Research Paper Commerce

Present status of traditional handloom industry in Cachar District of Assam

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KEYWORDS

Clothing is one of the basic need of human life this basic and most important need is satisfied from the early days of civilization by the handloom industry which is one of the oldest cottage industry spread all over the country. Handloom industry used to play a significant role in the rural economy of the Barakvalley. It was not just another way of earning livelihood rather it could also earn fame by its products outside the country. Irrespective of the category and place of weaving, the weavers produce varieties of products. Irrespective of the policies, projects, andaspirations arising out of various quarters, handloom sector is undergoing changes whichare impacting on the livelihoods of the handloom weavers.

Manipuri women's are also greatly involved in this handloom industry in Cachar district. They are artistic and creative which they prove in the field of handloom and handicrafts. They produce various types of product like Inafi (Sari), bed-cover, Manipuri Chador & Manipuri gamocha, Mosquito net, etc. This not only makes them economically independent but also helps their families with their financial contributions.

But now in Cacharthe most of the weavers engaged in this traditional art are facing severe livelihood crisis because of adverseGovernment policies, globalisation and changing socio-economic conditions. In this age of rapid mechanization, handloom sector is passing through difficult days, as it haslargely failed to keep pace with the change in market conditions. Despite a number ofschemes and programmes run by various government agencies for promoting the sector,production in handloom sector has been continuously declining over the years. Majority of the weavers were ignorant of the existence of any special credit programme for them. The income from traditional handloom are not able to provide an honorable living to the weaver by solely depending upon this occupation in the District resulting in migration to other occupations.

This section of the study presents an overview of handloom in Cachar district based on secondary data. Here in Barak valley this traditional handloom textiles was exists and also quite a good number of peoples were engaged with this industry. In Cachar district the maximum weaver uses country looms. This was the traditional technology. The country looms are owned by individuals and families. In this production system, the weavers are not attained in favour of factory system. The family labour including that of women and child is the main source of production. Thus the quality and the production technology continued for centuries without many changes. In this process the weaver or the craftsman had to concentrate his eye, feet and hand and apply the mind in every minute. Then only he could make a finished good suitable for the market.

For handloom sector, the co-operative system of production is expected to be the best and least exploitative. According to the guidelines of the Co-operative Act, all weavers attached to

a co-operative society are its owner members and they have legitimate rights over the management of the society and a share on the profits or loss made by the society. Theweavers working under the co-operative system of production are supplied with the essentialraw materials such as yarn, dyes, chemicals, etc. by the primary weavers' co-operative society

and get the reasonable wage or conversion charge for the amount of labour put in by them on

weaving.Through the society the member weavers are provided with other social security benefits such as medical relief, group insurance facility, old age benefits and assistance for modernisation of loom and the work shed and the like.

The co-operative system of production is undoubtedly beneficial for the weavers and also for the survival of this traditional industry in a District like Cachar. However, it is found that in majority of the cases the co-operatives have failed to serve the interest of poor and illiterate weavers Most of the co-operative societies are now sick. Due to weakening of co-operative system of production the livelihood of lowly skilled and semi-skilled weavers is at stake

The weaversdepending on this age old industry suffer from serious problems with the average earnings far below their needs and most of them live below the poverty line.Handloom industry in Cachar District is having glorious past but questionable present and uncertain future due to lot of internal and external factors that are acting behind this. In view of the above stated reasons the present article is an attempt to identify the reasons for migration. Handloom, being a traditional skill, once the elderly weavers give it up, the skill will be lost forever and it would be impossible to revive it. Thus this article focuses on the comparison between the weavers who migrated to other occupations by leaving weaving out of desperate need forlivelihood and subsequent changes in their socio economic condition in comparison with those who are continuing in hand weaving and eking out their livelihood for survival.The mainaim of this study is to analyze livelihood opportunities of weavers who are in weaving as a profession and those who are migrated from weaving for survival.This traditional village industries provide a vital means of livelihood to village artisans. In some parts, it has attained the status of a mature industry, and in other parts, it is still an enterprise confined to the needs of the particular home Handloom industry in Cachar District is having glorious past but questionable present and uncertain future due to lot of internal and external factors that are acting behind this. Though it employs a massive number of rural people, the handloom sector is considered a

sunset industry.

Profile of the Handloom Textile in Cachar District

The handloom industry in the Cachar District has a long tradition in the socio economic life of the people for supplementing the family income to a great extent of the society .The Laichamphi, fanek mosquito net etc. produced traditionally by the weavers of CacharDistrict.

At District Level

The entire Cachar District is divided into 18 Circles and each Circle is under the control of a Deputy Director of Handlooms and Textiles / Assistant Director of Handlooms and Textiles who are in-charge of implementation of the various welfare and developmental programmes of department at the field level. In Cachar district there exist the

Office of the
Asst. Director of Handloom and Textiles, Cachar
Dak Bungalow Road. Silchar -788001

A table of the name ofthe block in Cachar District and the total no of household engaged in Handloom weaving is formulated based on the secondary data collected from the office of the Handloom &Textile, Silchar

Name of Block	Total No. of weaving House hold
Barjalenga	287
Borkhola	879
Banskandi	2464
Binnakandi	2675
Kalain	660
Katigorah	881
Kumbha	12
Lakhipur	4359
Lakhipur(TC)	529
Narsingpur	1806
Palonghat	1314
Rajabazar	2018
Salchapra	644
Silchar	1561
Silchar(MB)	221
Sonai	1170
Tapang	224
Udharbond	1349
Total	23053

Source – 3rd National Handloom Census 2009 done by NCEAR.

