

THE ART OF JAMDANI WEAVING IN BANGLADESH: HISTORICAL ORIGINS, CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

In this the research, historical background of Jamdani Weaving in Bangladesh its cultural aspects and traditional early practices and know-hows have been discussed. This study seeks to explore this complex art form through interviews with artisans, and by reviewing existing literature it proposes a better understanding of the same. The results emphasize the vast legacy of Jamdani weaving and its journey over thousands of years, thereby clinching it to be one essential pattern in Bangladesh's cultural as well because the economical tradition.

Keywords: *Jamdani Weaving, Bangladesh, Historical Origins, Cultural Significance, Weaving Techniques, Qualitative Research.*

INTRODUCTION

Jamdani weaving, the time enduring craft is recognized as one of Bangladesh's most illustrious and culturally significant textile Heritage. Jamdani with its ethereal beauty and intricate patterns has charmed almost all of us alike both in the past as well as present day textile arts. The history and culture linked with Jamdani weaving are meticulously examined through this study, capturing the ancient art of colonial Bengal in an elaborate fashion.

The invention of Jamdani weaving can be dated back to the ancient Little Bengal with its (very fine) muslin cloth and figured, flowered or brocaded designs. Looking back at historical records and literature, mentions of Jamdani weaving first appear as early as the 3rd century BC indicating its long-standing tradition in the socio-economic lives of this region. The craft thrived or was fueled, under different dynasties but the Mughals are credited with having perfected the Jamdani during what is often called as its golden period. The elegance of Jamdani muslins bowled people over both inside and outside the subcontinent.

Jamdani is a very important part of the culture in Bangladesh. It is more than just a textile but it is also the artistic heritage and national identity of nation. In fact, the motifs and style of Jamdani is

mostly cultural in essence due to symbolizing centuries-old beliefs; an embodiment Bangladeshi culture. In addition, the weaving of Jamdani is typically done within families so that knowledge about how to create it has passed through generations and remained culturally significant.

Jamdani weaving methods are very laborious and complex as well. Unlike other textiles which are produced on Loom and woven by machinery, Jamdani takes a manual loom to introduce the pattern throughout the weaving within same time without any aid of machine helpful only for preparing basic fabric whereas weft is put in intricate patterns. This method is especially excellent for more complicated and ornate designs, which helps to give the final Jamdani fabric a white labored appearance making it unique. The knowledge and experience vital for this craft are extreme, showing the devotion of these craftsman.

Though historically and culturally significant, the art of Jamdani weaving is threatened in modern times by mechanized textile production and waning tradition. Nonetheless, the struggle to save and promote Jamdani weaving shows some promise in initiatives created around acknowledging it as well preserving its textile tradition. The fact UNESCO body declared Jamdani a masterpiece of Intangible Human Heritage provides the necessary attention to it, which does not allow this weaving art get extinct.

Qualitative research design uses interview, Participant observation & extensive literature review to gain realistic understanding of Jamdani weaving. This study seeks to map the historical roots, cultural dimensions and early practices of Jamdani as a traditional art form representing this unique craft embedded in part within Bangladesh's social-economic mold.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To Trace the Historical Origins of Jamdani Weaving:

- The earliest references to Jamdani weaving in historical texts and archaeological findings.
- Tracing the transitions of weaving technology and designs in Jamdani from ancient times till now.
- An analysis of how different dynasties, especially Mughal times helped the weaving of Jamdani.

2. To Understand the Cultural Significance of Jamdani Weaving:

- Examine the Importance of Jamdani weaving as a part of Bengali cultural identity and Heritage.
- Research the symbolism and cultural stories within Jamdani patterns/motifs
- Analyze the role of Jamdani fabrics in Bengal culture & customary; issue- Essay topics for UPSC 2021

3. To Document the Traditional Weaving Techniques and Practices:

- A detailed description of traditional tools, materials and methods used in Jamdani weaving

