



People Tree Founder & Director, Safia Minney

SAFIA MINNEY: A BIOGRAPHY

Safia Minney is founder and director of Fair Trade and environmental fashion and lifestyle label People Tree. Safia has turned a life-long interest in environmental, trade and social justice issues from a lifestyle into a Fair Trade business.

Business and Pleasure DO mix:

Safia's background is in marketing and publishing. She worked for Creative Review magazine for 4 years where she developed a strong eye for visual content and a passion for promoting social and environmental awareness and action through advertising and communications. After backpacking alone for 3 months between Bali and Myanmar, Safia decided to use her experience to help NGOs build their profiles. In 1989, she moved from London to Tokyo with her husband, where she turned her interests into an NGO, Global Village, then later, a company.

In the beginning:

Working with two university students from Yokohama University, Safia began producing and publishing a small free leaflet that provided consumers with environmental and organic listings – the 'green' information she believed people needed. Before long Safia had four full-time staff members working from her home in order to carry out the growing activities of Global Village. In 1994 Global Village became a member of IFAT [the International Fair Trade Association].

NGO, Global Village:

Global Village operated from Safia's home for nine years, gradually occupying more and more space. By 2000 it had grown to 17 staff members trying to coordinate catalogue production, sales to 500 shops, events and campaigns (and getting two children to bed), and it was time to take a commercial office space.

In 1995 Fair Trade Company was formed as a limited company and a shop was opened in the fashionable Jiyugaoka district, in Tokyo.

People Tree takes shape...:

In 1997 Safia added a Fair Trade Fashion Collection, using eco-textiles, including organic cotton, to the products sold by Fair Trade Company, and the first People Tree collection was launched. People Tree was working closely with textile artisan groups to help them meet environmental standards and develop their market potential, with two full-time designers at People Tree. Today, People Tree has five full-time designers on the team, which consists of 40 staff members in Tokyo and eleven in London.

**Recognition:**

In September 2004 Safia was selected as one of the world's most "Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs" by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship.

This is the fourth consecutive year that the SCHWAB FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP has selected the world's foremost social entrepreneurs: practical, results-oriented innovators who set in motion a process whereby the poor become agents of change and self-determination. Social entrepreneurs use business and innovative revenue models to stimulate social inclusion.

In April 2005, Eastern Eye Newspaper presented Safia with the Community Award at the annual Asian Business Awards, in recognition of her work with Asian Producer Communities.

So far in 2006, Safia has been named Social Entrepreneur of the Year in the Edge Upstart Awards and was shortlisted for the Triodos Bank Social Entrepreneur Award and the CBI's First Women Awards.

A family affair:

Safia is British born, with a Swiss mother and Mauritian father.

Safia relocated to Japan with her husband, James, in 1989 from London, where she had worked in publishing and communications for eight years.

They have two children, a son (aged twelve) and a daughter (aged nine). Safia went into labour with her son just after a shipment of Fair Trade goods had arrived at their house from Bangladesh. The house was full of volunteers on the day of this home birth, which also marked the launch of Baby Milk Action Japan, a new campaign on the unethical marketing of Baby Milk in Developing Countries. Safia's children have literally grown up surrounded by Fair Trade and have visited many of the producer groups and projects that People Tree works with.

Safia's husband is as committed to the success of People Tree as Safia herself. James returns from his full-time job and works late into the night on People Tree's finance, IT and business development. Even the children are involved in People Tree; both have made regular appearances in the People Tree catalogue modelling the children's clothes.

Safia takes her commitment to the environment very seriously, it is a lifestyle choice as much as a business aim and her home is extremely ecological. The family recycle, eat organic food, and much of her furniture is recycled.

Safia works, on average, a 14-16 hour day, and travels two weeks a month visiting producer groups, speaking at conferences, attending seminars and managing both the UK and Tokyo offices. People Tree and Fair Trade is a full time job, a lifetime commitment and an absolute passion.

For more information, please visit:

www.peopletree.co.uk

www.ifat.org

www.schwabfound.org