



“Prices have dropped. Yes, some premium sarees fetch higher prices, but they are limited. Most of our sarees — those in the range of Tk 3,000 to 4,000 — are struggling in the market. The demand is declining, and we can’t recover.”

The introduction of power looms and mass-production techniques has allowed sarees to be made at a fraction of the time and cost. Unlike traditional handlooms, which can take days or weeks to complete one saree, power looms can produce dozens in a single day. This shift has led to a major drop in prices, forcing handloom weavers into an unfair competition.

At one time, Tangail sarees were considered an investment piece, passed down through generations. However, the influx of cheap, machine-made alternatives has altered consumer habits. Today, customers opt for lower-cost, synthetic-blended alternatives rather than investing in handwoven sarees.

One weaver informed us that they are now being forced to sell at an unsustainable price of Tk 420 per saree just to compete.

Atyiar Rahman, General Secretary of the Balla Union Traders’ Association, shared his concerns: “Even though we buy raw materials at a high price, we end up selling sarees for less than what they cost to make. At this rate, the handloom industry will collapse. Many weavers have already left the trade, burdened by debt. If the government doesn’t intervene, this entire community will disappear.”

**A crisis of costs and debt**

Handloom weaving requires high-quality materials such as cotton, silk, and dyes, but the cost of these essentials has skyrocketed. Abdul Malek, a former weaver, who was once successful in the trade but later had to sell his handloom machines, explained the sharp increase in production costs: “Once we used to buy materials for Tk 1,300, and now we have to spend Tk 4,000. Costing is a big factor for the weavers.”

This dramatic rise in prices means that weavers must invest more upfront to continue their craft, but their earnings have not increased proportionally. Moreover, unable to afford new materials, many weavers take loans or buy on credit — only to find themselves trapped in a cycle of debt and loss.

Talha grieved, “You talk about supporting Tangail sarees, but the reality is, there is no real assistance. Our artisans work long hours — four, five, even ten hours a day — to create each saree, yet they earn very little. Meanwhile, Indian and Chinese fabrics flood the market, controlled by powerful syndicates. We need to encourage people to wear our sarees again; otherwise, this craft won’t survive.”

**Diversifying for survival**

Some weavers believe that expanding beyond sarees could be a solution. They suggest producing shalwar kameez, scarves, or other garments using the same handwoven fabric. However, as a weaver pointed out, “But for that, we need capital, which we don’t have. The losses have pushed us to the edge. We are out of

professionals, prefer ready-to-wear garments and do not wear sarees regularly.

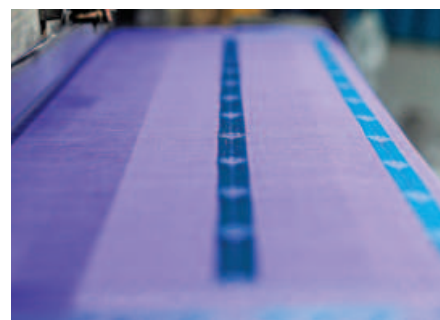
If weavers successfully diversify, Tangail’s heritage can be preserved, while adapting to modern consumer needs. Instead of seeing handloom weaving as a dying tradition, it can be rebranded as a sustainable, eco-friendly craft that caters to both local and global markets.

However, without financial aid, skill-building opportunities, and marketing assistance, weavers cannot make this transition alone, as Rahman stressed, “We need promotion. We need people to know about Tangail’s weavers and their struggles. There’s still demand for authentic, handcrafted textiles, but we must make sure our artisans get the fair price they deserve.”

With the right blend of innovation, policy support, and consumer awareness, Tangail taant can thrive once more, ensuring that the weavers of Balla Union continue their craft for generations to come.

If you want to support authentic Tangail sarees and their weavers, visit the Tangail Saree Mela at Balla Union, held every Saturday, where artisans showcase their hard work.

The choice is in our hands — will we allow Tangail’s handloom tradition to fade into history, or will we stand up to protect and revive this extraordinary craft?



money, unable to reinvest in our craft.”

Currently, almost all Tangail taant production is focused on sarees, but the market for sarees is shrinking due to various reasons — for example, younger generations, particularly urban

**By Ayman Anika**  
**Photo: Shadab Shahrokh Hai**  
**In frame : Weavers of the taant community Balla union, Tangail.**