

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF THE WEAVING INDUSTRIES OF MISHINGS IN ASSAM: A CASE STUDY IN LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT:

The Mishings are the second largest scheduled tribe (plains) group of Assam after Bodos. The Mishing woman occupies an important place in the socio economic structure of her society. They are born weaver, skilled in agricultural and allied activities. But the Mishing women weavers face lots of problems in their occupations. The present study has been conducted in Lakhimpur District, Assam. The field survey was conducted by selecting four representative villages, namely, Baangmora, Barkhamukh, Latibarchuk and Moukhuwa of Ghilamora block in Lakhimpur District. Out of total population of the study, 20 households from each village were selected as sample for this investigation. Here weavers are the respondents themselves and data has been collected from 80 (eighty) Mishing women weavers through purposive sampling technique with the help of self conducted questionnaire. The desirable data related to socio economic characteristics namely ; educational status, monthly income, working hours of the weavers, housing conditions, sanitation facilities, electricity facilities, drinking water facilities etc. The main aim of this study is to know or study about the problems faced by the Mishing women weavers in their occupations and suggest some measure for their improvement. The study reveals that the weavers face lots of problems in their field of work, more particularly in respect of their accommodation facilities. Moreover, most of the weaves are from poor socio economic background and engaged in weaving out of compulsion. So based on the results, certain suggestions or measures have been given for improvement of these problems. Here, a very simple statistics (percentage) has been taken for analysis of the study.

(KEY WORDS: Accomodation, Allied activities, Households, Mishings, Women Weavers.)

INTRODUCTION:

In India the weaving industries play a very important role in economy. It is a part of our culture and one of the largest economic activities after agriculture having the capacity of absorbing a greater number of manpower. About 40 lakh weavers and allied workers are employing directly or indirectly in this sector.

(source: Ministry of Textile, Annual Report 2017- 2018)

In Assam weaving is an intrinsic part of Mishing culture. A Mishing woman, despite being engaged in myriad household activities through the day, would spend some time on her loom everyday. The women make garments, mainly for everyday use, through handloom weaving. They also wave classy products for special occasions.

The Mishings are found in different areas of Assam, they are mainly concentrated in the riverin areas of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur districts of Assam. The Mishings have its own unique traditional and cultural practices which differentiate the ethnic group from other group. The weaving loom is found in every household of rural Mishings and women folks contribute a lot to the development of this culture showing their artistic talents. The Mishing women are expert in weaving and their skill to combine colors and designs have given them a special position in Assamese culture .The traditional dresses made from the weaving loom of Mishings are nowadays becoming very popular among the greater Assamese society due to its unique in floral design. Although ,the demand for these industrial cloths increases day by day ,the problems faced by the weavers of these industries are not decreasing .So this paper ,try to study the various problems faced by the weaving industries of Mishings and it also study various remedial measures to solve their problems.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED STUDY:

Some of the review related to the study is:

1. According to Dr. Raju Phukan, in his research paper, "Handloom Weaving in Assam: Problems and Prospects", poor marketing and insufficient market linkage outside the state ails the industry from growing and earning more revenue. Apart from other, innovations in design to cope up with the latest market demand are not sufficient and have posed a threat to this indigenous industry. Therefore, it is high time that all round efforts are made to revive this important and unique industry.
2. According to Priyanka Narzary ,in her thesis, "Weaving Practice and Challenges Among The Bodo Weavers : A study in the Context of Neo- Liberal Perspective, "due to high age, lack of family support to the women weavers ,insufficient income level, lack of modern technology in weaving system, lack of marketing facilities and ignorance of the government helps to slow growth of these industries.
3. According to Dr.Sudhanshu K K Mishra ,Rakesh Srivastava and K I Shariff ,Dy General Managers / Faculty Members of Bankers Institute of Rural Development ,Lucknow 2016 ,in their study "Report on Problems and Prospects of Handloom Sector in Employment Generation in the Globally Competitive Environment" found that , lack of availability of market information, lack of awareness about the product features among customers ,insufficient promotion and advertisement of handloom, lack of quality standardization etc. lead to poor production in this sector.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY:

Livelihood is a very important issue in the world today .Weaving is a very good livelihood option as it preserves cultural and traditional modern technique and also helps the future generations to create advance and modern designs keeping in touch with tradition. Although weaving industries provide large employment generation to the Mishing weavers for long time, it is still at the subsistence level. Weaving industries of Mishings in Lakhimpur have been facing a large number of economic and non economic problems that needs to be addressed properly for the development of this section with bright future.

SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE MISHINGS OF LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT:

The socio economic condition of Mishings in Lakhimpur is very important aspect in the study. After a long period the Mishing community is not developed .From the time of independence government has been trying to develop Mishing people through different welfare schemes and programs but no progress has been observed so far of their social status. The majority people of the community are living below poverty line .Most of them are uneducated.

Socio-economic indicators include: (1) social aspect and (2) economic aspect

Social aspect –

1. The Dwelling style.
2. Educational scenario
3. Health

Economic aspect-

1. Occupational structure.
2. Land holding pattern.
3. Income.
4. Saving and investment.
5. Borrowing

Dwelling system:

It has been seen that most of the Mishing villages are situated near the riparian tracts and embankments with long traditional house in haphazard manner.

a) The House :

Every Mishing family possesses a traditional thatched house .Most of there is of bamboo structure. The most important feature within a Mishing house is the fire place Merum which is looked upon with must respect.

b) Educational status :

Most of the Mishings are illiterate in nature due to poor economic condition of the family .A very few people have completed their higher study.

c) Health:

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “A state of complete physical, Mental and social being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmty.” The Mishings of Lakhimpur are not so conscious about the health and disease.

d) Beliefs:

Most of the people of Mishings in Lakhimpur believe that evil spirits can cast disease to human beings.



Economic Aspects:***Agriculture:***

Agriculture is the main occupation of livelihood of the Mishings . Besides, they have weaving industries, poultry firms, Pig firms etc. As regards to the relative contribution of various sources of the Mishing income ,Sali, Ahu, Bau paddy are the major crops of Mishings in Lakhimpur.

Service:

Service is the third source of income of Mishings.

Land holding pattern:

The Mishing uses their land mainly for cultivation. But it has been observed that land is not properly utilized. So there is a need for optimum land use planning and adopting suitable cropping pattern, which is most urgent today for improving their social, cultural and economic condition.

Income pattern:

Due to floods, soil erosion, illiteracy etc. various reason the per capita income of the Mishings are very low.

(Source: Shodhganga .inlibnet.ac.in)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- (1) To study the socio economic background of the Mishing women weavers in Lakhimpur District.
- (2) To study the problems faced by the Mishing women weavers in their occupations.
- (3) To study some measures for improvement of various problems faced by the Mishing women weavers regarding their occupations.

HYPOTHESIS:

- (1) The socio economic background of the Mishing women weavers of Lakhimpur is low.
- (2) Mishing women weavers of Lakhimpur have a number of problems.
- (3) The profession of weaving has not been modernized.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present study is limited in terms of sample, geographical situation and content. The specification of such limitations is as follows:

- (1) The present study is only confined to Mishing women weavers.
- (2) The present study is also limited to the Mishing weaver section of four villages of Lakhimpur District, namely, Baangmora, Barkhamukh, Latibarchuk and Moukhuwa. Total 80 (eighty) respondents have been selected for this investigations.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The study was based on both primary as well as secondary data. To collect primary data, from sampling unit, a sample survey has been made and for this purpose a suitable interview schedule was constructed to collect information from 80 (eighty) sample respondents. The field survey was conducted by selecting four representative villages, namely, Baangmora ,Barkhamukh ,Latibarchuk and Moukhuwa of Ghilamora block. Out of total households, 20 (twenty) households from each villages were selected as sample respondents for this investigation. The desirable data related to socio economic characteristics, namely; age education, marital status, family type, type of house, monthly income, other facilities of weavers etc. were collected directly by personal interview. Here weavers are the respondents themselves. A simple statistical (percentage) method was used for this study. Secondary data were collected from various research articles, journals, thesis, internet sources etc.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA:

Table 1. Sex wise distribution of sample households according to their Educational status during 2016-2017

Educational status	No. of males	No.of females	Total no.	Percentage of males	Percentage of females	Total percentage
Illiterate	13	2	15	3.03%%	0.46%	3.49%
Primary	26	35	61	6.06%	8.15%	14.21%
M.E.	47	38	85	10.95%	8.85%	19.81%
High School	72	71	143	16.78%	16.55%	33.33%
Higher Secondary	51	54	105	11.88%	12.58%	24.47%
Beyond Higher Secondary	13	7	20	3.03%	1.63%	4.66%
Total	222	207	429			

(Source : primary data collection by field survey in 2016-17)

Interpretation:

From the above table, it is seen that, though illiteracy rate is very low that is 3.49 %, only 4.66% of people under study, are getting higher education that is beyond Higher Secondary level education. Out of which 3.03% male and 1.63% female, this is very poor. In this study, it has been seen that, 33.33% people enroll in high school level education .Among which 16.78% male and 16.55% female. Again in case of primary and Higher secondary level educations ,though female percentage of education is higher than male percentage, but the overall percentage of both primary and Higher Secondary level education is not satisfactory.

