



The Missing Women of Assam and their Economic Participation in Weaving

Industry

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ABSTRACT

The Misings are one of the indigenous tribes of Assam. The Mising tribe believed to have come from western china and settled in the downstream of River Brahmaputra. The Mising women perform many duties in tribal life of Mising community including weaving and knitting. Weaving clothes is one of the main jobs of Mising women. In the past, the girl not good in weaving cloth is less considered for marriage in Mising community. Now-a-days many Mising women participated in weaving in economic way and earning a handsome income. As the time going more women are participating in weaving industry economically. Though Mising cloth has a good market, yet the weaver faces many problems in this industry which need to be solved. This paper tries to discuss the economic participation of Mising women in weaving industry, the problems faced by the women in weaving industry and give some suggestions to solve the problems.

1. Introduction:

The Misings are second largest indigenous tribes of Assam belong to the Mongoloid stock of human races. The Mising and their related tribes believed to have come from Western China and for economic reasons migrated down to the Brahmaputra River following the downstream course of the Siang River. They mainly inhabit in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath Chariali, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Majuli, Charaidew, Jorhat and Golaghat and three districts of Arunachal Pradesh

Viz. East Siang district, Lower Dibang district and Dibang Valley. Formerly, the Misings were known and often referred to as Miri in the scriptural documents and administrative records. The Misings are worshipers of Do:nyì-Po:lo (Sun and Moon).

Women in tribal society play a vital role in social and economic activities. The participatory role of the tribal in maintaining their living conditions is fully exploring the natural endowments and the alternative use to find an appropriate place towards a strategic approach. Like other tribal society the works allotted to Mising women are categorized as household or domestic and economic work. The Mising women performs many domestic works including cooking meal for the family, take care and looking after siblings, looking after the domestic animals, preparing opium for the family and for the guests, serving their man folk and all other domestic chores. The women participate economically in cultivation, livestock keeping and weaving. The cloth weaving is an important activity performed by every Mising women. The Mising women weave clothes for the family and now-a- days for economic purpose.

2. Objective:

The objective of the study are-

1. To study the Mising women's economic participation in weaving industry.
2. To study the problems faced by the Mising women in weaving industry.
3. To give some suggestions to solve these problems.

3. Methodology:

For the proposed research paper the introductory and analytical method is used. The data are collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected through personal contact and secondary data are collected from different magazines, journals, books, articles, written and published by various institutions and organizations. Further some data are collected from internet.

4. Economic Participation of Mising Women in Weaving Industry:

Weaving is an important job that every Mising women is expected to do. It is a traditional job for them. Every Mising girl is expected to be an expert weaver. In the past, a girl not good in weaving was least preferred for marriage. Thus weaving skill was an important qualification for a Mising girl for marriage. Before settlement in the plains, the Mising women used to weave clothes for entire members of the family. In the past, the hill dwelling people were completely out of modern economy.

So, they had to be self-dependent in all requirement including clothes. As such, tradition of making clothes developed in them and the tradition is still carried on. As the time passed some Mising women are weaving clothes for economic purpose.

The Mising women use two types of weaving machine for their work. One is mini loom which is a portable loom wear by the Mising women on their waist and weaves gadu, mibu galuk, gopa, gale, linkog etc. The other type of loom is common ordinary loom which is not portable. The Mising women weave shawls called Tapun Gasor or Endi Chadar, Ri-Gaseng, Muffler, Garo and Potali etc.

Although every Mising women does not weave clothes for sale but now-a-days many Mising women adopted weaving as a means of income. Mising shawls, Ribi- Gaseng, Garo etc. have a good market in Assam. As such women may earn Rs.10, 000-Rs.20, 000 or more per month by selling clothes produced by them. The approximate market value of some of the items they weave is-

Type	Value in Rs.
Gadu	20,000/-
Endi Chadar	2000/-
Ege Gasor	2000/-to18,000/-
Ri-bi-Gaseng	1500/-
Mibu-Galuk	1500/-
Garo	1000/-
Dumer	300/-

Source: Observation by the researcher

Thus weaving can give a substantial income to the Mising women. The Mising men and women use these dress in each and every occasion to show their culture and unique identity. The weaving, mending and sewing are considered exclusively women's job in Mising society.

Besides the Mising the other people from different castes and communities of Assam wear these clothes. The Mising Mibu-Galuk, Ribi-Gaseng, Muffler etc. are often offered to guests coming to this area. Therefore there is a good market of Mising clothes and by weaving and selling these clothes commercially the Mising women earns good income.

5. Problems Face by the Mising women in Weaving Industry:

The Mising women face many problems in weaving industry. This are-



1. The Mising weavers producing fewer goods in their traditional machines comparing to the power loom sector. Therefore Mising women are unable to supply the products according to the demand. Hence the income of the weavers becomes low and they can't take weaving as sole means of income.
2. The traditional weaving products have some unique features which cannot be replaced by the modern power loom products. So research and development is needed in this sector which is rarely found.
3. Most of the Mising women hesitate to take bank credit facility for enhancement for their need due to difficulties of taking credit and hence the industry is not fully enhanced to its product demand.
4. There is a need of training, proper education design and product development, modern technology market access which are lacking behind among the Mising women.

6. Suggestions:

Some suggestions are given here to solve the problems of Mising women in weaving industry.

1. The government and other non-government organization should initiate various programmes to give training and development of skill of the Mising weaver.
2. The credit facility should be made easier for the Mising weaver so that they can enhance their production according to the demand.
3. For the better market access a little bit modernization and specialization should be done. This will enlarge the production and widen the scope and skill of the Mising weaver.

7. Conclusion:

Weaving cloth is one of the main jobs of Mising women. Each and Every Mising women should know weaving. The Mising women used to weave cloth for the entire family earlier. Now-a-days many Mising women adopt weaving as a profession and earning a good income. There is a good market of Mising clothes in Assam. Besides the tremendous potential of Mising clothes the weaver sometimes faces several problems. When all these problems would be solved the weaving could become the main means of income for the Mising weaver.

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