

Empowerment Of Rural Women Through Zari Embroidery In Berasia Tehsil, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the role of Zari embroidery in empowering rural women in Berasia, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh). Zari embroidery is known as traditional craft practiced in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. It creates opportunities for the women to earn their livelihood as well as preserve their cultural heritage. Findings of this study reveal that Zari embroidery enhances women's financial independence, social inclusion, and cultural identity through skill development and training offered by self-help groups (SHGs). Profound studies of some literatures, government and non government organization reports confirm that women engaged in Zari work demonstrate higher self-esteem, improved leadership abilities, and strengthened economic stability. In spite of these advantages Zari Embroidery skilled women face challenges such as restricted mobility, limited market access, and inadequate institutional support. The study recommends targeted interventions in training, marketing, and policy frameworks to enhance the overall empowerment of women through Zari Embroidery.

Keywords: Rural Women Empowerment, Zari Embroidery, Skill Development, Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

INTRODUCTION

“Empowerment is not just about income, it is about identity, leadership, and creative freedom.”

Women in rural India contribute significantly to agriculture, household management and traditional crafts. However, limited access to education, healthcare, financial resources and decision-making roles restricts their development. Empowering these women is crucial for inclusive growth since it enhances their agency and participation in social and economic processes.

Zari Embroidery is an effective tool for women's empowerment. It has now become a community based craft, practiced widely in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. It offers rural women the opportunities to earn an income and preserve their cultural heritage. This traditional skill is used to decorate royal garments with metallic threads. Participation in Zari work provides not only economic benefits but also social support, peer learning, and leadership development through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). These platforms promote collective growth,

entrepreneurial opportunities, and increased self-esteem among rural women.

Factors Influencing Empowerment through Zari Embroidery

❖ Training and skill development

Training and skill development play an important role in empowering rural women engaged in Zari embroidery. Through training programs, women acquire technical knowledge, improve their embroidery techniques, and learn new designs, patterns and finishing methods that enhance the quality of their products. These improved skills increase their productivity and enable them to earn higher incomes, contributing to their economic independence. Training also builds self-confidence, encourages creativity and equips women with entrepreneurial and marketing skills, helping them manage their work more effectively and explore new market opportunities. In addition participation in training programs promotes social interaction, leadership development and greater involvement in community activities. Thus, training and skill

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development serve as important tools for enhancing the economic, social and cultural empowerment of rural women through Zari embroidery.

❖ Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

SHGs provide a platform for collective learning, saving and economic support. In Zari embroidery, SHG helps women acquire skills, access resources, collaborate on production and market their products. They improve leadership skills and bargaining power, enabling women to negotiate fair prices and manage finances effectively.

❖ Entrepreneurship and Market Access

Entrepreneurship and market access are important factors in the empowerment of rural women engaged in Zari embroidery. Entrepreneurship enables women to use their embroidery skills to establish small businesses, generate income, and become financially independent. Through training programs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and support from government and non-governmental organizations, women gain knowledge of business management, financial planning, product development, and marketing. These opportunities enhance their confidence, decision-making ability, and leadership skills.

Market access provides women with opportunities to sell their Zari embroidery products beyond their local communities. Participation in handicraft exhibitions, trade fairs, cooperative societies, and digital marketplaces helps them reach a larger customer base and receive fair prices for their work. Better market linkages reduce dependence on intermediaries, increase earnings, and encourage innovation in product design and quality. As a result, entrepreneurship and market access contribute significantly to improving the economic status, social recognition, and sustainable livelihoods of rural women.

❖ Social Support and Family Acceptance

Social support and family acceptance are essential for the empowerment of women engaged in Zari embroidery. Encouragement from family members, SHGs and the community enables women to participate in training, production, and marketing activities. Family support, including recognition of

women's work and sharing household responsibilities, helps improve their skills, income, and self-confidence. As women contribute economically to their households, they gain greater respect, decision-making power, and social recognition. Community and SHG support further promote networking, cooperation, and leadership development. Thus, social support and family acceptance play a significant role in enhancing the economic, social and cultural empowerment of rural women.

❖ Government and NGO Support

Government schemes and NGO initiatives promote skill development, financial access, and infrastructural support. These interventions are crucial for transforming Zari embroidery into a sustainable livelihood source.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Berasia tehsil in Bhopal has many women with creative talent but limited employment opportunities. Traditional skills like Zari embroidery remain underutilized despite government and NGO efforts to promote SHGs and skill development. Women face challenges such as inadequate training, poor market access, and social restrictions. This study investigates how structured support, including training programs, SHGs, and market linkages convert Zari embroidery from a household activity into a sustainable income-generating livelihood in Berasia.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the role of Zari embroidery and traditional crafts in empowering rural women in Berasia, Bhopal (M.P.)."
2. To assess the impact of training, SHGs, and market access on women's participation and leadership.
3. To identify challenges and recommend strategies for sustainable craft-based livelihoods.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study highlights the intersection of tradition, skill development, and entrepreneurship in empowering rural women. It provides practical insights for

policymakers, NGOs and community leaders seeking to design inclusive development programs. Focusing on Berasia Twhsil, Bhopal, M.P. the research illustrates how heritage crafts can promote rural development and preserve cultural identity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Anita Tyagi, Mrs. Bhawana, and Ms. Jully Singh (2020) in their research studies showed that focused training can greatly improve women artisans in Bareilly. The research indicated that structured skill development helps raise the quality of zari-zardozi embroidery, increases productivity and fosters entrepreneurship. Women who received training improved in time management, design innovation and organizational participation. The study also reveals that training boosts confidence and encourages women to join self-help groups and craft collectives. It supported the idea that skill development is vital for the economic empowerment of rural women in traditional crafts.