- This includes — investigating the apprenticeship & training practices of Jamdani weavers.
 - Study the history of weaving methods and modern influences on traditional techniques.
- 4. To Evaluate the Economic and Social Impact of Jamdani Weaving:**
- Learn in traditional weaving communities to discover the social structures and community dynamics.
 - Examine the challenges experienced by Jamdani weavers in light of today's economy, such as competition from machine-made textiles and sustainability concern.
- 5. To Explore Contemporary Adaptations and Global Recognition:**
- Analyze the influence of Jamdani as an Intangible Cultural Heritage: A UNESCO recognition on its conservation and economic realization.
 - Study the market dynamics in relation to Jamdani fabric as well as an understanding of consumer perception and behavior — both within India, and internationally.
- 6. To Propose Strategies for the Preservation and Promotion of Jamdani Weaving:**
- Bringing in policy measures and support mechanisms that ensure the sustenance of Jamdani weavers.
 - Then, propose how Jamdani fabrics can better marketed globally without compromising its cultural artistic value.

These objectives seek to establish a holistic understanding of Jamdani weaving in Bangladesh through ways it is historical, cultural traditionalism Existence and Survival Techniques Economic contribution and contemporary applications. This research aims to preserve and promote this valuable heritage by answering these goals.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes qualitative research methods, including:

- **Interviews:** Conducted with 15 experienced Jamdani weavers from different regions of Bangladesh.
- **Participant Observation:** Observing the weaving process in workshops.
- **Document Analysis:** Reviewing historical texts, previous research articles, and visual records of Jamdani patterns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Reviews adhere to the APA referencing system.

Historical Context and Early Beginnings:

The roots of Jamdani weaving are over centuries old and date back to the earliest Common Era. It is believed that the word "Jamdani" comes from: jam (Flower) and dani (Vase), originating in Persian Show some picture of flowers which involved with weaving. Ancient Indian literature

however references light woven fabrics suggesting Weaver emperor developed a closely related muslin-like perceived superior weavers of Bengal emphasis on finer threads also seen in practice globalized, Gold outsourced revenue often peaceable contrasted Indians skilled more desirable endless markets textiles varieties warp-weft fine sustainable hand labor world (Weaver), quality Working entirely legitimate economic exploitation, (Wilkinson).

- **Jamdani at its Golden Age and the Mughal impact**

The Mughal era was an important time in the history of Jamdani weaving. The art was patronized and promoted especially during the reigns of various Mughal emperors, Akbar in particular. According to Alam (2001), weaving centers in Dhaka (nowadays Bangladesh) thrived during the Mughal period, known for producing some of the highest quality Jamdani fabrics which were much sought after both locally and internationally. The complex designs of this period showed an inspired mix between native and Persian artistic influences, a testament to the intermingling that was Mughal Bengal.

- **Social and Economic importance in the Old Bengal**

In ancient Bengal, weaving of Jamdani was not only a mere art but also an economic activity. Islam (2003) states the importance of Jamdani fabric trade and is exported to several regions including Europe and Middle East, thus being a major contributor within the economy. The robust demand for Jamdani fabrics, however, highlights the cultural worth of these textiles and exceptional talent displayed by Bengali weavers.

- **Technological and Aesthetic Progress**

Over centuries the craft has developed into form that utilizes numerous techniques and artistry to make this fabric - Jamdani weave. Chakrabarti, (2014) reports on traditional techniques used for Jamdani weaving and mentions the labor-intensive process of patterning by inter-weaving weft threads with the warp directly at loom. This method helped in producing extremely intricate and delicate motifs which made Jamdani different from other weaving techniques.

- **Preservation and Recognition**

In recent time measures have been taken to safeguard the Jamdani weaving heritage. In 2013 UNESCO recognized Jamdani as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which confirms its cultural importance that requires protection. This attention has inspired efforts to document and preserve the traditional weaving techniques, so that a heritage of Jamdani could be further carried on.

Cultural Significance of Jamdani Weaving in Bengal

The masterful art of Jamdani weaving is unrivaled not only for its artistic brilliance but also for the broader cultural heritage of Bengal in which it has a deeply ingrained place. How the practice

of Jamdani weaving is not only a cultural but fascinating social and economic element in Bengal, this review delves into the references made by several scholars to throw light on its dimensions.

