

CHAPTER-I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Silk persists to enjoy its significance as a luxury clothing for the mankind as forever. The everlasting grace of silk always finds its place in the position society. Silk remains as the queen of textile and cannot be replaced by any kind of man-made or synthetic textile. There are four different varieties of silk- Muga, Eri, Mulberry and Tasar silk. Asia is the main producer of silk in the world and it produced over 95% of the total global silk. Bulk amount of silk are produced in China, India, Japan, Brazil and Korea. India is the second largest producer of silk followed by China. India contributes 18% of total raw silk of the world's total silk production.

1.1.1 Muga silk

Muga silk is the golden yellow colour silk is prerogative of India and the pride of Assam state. The word "Muga" means yellowish in Assam. It is produced from semi-domesticated multivoltine silkworm. These silkworms feed on the aromatic leaves of Som and Soalu plants and are related to the trees similar to Tasar. The shimmering yellow golden silk is found in Indian traditional literature since 1662 B.C. and is basically cultivated in the Brahmaputra Valley because the ecological requirements for its growth are found in this natural abode. The people of Assam have been traditionally engaged in the cultivation of Muga silk. Historical records indicate the presence of Muga silk in the Brahmaputra valley since 321 B.C. Assamese people use Muga silk to produce Mekhela-sador, saree, kurti (for female), kurta (specially for male), riha, bed sheets and for other materials for decoration purpose. In the Ahom reign, Muga mekhela - sador was worn by the brides in their marriage ceremony. The royal family dressed themselves in Muga as it was the sign of pride and purity. Apart from that the people who belong to the kingdom and other respected people in the society use Muga cloth as their main dress. The cultivation and weaving of Muga Silk has been there for a very long time but the golden age can be traced to the period between 1228-1828. The Ahom rulers patronized the growth of Muga silk as an industry. They had

declared that all the higher officials of the kingdom were to adorn only cloths made from Muga silk.

In Assamese culture, Muga takes a different place. At the time of Bihu dance, the dancers (both girls and boys) have to wear Muga dress. Muga is our cultural dress. The respect of Muga is not only limited under Assam. Its shinning and value spread the whole world. Presently, the demand for Muga is very high all over the world. Always there is a scarcity of Muga cloth due to high demand and less production.

1.1.2 Mulberry Silk

Mulberry silk provides the shine and flexibility that is desired by every fabric. It is one of the most popular and well-known forms of silk. This type of silk is originated from the era of Indus Valley Civilization. Rearing of wild silk from the available caterpillars was a popular culture at that era. People who belonged to the Indus Valley civilization reared cocoons of the worms to produce silk. The cocoons single source of food is the white mulberry plant, which results in their white or off white colour. These silkworms are cultivated and reared indoors. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir are the major Mulberry silk producing states of India. When Mulberry silk was first reared, it was the cloth for the rich section people of the society. The Mulberry silk cannot be used for the regular use. It is generally used during the festivals, parties or any other formal occasions. Most of the textiles producing mulberry silk varieties indulge in the creation of silk sarees, dress materials or evening gowns. This silk is also used for gifting purpose across the globe. There is high demand all over the world in this Mulberry silk. Since India is the second largest producer of Mulberry silk, therefore this country is also the greater exporter of this type of silk.

1.1.3 Eri Silk

Eri silk is famous in India as “Endi” or “Errandi”. The earliest evidence of Eri silk culture in India was found in 1779. Eri silk is basically used in the North- Eastern parts of India. From Eri, the weavers basically produce various types of shawl, Mekhela-sador, kurti, shirt etc. Eri cloths are basically off-white colour warm cloth.

Various natural colours like turmeric, cow-dung, tea leaves etc. dye on Eri thread to produce coloured Eri cloth.

1.1.4 Tasar Silk

Tasar is a naturally gold colour texture. It is that kind of silk which has bright shine, soft hand feel, and long lasting and highest wear resistance in natural fabric. The amount of annual Tasar silk production in India is almost 400 metric ton raw silk and it produced almost 11 million hectares of land. Presently in India, this type of silk is basically produced in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and a small part of Karnataka.

