

## Case Studies : Tant Jamdani Cluster : West Bengal

### Roopa Biswas - Preserving Tradition Through Jamdani Weaving

Roopa Biswas, married women with magic hands in the craft of Jamdani has been weaving for 17-18 years. Rooted in the small village of Phulia of Nadiya district, She exemplifies the challenges faced by artisans in India's heritage textile industry. Her life highlights the importance of women's empowerment in preserving this traditional craft.



**The Challenge:** Jamdani sarees of West Bengal, known for their intricate motifs woven on muslin silk, are a dying art due to the rise of power looms producing faster, cheaper alternatives. Roopa and countless artisans like her struggle to compete with mass-produced fabrics, jeopardizing their livelihood and the future of this heritage craft. Supporting skilled artisans like Roopa is crucial. Authentic Jamdani sarees, taking 1-1.5 months to weave meticulously, hold a distinct value compared to machine-made imitations. Their higher price point (Rs. 15,000 - 16,000) reflects the time, skill, and cultural significance embedded in each piece.

**The Call to Action:** Empowering women like

Roopa is not just about providing work; it's about safeguarding a cultural legacy. With Joint effort of Tisser and LTI mindtree, we can ensure the survival of this exquisite craft and the economic well-being of the artisans who keep it alive.



**Pratima Sarkar**, a 28-year-old married woman residing in Shantipur, West Bengal, is deeply rooted in the traditional family business of Tant and Jamdani weaving. Having acquired a BA degree, Pratima has been weaving since her childhood, inheriting the skills from her family engaged in the weaving artisan profession. Her husband, Shantanu Sarkar, is also involved in the same occupation.

Pratima's family, including her in-laws, has been practicing traditional weaving for generations. They reside in Shantipur, while her maternal family is located 10 km away. Postmarriage, Pratima continued her involvement in weaving due to the shared family business.

Recognizing the potential of traditional weaving, Pratima, along with artisans from peripheral villages, founded a Producer Company in collaboration with Tisser Artisans Trust and LTI Mindtree. As one of the founder members and a director, Pratima played a pivotal role in establishing the producer company. The collaboration with Tisser and LTI Mindtree brought substantial support to the producer company named 'Universal Handloom Weaving Producer Company'. Mr. Sabir, a dedicated cluster coordinator, worked tirelessly to set up the producer company. In 2022, Business Sakhi training was provided to artisans, imparting essential skills for business management.

Currently, Pratima earns INR 3500 per month, which she finds inadequate considering the hard work involved in weaving. Despite fulfilling orders from Tisser, artisans also take additional orders. However, the income remains insufficient. The weekly haat/mandi in the village serves as a platform for selling their products, but traders' bargaining affects the artisans' profits. Pratima envisions the producer company thriving in the future, generating more orders from Tisser, which would significantly enhance the artisans' earnings. She aims to elevate the traditional art of Tant and Jamdani weaving to a global platform through the producer company, seeking recognition and identity for the artisans.

Pratima emphasizes the importance of various training programs covering skills, finance, record-keeping, digital literacy, supply chain, and marketing. These initiatives would empower artisans and the producer company to achieve their goals and navigate the challenges of the modern market.

Pratima Sarkar's journey reflects the resilience of rural women artisans in preserving traditional crafts. The collaboration with Tisser and LTI Mindtree, coupled with dedicated efforts and training, holds the promise of transforming the local weaving industry. With a vision for global recognition, Pratima and her fellow artisans aspire to build a sustainable future for themselves and their traditional art.



Habibpur, a quaint village in West Bengal, is home to around 1,000 people residing in 300 households. The community's primary occupation revolves around weaving of *Tant* and *Jamdani*, with both men and women engaged in this traditional craft. This case study sheds light on the life of **Kiya Mandal Biswas**, a 22-year-old married woman with a passion for weaving, residing in Habibpur. Kiya, educated up to the 10th class, inherited her weaving skills from her mother, who practiced the craft as well. After her marriage, Kiya dedicated herself

entirely to weaving. Her husband works in the hotel industry in Pune, Maharashtra, while she manages the household weaving activities in Habibpur. Kiya is an expert weaver, specializing in crafting Saris, stoles, and Dupattas. Her in-laws, following the village's tradition, are also engaged in weaving. The household is equipped with looms, and the entire family contributes to the weaving process, maintaining the village's rich tradition.

Kiya's day revolves around her weaving responsibilities, dedicating 7 to 8 hours daily. Her busiest period spans from July (*Rathayatra*) to *Durga Puja*, with additional work during festivals. Kiya manages her work around her child's sleep schedule, showcasing her commitment to both her craft and family.

Despite her dedication, Kiya faces challenges, earning Rs. 300 per day. She aspires to enhance her skills and knowledge, expressing a desire for digital literacy, financial literacy, and advanced design concepts. Her goal is to increase her daily income to a minimum of Rs. 500, aspiring for a better life and a promising future for her child.

Even though she is grateful for support from Tisser and LTI Mindfree, Empowering artisans like Kiya requires targeted interventions. Offering training programs in digital literacy, financial management, and advanced weaving techniques could significantly enhance her capabilities. Connecting her with marketplaces and providing access to design workshops would open avenues for higher income.

Kiya Mandal Biswas's story exemplifies the intricate balance between tradition and aspiration. By addressing her specific needs through tailored training programs, we can contribute to the economic empowerment of rural women artisans like Kiya, fostering a positive impact.





In the quaint village of Shantipur, nestled in the heart of West Bengal, a handloom cluster has flourished under the guidance of Tisser Artisan Trust and LTIMindtree. Among its dedicated artisans is **Susmita Sarkar**, a 26-year-old woman with a burning determination to secure a better future for herself and her family.

Susmita Sarkar is a skilled Tant and Jamdani fabric weaver, specializing in crafting exquisite sarees, dupattas, and stoles. Despite not owning her own handloom unit, Susmita's expertise and dedication shine through in every piece she creates. Married to a small mobile vendor selling essence sticks, Susmita's family depends on her modest income to make ends meet.

One of Susmita's primary challenges is the lack of ownership of a handloom unit, limiting her earning potential and independence. Additionally, being a mother to a six-year-old daughter, she faces the challenge of balancing work with childcare responsibilities. Despite these obstacles, Susmita remains resolute in her pursuit of a better life for her family.

Currently, Susmita earns Rs. 3000/- per month, a modest income that barely covers their basic needs. However, her aspirations extend beyond mere survival. She dreams of owning her own loom and achieving a sustainable income of Rs. 15000 per month, a goal that would significantly improve her family's quality of life.

Susmita's dreams extend far beyond financial stability. She harbours a deep desire to provide her daughter with a quality education, ensuring a brighter future for the next generation. Her commitment to her craft and her

family's well-being fuels her determination to overcome the challenges she faces.

Susmita's story epitomizes the transformative power of empowering women artisans in rural communities. By providing access to training, resources, and opportunities, initiatives like the handloom cluster in Shantipur empower women like Susmita to break free from the cycle of poverty and pursue their dreams.

Susmita Sarkar's journey is a testament to the resilience and determination of women artisans in India's handloom sector. Through collaborative efforts from Tisser and LTI Mindtree we can create a more inclusive and sustainable future, where individuals like Susmita can thrive, fulfil their potential, and build a better life for themselves and their families.