

Silk Industry and Women Empowerment: A Study on Mulberry and Muga Silk of Sualkuchi Village, Kamrup (Rural) District of Assam

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Chapter VII

Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions

7.1 Introduction

Silk is a natural protein fiber which can be woven into textiles. These protein fibers of silk are self-possessed fibroin and it is produced by certain insect larvae to form cocoons. In ancient India, the kings and the rich section people wore silk cloths. So, silk is the sign of arrogance and richness. “Silk” was first produced in China as early as the Neolithic period. After China, India also started to produce silk and there were many historical proofs that Indians were spinning silk from time immemorial. 327 BC, when great King Alexander came to India, he was very impressed by Indian weaving skills and so he took back some Indian finely woven silk and silk cloths.

Again, the weaving tradition in Sualkuchi 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).

India stands second highest position of silk production around the world followed by China. Though India produces high amount of silk, but India’s export amount is very less due to high consumption in domestic market. India produces almost 15% of global silk and exports approximately only 4%-5% silk of global market.

Again, among all the silk producing states, the highest amount of raw silk producing state is Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh marks second highest position and Assam produces third highest amount of silk among all the silk producing states of our country. Assam has the pride to produce all four varieties of silk, such as Mulberry, Muga, Eri

and Tassar. Assam has the monopoly to produce Muga silk.

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 (World Development Report, 2012). 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. 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 similar 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 women percentage constitute much more lower than men. In 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. 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 own capacities. Around the world healthy, educated, employed, women break poverty cycles- not only for themselves but for the families, communities and countries as well.

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, there is an attempt has been made to analyse the nature of women empowerment through silk industry is 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.

Assam silk is famous in all over the world. Sualkuchi is main centre to produce Assam silk. Sualkuchi is known as the “Manchester of Assam” in 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 are 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.

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.

The Sualkuchi silk village group covers 15 villages around Sualkuchi. But the study is delimited to the weavers in the Sualkuchi silk town. 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.

7.2 Major Findings of the Study

7.2.1 Comparison between World and Indian silk production

India produces in an average of 14% of total world silk production. From table 3.1 and 3.2 it is observed that in year 2012-13, India produces 14.82% of total world silk production. Again in 2013-14, India produces 14.87% of total silk production which is increased by 0.05%. In financial year 2014-15 India's silk production is decline to 14.21% and again it is increased by 14.82% in 2015-16. But India's silk production riches its highest amount in 17.05% in the year 2016-17 in comperision to 2016-17.

7.2.2 Export of Silk from India

India exports almost 4% to 5% global silk. Though India exports a huge amount of silk to the global trade market but still this amount is not a significant amount of export since India is the second largest silk production country among the whole world. The main reason behind this is the domestic demand for silk. More than 85% of silk goods productions are used in domestic market. The export items of Indian silk are

finished goods like curtains, carpets, cushion covers, bed spreads etc. The Indian silks are exported to the various markets of USA and almost all the European countries and some markets of Asia Region. The export earnings through the silk goods are decreased over the years due to global recession and reduction in demand for silk goods in western countries. The export earnings of silk goods over the country during 2016-17(P) were Rs.1, 871.01 crores. The record of exports of Silk in India shows a continuous declining phase from 2010 to till 2016. It decreased to 16.99 USD Million in 2016 from 57.41 USD Million in 2015. Exports of Silk in India averaged 236.32 USD Million from 1996 till 2016, reaching an all time high of 392.43 USD Million in 2005 and a recorded as the lowest amount of 16.99 USD Million in 2016.

7.2.3 Silk Production in Assam

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 10532 villages and provides employment to approx 2.60 lakh families. Assam accounts for the highest production on Muga and eri in the country. Assam ranked 3rd position in the production of Muga and Eri silk by producing 94% Muga silk and 62% Eri silk of the total production of the country.