Arsheed Ahmad Bhat (2021), in *"Threads of Empowerment"* highlights how embroidery empowers rural women in Kashmir through the support of the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM). The study emphasized the role of SHGs, training and market access in promoting financial independence, leadership and cultural preservation among women. It also identified challenges such as limited infrastructure and gender barriers, while recommending community based approaches and policy support that can be applied to other rural areas, including Berasia, Bhopal.

The Rit Foundation (2021), in its case study *"How Sarojini and 350 Rural Women Transformed Their Lives through Embroidery"* showed how embroidery empower rural women through skill development, SHGs and market access. The study highlighted the role of NGOs in providing training and support, helping women achieve financial independence, leadership skills and greater self-confidence. It also suggested that similar initiatives can be successfully implemented in rural areas such as Berasia, Bhopal.

Pooja Kumari (2022), in her study *"Enrichment in Zardozi Craft to Generate Employment for Women"* highlighted how Zardozi embroidery create sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women.

The study emphasized skill development, SHGs, market linkages, and design innovation as key factors for women's economic empowerment. It also emphasized the importance of policy support, digital literacy and access to modern markets to overcome challenges and improve women's income, confidence and entrepreneurship.

Sunanda and Savita Sangwan (2022), in their study *Women Empowerment through Income Generation Activity by Adaptation of Traditional Phulkari* they found that training in traditional Phulkari embroidery enhanced rural women's skills, income, confidence and entrepreneurial abilities. The study showed that Phulkari embroidery serves as an effective home-based livelihood option, enabling women to improve their economic status and preserve their traditional craftsmanship. The authors concluded that skill development supported by training and market linkages, plays a significant role in promoting the socio-economic empowerment of rural women.

According to **Dutta and Paliwal (2025)** article "Exploring the Socio-Political Dialogue in Contemporary Embroidery Art Practice in India" showed that embroidery in India has changed from a simple home skill to a way of expressing culture and engaging in social and political issues. The work of Paula Sengupta and Lavanya Mani reflects that embroidery serves as a living record that preserves heritage and tells stories of resistance. The literature also emphasizes how embroidery helps empower communities by encouraging women's unity, leadership, and confidence, addressing gender, class, and postcolonial identity issues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

❖ Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the role of Zari Embroidery in the economic, social and cultural empowerment of rural women in Berasia, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh). The entire study is based on secondary data, collected from various sources, including government reports, academic journals, books, policy documents, NGO publications, census reports and official statistics related to women's empowerment, handicrafts, rural livelihoods and embroidery based enterprises.

❖ **Sources of Data**

To facilitate a structured analysis, the relevant data are categorized into thematic tables based on the objectives of the study. These tables summarize key findings from the literature and secondary sources, providing evidence on the role of handicrafts, Self-

Help Groups (SHGs), training programs, market access, and entrepreneurship in enhancing women's livelihoods and empowerment.

Table 1 presents the role of handicrafts in supporting the livelihoods and economic empowerment of rural women in India.

S. No.	Indicator	Data
1	Traditional handicrafts provide employment to millions of artisans in India specially women from rural areas.	Handicrafts are an important source of non-farm rural employment and income generation.
2	Government support includes skill development, design development, marketing assistance and artisan welfare schemes.	Ministry of Textiles promotes handicraft-based livelihoods through various schemes.
3	Needlework and embroidery crafts are recognized as important handicraft sectors.	Zari and embroidery related crafts fall under traditional needlework handicrafts.

Table1. Handicrafts and Rural Women's Livelihoods in India

The findings presented in **Table 1** indicate that traditional handicrafts play a significant role in generating employment and income for rural women. Government initiatives further strengthen these livelihoods through skill development, marketing assistance, and welfare schemes.

Table 2 presents the contribution of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to the economic and social empowerment of rural women.

S. No.	Indicator	Evidence
1	National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) mobilizes rural women into Self Help Group (SHGs) for livelihood enhancement.	SHGs serve as an important mechanism for promoting employment, increasing income and fostering entrepreneurship among rural women.
2	Access to credit and skill training significantly contributes to economic empowerment.	Participation in livelihood programs contributes to improved employment and self-employment prospects for women.
3	SHG strengthens financial inclusion and social participation.	SHG provide savings, credit and enterprise support to women.
4	Women participation in SHG improves economic self-reliance.	Large-scale SHG initiatives have enabled women to become income earners and entrepreneurs.