1.2 Women Empowerment

The growing social awareness across the world has brought a number of issues related to the economic development among which gender equality and empowerment of women are very prominent. The discrimination against women in the form of male-female differentiation constitutes the core of gender biased society. Till today it is estimated that 6 million women are missing every year. Among them 23 percent are never born, 10 percent are missing in early childhood, 21 percent are missing in the reproductive years and 38 percent are in above the age of 60 (World Development Report, 2012). Women in under developed and developing countries are treated differently than developed countries and lagging behind men through various domains. In across to education in low income countries, the enrolment rate for girls in secondary school was 34 percent in 2010, while for boys, it was 41 percent. Almost twenty years back the rate were 22 percent and 30 percent respectively. Meanwhile, the primary school enrolment has become nearly universal for both boys and girls. It is also seen that, in labour market, women are earning less than men for same work. Women spend almost twice as much time on housework, almost five times as much time on child care, and about half as much time on market work as men to do (Beniell and Sanchez, 2011). In political representation the percentage of women constitute lower than men. In terms of having legal rights, women in many countries still lack independent rights to own land, manage property, conduct business or even travel without their husband's consent.

The need of Women empowerment has emerged as a pressing global issue. The year 1975 has great significance for women in the world. The United Nations Organization (UNO) declared it as the international year of women and joined in all nations to ensure equality for women and their interception in social, economic and political life. UNDP focuses on gender equality and women empowerment not only as human rights, but also because they are a pathway for achieving the millennium development goals and sustainable development. Empowerment refers to increasing the economic, political, social, educational, gender or spiritual strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their capacities. Around the world healthy, educated, employed, women break poverty cycles- not only for themselves but for the families, communities and countries as well.

In India, till the Fourth Five Year Plan, women related programmed were adopted with a welfare approach. But after the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1978), the women related programmed changes from welfare to development. Women's development was included as a separate economic agenda in the Sixth Plan (1980-85). The Seventh Plan (1985-90) had declared objective of bringing women into the mainstream of national development. In Eighth Plan (1992-97), the approach towards women shifted from development to empowerment. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) focused on empowerment of women as its strategic objective and adopted the Women Component Plan (WCP) (Sharma, 2012).

Per capita Income recognizes the fact that gender bias and discrimination against women is still a powerful negative force in significant percentage of the total world population. The United States, along with many other countries has made a substantial strides in gender equality, but the battle for empowering women ranges on, especially in too many counties where violence and oppression against women is a daily occurrence. Thus, despite this fact female influence, hard work and perseverance provide the bedrocks of a family's structure and success.

The term 'women empowerment' refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decision of their own life for their personal benefits as well as for the society. It emphasizes on increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength

of the women, to ensure equal right to women and to make the female confident enough to claim their rights. Thus, empowerment is the development that allows one to gain the knowledge, skill sets and attitude needed to bring in with the altering world and the status in which one lives.

It is very necessary for the development of the society. Basically it is seen that the woman of a family are not taking any active role in case of decision making. She is dependent on her father before marriage, after marriage on her husband and at the old age on her son. If women are making empowered she has the power of making decision for herself. She has the ability of showing assertiveness while making decision collectively. She has the ability to develop new skills for group power and self improvement.

To be independent and empowered women need to make financially strong. If a woman is financially strong then she can easily take decision about financial matters for herself as well as their households. So, it can be considered that women's income also takes an active part of the family welfare. Women spend her income on children education, health care etc. So, our future generation will become strong. A well developed family indicate a develop society as well as a develop nation. Basically it is seen that the rural women are need to be empowered more. They are poor and uneducated. Women empowerment is a global effort to promote the economic and social empowerment of women through the formation of self managed and self sustaining income earning groups. There is no denying the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in almost seven decades after independence but the women still have to struggle against many handicaps and social evils in this male dominated society.

1.3 Silk Industry as a source of Women Empowerment

Sericulture results high labour force participation rate in comparison to any other rural avocation due to which sericulture has emerged as the ideal tool for employment generation and rural development. In this industry the rate of participation of women is 60% and family member's leads to high income flow to the family. This sector (weaving) requires low investment and high return, short gestation period and steady income through the year.

The Pat-Muga firms are organized by individuals with private resources with the help of family members and can pursue as full time and part time occupation. Capital investment is very low and the used equipments are very simple. In Pat-Muga industries we generally used locally available resources, such as raw materials and labours. So, the local small scale entrepreneurs and unemployed people are benefited from this. This results in reduction of unequal distribution of income, self employment, employment generation and enhancing standard of living of the rural people.