- **Jamdani as a Cultural Symbol:**

Bengal had a heritage of Jamdani weaving that extends well into antiquity, and forms an important part of the identity and cultural consciousness among people across generations. As per Islam (2003), the elaborate and intricate patterns and motifs in Jamdani emphasize on the profound heritage, artistic history of Bengal. They often include motifs of local flora and fauna and geometric or abstract shapes draw upon folklore Bengali traditions. The cultural connotations found within Jamdani motifs speak to the resonance between the material and identity of a region.

- **Economic and Social Impact:**

Jamdani weaving has profound economic importance in Bengal. According to Begum (2010) weaving of Jamdani is known as a great wealth during the era that extended from before Mughal, where Bengal was known for exporting finest muslin clothes. It made livelihoods for a thousand of artisans and was one of the main trades among local economy. In addition to this, Jamdani was largely a communal effort and thereby cemented the social fabric of weaving communities.

- **Part of Traditional Traditions and Modern Styles:**

For several traditional ceremonies and rituals in Bengal Jamdani fabrics are an important part of the dresses. Typically, as Ahmed (1999) observes Jamdani saris are worn in the form of wedding presents and on other occasions hence it representing purity and a distinctive class. This is a clear demonstration of the cultural value and authenticity instilled into Jamdani through its use in such context, upholding age old customs. Today reinventing itself in the global fashion Industry with traditional work technique & equipment and modernize design is keeping up to its past grandeur (Chakrabarti, 2014).

- **Conservation and UNESCO Consideration:**

Jamdani weaving has also made it to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage List. On 4 December, 2013 UNESCO declared the traditional art of weaving Jamdani as an intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, Jamdani). This realization has given a fillip to the documentation and protection of traditional Jamdani weaving techniques, protecting these extremely rare cultural heritage from getting extinct with modernization.

- **Contemporary Significance and Challenges:**

Jamdani weaving suffers many logistical challenges in the modern world, despite its cultural significance. The industrialization and the new machine made textiles are taking over some of

these traditional weaving methods to practice (Alam 2001). Furthermore, migration of younger generations to cities for book learning and better paying jobs have resulted in a decrease in skilled artisans. Various efforts to tackle challenges there are different initiatives by the government, NGOs and private sector working on promoting Jamdani Weaving (Ray, 2012).

Weaving Techniques and Practices of Jamdani Weaving in Bengal:

Jamdani is a luxurious, laborious and time-consuming form of weaving practiced in Bangladesh for centuries. This literature review considers those traditional methods and practices in Jamdani weaving known as something Bengali. It explores the ancient techniques, transition of weaving practices, and persistence among craftsmen based on true stories.

- **Supplementary Weft Technique:**

A supplementary weft technique is employed to create the intricate patterns typical of Jamdani weaving. This is a time consuming and intricate task as described in Chakrabarti (2014) where threads of different colors are put by hand individually within the weft, it finally creates unique flamboyant geometric patterns throughout Jamdani.

- **Loom and Tools:**

Jamdani weaving is done on a hand loom known as the pit-loom, exactly for having control over every thread in making intricate designs. The loom is placed in a pit dug into the floor with the weaver sitting on ground level (Begum, 2010). This allows the tension which provides stability to weave details designs. In addition, the tools used-like the bobbin and shuttle-are made to work with as fine a thread that Jamdani weaving requires.

- **Artisan Skill and Training:**

This ancient skill of weaving Jamdani is usually transmitted over a period, it got evolved through generations so the method to weave takes years. Ahmed (1999) highlights that traditionally entered weaving activity at a very young age, often learning the trade by working in master weaver's workshop and observing or taking part in all value added activities. Such an apprenticeship model also ensures that the high standard of craftsmanship synonymous with Jamdani does not die.

- **Pattern Development:**

We must have seen several patterns of Jamdani over the centuries because it has evolved, as those are influenced by Culture around them and there minor aesthetic preference changes occurred. (Ray, 2012) also points out that the traditional motifs like flowers, vines and geometric shapes are hugely in demand but contemporary designs with a touch of modern elements find their place as well considering what tastes we have. This progression really

demonstrates how Jamdani weaving can be so malleable to the tastes of today and yet honor its ancestral heritage.

