

ABSTRACT

Textile is a part of our life like food and shelter. It is one of the oldest craft and industry of civilization. Industrial revolution was initiated with textile. It has happen to be the growth engine of all developed and developing countries. All big cities of the world have textile as their economic backbone. It is the interlacement of the two sets of treads longitudinal and across, which is termed as weaving, the fundamental technique of which has been known to the mankind since the days immemorial, as its culture has been a necessity for production of cloth at least for the purpose of covering the human bodies.

Textile is a combination of both art and science. This is one of the industries which is not purely engineering, but a blend of technology and engineering, a fusion and it can never be like the rocket science. The depth of this industry is an ocean. A meter of fabric, weighting few grams, may be composed of trillions of fine fibres of varied characteristics, arranged in a way to transform into yarn and then from thousands of yarns into fabric. And the process still does not end. It passes through various processes finally to become user worthy and user friendly. Like an evolution it then evolves as an expression, style, fashion or a lifestyle and it goes on ----

The continuity and contemporary characters along with the importance of the indigenous textile tradition in the Hajo circle of Kamrup district, Assam have been discussed under the relevant chapter of the project. It is amply evident from the discussion that handloom weaving in Assam is not merely the production of textile items but an integral part of life and culture of the indigeneous population having diverse socio-cultural background. Chapter – I describes that the tradition of textile production at home is an age-old feature which has been descending from generation to generation and the historical antecedents provide substance to the contemporary practices. Long before human begins to weave cloth, they had been using non woven cloth, skins of leather for clothing and a wide variety of other purposes. The non-woven fabrics felt and bark-cloth consist of fibrous

materials which can be made into a continuous length without spinning or weaving. With the passes of time and as a means of civilization the craft of weaving has invented.

The main objectives of the study are:-

- To study the socio-cultural aspects of indigenous weaving.
- To study the history, folklore and technology associated with traditional textiles and weaving in the region.
- To study the changes in the design and motifs as a result of commercialization of the industry.
- To study problems and prospects in the development of traditional textile industry.
- To suggest measures to develop and sustain the traditional handloom industry in the region.

With a view to achieve these objectives the project has been divided into eight (8) chapters. The first one are devoted to the introduction of the problem which includes Textiles in human civilization, Indian heritage in handloom & weaving, Textiles in North-east, Textile heritage in Assam and scope and justification of research problem.

Chapter – II gives the review of related literature as the survey of literature plays an important role in establishing the backdrop for any research in social sciences. It is felt that justification of the present study can be classified by reviewing the available literature on the subject. Therefore, an attempt has been made to review the available literature on the subject to find out gaps in research before finally selecting the present topic for study.

Chapter – III gives a description of methodology that the researcher has adopted for the study. The type of the research is qualitative and the methodology used for the study is multiprolonged and multidimensional. The study is based mainly on primary and secondary data for analyzing of problems related to the

development of traditional handloom practices. The purposive sampling method has been selected for field survey. An interview format has been prepared and interviewed the selected respondent.

For collecting primary data on the basis of purposive sampling method five weaving villages has been selected for field survey in the entire Hajo Revenue circle.

Chapter - IV gives some introduction to the study region i.e. the Hajo circle of Kamrup district, Assam which may have related with weaving activities even from the days of Kautilya.

Chapter – V relates to the history antiquity and folklore associated with traditional textiles and weaving. Assam has a long history of textile culture. There are descriptions of early Assam in many ancient religious and secular treaties of India. There are descriptions of Assamese textiles in Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kautilya mentioned in Arthasastra the name of Chinapatta a variety of silk from china. Kautilya also mentioned other varieties of silk from early Assam namely Dukula and the best one from Subarnakundya, which has been identified with early Assam and was situated near Hajo. In Arthasastra there are mentions of other varieties of silk from Eastern part of India. But according to Arthasastra the silk from early Assam was the best of all. The chapter also describes about the folklore associated with weaving in the region.

Chapter – VI describe about the traditional Textiles and weaving practices of Assam and designs and motifs of various kinds weaved in the region from very early period. The designs in a general way is divided into five broad categories, viz, naturalistic, stylized, geometric, abstract and structural. The motifs are - floral and plant motifs, Animal motifs, structural motifs and Geometric motifs. All these motifs have been designed in a very stylized form in the region to cater the aesthetic needs of the customer.

It also describes some folklore and folk beliefs and the traditional textile technology including the process of folk dyes.

Chapter – VII is an analytical one which describes the present status of weaving. As no living culture is static some changes have taken place with the craft of weaving in the region. This is because of the fact that the innovative thinking of the weavers have compelled them to convert their traditional handloom industry to commercial one. In the same chapter the researcher has explain some problems associated with the handloom industry.

Chapter – VIII gives the summery of findings and conclusion of the project.

The textile takes a significant role in understanding the culture and history of mankind. Its relationship with man is as like as the body and soul. As an aspect of material culture, the textile warps not only the human body but also culture at the same time.

In Assam, the art of ‘weaving’ is an age old traditional activity. It prevalent among all castes and is exclusively feminine one. The textile is treated here as a domestic craft to meet the household requirement of every family. It is only a labour of love. The women use this craft as a vehicle for expression for her cultural imaginations and experiences. She reflects her imagination in the form of motifs of varied forms drawn from various sources. For example when an Assamese girl etches floral motifs on ‘Bihuyan’ as a gift to be given her beloved on the occasion of Bihu festival – she naturally puts her mind and heart into it. They weave design with their deep feelings and emotion by using brilliant colour combination. Here each motifs becomes an alphabet of her mind. Such alphabets or symbols when put together become a letter of love and youth understands the sense.

Assam is a confluence place of different ethno-cultural groups; each has cultural background and distinct history of its own. The geographical diversity, ecology and socio-economic condition affect in the growth and development of each group. The ethnic groups have their respective speciality as well as peculiarity in weaving and in designing. The design and costumes always

symbolize the cultural identity of each group in the society. The geo-cultural boundary between two ethnic groups is not in a water tight form and one never stood hostile to another. Rather, they co-exist peacefully and make a common culture that exhibit in the textile traditions of this region. In traditional context, the textile is marked by continuity and homogeneity at the same time. This very process of integration was enacted by the women. She acts like a scribe and records the ethno history in floral language on fabrics. So, the textile exists as a document for ethno history of preliterate people.

But now, the economic change brings qualitative and quantitative changes in the life and culture of the people. For this change, new elements of textiles have found in the way in Assamese culture. It was transformed identifiably more in urban area in comparison to rural settings.

In rural areas, the textiles has not lost its traditional elements; it constitutes more or less unchanged and distinct and remains uninfluenced of urban cultures.

The textiles of the study region are on road to transformation and synthesis. It breaks their traditional boundary – they come closer and exchange their elements. This is spontaneous and people do not show any negative attitudes. This is a silent process of assimilation. Another notable fact is that the traditional designs or motifs are transformed on the new types of costumes, where the traditional values and beliefs related to textiles are on wave in the face of modern changes. But the innate linkage between traditional and modernity is not lost. It flickers but has not extinguished. Traditional designs continue to exist from being its oblivion.

It is not an easy task to keep aside anything unacceptable on this ground that the design is new. But, it reflects the reality of life and experiences of the people and culture of this area, it should be preserved.

Changes is common phenomenon. There must have change in traditional textiles. The new trend will escort more commercialization and opportunity for

employment and investment. But in the same time, people ought to be aware of presenting the originality of culture along with evolution.

If textile craft is given a new shape with dignity, awareness and effort, it would bring the lost pride of Sualkuchi, alongwith the entire Hajo circle and of Assam.