

ularly **Ruby Ghuznavi**, is certainly trying very hard to reinstate the glory days of Jamdani's past. She has worked relentlessly to revive and promote vegetable dyes and other fine crafts traditions. **Ruby Ghuznavi** is optimistic that the intricacies of the Jamdani weave; the heritage motifs in all their glorious Persian influence, can still be restored, if pursued properly.

One of the major ways to do it is by acknowledging the actual worth of a Jamdani, by giving value to its magnificence. For that to happen, we must recognise the effort, dedication and outstanding skill of the artisans. The dedication in producing just one fine Jamdani, which can take months, should be acknowledged and matched in its monetary compensation.

This is where Bengal Foundation is particularly interested; we believe that the community that weaves with such unsurpassed finesse, must be brought to the fore.

Interestingly enough, the primary reaction was pessimism, especially on the part of elderly artisans. With steady encouragement, the younger weavers gained enough confidence to take on the initiative.

Four major crafts organisations came forward to help — **Aarong, Aranya, Kumudini, and Tangail Saree Kutir**, with their expertise, production capabilities, connections within the community, and a similar vision and knowledge regarding the business.

With the younger weavers now duly acknowledged as masters and associates in the production of Jamdani; it certainly shows a lot about Bangladesh and its future, that it's all about the younger generation and their willingness to persevere.

This is certainly an indication towards a brighter future for both Jamdani and our country.



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the master craftsmen?