- **Technological Advancements:**

Recently, some technological interventions have been included for more speedy and efficient outcomes in weave quality. The advent of modern looms and processes for patterning designing, thread management has been discussed by Alam (2001) could help in weaving innovation without losing the essence of traditional craftsmanship.

FINDINGS

- **Historical Origins:**

The research suggests that Jamdani weaving originated in ancient Bengal circa the 3rd century BC. This typical weaving tradition has originated in different times of the history and it got developed very nicely during Mughal Era. The Mughal emperors, especially Akbar promoted Jamdani leading to its golden era. Jamdani weaving was prized both locally and internationally- this is corroborated by historical records, literature among others as a testament to its popularity & quality.

- **Cultural Significance**

While traditional Jamdani weaving reflects the high level of creative skill and diversity, it also serves as an emblem that represents Bangladesh's cultural identity. Jamdani weaves can have very intricate designs and patterns, which involves really exotic motifs that bear their own cultural connotations and traditional symbolism reflecting the long history of influences from different regions around Bengal society. Some of the key cultural positions that jamdani occupies is through being part some traditional ceremonies and rituals- right from weddings to religious festivals. The familial tradition and culture specific to weaving of Jamdani is passed down generations, irreplaceable craft skills that make the textiles unique.

- **Treadling and Tie-Up Exercises**

Jamdani weaving techniques are extremely labor intensive and artisan-led. Supplementary weft is the technique, an additional colors of Weaving threads are woven through middle layer to form various patterns. This makes the method suitable for intricate designs that Jamdani fabrics are known for and no two pieces of a real Jamdani fabric would ever be exactly alike. The intricate weaving of patterns from a pit loom is essential in traditional Jamdani. The skills for this delicate Jamdani weaving are mostly passed down through generations of apprentices who learn the craft from their ancestors, so training periods span years to protect age old handloom practice in Bangladesh.

- **Challenges and Modern-day Relevance**

Though traditionally rich and cultural, the Jamdani weaving endures a number of modern day challenges. Mechanized textile production is on the rise - as well as prices of handmade goods, which may no longer be affordable for many. This spells danger for traditional weaving practices everywhere. Moreover, the mass exodus of youth in quest for lucrative jobs in urban cities has exhausted availability of expertise artisans. But initiatives to revive Jamdani weaving and showcase it as part of the heritage, like being listed by UNESCO in 2013 among its Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list have injected a new lease into efforts that are underway toward saving this craft.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preserving Traditional Techniques:

- Implement Training Programmes & Workshops for Young people relating to Jamdani weaving.
- Incentivize master weavers to record knowledge and methodologies on paper, images as a way of retaining them.

Economic Aid to Artisans:

- Do offer, though one or the other way financial incentives and subsidies to Jamdani weavers on their produced textiles so that they are able to compete with machine woven fabrics.
- Building cooperatives and self-help groups to enhance the economic sustenance of weaving communities.

Use of Jamdani in Modern Fashion:

- Collaborate with enterprising fashion designers of the day to marry Jamdani fabrics and contemporary designs for a significant shift in its marketability.
- Make Jamdani weaving popular worldwide through organizing exhibitions and fashion shows, to attract international demand.

Incremental introduction and education:

- Promote the arts and crafts of weaving, spinning through wide range educational programs & broadcast network such as Jamdani days, raising public awareness on heritage cultural-important.
- Incite a generation of viewers by teaching Jamdani weaving in schools, train them to understand the process and make sure they remember it for centuries.

Research and Documentation:

- Promote academic research into the history, culture and techniques of Jamdani weaving.
- Developing digital Library to make documents on the principals (patterns, motifs and techniques) in Jamdani weaving.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the long history and cultural importance of Jamdani weaving in Bangladesh. Jamdani has been produced in Bangladesh for centuries, and various exhibitions of the world show about it since its ancient references till the golden age when Mughals were patrons make this textile as a legendary example of high quality artistry and cultural heritage specific to Bengal. There intricate and traditional styles still capture the hearts of many making sure this craft is preserved and promoted around the globe. If these challenges faced by the Jamdani weavers are taken care of and the recommended measures get implemented, this invaluable tradition may well survive in a healthier state.

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