Assam produces in an average of 11% of India's silk production. In year 2012-13, Assam produces 8.73% of total silk production of India. Again in 2013-14, Assam produces 10.45% of total silk production of India which is increased by 1.72%. In financial year 2014-15 Assam's silk production was increased by 11.22%. Again in 2015-16 Assam produces 11.66% of India's total silk production. Assam produces 12.59% of total silk production of India in the year 2016-17. So, from the above data it is observed that Assam's silk production is gradually increases and it is in a increasing trend.

7.2.3.1 Muga Production in Assam

Muga is the golden yellow silk is the pride of Assam and the rarest silk among the whole world. Assam has monopoly power, Muga silk has been given the Geographical Indication (GI) status in 2007 and the logo of authentic production has been registered with the “Assam Science Technology and Environment Council” (ASTEC). The Central Silk Board (CSB) of India has the power to inspect Muga silk products, certify their genuineness and allow authentic traders to use the GI logo.

The numbers of Muga firms or centres are gradually increases. Due to some unknown reasons the number of firms reduced in 2013. But after that the number of firms continuously increasing. The basic reason of number of increased firms is the continuous increasing demand of Muga silk. The total amount of Muga silk production was 113.28 MT in the year 2011. It increases to 114.56 MT on the next year. The year 2014, a total of 127.20 MT Muga was produced in Assam as a whole. In 2017, the amount of Muga was 129.60 MT. The highest amount of Muga was produced in Kamrup districts of Assam. Yearly more than six thousand lakhs Muga cocoons were produced in Assam. Goalpara, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Kamrup and Golaghat are the districts which produces highest amount of cocoons.

7.2.3.2 Mulberry silk Production in Assam

Mulberry silk is that part of silk whose uses are highest all over the world. Mulberry silk is the natural protein fibre which uses on various activities in all over the world. In Assam also highest amount of Mulberry silk is produced in comparison to other varieties of silk.

In 2011, 25 mulberry firms are in Assam. This number had increased to 46 firms in 2012. It had again increased at a huge rate by the year 2014 and its number reaches to 104 firms. Its number increases to 121 and 124 by 2015 and 2016 respectively. But due to the end of 2017, the number of mulberry farms little bit of reduced and it is 115.

The highest area of mulberry food plant is belongs to Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. Before 2015, only the Government mulberry food plant data are available, due to which total area under mulberry food plant are very limited. But after 2015 both government and private mulberry food plant data are available and we get an accurate

picture regarding total mulberry food plant area in Assam. From 2015 onwards, it is observed that food plant areas are in an increasing trend.

The total amount of Mulberry silk production was 11.40 MT in the year 2011. It decreases to 11.25 MT on the next year. The year 2014, a total of 27.24 MT Mulberry silk was produced in Assam. In 2017, the amount of mulberry was 49.64 MT. This signifies that there is a continuous increasing trend in the production of raw mulberry silk of Assam.

7.2.3.3 Eri Silk Production in Assam

Eri is the woolly white colour silk which is often referred to as the fabric of peace when it processed without killing the silkworm. Eri silk is also famous in India as Endi or Errandi silk. This type of silk is the most durable and strong type of fibres which are cool in summer and warming in the winter session. Eri silk production in Assam was 3143 metric tons during the year 2015-16. It had accounted a 62.11% of the total Indian Eri silk production.

7.2.4 Silk Production in Sualkuchi Village of Assam

There are inconsistencies in the production of silk on the study area. In the year 2010-11, amount of silk production was 2043.50 MT and it is reduced to 1,875.9 MT on 2011-12. It again reduced to 1,654.4 MT in 2012-13. But the amount increased to 2212.8 MT in the year 2013-14. It again increased to 2577.6 MT in 2014-15. The amount reduced to 2327.5 MT by the year 2015-16. The silk production again increases by the following years to the amount 2667.7MT and 2983.6 MT in 2016-17 and 2017-18 respectively.