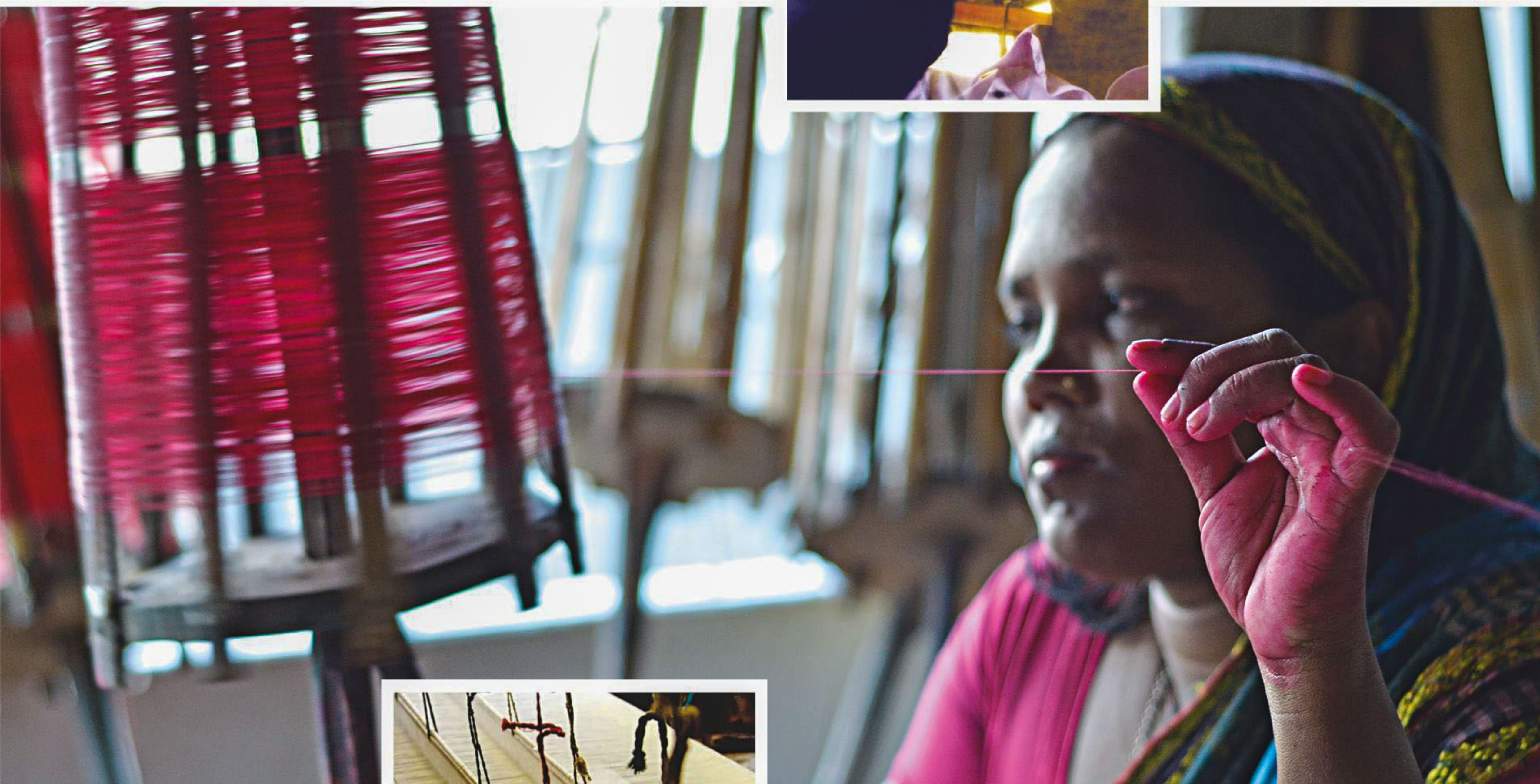
