

CHAPTER - III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this research was multi-proged and multidimensional. The study was based mainly on primary and secondary data with an objective of analysing the problems related to the development of traditional handloom practices. For collecting primary data on the basis of qualitative sample five (5) weaving villages were selected for field survey in the entire Hajo Revenue circle. The selected handloom weaving villages are Sualkuchi and Bongsor under Sualkuchi Development Block and Hajo, Ramdia and Bamundi under Hajo Development Block. Ramdia is not a village but a Mouza with five adjoining revenue villages viz., Majorkuri, Uzankuri, saster Bongaltola and Bongalpara. The remaining villages were not selected for conducting field survey as no evidences has been found of performing the craft of handloom weaving continuously.

For the purpose of survey of the weaving industries listing of the households was done. Purposive sampling method has been adopted for listing the households as the type of the research is qualitative research. The survey is conducted in two stages.

After ascertaining the universe of the industry, an interview format is prepared. The size of sample household varied from area to area. Where the number of weaving household did not exceed ten then five units in each locality were covered. In case of weaving family upto 20 a maximum of ten schedules were canvassed and in case of weaving households over 20 and up to 100 at least 30 samples were taken. This was done in the first stage.

In the second stage survey, the old list of households was checked in all the localities and expansion or contraction of the old industries and entrance of new ones and exit of old ones were recorded. The purpose of the second survey was to observe any change that might have taken place in the locality with regard to old as well as new industries.

In this phase, questions were asked regarding the type and quality of products, marketing problems with backward and forward linkages, problems of raw materials, labour, credit etc. as well as psychological questions on technological upgradation such as information about semi-automatic looms, powerlooms, export prospects after product diversification etc.

Likewise some oral questions were also canvassed with a view to knowing the economic background of the worker such as his/her weekly income, relation with the employer, advances taken from the employer and how it is repaid etc.

In the handloom industry of Sualkuchi a sampling was done on 100 households as there are a lot of families practicing weaving traditionally. We are convinced that the percentage of sample at both stages of the survey is quite sufficient to represent the position of the industries concerned.

To collect data on folkloristic aspect of weaving, leading tradition bearers and practicing weavers have been communicated for documentation of folkloristic knowledge. For this purpose, secondary sources such as published books and unpublished manuscripts on textiles and weaving practice and culture were referred. After collecting the traditional design and motifs from various sources, it has been documented in the respective chapter. Then a comparative study between traditional designs and motifs with existing commercial designs and motifs have been made. To study the socio-cultural aspects of the transition from traditional to commercial weaving practice survey has been done in selected villages. As mentioned above the field study data is collected from sample weaving villages of the area. The relevant secondary data has been collected mainly from different sources. Primary data was collected from weavers and practitioners by using questionnaires. Oral interviews have also been taken from older weavers.

The sampling Design of the study

The design of the sample survey of the present study is presented in the following table.

Table – 2.1

Area of the survey	Total no of selected households in the selected area for field survey	Total no of Respondents	Total no of Male Respondents	Total no of Female Respondents	Total no of Tradition bearers (Aged person)
Sualkuchi	100	120	40	80	20
Bongsor	10	10	5	5	5
Hajo	08	10	3	7	3
Ramdia	30	35	10	25	10
Bamundi	10	15	4	11	5
Total no of weavers	58	190	62	128	43

Data collected from field survey

It is observed from the table that in Sualkuchi the sample household is 100 out of which the number of respondents is One hundred twenty (120). Of this male weavers is 40 and female weavers is 80. In Sualkuchi twenty (20) respondents were interviewed who were aged persons with profound knowledge of weaving. In the village Bongsor the sample household is ten of which the number of respondents is also ten (10). Of this ten (10) respondents, five (5) were male and the remaining five (5) were female. Among these, five (5) were aged persons. In Hajo the sample household was eight of which the number of respondents was ten. The male respondents were only three whereas the female respondents were seven and the tradition bearer was three.

In Ramdia, the selective household was thirty and the number of respondents was thirty five of which male respondents was ten and the female respondents were twenty five. In Ramdia we met ten tradition bearers, age old

person who have provide us a lot of folkloristic elements relating to weaving. In the village Bamundi the selective household was ten of which the number of respondents was fifteen. In Bamundi male respondents was four and the female respondents was eleven. In Bamundi we met five respondents who have the knowledge of folklore relation to weaving and other culture.