7.2.4.1 Muga Silk Production in Sualkuchi Village

In 2010-11, 13000 kg of Muga silk were produced. This amount increases to 13.05% on the next year. Annual growth rate was 0.38% on the particular year. The amount decline to 9.90 thousand kg on 2012-13 and at that year there was a -24.13% of negative growth rate. The next two conjugative years amount of Muga silk production was same i.e. 9950 kg respectively. On 2015-16, there was again a decline on Muga production. But again in 2016-17 production decline to 7350 kg and in 2017-18 it

increases to 11070 kg and at that time there was a 50.61% of annual growth during the previous year.

7.2.4.2 Mulberry Silk Production on Sualkuchi Village

In 2010-11 0.40 lakh Kg of mulberry silk were produced. This amount declined to 0.33 lakh Kg on the next year. Annual growth rate was -17.5% on the particular year. The amount decline to 0.37 lakh kg on 2012-13 and at that year there was a 12.12% annual growth rate of mulberry silk. The next two conjugative year's amount of mulberry silk production was increases i.e. 0.47 lakh kg and 0.55 lakh Kg respectively. On 2015-16, there was a decline on Mulberry production in Suallkuchi. But again in 2016-17 production increases to 0.30 lakh kg accounting 36.36% annual growth rate and in 2017-18 it increases to 0.41 lakh kg and at that time there was a 36.67% of annual growth during the previous year.

7.2.4.3 Division of the silk firms based on their Size

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

1721(48%) firms are registered as a small size firms. 1064(29%) firms are registered as Medium size firms and 836 (23%) firms are registered as a Large size firms. From the data, it is seen that the number of small size firms are highest than the other two sizes of firms. This is because, in the village Sualkuchi, almost every household have their own handlooms (1 or 2, maximum 3) and apart from the engagement of their family members, few of them hire weavers from the village or from the native places. Some of the family has only one handloom, which they use for commercial purposes.

7.2.4.4 Male female Ratio in Sualkuchi

The ratios of female weavers are more than the male weavers. Out of total number of weavers in Sualkuchi village, 57.01% are male weavers and only 42.99% are female weavers.

The number of total surveyed weavers in Small size weaving firms (1 to 3 handlooms) are 145, where 84 (57.93%) are Local weavers and 61 (42.07%) are outside female weavers. In medium size firms there are 104 weavers, out of which 51 (49.04%) are local weavers and 53(50.96%) are outside weavers. In case of large size of firms, there are taken 96 weavers as sample weavers, where 08 (8.33%) are local weavers and 88 (91.67%) are outside female weavers

7.2.5 Results and Findings drawn from the Surveyed Weavers

7.2.5.1 Education of the weavers

Out of total 345 surveyed weavers, 83 weavers are illiterate that means they do not know how to read and write. They just put their thumb impression in any officials and necessary documents. These weavers are never gone to school. 125 weavers are just finished their primary education or just passed out class IV. After that they left their school. 74 weavers are class VIII passed out but they discontinue their education and left school. 46 weavers were completed HSLC level and 17 weavers are high secondary passed out. On the time of survey, it is found that not a single weaver is graduate.

7.2.5.2 Marital Status

It is observed that most of the weavers are married weavers. There are 44.35% weavers are married weavers. 38.26% weavers are unmarried weavers, 6.67% and 10.72% are weavers are widow and separated respectively.

7.2.5.3 Standard of Living

The standard of living is also reflected the housing pattern of sample weavers. In our study area it is observed that among the households of the weavers only 1.45% weavers constructed with RCC house, 27.54% has Assam type house where 46.38%

weavers and 15.94% weavers have Bamboo house and Indira Awas Yojana houses. 8.70% of the total weavers have houses with wall with Roof Sheet.

Out of the surveyed weavers, it is observed that 14.20% of the weavers do not have electricity facility at their houses. 25.80% of the weavers uses unhygienic toilets, 67.25% weavers mention that they do not consume pure drinking water and 36.23% weavers still cook without LPG facility rather they use fire wood and stoves.

In our study area for the purpose of highlighting the standard of living of the surveyed weavers' data regarding the use of consumers durable commodity such as Car, 2- wheelers, computers, refrigerator, mobile phone and television sets, it had been found that 0.86% weavers have cars, 8.70% have two wheelers. Only 0.58% have computers, 7.83% uses refrigerators, 92.46%uses mobile phones and 57.97% weavers have television sets at their houses.