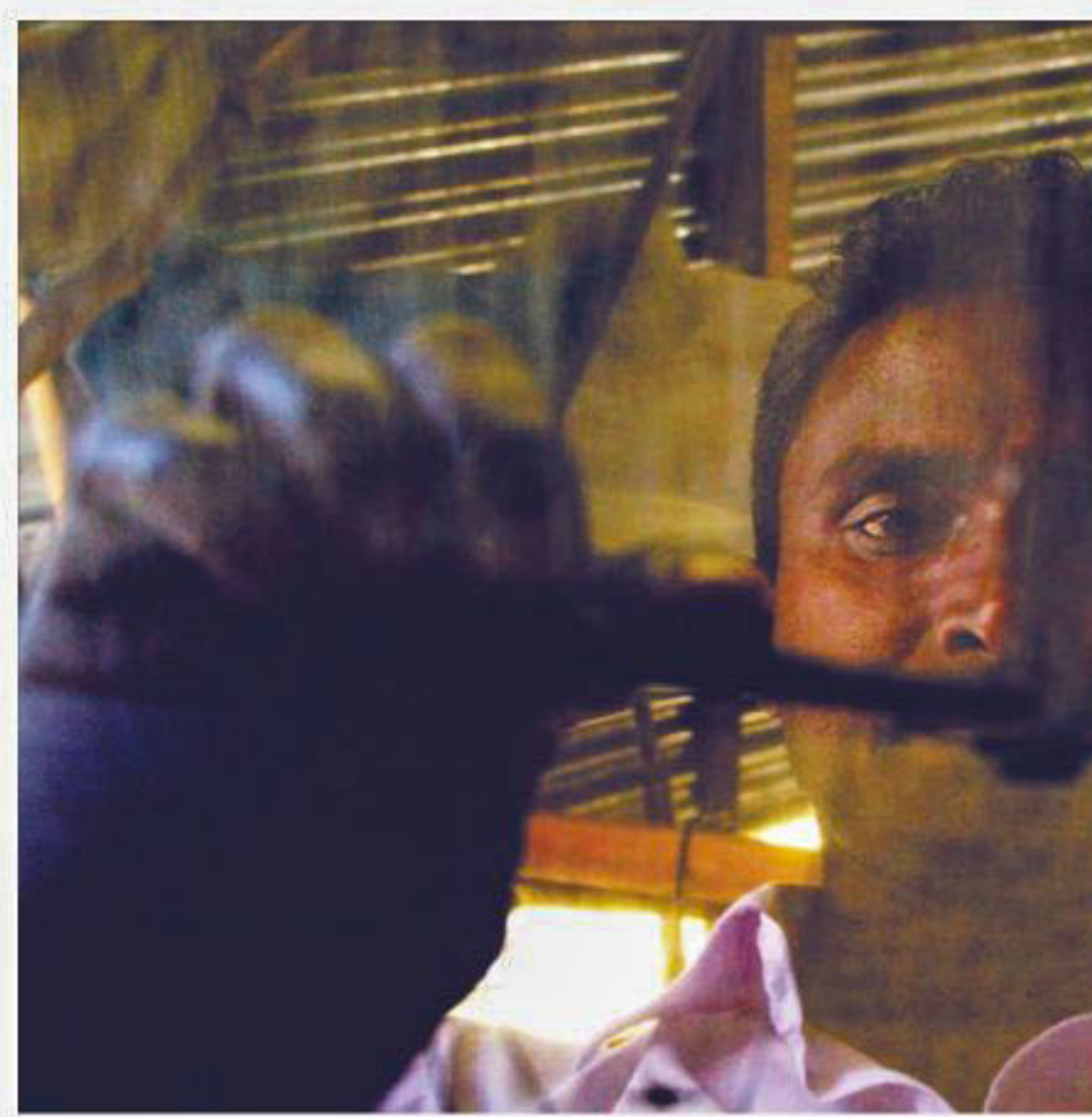
It is indeed an interesting question.