Assam is famous for silk production. Silk cloth produced in Assam is famous for both domestic as well as commercial purposes. As mentioned earlier, Assam has the unique distinction in producing four major varieties of silk- Muga silk, Eri silk, Mulberry silk and Tasar silk. Rearing of Eri, Muga and Mulberry silk worm are playing an important role and economic support to a large section of rural population in the state. It is practiced in more than 10, 532 villages and provides employment to 2.6 lakh family. Assam accounts for the highest production on Muga and Eri in the country. Around 60 percent women are engaged out of the total population practice in this industry. Hence, these activities enable Assam women self independent in earning of income and some other decision making for their socio economic development. Since empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedoms and opportunities, which they were denied in the past only because of their being women now having variety of opportunities in enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. Hence, women empowerment essentially means that women have the power or capacity to regulate their day-to-day lives in the social, political and economic terms –a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage. To empower women, the initial stage is to make them financially independent. Financial power is the most important key to make anyone empowered. In rural areas,

employment facility is very limited. It is not possible for most of women that they come out from their house and do work. So, we have to try to give them employment opportunities on their own places.

In this study, attempt has been made to analyse the nature of women empowerment through silk industry which is considered as one of the oldest weaving industry in Assam. Weaving plays an important role in employment generation as well as a source of income to a family; various socio-economic spheres relating to women empowerment would contribute to have scope of their day to day life business. Since this weaving sector requires less investment, therefore, anybody can easily establish such firms in their house and apart from income earning, they can able to give employment to others too.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Silk industry is an agriculture based industry. The techniques of silk production play an important role in rural economy of our country. The silk industry generates employment in various stages of silk production, like cultivation, rearing, reeling and weaving.

Assam silk is famous in all over the world. Sualkuchi is the main centre to produce Assam silk. The village Sualkuchi is known as the “Manchester of Assam” for producing silk. People from different parts of the world are fascinated by the cloths produced from Muga and Mulberry silk by Sualkuchi weavers. Presently, in Sualkuchi village there are 13,752 looms in silk weaving industry. Among these looms, 5,532 are Muga looms and 8,220 are mulberry looms. Among 12,056 weavers 5,183 are male weavers and approximately 6,873 are female weavers. Sualkuchi had provided direct employment of more than 12,000 weavers, 6,000 helpers and also silk sector provided indirect part time employment such as yarn winders, Muga reelers, and on management. Therefore the silk industry in Sualkuchi village creates employment to nearly 24,000 people (Directorate of Handloom & Textiles, Govt. of Assam, 2016).

In Sualkuchi silk weaving industry, almost 60% weavers are female weavers. It is a significant characteristic of the industry that women played the fundamental role in developing rural economy. It has also provided role in developing the rural economy. It

has provided some source of livelihood to the economically weaker sections of the society specially for the women, helps to make them financially independent and generates women empowerment to the poor section of the society, since empowerment starts with financial independencies.

Till now, many researchers and analysts has visited Sualkuchi village and in every visit, it is found that the whole village and almost every household belongs to the village are always runs after silk irrespective with age and gender. Every female in the village knows handloom work and they do it commercially. Every day as an average of 1000 visitors (including domestic consumers and foreigners) visit the village to purchase Pat-Muga cloths. The whole economy of the village runs after silk and silk products. Sualkuchi is the oldest and the biggest silk village of Assam. Therefore the researcher felt the need to take up a thoroughly study of the Sualkuchi silk weaving industry.

1.5 Study Area

Sualkuchi, as the study area is the main centre of Kamrup District of Assam where large amount of silk are produced. It has the largest number of cottage industry engaged in handloom among the whole Assam state. The pride village Sualkuchi is situated under Kamrup (Rural) district of Assam. This village is known as the “Manchester of Assam” and was established by Momoi Tamuli Barbaruah, a great administrator of the Ahom kingdom. Barbaruah set up this weaver’s village by shifting a large number of master weavers from all over the region to this village. It is situated on the bank of Brahmaputra, about 35 kms west from Guwahati city; it is in the block of Kamrup district with a population around 52,679 with geographical area of 90 kms. Here weaving is a dominant occupation along the population. The weaving tradition in this area started in the 11th century when king Dharma Pal, of the Pala dynasty sponsored the craft and brought 26 weaving families from Tantikuchi to Sualkuchi. The village became a weaving village when the Shams occupied Sualkuchi defeating the Mughal in the mid 17th century. Now the Assam silk industry centralized in Sualkuchi. Presently 73.78% of the households of the village are being engaged in commercial weaving and hand-loom. The census of hand-loom in Sualkuchi conducted in 2012 reveals that Sualkuchi has 13752 active commercial hand-looms. It is an ancient craft