7.2.5.4 Payment Structure

The payment of per piece plain Sador is Rs.300, Mekhela is Rs.250 and Riha is Rs. 300. That means in a full set of Assamese Mekhela Sador (which contains Sador, Mekhela and Riha) the owner have to pay Rs. 850 to the weavers. Normally it is seen that it takes 2 to 3 days.

The payment of per piece Guna and Suta (design) mix Sador is an average of Rs.700, Mekhela is an average of Rs.500 and Riha is an average of Rs. 400. That means in a full set of Assamese Mekhela Sador (which contains Sador, Mekhela and Riha) the owner have to pay Rs.1600 to the weavers. Though the time to finish a set is based on the design, skill and weaving speed of the weavers but normally it is seen that it takes 3 to 5 days.

The payment of per piece Guna (design) Sador is between Rs.1000 to Rs.1200, Mekhela is between Rs.700 to Rs 800 and in case of Riha, it is between Rs. 500 to Rs.700. That means in a full set of Assamese Mekhela Sador (which contains Sador, Mekhela and Riha) the owner have to pay Rs.2200 to Rs 2700 to the weavers. Though the time to complete a set is based on the design, skill and weaving speed of the weavers but normally it is seen that it takes 4 to 10 days.

The payment of per piece only Suta (design) base Sador is an average of Rs.700, Mekhela is an average of Rs.425 and Riha is Rs. 375. That means in a full set of Assamese Mekhela Sador (which contains Sador, Mekhela and Riha) the owner have to pay almost Rs.1500 to the weavers. Though the time to complete the weaving a set is based on the design, skill and weaving speed of the weavers but normally it is seen that it takes 4 to 7 days.

The average monthly man hours of 345 weavers are 161.20 hours and the average monthly man days are 20.15 days per month. The average monthly incomes of total surveyed weavers are Rs. 5,870.00.

7.2.5.4.a Average Man days income

The average monthly man hours of local weavers are 117.26 hours and for the hired weavers it is 199.53 hours. The average monthly man days for local weavers are 14.66 man days and for hired weavers it is 24.94 man days. It is observed that the average monthly man hours and average monthly man days both are more in case of hired weavers than the local weavers.

7.2.5.5 Work Experience and Income level

The weavers whose experiences are of 1 to 5 years, there are 91 female weavers. They earn an average income of Rs.6,000. The 5 to 10 years experience involves 131 female weavers, which earn an average income of Rs. 8,000. 10 to 15 years work experience involved 85 weavers and their monthly average income is of Rs. 9,000 and the more than 10 years work experienced workers involved 38 female weavers, where an average income of Rs. 6,500.

7.2.5.6 Bank Account

Out of the total surveyed weavers, 296 (85.80%) weavers having bank account and 49 (14.20%) weavers do not have any bank account. 103 weavers have single bank account, i.e. 34.80% of the weavers have single bank account and the rest of the weavers (193,65.20%)of the female surveyed weavers have joint bank account with their husband. Out of these weavers, 78 (26.35%) weaver operated their bank account by themselves only. They go to the bank to deposit and collect money. On the other hand, 218 (78.47%) weavers' bank accounts are operated by others, such as their

husband, father, brothers etc. 63 (21.28%) weavers' uses ATM cards and 233 (78.72%) weavers do not use ATM cards.

7.2.5.7 Decision Making Power

Out of 345 surveyed weavers, 54.20% (187) weavers mention that they have strong property purchase power in their family and 158 (45.80%) weavers mentioned about their weak property purchase decision power.

243 (70.44%) weavers' uses mobile phones and 102 (29.57%) weavers do not use mobile phones. Out of these mobile phone used surveyed weavers, 53 (15.36%) weavers' uses mobile internets and 190 (78.19%) weavers do not use mobile internets.

