Research Paper GEOGRAPHY

Cotton Handloom Industry Problems and Prospects of Development (A Case Study of Alipurduar Block - Ii)

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ABSTRACT

Alipurduar block-II of Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal has been an industrially lagging region since the period of past independence. Industry plays a minor role in economy of Alipurduar Block-II. The economy of the Block is basically agrarian and it is also underdeveloped. The backwardness is characterised by a low per capita income, low yield per acre, backwardness in industrialisation, shortage of capital and lack of infrastructural facilities and large labour surplus. While excessive pressure of continuous migration has increased the problem of unemployment to a maximum. The people of some villages of Alipurduar Block-II are engaged in traditional occupation. Handloom industry in Alipurduar Block-II has started from the earlier period. The migrated people from Bangladesh started work of weaving as they were having the traditional skill. This study is made to know the present situation of handloom industry in Alipurduar Block-II and attempts to put forward the policy recommendation for the development of this sector. This study also highlights on the future prospects and further development of the industry so that the industry grows well and can solve the present problems.

Keywords : Handloom Sector, finished product, economic status, problems & prospects of development

INTRODUCTION:

Handloom industry is a traditional and also a cottage industry in India. It provides employment to the large section of poor people. However, the role and significance of the industry to the national development is declining. In fact, the industry is facing lot of problems such as men, material, methods, machines, money, marketing and management.

Handloom weaving is very popular in some district of West Bengal. This craft is practised in almost every household in rural areas of those districts. In the map of North Bengal , Jalpaiguri district is one of the most important district. The weaver concentrated areas/blocks of the district are-a) Alipurduar-II, b) Kumargram, c) Mayanaguri, d) Madarihat, e) Birpara, f) Falakata, g) Jalpaiguri Sadar, h) Kalchini . Handloom industry in Alipurduar-II has started from the earlier period. The migrated people from Bangladesh started work of weaving as they were having the traditional skill.

Tab: 1: INFORMATION OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY OF JALPAIGURI DISTRICT (2000-01):

Sl.	Items	Total
1.	Total number of Handloom	3295
2.	Total no. of persons engaged in weaving Activities (full + part time)	4320
3.	Total no of registered primary H.L. Co-operative Societies	42
4.	Total no of loams under registered H.L. Society	1387
5.	Total no. of weavers under registered society (S.C. : 728, S.T. : 166 , O.B.C. : 302, General : 332)	1528
6.	a) Total no. of active society	03
	b) Total no. of registered loams under active society	306
	c) Total no. of looms under active co-operative societies	71
7.	a) Total no. of Dormant societies	39
	b) Total no. of looms under Dormant societies	1081
8.	Total no. of weavers benefitted under Old Age Pension Scheme	04

Source : Office of the Development Officer (Handloom), Alipurduar

ZONE OF CONCENTRATION OF HANDLOOM WEAVING :

The Handloom industry in Jalpaiguri District is found to be widely developed throughout the districts. On the basis of intensity of concentration, we can divide the district into 3 zones. These are-

1) Highly Developed Zone:This covers the eastern and south middle part of the district. In this zone, Alipurduar block I and II, Kumargram, Falakata blocks are fall.

2) Moderately Developed Zone: This zone comprises the block of Sadar Jalpaiguri, mayanaguri, Mal.

3) Least Developed zone: This zone comprises the blocks of Rajganj, Dhupguri, Mal.

TYPES OF LOOMS IN OPERATION:

Generally four types of looms are used in the handloom in-

dustry. These are-a) Semi automatic loom, b) Frame loom, c) Pit loom, d) Throw-shuttle pit loom. But in study area, only two types of loom are used. These are-Frame loom and Throw-shuttle pit loom. Frame loom are large in number than Throw-shuttle pit loom, in the study area. Most of the Throw-shuttle pit looms are known as Thakthaki and Frame looms are known as Chittaranjan loom .

MAJOR RAW MATERIALS:
Handloom industry needs several raw materials. Major raw material is cotton thread. The raw materials which are used in handloom industry can be grouped into two categories-

a) Processed Raw Materials- This group includes both cotton yarn dyes, sagu, bleaching powder, araroot and other chemical. This group constitutes more than 80% of the total cost of raw materials used.

b) Un-processed Raw Materials: This category includes the raw materials like rice paste, water etc, which consti tutes only 20% of the total cost of raw materials.

