

DESIGNER SHAHRUKH AMIN

on fashion beyond social media feed



Twenty-six years ago, Bangladesh's fashion landscape looked remarkably different. Designer label was a foreign concept, and getting clients to invest in a signature piece required more convincing than the craftsmanship did.

Today, with trends travelling across social media in seconds and wardrobes increasingly shaped by algorithms, the challenge has evolved. Yet, for Shahrukh Amin, the one principle that has remained unchanged is that fashion should never drown out the person wearing it.

"What we need to understand is that people are not blank canvases," says Shahrukh Amin. "What you wear should complement you and your fashion voice without outshining you."

It is a philosophy that has quietly shaped every stage of his twenty-six-year career. Long before algorithms and inspiration dictated trends travelled at the speed of a scroll, Amin was building a fashion house rooted in individuality. Today, as one of Bangladesh's most enduring designers, his greatest achievement may not simply be the garments he has created, but the trust he has woven with generations of clients who have grown alongside his label.

His own story, however, began not in fashion but with a love for painting. Art fascinated him long before fashion entered the picture. That interest eventually led him to help a friend's fashion brand, initially working just a couple of days a week.

What began as a casual creative outlet soon became something much bigger.

"The more I worked, the more I enjoyed it," he recalls. Two days gradually became four or five, until the idea of creating something of his own no longer felt distant.

That dream became Almirah, a small label— as Amin humbly states — that has now spent twenty-six years establishing itself as one of Bangladesh's most recognised names in designer fashion.

The early years, however, were far from easy.

"When I started, we were more of a design studio where several designers collaborated," he says. "Back then, the idea of designer wear itself was very niche."

Clients were not familiar with concepts like signature aesthetics or investing in a designer's individual creative vision. Building a label meant first explaining why such a vision mattered.

Ironically, Amin believes today's fashion landscape presents an entirely different challenge. With inspiration now only a swipe away, originality has become increasingly difficult to preserve.

"Everything is online. Everything is trending," he says. "Many designers are losing their own voice just to keep up with trends."

As collections begin to resemble one another, he worries that regional identities are becoming increasingly blurred. "There are times when you cannot immediately tell whether something is Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Indian."

For Amin, fashion should be far more personal than whatever dominates

a social media feed. Interestingly, he has observed that Bangladeshis living abroad often embrace local designers more enthusiastically than those at home, seeking garments that help them remain connected to their roots. Yet, amid changing markets and shifting trends, it is neither awards nor commercial success that Amin considers the greatest reward of his career.

Instead, it is witnessing his clients' lives unfold through the garments he creates.

"There are nearly twenty clients whose entire journeys I've been part of," he says with a smile. "I designed outfits for them when they were university students—at Dhaka University, NSU and elsewhere. Then came their wedding outfits, anniversary celebrations, baby showers... and today I'm designing for their daughters."

Many of those clients now live overseas, but distance has done little to weaken the trust built over decades.

"They don't even ask to see every design anymore," he laughs. "They simply say, 'Please send five outfits—whatever you like.'"

For a designer whose philosophy centres on understanding the individual, there could hardly be a greater compliment.

That philosophy recently found expression in his campaign featuring singer and actor Elita Karim. Rather than choosing a muse who would simply model the clothes, Amin wanted someone with an unmistakable sense of personal style.

"Elita has a distinguished fashion taste of her own," he says. "She knows her own style instead of following the trend train."

Understanding that she gravitates towards understated elegance rather than embellishment, the creative direction



naturally evolved into something more rooted and personal. Drawing inspiration from her love for sarees and her comfort in kameezes and kaftans, the collection balanced contemporary silhouettes with timeless restraint.

"Elita doesn't wear bling," Amin explains. "The idea was to stay current without losing individuality."

It is a philosophy that echoes the designer's own belief that clothing should complement the wearer rather than compete with them.

By Nusrath Jahan

Photo: Adnan Rahman

In-frame: Shahrukh Amin; Elita Karim

Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha

Makeup & Hair: Sumon Rahat

Set: Eskay Décor by Saimul Karim