An intriguing aspect of Jamdani is that all techniques of producing any particular design is transmitted orally from one master weaver to their apprentice, from memory. So, at the end of the day, it's not only about appreciation of the Jamdanis, but also recognising the design acumen and labour that goes into making the exquisite material see the light of day.

To make Jamdani sustainable in the long run, the transmission of knowledge must be ensured, so that next generation weavers can work with it.

LS: The most hopeful option for a way forward...?

As acknowledged previously, to sustain the momentum we certainly need to think about the future. Otherwise, all these efforts will just recoil into the previous state of sluggish lethargy. The correct way forward is



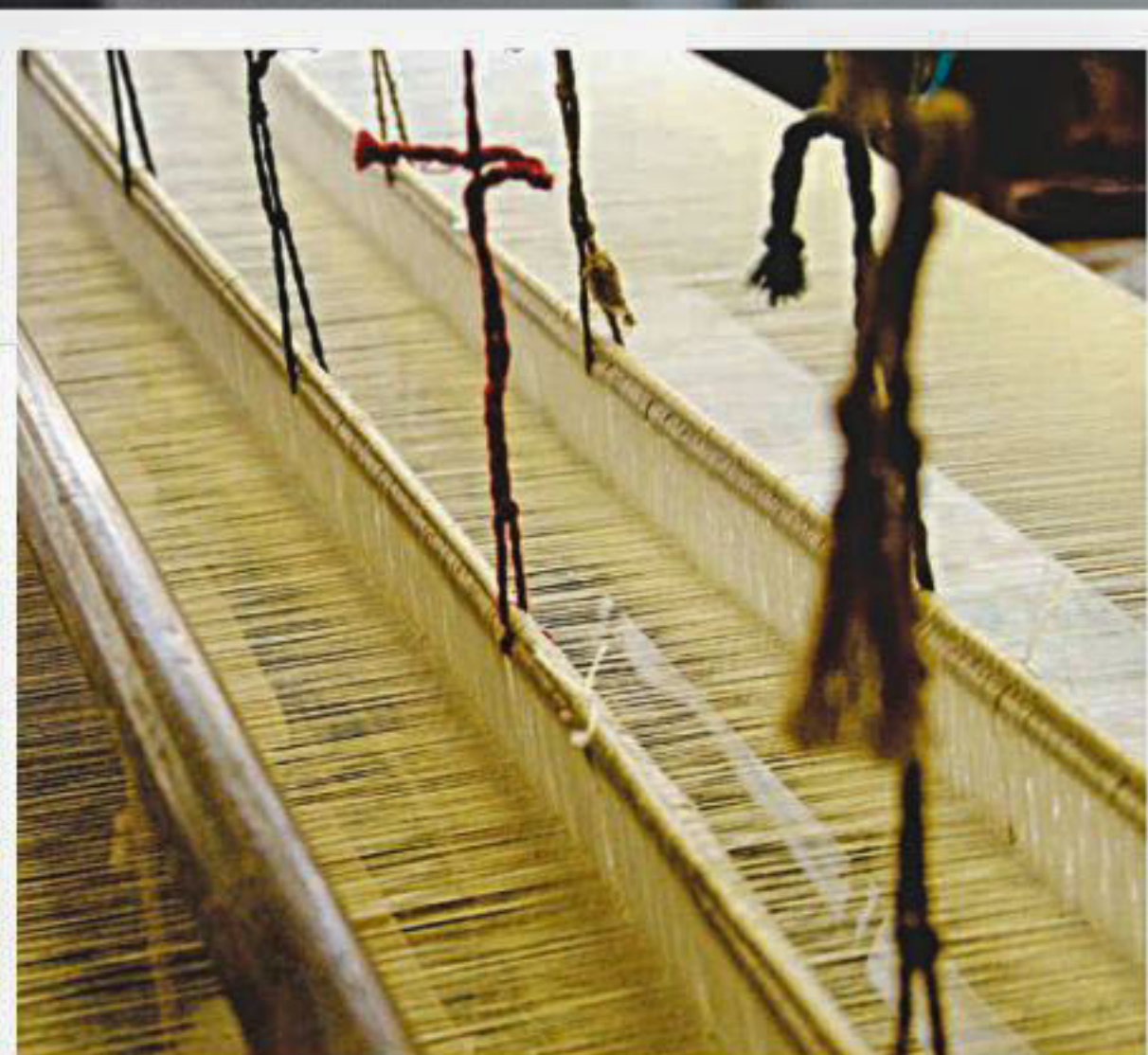
The beauty of the craft must be recreated to give Jamdani its proper place as a craft in its own right.

The National Crafts Council wants to recreate 100-year-old Jamdanis as a celebration of the quality of the work by weavers, and together with them, we are very interested to let the world get acquainted with the elegance of the product.

LS: Finally, is everything lost or is there still time for the young weavers to actually bring back our age-old heritage weave? How important are the skills of the weavers, and their willingness to take part in the revival effort?

All is not lost and the spark is still there, but buried under years of neglect!

Chandra Shekhar Saha, had to go through immense difficulty overseeing numerous workshops to make the artisans agree to the idea of recreating the centuries old designs.



LS: How important is the role of women in the production of Jamdani? Is there any difference between today and the yesteryears?

There is an incredibly complex pre-weaving phase involved in making every single piece of Jamdani sari, and these are all done by the female apprentices with the utmost precision.

In the earlier times, womenfolk were only involved at the pre-weaving stage, but they have now come forward to join the more prominent and visible weaving stages as well. I might never have noticed this until **Dr. Hameeda Hossain** pointed it out.

It is important we inform the world that the female workforce is (finally!) visible and actively involved in the creation of magnificent hand-woven fabrics. This is certainly an observable difference between the past and the present.

LS: Is there any formal book of patterns for the weaving process? How do the young weavers learn the craft from

extremely important for a sustainable revival.

The designers, particularly the high-end couturiers of our country, must come forward and help bring the Jamdani to the international market.

In order to sustain the long term vision, we certainly need appreciation from the world market. Otherwise, if we try to limit our legacy to just ourselves, then only a handful of collectors and enthusiasts will know and appreciate the value of the fabric and the artisans' skill.

We as Bengalis should be able to take pride that Jamdani is our heritage — our craft, and that our artisans are the ones responsible for developing the exquisiteness that is the Jamdani fabric, but for the thoughts to be appreciated and the crafts to survive, this very product must be shared with the rest of the world.

**Interview by Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Bengal Foundation**