable decline. "Ten or twelve years ago, Benaroshi sarees were in high demand," he says. "But now, the industry is in crisis."

Although demand rises slightly during the wedding season, imported sarees, especially from India, flood the market and divert customers away from local artisans.

The weaver explains that creating a Benaroshi saree can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on its intricacy. In the past, he worked alongside a team where each person



specialised in a step of the process, from twisting threads to making zari. However, many of his former colleagues have left the industry, taking up jobs as rickshaw pullers or in restaurants to support their families.

Today, local weavers like him are overshadowed by cheaper, imported alternatives, which deprive Bangladesh's taant industry of the support it needs to survive.

The process of creating a handloom saree is labour-intensive and requires immense skill, yet the artisans are paid modestly for their work. A weaver in Chapai Nawabganj explains that they are paid per yard, with a single weaver managing to produce three to four yards on a good day.