village having silk rearing and weaving communities. 90% of household of Sualkuchi have looms. It is found that 79% families have traditional looms at their home, 17% of them have modern looms for commercial silk weaving (CSB, Assam 2016). Pat and Muga are the two main silk varieties that they use to produce Sarees, Mekhela-Chadar, Selowar-Kameej, Kurta, Scurf, Shwol, Gamosa and Chunni etc. In Kamrup (rural) district there are approximately 6,000 handlooms. Out of which 4,478 handlooms are situated in Sualkuchi. Total numbers of weavers in this village are 12,056 out of which 6872 are women weavers accounting 57% are female weaver (Directorate of Handloom & Textiles, Govt. of Assam, 2016).

Sualkuchi is the textile centre of Assam. Muga silk and Pat silk along with Eri silk or Endi cloth from this region is famous for its quality. Mekhela chadors and Gamosas made from this indigenous material are in high demand through whole world. These products not only used for domestic consumption but also exported to many countries among the world.

Map: 1.1

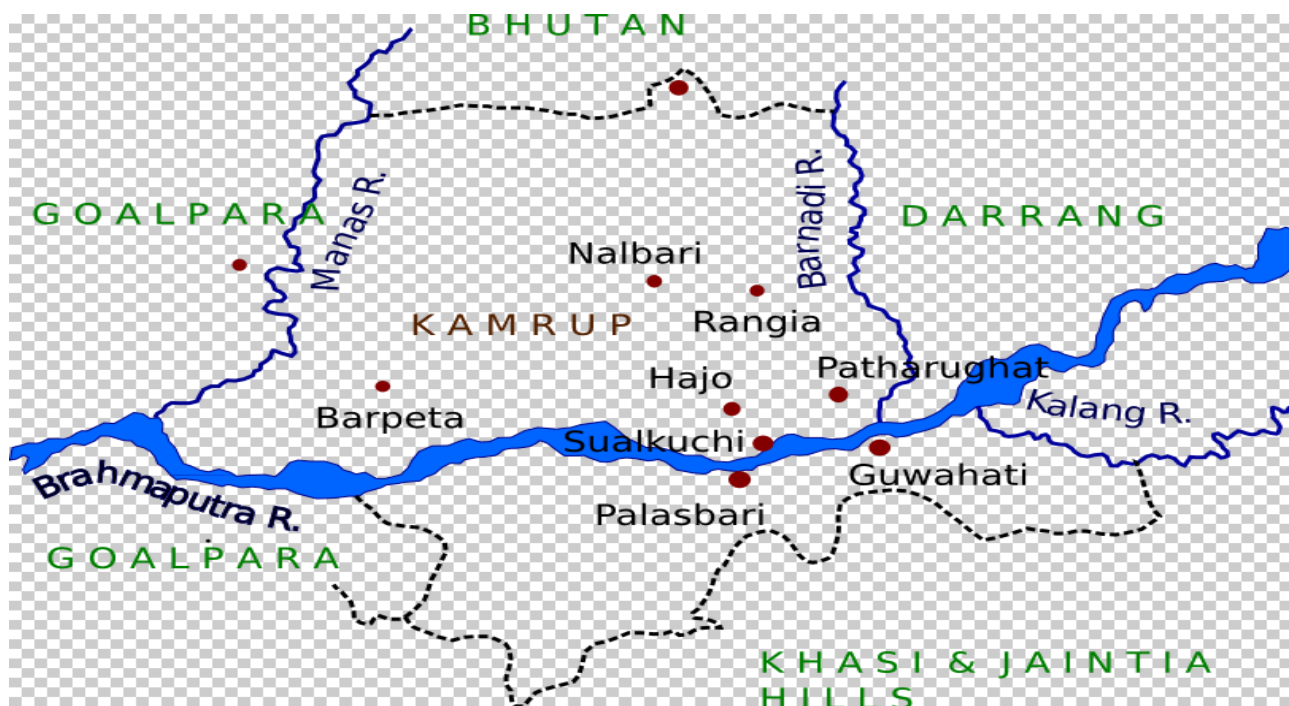
Map of Assam (Locating Sualkuchi Village)