85.22% of the surveyed weavers mentioned that they have the power to purchase their personal necessary commodities (such as cosmetics, cloths, shoes, bags, mobile phone etc) according to her without taking any prior permission from other family members. On the opposite of these, still there are 14.78% weavers whose decision power is weak to purchase her own necessary commodity and they have to ask their family members (like husband) before purchasing it.

163 (47.25%) weavers mention that they have strong decision power regarding day to day home marketing and 182 (52.75%) weavers mentioned that they have less decision power regarding day to day marketing and they have to cook whatever their husband or brother or father bought.

It is seen that 107 (49.77%) weavers mention that they can cook according to them. 122 (35.36%) weavers mentioned that they cook according to their husbands. 69 (20.00%) weavers mention that they have to cook according to their child and 13.62% (47) informed that they have to cook according to others like parents or in laws.

In case of fertility oriented decision, an average of 58.26% (201) weaver replied as their role are strong in case of fertility regarding decision making power and 41.74% (144) of female weavers replied about their strong decision power are negligible.

72.75% weavers have strong decision power regarding the choice of their child's school. The basic reason behind this, they can effort for child's education. 81.16% female weavers are independent to offer gifts like cloth, toy etc during festival sessions. 93.33% of the weavers observed their child's food by themselves. Only 06.67% weavers have low decision power regarding their child's food.

7.2.5.8 Social Awareness

It is found that out of total 345 surveyed weavers, 71 (20.58%) weavers read daily news paper and 274 (79.42%) weavers do not read regular or daily news paper. From the above data and discussion, it is clearly seen that the weavers are little bit of aware about the situations of the society and they try to keep news about the society.

Voting Decision making power of surveyed weavers in study area is very strong. 64.35% weavers respond that they vote during election according to them and no need to listen from others. Where 35.65% weavers informed that they cast their vote on the basis of family discussion. The decision to choose the right candidate, the weavers obeys to listen to their family, elders or husband

It is found that before starting the weaving business 70.43% of the female weavers are highly participated on public meetings and 29.57% of the female weavers are rarely participated on public meetings. The study shows that after joining in weaving, the amount of participated female weavers are increases and it reaches the number 80.58% while the number of rarely participated female weavers are reduced to 19.42% from the earlier percentage 29.75%, which is a very good indication of women participation on social activities.

7.2.5.9 Freedom to go outside

Freedom of women to go outside from home is an indicator to enjoy their rights. How freely the female go out of home on their own for different purposes is the freedom and autonomy enjoyed by women. 13.04% weavers' response that they have to obey command from their family, 26.09% mentioned that they have to take permission. 23.19% weavers have to inform only and 37.68% weavers mentioned that their outside going permission depends on nature of visit.

The weavers informed that there is not any wage rated discrimination among the male and female weavers. Their wages are based on their productivity. The weaver whose productivity is more in a day or in a week or in a month, his or her payment will be more than the others.

7.2.5.10 Training Increases the Productivity of the Weavers

It is found from the study that the trained weavers are more productive than the non-trained weavers. The study is based on 66 (19.13%) trained weavers and 279 (80.87%) non-trained weavers. The result is drawn from SPSS regression model.

7.2.6 Problems deals with Silk Industry in Sualkuchi Silk Weavers

11.59% of the weavers face the problem of sexual harassment in the work place. One of problem faced by the entrepreneur in Pat-Muga industry is the non-existence of price control. That means the price of the products is not regulated. It is changes day by day or it is different in the basis of locality. Again, raw materials cost increasing in a rapid rate.

Weavers' response regarding their work pressure, 300 weavers mentioned that they had to work under heavy work pressure. There are only 45 weavers out of 345, who said that they did not face heavy work pressure from their work.

The health problems of the weavers are divided into two parts- major health problems and minor health problems. 16.08% of the local weavers and 21.78% of the hired weavers were answered that they have major health problems. On the other hand 34.97% of the local weavers and 34.16% of the hired female weavers are suffered with various minor health problems.