TOOLS AND ACCESSORIES:
The products are passing through a series of process. So, a large number of tools and accessories require for one handloom unit and their current prices.

Tab:2: List of tools and accessories required in one handloom unit:

Sl no.	Name of the tools/accessories	No required	Current Pric (in Rs)	Longevity
1.	Ficure	2 sets	30	1 year
2.	Bow	1 set	120	1year
3.	Shana	1 set	65	1 year
4.	Maku	3 sets	75	10 months
5.	Neli	100 sets	60	1 ye ar
6.	Bobin	300 sets	150	18 months
7.	Bow stick	2 sets	20	10 years
8.	Spinning Charka	1 set	200	10 years
9.	Drum	1 set	1500	15 years
10.	Loom	1 set	3500	20-25 years
11.	Range	2 sets	70	8-10 years

Source : Field Study,2006-07

MAJOR ARTICLES PRODUCED:
There are varieties of handloom item produced in Alipurduar Block-II. But the production of Gamchha is the prominent. The Gamcha is produced as a large amount. Here large size, medium size and small size Gamchha is produced. In Taleswarguri, Chadar, Dokna, Sal also produced. This areal variation is mainly due to unequal distribution of skilled workers and availability of working capital.

SEASONAL VARIATION:
In handloom industry, seasonal variation in production is one of the important features. Similarly there is a slight seasonal variation in Alipurduar Block-II. Although, the weaving activities has been carry on throughout the year, but July to August are seen to be lean season when concentration rainfall for days together renders the weaver unfit for weaving because of high humidity. September to March is peak season for weaving activities. During the hottest season there is heavy demand of Gamchha . September to October, there are maximum demand of small and medium type of Gamchha because of Puja festivals.

MARKEING MECHANISM:
Handloom weaving in Alipurduar Block-II is partly based on local demand and the finished products are sold outside the Block-II. Alipurduar Hut , samuktala Hut, Barobisa Hut, Kamakhyaguri Hut, Mathura Hut, Baburhat Hut, Kalchini Hut etc are main marketing centres for these goods. The weavers who have small units sell their products locally. These huts are observed once in a week or twice in a week.

ECONOMICS OF HANDLOOM WEAVING :
By studying the factors such as size of the units, organisation of labour according to age, sex and skill, monthly profit of weavers , it can possible to depict the economic status of the handloom industry.

Tab: 3 : Size of the unit in terms of workers:

Size of class	No of Units	Percentage
Less than 2	4	13.30
2-4	18	60.00
4-6	5	16.70
Greater than 6	3	10.00
Total	30	100.00

X=3.07 SEx=0.46 C. V.=8.14

In handloom industry the number of production units are small in size. The unit of production in this case is the family and average size of production in terms of employment varies from 2 workers to highest 8 workers. The average size of the unit is 3.07.

Tab:4 :Size of the unit in terms of Loom:

Size/Class	No of Units	Percentage
1-2	12	40.00
2-3	8	26.70
3-4	7	23.30
4-5	2	6.70
5-6	1	3.30
Total	30	100.00

X=2.56 SEx=.023 C.V.=4.94

In the handloom industry the number of production unit in terms of loom is also small in size. The survey data reveals that about 40% of the total units have 1-2 looms . About 26.70% of the unit have poses 2-3 looms, 23.30% of the unit have 3-4 looms,6.70% and 3.30% of the units have 4-5 and 5-6 looms respectively .

Tab: 5 : Organisation of labour according to sex:

Type	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Skilled	37	57.80	27	42.20	64	100
Partly skilled	5	17.85	23	82.15	28	100
Total	42	45.65	50	54.35	92	100

There is a wide difference between the rate of participation of both men and women in handloom industry. The participation of men in skilled category is 57.80% whereas for women, it is 42.20%. In case of partly skilled category, the participation rate of women is 82.15 % whereas only 17.85% for men . So it is clear that the male workers are mostly skilled and some of them are partly skilled whereas in case of female workers, the situation is just opposite.