Table 2. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Women's Empowerment

The evidence presented in Table 2 demonstrates that SHGs contribute significantly to women's financial independence, entrepreneurial development, and social participation, thereby enhancing overall empowerment.

Table 3 presents the major challenges faced by rural women artisans engaged in Zari embroidery and their implications for sustainable livelihoods.

S.No.	Challenge	Evidence	Relevance to Zari Embroidery
1	Limited market access	Traditional artisans often struggle with branding and market linkages.	Directly affects sales and income of Zari workers.
2	Inadequate training and design support	Government schemes emphasize skill upgrading and design intervention.	Need for continuous training.
3	Limited institutional support	Rural women require stronger credit and livelihood support systems.	Affects sustainability of embroidery enterprises.
4	Digital exclusion	Rural women face barriers in accessing digital markets and services	Limits online marketing opportunities.

Table 3. Challenges Faced by Rural Women Artisans

The information presented in Table 3 indicates that limited market access, inadequate training, weak institutional support, and digital exclusion remain major barriers to the sustainable development of Zari embroidery enterprises. Addressing these challenges is essential for strengthening the economic empowerment of rural women.

❖ Data Analysis and Interpretation

Through the secondary data this study indicate that handicrafts represent an important source of rural employment and livelihood generation in India, particularly for women engaged in traditional crafts and embroidery work is mention on table no. 1. The table no 2 provide Government initiatives through the Ministry of Textiles and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) emphasized skill development, market support, and Self-Help Group (SHG) participation as key strategies for women's empowerment. This Studies show that SHG contribute to increased income, financial inclusion, and social participation among rural women. The table 3 emphasized the challenges such as limited market access, inadequate institutional support, and digital exclusion continue to restrict the full potential

of women artisans. These findings support the present study's observation that Zari embroidery contributes significantly to the economic and social empowerment of rural women in Berasia Tehsil while highlighting the need for stronger market linkages and capacity-building initiatives.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study finds that Zari embroidery is an important source of livelihood and employment for rural women, contributing to their economic empowerment through income generation and improved financial stability. Government initiatives, skill development programs and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have supported women artisans by enhancing their skills, financial inclusion and social participation. The findings also indicate that participation in Zari embroidery strengthens women's self-confidence and social status within their families and communities. However, challenges such as limited market access, inadequate institutional support, and digital exclusion continue to restrict the growth potential of women artisans. Therefore, stronger market linkages, capacity building programs and policy support are

essential for ensuring sustainable livelihood development and women's empowerment.

RESEARCH GAP

The findings indicate that Zari embroidery contributes significantly to the economic, social and cultural empowerment of rural women by generating income, enhancing self-confidence and strengthening participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs). However, the study also reveals persistent challenges such as limited market access, inadequate training opportunities, weak institutional support and digital exclusion. Existing research has not sufficiently examined how these barriers affect the long-term sustainability of women's empowerment through Zari embroidery. Furthermore, there is limited evidence on strategies for improving market linkages, digital integration and policy support for rural women artisans. Therefore, further research is needed to explore sustainable mechanisms that can enhance the livelihood opportunities and overall empowerment of women engaged in Zari embroidery.

CONCLUSION

In India, Zari embroidery has emerged as an important means of empowering rural women by enhancing their economic, social and cultural wellbeing. In Berasia Tehsil, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), women engaged in this traditional craft have improved their income, strengthened their social status, and preserved their cultural identity. Participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), skill-development programs and support from government and non-government organizations has enabled women to gain financial independence, self-confidence and leadership skills.

More than its economic benefits, Zari Embroidery serves as a medium for cultural preservation by facilitating the transmission of traditional knowledge and craftsmanship across generations. The findings suggest that women artisans have moved beyond traditional domestic roles to become active contributors to household income and community development. However, challenges such as limited market access, inadequate training opportunities, insufficient institutional support and digital exclusion continue to constrain the growth and sustainability of embroidery based livelihoods.

Therefore, strengthening policy support, expanding market linkages, improving skill-development initiatives and promoting digital inclusion are essential for enhancing the long-term empowerment of rural women. Such measures can help ensure sustainable livelihoods, greater financial independence and the preservation of valuable cultural heritage.

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DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study is based exclusively on secondary data obtained from publicly available documents, published literature and official reports. No human participations were involved in the research. Therefore ethical approval was not required.

CONSENT TO PUBLISH

Not applicable. This study is based exclusively on secondary data obtained from publicly available sources and published documents. No individual or identifiable personal data are included in this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are derived from publicly available secondary sources, including published research articles, government reports and policy documents.

All sources used in the study are cited in the reference list.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Not applicable. This study is based exclusively on secondary data obtained from publicly available government reports, published literature, policy documents, and other publicly accessible sources. It did not involve human participants, personal data

collection, interviews, surveys, or experiments; therefore, consent to participate was not required.

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