It is seen that 233 weavers are suffered with eye related problems out of total 345 weavers. In the division of local and hired weavers 83 weavers are affected from eye related problems and 60 weavers are not suffered with such problems. In other words, 58.04% of the local weavers are affected and 41.96% weavers are not affected with eye problems. Again in case of hired weavers 150 weavers are affected with eye problems and 112 are answered negatively. Almost 67.54% of the hired weavers are affected with eye related problems.

Out of 143 local surveyed weavers' 85 weavers having different pain related problems i.e. 59.44% of the weavers having such problems. On the other hand, in case of hired weavers almost 78.22% of the weavers having pain related problems. The

observation clearly notified that the hired weavers having more pain related problems than the local weavers.

The survey results that 76.23% of the weavers lived without pure drinking water on their work place. They mentioned that they have to consume water either directly from “well” or “tube wells”. They do not have any filter or water purifier facility on the work place. This affects the health of the weavers. They mentioned that they frequently suffered with dysentery, diarrhea etc. only 23.77% of the weavers mentioned that they have water filter in their work place and able to drink pure, safe and clean water.

32 weavers mentioned that they had “Katcha toilet” on their work place and 23 weavers mentioned that they have to go open defecation. There are 59 weavers who informed that there are not any toilet or urinal facilities on their workplace. Apart from that, all the weavers mentioned that there are no any separate toilet facility for male and female weavers. They all have to use same toilets, which often create problems to them.

Out of total 345 respondents, 216 answered positively to having bathroom and urinal facilities on their work place i.e. 62.61% of the total respondents having bathroom and urinal facility in their work place. But 37.39% of the weavers mentioned that they do not have any bathroom or urinal facility in their work place and this create a big problem to them.

215 weavers mentioned that they have electricity facility with them on their work place and 130 weavers mentioned that they do not have electricity facility with themselves. This indicated 62.32% of the weavers having electricity facility on their work place and 37.68% of the weavers faced the problem of lack of electricity.

No weaver is satisfied with their payment structure. The given amount are too less to fulfil their daily needs. The weavers informed that wage distribution is their basic problem. They deserved more wage than they currently received. 68.97% of the small size firm’s weavers are getting festival bonus where 32.03% of the weavers mentioned that they did not get any bonus during festival times. 72.12% of the weavers on medium size firms get festival bonus facility whereas 27.88% weavers mentioned that they did not. In case of large size firms, 93.75% weavers answered positively and 6.25% answered negatively regarding their festive bonus.

14 weavers from small size firm mentioned that they got medical facility on their work place. 20 weavers from medium size firms got medical treatment from their owner and only 35 weavers from large size firms are getting simple medical facility from their owners. No one get ESIC facility, which Government make compulsory for the owner of an organization who have 10 or more employees. There are not any provisions for the sick payment and insurance policies for the weavers in the study are. It is seen that no weaver get any pension facility from their work place. All the three sizes of weaving firms, i.e. small size farm, medium size firm and large size firms have not any type of pension facility at the old age of the weavers.

Almost all of the producers use the old traditional technique to produce Pat or Muga cloth. It is more time consuming and expensive. If they use the developed machineries and modern techniques then their cost of production will reduce as well as them able to give better quality.

100% of the local weavers are stayed on their own residence. On the other hand, out of total 202 hired weavers, 64 (31.68%) weavers stayed in rented houses and 138 (68.32%) weavers are lived on houses provided by the owner. No hired weavers lived on their own houses on the study area. From the study it is clear that most of the hired weavers (more th out of total 143 weavers, who lived in their own houses, 89 are belongs to small size firms, 31 are belongs to medium size firms and 23 are belongs to large size firms. All the respondents informed that they have electricity facility on their houses. 14.60% weavers from small size firms are with unhygienic toilets, 51.68% of the weavers do not consume pure drinking water and 20.22% weavers do not use LPG for cooking. In case of medium size firms 22.58% weavers with unhygienic toilets, 70.96% without pure drinking water and 25.81% weavers lived without LPG cooking facility. Similarly in large size firm weavers category, 21.74% without hygienic toilets, 43.48% are without pure drinking waters and 17.39% are without LPG cooking facility. As a total of the weavers who lived on their own houses, 17.48% weavers are lived without hygienic toilets, 54.55% without pure drinking water and 20.98% of the weavers without LPG cooking facility.