Tab: 6 : Role of Full time and part time workers:

Type	Workers	%
Full Time		
Male	37	65
Female	20	35
Total	57	100
Part Time		
Male	06	17.14
Female	29	82.86
Total	35	100

In the survey areas, there are two types of workers are found ,i.e. full time and part workers. The % of male workers as a full time is 65 %, whereas the % of female workers as full time is only 35 %. In case of part time workers, the % of male is 17.14, which is lower than female workers i.e. 82.86%. The % of full time male workers is more than female workers because male labours are more skilled than female.

Tab:7 : Age structure of workers:

Age Group	Less than 18	18-35	35-50	Greater than 50	Total
Full Time					
Male	0	16	7	14	
Female	0	5	14	00	
Total	0	21	21	14	56
Part time					
Male	2	1	2	00	
Female	5	17	6	03	
Total	7	18	8	03	36
Total	7	39	29	17	92
Percentage	7.60%	42.40%	31.50%	18.50%	100%

X=36.12 Sex=0.40 C.V.=1.02

Out of the total workers, 7.60% of members fall under less than 18 and 42.40 members fall under 18-35 ages, 31.50% members are in under 35-50 years age and 18.50 % members fall under greater than 50 ages. So the highest % of members are found in the age group 18-35.

Tab : 8 : Profit per month:

Profit class (Rs)	Units	Percentage
400-1200	7	23.30
1200-2000	17	56.70
2000-2800	6	20.00
Total	30	100.00

X-1573 Sex=6.89(Rs) C.V.=2.39(Rs)

From the above table, it is clear that about 23.30% of the total units get profit in Rs. 400-1200, about 56.70% of the units get profit of Rs. 1200-2000 and about 20% of the units get profit of Rs. 200-2800. So it is concluded that though the profit is not so high, but if the weavers start to produce new item of good quality, they get a good profit. In this case they should take training on handloom weaving.

PROBLEMS IN HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN STUDY AREA:

The handloom industry of Alipurduar Block-II as well as whole Jalpaiguri is facing serious and several problems. These are-

1. The raw materials required to produce Gamchha, Chadar, Dokna etc are cotton yarn. Shortage of yarn is one of the major obstacle for the development of handloom industry.
2. The main raw material of this industry is yarn and the price of the yarn has been increasing at an alarming rate, as a result the amount of profit of the weaver has decreased.
3. Inadequate marketing facility.
4. Most of the machinery tools are backdated. As a result the cost of production remains high.
5. The Weavers do not get reasonable price of their finished products i.e. Gamchha, Chadar, Dokna etc.
6. There is an unhealthy competition with synthetic and which hamper it development.
7. There is a lack of organisational strength.
8. During agricultural season the labours are engaged in agricultural field. As a result, the handloom work faces problem in that period.
9. There is no training centre at Alipurduar as well as Jalpaiguri district. So if one willing to get training, it is out of his capacity.
10. It is extremely difficult to transport the finished products especially in rainy season. Transportation by bi-cycles or pay high transport charges creates economic problems of weavers.
11. A weaver faces the problem of inadequate capital at the very beginning of his production process.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY:

1. Govt. should offer short term loan before the weaving season so the weavers will not facing any financial problem for handloom weaving.
2. State and Central Govt. should pay more attention in the financing of training taken up for improving handloom sector.
3. The weavers will be benefitted if the Govt. comes forward to form a responsible organisation that will supply raw materials to the weavers at a fair price.
4. Govt. may supply yarn according to the need of the weavers at a fair price.
5. Training centres should be setup within district, to provide training among the women weavers.
6. Technological upgradation is necessary to make the production system more efficient and to increase the productivity of handloom sector.
7. Registration of every handloom unit should be done. Besides this, the individual units should include them to co-operative societies, as they get many help from government.
8. The closed or dormant co-operative societies should be revived again.
9. The activities of ' Tantuja', 'Tantushree', 'Manjusha' etc should be extended.
10. Arrangement for proper marketing tie up.

CONCLUSION:

At last it can be concluded that though there is tough competition between handloom and mill, if proper management of marketing and financial facilities are made available than the handloom industry will surely survive.

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