

# Traditional Cloth Production Techniques in Assam

Minakshee Boruah, Fancy Chutia, N. Tamna Singha

**Abstract:** From the very ancient period, it has been witnessed that Assam has producing different types of cloths by their own styles and Assamese women are showing their skills as great weavers. Textile craft is an integral part of cultural and social life of Assam. The artists associated with textile craft i.e. the wavers contributing their efforts to continue this tradition. In this paper, we will discuss about Assam's traditional textile crafts, production of different textile crafts, the instrument and tools associated with textile crafts etc. in detail. Along with this we will also include Globalization and different textile crafts formed by the influence of globalization in the present time.

**Keywords:** Traditional, handloom, textile, cloths, weavers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Assam, from the very ancient period, the weaving culture has been considered as a dignitary work. The Assamese people complete the process of sewing threads to weaving cloths in traditional manner. Commercialization has made textile craft industry as the second most employed industry after agriculture in Assam. The handloom craft has employed directly more than 25000 wavers and associates and also many people who are indirectly associated with this industry. The handloom and textile industry of Assam has been contributing in the development of different central and state government projects in this sector. With changing time this traditional industry has affected by modern scientific technology. As a result, use of skilled techniques has improved the production as well as income. In National handloom textile day the central Minister of textile (State) Ajoy Tamra stated that 65% of the weaver of India belongs to Assam. If we see the textile production techniques we notice some similarities between the upper and lower (especially Sualkuchi) Assam. Different tribes also have adopted different techniques to produce cloths by their own.

## II. PURPOSE OF STUDY:

The main purpose of this research paper is as follows-

- (i) Through this paper we will discuss about the traditional cloth production techniques.
- (ii) We will discuss about the modern instruments utilities and technique associated with cloth production

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- (iii) We will discuss about the different cloth production techniques among different parts of the state.

## III. METHODOLOGY

To analyze the collected data, we have used relative analysis techniques and data collected from field work.

## IV. REVIEWS OF LITERATURE-

In this paper our concern is- study of traditional cloth production style in Assam. Some books and literatures relating to this are given below-

The history of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD (1987) by P.C. Choudhury where he has enumerated the 12<sup>th</sup> century Assam's sericulture and weaving culture. He also enlisted about the use of silk materials in Assam during the time of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kalikapurana, Yoginitantra. Jayanta Devasarma's "Traditional textile design of Assam and its preservation, Pragjyotishpur Sahitya Sabha, Guwahati-14, June-2018" textbook explains traditional weaving culture and different patterns/models engraved in cloths. Dr. Leela Gogoi has explained about cloth production in his book "Assam's culture (1982)". Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua explains about Muga cloths, embroidery and about Assamese weavers of Ahom period in his book "Assamese language and culture (2001)". Golden Silk crafts of Dhakuakhana region by Minakshee Boruah where it is explained about Assam's position in cloth production, Assam's traditional cloth production techniques etc.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In simple language, meaning of the word craft is- "products made with hands". From the very ancient period, different crafts industries have been growing up in Assam. Among these, terracotta industry, bamboo and cane industry, bell-metal industry, sericulture, weaving works etc. are the major works.

When we talk about weaving works, we must say at first that from the time of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kalika Purana, and the Yogini Tantra, cloths production process is going on. In Kalika Purana, the cloth production technique has divided into 4 categories as given below-

- (i) Cotton
- (ii) Blanket
- (iii) Balka
- (iv) Kokhaj

Even before, in Ramayana and Mahabharata, it's been mentioned about production of silk yarn.

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While describing about Kamrup in the Ramayana, it is said-“KosaKarnamBhumih”, which means “country of cocoon production”. Again in Mahabharata, it is mentioned about Kamrup as “Subarnakanakarnam”- which means “state of silk production”. When Hiuen Tsang visited Assam during the reign of BhaskarVarman in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, mentioned about silk yarn production. Kautilya’sArthashastra and Banabhatta’sHarshacharit also mentions about Assam’s silk industry. Sir Edward A. Gaid stated, in Assam silks are produced naturally. The East India Company exported Assam’s silk cloths (especially Muga and Paat) to England during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. After independence, the government paid special attention on this industry as a result of which- Handloom-textile industry has grown up. Recently, the central government has released 600 Crore of rupees to develop Assam’s Endi and Muga silk production. Besides this, to improve skills, the government has opened 120 handloom textile training centers where around 25000 peoples are being trained. Concerning to the needs of handloom textile industry, a handloom textile center has opened and to improve the productivity and income of the youths associated with fashion designing, the government is taking initiative to set up a center of fashion technology in Jagiroad. In the Machester of Assam, Sualkuchi, the demand and value of PaatMuga cloths are increasing day by day. Gandhiji in his visit to Assam praised the weavers of Assam.