Source : <https://www.mapsofindia.com>, February 19, 2020

Map:1.2

Map of Kamrup District (Locating Sualkuchi Village)



source: <https://www.mapsofindia.com>, February 19, 2020

Map: 1.3
Map of Sualkuchi Village (Study Area)



Source: <https://villagemap.in/assam/kamrup/sualkuchi>, 2019

1.6 Sample Design

In order to achieve the objectives, both primary and the secondary data are used. Primary data are collected by visiting various pat and Muga firms. For this purpose a well designed questionnaire is framed. Details about the weavers' production process, source of raw materials, used machinery, wage structure, marketing facility and about the weavers training facility etc all are collected through questionnaire.

Total entrepreneur in the village are 3621, consisting 13,752 handlooms, number of total weavers are 12056, and out of these 6872 are female weavers (Directorate of Handloom & Textiles, Govt. of Assam, 2016). Basically the business is run under the head of the family but after his death his wife or daughter (in absence of son) handles it. The females of the family are help in other activities. There is an attempt to select 5% weavers out of the total number of weavers. The numbers of 5% female weavers out of total number of female weavers (6872) are 345. So the research sample sizes are 345.

1.7 Objectives

The following objectives are under taken for the Study:

1. To investigate the silk production and engagement of women in silk industry.
2. To examine the impact of silk industry in empowering women through employment and weavers education in the study area.
3. To analyse the Government policies for silk industry and how it help empowering women.
4. To examine the various problems of silk weavers in study area which impact adversely on empowering women.

1.8 Hypotheses

The following hypothesis has been tested:

1. There is no relationship between weavers' income and education.
2. There is no significant impact of training on productivity of the weavers.
3. Silk industry promotes women empowerment.

1.9 Research Methodology and Data Collection

The research work has been carried out taking both primary and secondary information. The various sources of secondary data collection are newspapers, journals, magazines, various articles, Assam Statistics year book, published and unpublished from various internet sources etc. And for the primary information, data are collected by direct personal interview through questionnaires. Questionnaires are prepared in such a way which will help us to get our necessary information.

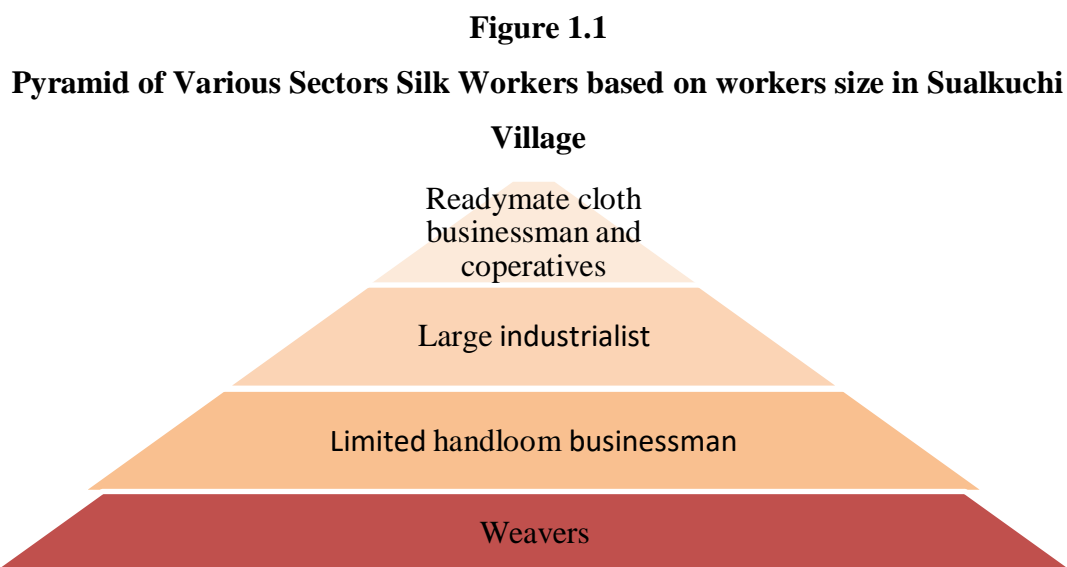
Questionnaire was prepared such a way that the weavers can easily understand and they are able to give a reliable answer.

