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Genre: Nonfiction (Bangladeshi traditional clothing/textiles)

Level: Intermediate to Upper Intermediate

Title: The Jamdani Saree

The Jamdani Saree



The Jamdani *saree* is a form of **precious textile** art that comes from the 2,000-year-old **traditional muslin** of the Dhaka **region** of Bengal. It is not just a saree, but a **symbol** of the **taste** of the Bengali nation. It can take six months, a year, or even longer to **weave** a Jamdani saree. This shows how much **patience** it takes. Each Jamdani saree is a story, which is not **repeated**. What makes this saree special is the way it is **created** and the **skill** and continuous effort of the **weavers** (the people who make these Jamdani textiles). It is also a way of showing nobility, and has been recognized by **UNESCO*** as an "*Intangible Cultural Heritage**".

Sometimes the story of ordinary **rural** life, sometimes the story of a **festival**, or sometimes an event that happens in the world is shown by the rural women in the way they show their **weaving** skills when they make this kind of saree. That is, in the way they weave it, and their hard work.

Although it gained popularity **during** the time of the *Mughal** rulers, the demand for this kind of saree still flows on. This saree carries the "Bengali" **identity** of Bengali women, who love to wear beautiful sarees. Maybe that's why this kind of saree is still so

popular. No matter how a woman looks, the beauty of any woman always increases when she wears a Jamdani saree. It is a truly *elegant style* of dress.

Nowadays, the 'Jamdani' textile is not just a saree, but is also used in other clothes, like *Kameez, Fatua, Panjabi, Orna, and Lehenga** etc. which are also being made with this same muslin textile. This is because this textile is very **comfortable** to wear. In fact, it is currently increasing in value in top fashion houses.

This UNESCO-recognized product is also a **GI*** product, which means it is special to certain parts of Bangladesh, and cannot be copied by people elsewhere. Currently, it is mainly produced in the *Noapara* and *Sonargaon* regions of *Rupganj Upazila* on the banks of the *Shitalakshya* River in the *Narayanganj** district of Bangladesh. Every year, a large amount of foreign money comes into Bangladesh through this special textile industry.

Jamdani sarees have been taken to various countries of the world beyond Bangladesh, making Bengal famous. The *weavers* of this industry are therefore very special artists, and they are recognised as an *asset* to Bangladesh. Therefore, to keep this important Bangladeshi cultural industry and **tradition alive**, the Jamdani textile artists should continue to be highly valued.

Vocabulary lists

1. Words from the second 1000 High Frequency General Service Word List

alive	clothes	comfortable	copied	during	fashion
patience	precious	repeated	skill(s)	taste	weave / weaving / weaver(s)

2. Words from the Academic word list

created	identity	region
style	symbol	tradition / traditional

3. Offlist words (glossary)

asset	elegant	etc.	festival	intangible
muslin	rural	textile	weavers	

Non-English words and names

GI - Geographical Indication (GI) is an intellectual property right. It identifies a product (e.g. agricultural goods, handicrafts, or spirits), as originating from a specific region. The quality, reputation, or characteristics of the product are linked to that area. GIs are protected against illegal use of the product name.

jamdani - a special type of Bangladeshi textile

kameez, fatua, panjabi, orna, and lehenga - types of clothing worn in Bangladesh

Noapara and **Sonargaon** regions of **Rupganj Upazila** on the banks of the **Shitalakshya River** - places in Bangladesh where Jamdani textiles are made

Mughal - historical rulers of the Indian sub-continent from 1526 to 1857

saree - a flowing type of clothing worn by women usually made with one long piece of material

UNESCO - the “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization”

Comprehension Questions

1. **Remembering:** When did Jamdani saree textiles first become popular? How long have people been wearing Jamdani saree textiles?
2. **Understanding:** Can you use any adjectives that might describe Jamdani muslin? Compared to other textiles, why do you think people believe Jamdani muslin is comfortable to wear?

Critical Thinking Questions (Based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy of higher thinking skills.)

3. **Applying:** If you could choose some new clothing, would you like it to be made from a Jamdani textile or something else? Why? Give your answer and reasons, in English, to another classmate.

4. **Analysing:** How does making Jamdani textiles a “UNESCO *Intangible Cultural Heritage*” help to protect Bangladeshi traditions? Write a list of the possible benefits (good points) and disadvantages (not so good points) of the UNESCO decision in the table below.

Benefits	Disadvantages

5. **Evaluating:** Do you think Jamdani textile weavers should use modern stories designs and ideas in their saree designs? Why/why not? Do you agree with the writer that women who wear Jamdani sarees always look more beautiful? Why/why not? What makes a piece of Jamdani textile ‘beautiful’?
6. **Creating:** Create your own colourful design for a piece of Jamdani textile. Your design should tell a story about something to do with Bangladesh AND something from your own life. Write two or three short paragraphs about your design that explain it clearly. Show your design to your classmates, and in English, explain why you have designed it that way. (Do not read your information directly from your piece of writing.)