In case of small size firms, 30% of the weavers do not have electricity facility. 40% weavers from small size firms are lived with unhygienic toilets, 70% of the

weavers do not consume pure drinking water and 40% weavers do not use LPG for cooking. In case of medium size firms 24.39% weavers were without electricity facility, 41.46% with unhygienic toilets, 85.37% without pure drinking water and 41.46% weavers lived without LPG cooking facility. Similarly in large size firms, 32.18% are without electricity, 39.08% without hygienic toilets, 82.76% are without pure drinking waters and 41.38% are without LPG cooking facility. As a total of the weavers who lived on their owner's houses, 29.71% were without electricity facility, 39.86% weavers are lived without hygienic toilets, 82.61% without pure drinking water and 41.30% of the weavers were without LPG cooking facility.

It is observed that 40 weavers answered positively in case of sexual harassments. The other 305 female weavers answered negatively in the question of sexual harassment.

7.2.7 Government also make various policies to develop Silk Industry

The sericulture sector can generate huge employment opportunities with a very minimum investment cost. So, the Govt. and the Ministry of India gives a privilege to the development of this industry and always tries to engage more and more population on this sector. Ministry of Govt. implements various plans, policies, schemes and subsidies to the growth and development of this sector. The Central Silk Board (CSB) was the 1st organization established by the Indian Government to look sericulture activities in the country. The CSB is functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. The basic function of Central Silk Board is to co-ordinate the sericulture development programs in different states & for undertaking pre-shipment review of silk goods. NERTPS, ISDP, IBSDP, CMER & TI, ISDSI are the various programs taken by the government to improve the sericulture sector as well as silk industry the country.

7.3 Recommendations to Develop the Silk Industry

From the study it is seen that most of the weavers of the study area are not educated or even do not know how to write their names. Due to this reason, most of the weavers are not aware about the government plan and policies. They believe whatever their owner informed them. This is one of the most prominent weaknesses of the surveyed weavers which is arises due to educational drawback. The government should provide free adult education to the weavers and free education facility to their children.

One of the problems faced by the silk entrepreneur in Pat-Muga industry is the non-existence of price control. This indicates the prices of the silk products are not regulated. It changes day by day or it is different on different places. Apart from that, cost of silk raw material increases in a rapid rate. It creates problems to production cloths. Apart from that, it also a major cause of rise of silk price. Government should take initiative to settle a fix rate of silk yarn.

Lack of management and training is another problem faced by the entrepreneurs in this silk industry. Weaving is a skill which one generation learn from the another generation. For example, daughters are learning from their mother, sisters or from their mother in laws. Though they know how to weave but they are not skill weavers. If government and NGO's are provide training to the weaver and entrepreneur, then their profit margin will be much higher.

No weavers were satisfied against their payment structure. Each of them informed that their payments are too low to survive in present stage. The silk weavers' income is based on their level of productivity. If they weave more cloth, their level of income increases and vice-versa. The weavers do not have any proper wage rate and fixed time period to perform work. For that, the weavers continue their work till night from the morning, which affects weavers' health also. The government should consider this matter seriously and has to make certain feasible range of the weaver's rate of payment. If the Government determines some fix hours for work and a fix amount of wage rate, pension facility for the silk weavers, then the weavers are motivated and willing to perform their best. Wage fixation of the weavers is one of the basic tool to develop the industry.

Job security is another important measure to choose any profession. Silk industry has not provided any type of job security for their workers and specially for the weavers. If some assurance of job security is given, those more people will choose silk industry as their profession.