Handloom and textile statics in Cachar District (2002-2003)

HANDLOOM TEXTILE STATISTICS IN CACHAR, 2002-2003						
District	Handloom Training Center	No.of Trainees in Handloom Training Center	Weavers Extension Service Unit		Handloom Production Centre	
			No. of Units	Production of Cloth (in Meters)	No. Production Centre	Production of Cloth(in Meters
CACHAR	1	15	4	10600	Nil	Nil

STATISTICS OF HANDLOOM DEMONSRATION CIRCLE IN CACHAR, 2002-2003				
District	No. of Circle	No. of Villages Covered	No. of Weavers engaged	
			Part Time	Whole Time
Cachar	10	514	10798	14107

Source – Directorate of Handloom and Textile, Assam

In order to know the relative position of Cachar vis-à-vis Assam in respect of handloom and productivity, there is a year wise comparison of the status of handloom in Cachar with all India and Assam in terms of its key indicators like total production of cloth, total no. of part time and full time weaver etc.

Handlooms and productivity

Number of looms					
	Urban	**Rural**	**Total**	**Working looms**	**Productivity per loom(in mtrs)**
(in 000)					
India	630	3,261	3,891	3,612	5.12
Assam	65	1,344	1,409	1,299	0.63
Cachar	3	30	33	23	0.42

Source: Office of Textile Commissioner
Assistant Director, Handloom and Textile, Silchar, Cacharand
Ministry of Textile, Govt. of India, Various Annual Reports

Source: Office of Textile Commissioner
Assistant Director, Handloom and Textile, Silchar, Cacharand
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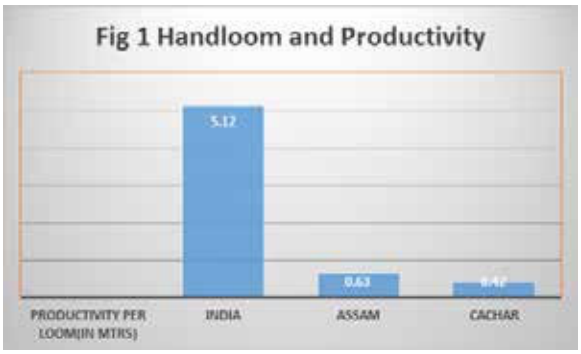
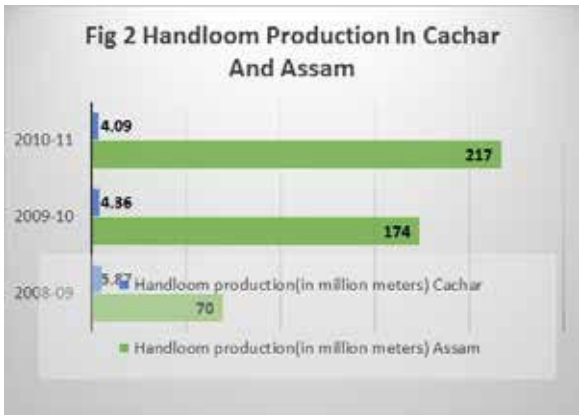


Present Status of handloom production (in million me-

ters) in Cachar vis-a-vis Assam

Year	Assam	Cachar
2008-09	70.00	5.87
2009-10	174.00	4.36
2010-11	217.00	4.09

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam 2011
Assistant Director, Handloom and Textile, Silchar, Cachar



Source: Statistical Handbook Assam 2011
Assistant Director, Handloom and Textile, Silchar, Cachar

Statistics of handloom and textiles of Cachar and Assam, 2010-11

District/ State	Handloom training Centre	No. of trainees in handloom training Centre	Weaver extent ion service unit		Handloom Production Centre	
			No	Production (in mtr)	No	Production (in mtr)
Cachar	1	15	4	15,000	Nil	Nil
Assam	102	1400	98	63047.73	21	9120.85

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam 2011

Assistant Director, Handloom and Textile, Silchar, Cachar

Conclusion

Thus from the above analysis it is clear that the position of Cachar in respect of handloom production is deteriorating day by day. Traditional village industries provide a vital means of livelihood to village artisans. In some parts, it has attained the status of a mature industry, and in other parts, it is still an enterprise confined to the needs of the particular home. Handloom industry in Cachar District is having glorious past but questionable present and uncertain future due to lot of internal and external factors that are acting behind this. The services of the co-operative societies and production centres also not beeffective in delivery of necessary training and guidance, facilitating modernisationand up gradation of technology and providing marketing support to the weaver. The weaver communities in the District have been pushed down to the lowerStrata of the economic ladder.Many weavers and even the co-operative societies/production centres are ignorant of the international market. The state government needs to encourage weaver to export of handloom products by providing needed financial assistance and proper guidance, facility and channel for foreign trade. It is necessary tomove these impediments so as to enable these organizations to function efficiently and smoothly. Any industry, the world over, requires public policy support. Handloom sector is also notexceptional.