### VI. TECHNIQUES OF CLOTH PRODUCTION IN ASSAM-

Assam’s cloth production techniques are very old. The people of Upper Assam are still weaving in traditional ways due to non-availability of modern and scientific instruments to engrave flowers in their cloths because of which, to complete weaving a pair of cloths it takes 25-30 days. Again, in a complete day, warping for weaving is possible only for 5-6 pairs of cloths. On the other hand, in the lower Assam, especially in Sualkuchi, due to availability of high-tech instruments and tools they can complete weaving of 30-40 pairs of cloths in a day. It has seen that the people of Upper Assam, especially of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sivasagar, Majuli etc. rear Muga silkworm and weave by themselves to sustain lives. Some people perform this for commercial purpose only and supply their products to Sulakuchi. The cloth production technique of Sualkuchi is more modern than the other regions of Assam because of close proximity to Guwahati and easy communication with the city. For this reason, the people also get higher government benefits than the other regions and quantity of cloth production as well as demands is high.

### VII. DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH HANDLOOM TEXTILE PRODUCTION-

Cloth production topic is becoming a well-established fact as through production of cloths a country can become self-reliant. In this regard, the Upper Assam regions are also not lying behind although the cloth production is running through traditional techniques in those regions and excitements of the weavers are not going down. Different kind of instruments associated with handloom-textile industry is as follows-

**Tulutha-** These are made of woods. In the loom it needs two tuluthas. One is used to wrap the silks and another to wrap weaved cloths. Towards the extreme end of tuluthas, 4 holes

are there to put the “Kanmari” so that the loom holds strong. This Kanmari is made of iron. The length of the tulutha is 2.5m and its radius is 7-8 cm.

**Durpodi-** It is one of the important tool of loom. It is made of woods and consists of two plates in between them the “Ranch” is placed. To hold the ranch tight, two bamboo sticks are use on either side. Its length is 1.5 to 2 meter and the breadth is 5-6 cm.

**Ranch-** It is again one of the important tool used in looms. It is made of small sticks of bamboo as well as iron. Ranch made of bamboo sticks are called as bamboo ranch and made of iron are called as iron sticks. Denser the sticks of ranch better will be the cloths.

**Goroka-** It is also called as pedal. Its main role is to divide the threads into two parts so that the “Maku” can pass through it. It is made of bamboo. It is placed in the bottom part of looms. It is pressed by legs.

**Maku-** Through maku, threads are passed from one end to another end. It is made of woods. Inside the Maku a “Mahura” is placed which is made of “GereliKathi”.

**Putol-** It is made of bamboo. In general, two putols are used in a loom. Its two ends are connected with weaved cloths.

**Siri Mari-** It is made of bamboo and is a flat tool, one of which end is pointed. It is used in the entire weaving process. It is used to divide the upper and lower threads. Its length is 1.5-2 meter.

**Soli Mari-** It is made of bamboo or woods. It is rounded and one end is pointed. Its length is 1.5-2 meter.

**Mohura-** Made of bamboo and elephant grass. But in the present day the weavers use sketch pencils. Its length is 4-5 cm.

**Ugha-** It is a tool required in the very early stage. It is made of bamboo and woods. A central stick is surrounded by 4 other sticks connected with Ughapat. It is used for wrapping threads. Presently it has been replaced by Bobin which is made of plastic.

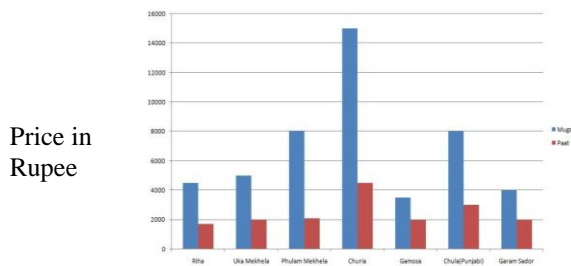
**Jotor-** It is a thread sewing machine which is made of woods. The parts associated with Jotor are- “Mal, Hakumari, Hotinikhuti, Jotorghila, Hatmari, and Hetamari”.

**Chereki-** It is made of bamboo. Generally it is of two types- “BorChereki” and “HoruChereki”.

### VIII. COMMERCIAL ASPECTS

Price list of cloths made of Muga and Pat in Assam in 2019-20 is given below-

Sl. No.	Name of cloths	Muga	Paat
1	Riha	Rs4500	Rs1600-1700
2	UkaMekhela	Rs5000	Rs1800-2000
3	FulamMekhela	Rs8000	Rs2100
4	Churia	Rs15000	Rs4500
5	Gamosa	Rs3500	Rs2000
6	Chula (Punjabi)	Rs8000	Rs3000
7	Garamsadar	Rs4000	Rs2000



**Fig. Graphical representation of price list of different products**

## IX. CONCLUSION

From the very ancient period the Assamese weavers are weaving cloths from them as well as the family members. The Assamese weavers can reflect their dream in the cloths by engraving flowers in different styles. Assam's traditional handloom-textile industry is very old. Although due to globalization, many changes occurred, but in the village areas, the traditional style is prevalent. In spite of, the weavers are not getting desired wage/income due to market contrast, but it is expected that they will get their right value.

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