The percentage of sample at both stages of the survey and the various sources mentioned above for documentation of folkloristic aspects of weaving is quite sufficient to represent the position of traditional industry which was taken for study.

3.1 Source of Work: Primary and Secondary source

To carry out the task of research the researcher have to find some Primary and Secondary source from which the historical events have been placed. At the very beginning the researcher had collected some published books and at the same time some unpublished manuscripts which provides ample evidences for the work. The researcher had selected some weavers on qualitative sample basis to know about the traditions of weaving and the oral history of the topic. Preparing a interview schedule the researcher interact with the traditions bearers who once upon a time were expert in weaving and bear the struggle in life. They still performing some related activities of weaving and thus helping their son, daughter and daughter-in-law in running the loom on commercial purpose. They provide most of beliefs on weaving activity and said that those beliefs have been extinct gradually with the passes of time and also due to the commercialization of handloom-weaving. Historical sources have also been collected from some museum like Srimanmta Sankardeva Kalakhetra, Anthropological Museum of Guwahati University, Assam State Museum, Ambari Guwahati etc, which provides the researcher with proper source relating to the topic. Books on folklore which gives ample knowledge and historical background about the traditional craft were also referred. Statistical handbook, Economic survey of Assam and the souvenir published annually from the textile business organizations such as Assam Textile Institute, Ambari, Guwahati were also used as source. These souvenir has furnishes a lots of gathering about this traditional crafts.

3.2 Significance of the Study

Assam has a largest population of weavers in India and over 17 lakh weavers are involved in more than 14 lakh handloom producing around 167 million of cloth annually.

The history of silk weaving in Assam dates back to the Ahom dynasty and it is believed that Ahom's brought the art of silk weaving from China to India, of different varieties of silk, *Muga*, the golden silk and *Eri* silk are indigenous to Assam and especially *Muga* is unique for its colour, texture and durability. In the context of silk weaving in Assam, Sualkuchi stands apart and it is thus known as the "Manchester of the East". Its weaving traditions go back to the 11th century when king Dharmapal of the Pal Dynasty patronized the craft and the village turned to be a weaving centre from the mid 17th century when Ahoms occupied the village defeating the Mughals.

The business of marketing and distribution of the silk products from Sualkuchi is now spread all over the Hajo circle which may be called as Sualkuchi Handloom cluster. There is a great potentiality of the products outside the country. The silk and silk products of Sualkuchi are in high demand in the countries like Japan, USA, Greece, Germany, South Africa, France, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia to name a few. The mugs silk is exported to Japan where it is used to make 'Kimonos' one of their traditional garments. (Debnath Jasojit, 2009 Souvenir Ed. Sarma Deva Jayanta). Thus, silk industry is a traditional industry in Assam and the products of silk is unique and it resembles the culture and traditions of the people of Assam. Sualkuchi has always been the centre of the industry and large section of the population of the village is involved in the business.

Today due to the competition changes in preference of the new generation and lack of support from government and other agencies might lead to shrinkage of the industry but if properly supported the industry can again be revived and can add substantial socio-cultural and economic upliftment of the population attached with the industry as a whole. Hence, the significance lies behind it.

3.3 Limitation

Inspite of the sincere and earnest effort to represent a real picture of the weaving scene, the study is subjected to certain limitations. As is well known, the unorganized industries and uneducated individuals, as such they take no care to maintain any account or proper records, particularly with regards to information on the houses or number of days they worked, raw materials consumed and income earned from the industry. Moreover, the poor artisans were found to have a tendency to exaggerate their poverty only from weaving. Some master weavers of village Sualkuchi reportedly tried to understate the number of looms under them for fear of impeding taxation etc., but the researcher was intelligent to verify the number of looms either from the neighbours or from the hired workers. But in villages other than Sualkuchi, the people in general had welcomed the researcher and rendered co-operation in answering the questions. Inspite of the sincere effort it has not deny that there may remain many ifs and buts in the field survey. Such limitations are quite natural in any type of field work. However great care has been taken to smoothen these limitations and door to door walking provide the researcher so much evidence for the study.