The collected data are transferred into a spreadsheet through Microsoft Excel in necessary rows and columns. Each row on the spreadsheet is representing each of the respondents. Columns are arranged to facilitate for picking up them up to transfer to other sheets for constructing Bar Diagram, Pie Diagram, Histogram, Ratio, Percentage etc. as per the requirement of the analysis. Besides Microsoft Excel sheet, we also use SPSS for the following analysis.

Other than Primary data, Secondary data are also analyzed with the help of Ratios, Graphs, Diagrams (Pie diagram, bar diagram, histogram etc.).

1.9.1 Classification of silk workers in Sualkuchi

To classify the various sections of workers engaged on Pat-Muga industry in the study area, we can construct the following pyramid:



Source: Field Study

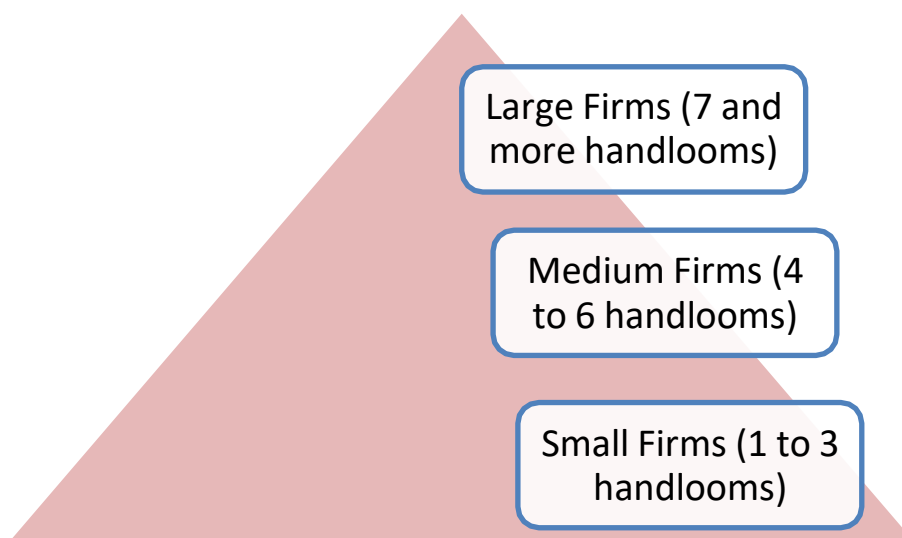
From the above pyramid it is seen that the whole population is related to the silk business in Sualkuchi village which can be classified into 4 (four) sections. These four sections are plotted in the pyramid on the basis of their labour strength. In this area, the highest amount of people are engaged on weaving, rearing, sewing etc which are classified as Labour section or labour class. So, these sections are placed on the bottom of the pyramid, which covers the highest area of the pyramid. The second highest labour forces are engaged in handloom business, which are placed on the 2nd position on the pyramid named as handloom businessman. The third largest amounts of population are engaged in industries in the study area and they are known as industrialists. They have their own silk firms in the village. They placed the 3rd highest position on the pyramid. At the top of the pyramid, those businessmen are placed who have their business with readymade cloth and cooperative sector. Their amount is lowest on this business in the study area as compared to other business section people on the silk industry and on the pyramid they stood in the top position. Our study is based on the female silk weavers of the Sualkuchi village.

1.9.2 Division of silk firms based on their Size

The firms are divided into three different categories by the local people of the study area based on the number of handlooms having by the firms, i.e. small sizes firm, medium sizes firm and big firms. The firm's who have maximum 3 handlooms are identified as Small size firm, who have 4 to 6 numbers of handlooms are identified as Medium size firms and who have more than seven handlooms are identified as Large size firms.

Figure 1.2

Pyramid of Small, Medium and Large size Weaving Firms based on workers size in Sualkuchi Village



Source: Field Study

The shape of the pyramid represents the shape of firms based on their numbers in the study area. Almost every household at least has one or two of their own handlooms. So, the numbers of small firms which have 1 to 3 handlooms are very large. The numbers of medium size firms are comparatively less and the numbers of large firms are the lowest. So, it takes lesser space on the pyramid.