Table 2 : Economic status of the weavers:

Monthly income (Rs.)	Number of women	Percentage of women
10000 – 20000	41	51.25%
20001 – 30000	6	7.5%
30001 – 40000	14	17.5%
40001 – above	19	23.75%

TOTAL =80

(Source : Primary data collection by field survey in 2016-17)

Interpretations:

From the above table, it has been seen that, 51.25% women weavers (respondents) get very low range of monthly income that is between Rs.10000-Rs.20000. Only 23.75% women weavers get monthly income of Rs.40001 and above, which is quite low.

Table 3 : Working hours of the weavers :

Working hours of the weavers	Number of women	Percentage of women
Less than 3 hours	1	1.25 %
4 hours	3	3.75%
5 hours	20	25%
6 hours	28	35%
7 hours	10	12.5%
8 hours	18	22.5%
Total =	80	

(Source : Primary data collection by field survey in 2016-17)

Interpretations:

From the above table it has been seen that, maximum 35% women weavers out of 80 women weavers under study, are working 6 hours. Again, only 22.5% women weavers are Working 8 hours per day, which is very low.

Table 4 : Facilities provided to the households of the respondents :

Facilities	Total number of households	Percentage of households	
Housing conditions :	Pucca	37	46.25%
	Kutchra	43	53.75%
Sanitation :	Yes	38	47.5%
	No	42	52.5%
Electricity :	Yes	35	43.75%
	No	45	56.25%
Drinking water :	Tube well	25	31.25%
	Water tap	10	12.5%
	Others (pond, river etc.)	45	56.25%

(Source: Primary data collection by field survey in 2016-17)

Interpretations:

From the above table it has been seen that, 46.25% households have pucca houses and 53.75% households have kutcha houses. So, housing conditions of the respondents are very poor. Again only 47.5% households have sanitation facilities. 52.5% households have no sanitation facilities. So, it shows unhealthy environment. Again 43.75% households have electricity facilities and 56.25% households have no electricity facilities. In case of drinking water, only 12.5% households have water tap, 31.25% have tube well, and 56.25% households depend on other sources of drinking water, that is pond, river etc., which is very unhygienic.

RESULTS AND MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The study reveals that:

1. Almost 33.33% people of total population of the study area have passed high school. Only 24.47% of people of the total population of the study area have taken higher education. 14.21% have taken primary level, 19.81% have taken M.E. level. Among the sample 3.49% found illiterate. Most of them deprived of school education due to poor economic condition.
2. Economic condition of the weaver's families was found to be not satisfactory. More than 51.25% (highest percentage) of women weavers earn between Rs.10000-Rs.20000 per month. Only 23.75% of women weavers earn between Rs.40001-above.
3. 35% of the women weavers work for 6 hours a day with a break of 2 hours. 22.5% of women weavers work for 8 hours a day with a break of 3 hours.
4. Most of the weavers have poor accommodations with unhygienic condition.
5. Poor electricity facilities retard earning activities.
6. The weaving occupation is traditional in nature, it is not modernized.
7. Whatever the Mishing women weavers in Lakhimpur, are they are due to their own efforts. They have not received any major support from Government.
8. Lack of storage facilities of weaving production is one of the major problems of the weavers in the study area.
9. The weavers cannot take loans from the financial institution due to high rate of interest.
10. In the weaving industries, the laborers do not get sufficient wage to fulfill their basic needs.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

From the study it is found that, the socio economic status of Mishing women weavers of Lakhimpur is lowland deplorable and these needs to be improved. Based on the result of the present study, there should be some remedial measures for improving the occupational status of Mishing women weavers in Lakhimpur. These are:

1. Satisfactory weaving condition and environment should be provided to the weavers.
2. Weaving should not be taken out of compulsion but should be out of interest.
3. Payment of the weavers should be made according to the needs of the weavers.
4. Weaving should be considered as one of vocational subject in our secondary school in modernized form.
5. Training should be given to the weavers on modern techniques and skills of weavers.
6. Training on weaving, using well developed looms, developed designs; dying system should be imparted to weavers.
7. It is necessary to encourage new generations to take weaving as a profession.
8. Special attention should be paid in implementation of different Government sponsored scheme.

9. Government should take necessary steps to organize discussion, seminar and workshop on cooperative education from time to time in order to make the weavers aware and educate on modern weaving techniques.
10. Government should provide sufficient financial facilities to the women weavers in this society.

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