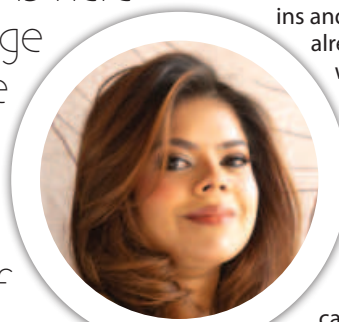




#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

How Alavee Hossain is redefining wellness and spas in Dhaka

Living in one of the busiest capitals in the world, Dhaka's urban dwellers do not know a moment of tranquillity and quiet. One visionary entrepreneur, however, is here to change this. Alavee Hossain, with her astute understanding of contemporary wellness needs, has gradually become the catalyst behind the rise of self-care sanctuaries that offer pockets of peace amidst the city's unending hustle.



A lifelong passion

"Growing up, I saw my mother run a beauty salon called Oishee Herbal Parlour in Malibagh, Chowdhuripara," shares Alavee Hossain. "So, I was familiar with how traditional beauty salons worked."

A henna artist at the age of 12, Hossain was encouraged to pursue her talents and gain independence from a young age.

"It is hard to believe that I am a computer engineer by profession," she mentions. A Pittsburgh University degree, a Wall Street career, and a 7-year move to Thailand later, Hossain decided to come back to Bangladesh and do something for her motherland. And as she knew the ins and outs of the beauty industry already, that's where she chose to wet her feet.

From her experience of high-end spas in Thailand, Hossain could see a stark difference in the beauty industry culture in this part of the world. A critical gap that piqued her attention was that parlours here invariably came with two problems: too much noise and too many lights!

"In a spa, you are supposed to look for quiet and relaxation, to unwind," she mentions, zeroing in on the key difference between conventional salons and true wellness centres.

She gauged the needs of her target audience with amazing clarity. Alavee Hossain realised that consumers sought not just beauty, but genuine tranquillity and holistic care. And with that, came Kensho and Yugen — one, a beauty salon and Japanese village-style spa in Gulshan, and the other, a medicated health and wellness massage centre in Dhanmondi and Lakeshore Hotel.

Leading with transparency and quality

One of the non-negotiables of Alavee Hossain's business philosophy and ethical leadership is her staunch commitment to transparency and quality in the products she uses and the services she offers.

"I have lived a good chunk of my life abroad," Hossain confides. "Salons in most of those countries would show me a range of products I wanted for my skin and hair. I chose, and they delivered."

This is not what she saw here in Dhaka, however. One of her customer surveys revealed the lack of clear information about products and treatments, which often bred scepticism.

Driven by her research, Hossain positioned her business ventures in a more customer-centric fashion, prioritising client education and ensuring customers are both informed and empowered in their choices.

As a trained wellness professional herself, Hossain understands the importance of building trust. Her vision for high-quality spas warrants an environment where clients feel comfortable expressing their needs, thereby elevating their experiences and establishing a new benchmark for the industry.

Innovating the future of wellness

Alavee Hossain's entrepreneurial drive is not just restricted to high-end salons and spas. It extends to embracing groundbreaking innovations as well, and especially integrating advanced technologies and holistic practices that go beyond superficial beauty.

Hossain aims to delve into "medicated spas," an emerging trend focused on tangible health benefits rather than skin-deep aesthetics. She plans to introduce techniques that enhance blood circulation, support muscular health, manage pain, and promote relaxation.

From Weyergans' DermioCare, utilising

electrically charged negative ions for skin rejuvenation, to their VacuStyler, employing intermittent vacuum and pressure therapy for improved circulation and tissue health, Hossain is bringing cutting-edge, never-before-seen amenities to Dhaka's consumer base.

A vision for empowering retreats

A venture that is close to Hossain's heart is the concept of wellness retreats. "Dhaka's people live under tremendous stress. Retreats that offer immersive experiences such as sound baths, Pilates, and yoga allow individuals to disconnect and recharge."

Alavee Hossain has invested in Ahara Woods, a tranquil sanctuary just a thirty-minute drive from Dhaka. This venture will offer transformative activities like art healing, breath work, and more, establishing it as a true detox zone for stress-afflicted individuals.

While investing in high-quality spa and wellness sessions may come with a higher price tag, Hossain's success is testimony to the fact that discerning clients are increasingly recognising the abject need for such experiences.

Trailblazers like her have managed to carve out a new path for wellness lovers in the country, and it is destined to see newer heights in the face of increasing demand.

"I have learned this throughout my life that hard work shapes you long before success finds you. The success I now enjoy reminds me of what my late father would always tell me: 'Work hard, keep your focus straight, manifest the best, and trust that something good is always on its way,'" Hossain says.

And she adds, "I am doing just that, and looking out for good things."

By Munira Fidai

Photo: Nafis Ahamed Khan