1.9.3 Structure of data collection

In the survey area, numbers of total weavers were 12056, out of which 6872 are female weavers. The study was completely based on female weavers. The highest numbers of weavers were engaged on small size firms i.e. 5,064. Out of which 2,900 were female weavers and 2,164 were male weavers. The second highest numbers of weavers are engaged on Medium size firms, the numbers are 3,617, out of which 2,080 were female weavers and 1,537 were male weavers and the lowest amount of weavers were engaged on Large size firms i.e 3,375 weavers engaged, out of which 1,920 were female weavers and 1,455 were male weavers. Since the numbers of female weavers are very huge, therefore it is not possible study the whole population. So, the researcher goes for stratified random sample survey without replacement. It is a method which involves the divisions of a population into smaller sub groups, which is commonly known as “Strata”. Out of the total weavers of the study area, 5% female weavers are studied, because 5% of 6870 female weavers enclose 345 weavers, which itself a large number and these information is sufficient to draw a conclusion. For the sample data collection 5% weavers were taken from each size of the firms. So, the following numbers of sample are collected from each division of firms-from Small size firms: 145 female weavers, from Medium size firms: 104 female weavers and from the Large size firms: 96 female weavers were randomly selected following without replacement process. This can be clearly explained with the help of the following table:

Table 1.1
Structure of Data Collection from Each Strata

Firm Size	Total no.s of weavers	Female weavers	Male weavers	Selecting 5% of Female Weavers out of Total Number of Female Weavers From Each Size of Firm
Small Size Weaving Firm	5,064 (42% of total weavers engaged in Sualkuchi)	2,900	2,164	145
Medium Size Weaving Firm	3,617 (30% of total weavers engaged in Sualkuchi)	2,080	1,537	104
Large Size Weaving Firm	3,375(28% of total weavers engaged in Sualkuchi)	1,920	1,455	96
Total	12,056	6,900 (57.23%)	5156(42.77%)	345

Source: Directorate of Handloom & Textiles, Govt. of Assam, 2016

1.9.4 T- Test

For the comparison of means, we have taken the help of SPSS the test runs on statistical principle by computing the means in the two samples: X_A and X_B .

Where, $X_A = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + \dots + X_n$

And $X_B = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + \dots + X_m$

$$\bar{X}_A = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n X_i}{N} \quad (i= 1,2,3, \dots, n)$$

$$\bar{X}_B = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m X_i}{N} \quad (i= 1,2,3, \dots, m)$$

N= Total no. of observations.

Correlation between two variables are calculated through Karl Pearson's method by using the formula,

$$r = \frac{(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$
 through Excel sheet.

Regression model is used for testing second hypothesis by using statistical software SPSS. Regression model is used in order to find the relation among training and productivity of the weavers.

Various diagrams such as pie- diagram, histogram, bar diagram are used to represent the data more attractively. Graphs and trend line are also used to represent some of in formations. To find the Trend Line, Excel sheet values are used.

1.9.5 Time for Data Collection

Primary data were collected during the month from July to December in the year 2016. The basic reason behind choosing July to December month's period is only because this is the period of the year which combined both high silk cloth demand sessions and low silk cloth demanded sessions in Sualkuchi village. Normally, in Summer, there is a lack of demand for silk mekhela-sador and other silk garments and from October the demand for silk cloth and garments starts to increase, because it is the time for festivals (such as Durga Puja) and the Assamese wedding session starts where people mostly buy and use Mulberry Pat and Muga cloths.

1.9.6 Limitation of the Study

The Sualkuchi silk village group covers 15 villages surrounding Sualkuchi. But the study is delimited to the weavers in the Sualkuchi village only. Again, if we consider silk industry, it clusters silk cultivation, rearing, reeling, weaving and marketing, which covers a very huge area and it quite difficult to study. So, the study is only concentrated on silk weaving sector.

Apart from that the study is based on primary data. Data are collected from direct personal interviews. But there is a chance of getting wrong information from the interviewers since they sometimes may not give accurate information.

1.10 Chapter Schedule

The study is classified into seven chapters:

- I. Introduction
- II. Review of Literature
- III. Silk Production of India and Assam with Special Reference to Sualkuchi Village and Engagement of Women in Silk Industry
- IV. Employment, Education, Income and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Weavers in Sualkuchi Village
- V. Government Policies for Silk Industries and its Benefits for Female Weavers
- VI. Problems Faced by the Silk weavers in Sualkuchi Village
- VII. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions
Bibliography

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