Bonus makes workers more professional, skill, dedicated and responsible for their job. So, the entrepreneur should try to make happy and efficient to their weavers by offering bonus. The weavers also get festival holidays during the time of festival. This worker bonus system makes the weavers happy and they tried to work harder. The opposite situation happens if the bonus system is not there. Bonus should be mandatory for every weaver. If the weavers get annual increment, festival bonus properly than they will be motivated to select weaving as a profession.

The weavers normally facing various health related problems such as back pain, neck pain, knee pain, foot pain etc, cold and fever, breathing problems and largely the eye related problems. Majority of the weavers informed about the various health related issues after joining weaving professionally. The basic reason of various health related problems of the weavers are the long working hours, mental stress, non eco friendly working environment and lack of proper lighting facility. On the other hand, the weavers do not get any medical facility from either owner or by the Government; they were depressed due to the medical expenses. The weavers should get proper medical facilities from their owner and from the govt. hospitals. If some medical insurance should be provided to the silk weavers then they feel some amount of relax from health problems.

The survey results that 76.23% of the weavers lived without pure drinking water on their work place. They mentioned that they have to consume water either directly from “well” or “tube bells”. They do not have any filter or water purifier facility on the work place. This affects the health of the weavers. Pure drinking water facility on work place is one of the major factors for the health condition of the weavers. So, the owner of the firm should take some initiative to provide pure drinking water to the weavers.

The work place should have proper sanitary facilities. Clean toilets, shower rooms and washing facilities are the essential of any work place. But, 37.39% of the

surveyed weavers mentioned that they do not have any bathroom or urinal facility in their work place and this create a big problem to them. Hygienic and specific toilet and urinal facility for the female weavers are another important factor for the workers. So, the owner should provide such facilities to his/her employees.

62.32% of the surveyed weavers having electricity facility on their work place and 37.68% of the weavers faced the problem of lack of electricity. Lack of proper lighting is another factor for the eye related problems of the weavers. It should be reduced by providing sufficient lighting facility on the work place. Electricity connection should make mandatory at the work place.

Sexual harassment is a universal problem around the world. 11.59% of the surveyed weavers face the problem of sexual harassment. Government should make some social awareness programs in against of sexual harassment at the work place. Though there are many laws in against of sexual harassment but still most of the females or employees are not aware about it they feel shy to inform such crime to others.

7.4 Conclusion

In India, 68.84% population lived in rural areas and only 31.16% population lived in urban areas (according to 2011 census). This indicates the country's economy will be developing if we develop the rural areas. The rural economy reflects the actual scenario of our country. Again, it is noticed that 30% of females engaged in professional works in urban areas whereas it is only 15.4% in rural areas. So, the country will develop if the rural economy developed. On the other hand, the economic empowerment of women possible if the condition of women who lived in rural areas should be developed, as most of the female lived in rural areas.

Sualkuchi is the silk village of Kamrup (Rural) district of Assam. Sualkuchi provides daily employment of 12056 weavers where 57% are female weavers. Silk weaving constitutes an integral and inseparable part of Assamese culture. It plays a vital role in rural economy. The silk industry of Sualkuchi spread day by day. This industry has lot of potentiality. Silk industry has the opportunity of export silk.

From the above discussion it is proved that silk industry is the female dominated industry. All the groups of females can get engaged on this industry irrespective of their age and education. The investment costs of this industry are also very low. So, anybody can easily get engaged in this sector.

The researcher's main motive through the study is to empower females basically the rural females through the silk weaving. Empowerment of women starts with financial independence. It is very important for each of female to become financially sound and independent. The silk weaving is the sector where educational qualification and amount of investment of money does not matter. Every woman in the society can easily get employment through weaving as it is said that the females are born weavers. Most of them do not need any professional training because they are able to learn it from their mother, sisters or mother in law.

If the women in our society become financially empowered, they have own money income. If they have on them, they can freely take decision about themselves and for the family. Educated and financially strong women can develop the society also. Financially empowered women not only carry forward themselves but also the family. She can easily tackle all the obstacles came to her family. So, it can be said that an empowered woman can empower the family. An empowered family leads to a develop society. A develop and well being society creates a develop state as well as a develop country.