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Globalization And Handloom Industry Of Assam: Opportunities And Challenges

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Abstract-Through the international division of labor and the global market, which currently dominates national markets, globalization entails the formation of a world economy that is not only the sum of its national economies but rather a strong independent reality. Handloom is a conventional product. Handloom marketing and distribution systems are likewise of the traditional kind. India's principal handloom states include West Bengal, Assam, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andra Pradesh, and Manipur. Among them, Assam is the leading manufacturer of handloom goods in India, including Muga, Paat, and Eri. Millions of rural weavers and craftspeople in Assam rely on the handloom industry for their livelihood. However, the Indian handloom sector faced new opportunities and difficulties as a result of the lifting of the import quota restriction for textile goods, which increased competition in recent years. In the present study an attempt has been made to analyze the opportunities and major challenges faced by the handloom industry of Assam due to globalization on the basis of secondary information.

Index Terms: Assam, Economic Impact, Globalization, Handloom Industry, Product Development.

I.INTRODUCTION

Globalization is the process of integrating various economies worldwide without hindering the free flow of goods, services, technology, capital, and even labor or human capital. Globalization involves the creation of a world economy that is not merely the sum of its national economies, but rather a powerful, independent reality, created by the international division of labor and the world market, which in the present epoch predominates over national markets. The handloom industry of Assam demonstrates the richness and diversity of Indian culture. Handloom is a traditional product. The marketing and distribution system for handloom is also a conventional type. West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Manipur are the major handloom states in India. Among these, Assam is the major producer of handloom products, such as Muga, Paat, Eri etc in India's handloom industry. Handloom industry of Assam provides livelihood to million of weavers and craftsmen in rural areas. But the removal of import quota restriction for textile products opened up new avenues and challenges for the Indian handloom industry, which infused competition in recent years.

A significant portion of rural Assam is covered by the handloom industry, which is the most significant unorganized economic activity after agriculture. A huge portion of the weaver community makes their living from this labor-intensive, environmentally friendly cottage industry. Assam boasts a rich cultural legacy in the handloom sector, and its traditional handloom weavers are renowned worldwide for their magnificent weaving skills. However, the introduction of the power loom sector in place of the handloom is a new trend in India's textile industry, and Assam is not an exception to this. Even though the handloom industry produced high-quality goods, it is inherently prone to crises because, unlike the power loom industry, it is unable to create large quantities of diverse goods in response to consumer demand. The skills and expertise of those working in the handloom business may need to be enhanced in order to compete in the modern world due to globalization and the opening of international markets. Present study has been conducted to measure the magnitude and the effects of the modern organized textile industry due to globalization, basically the pressure of the power loom sector on traditional handloom weaving.

II. OBJECTIVES

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives-

1. To analyze the impact of globalization on handloom industry of Assam.
2. To suggest suitable measures to preserve and promote handloom industry of Assam.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study makes considerable use of secondary data from reliable sources, published research articles, the All-India Handloom Census, and the Statistical Handbook of Assam. Accessibility, affordability, and a wide range of information are some benefits of secondary data. The All-India Handloom Census is very useful because it offers detailed information on output, employment, distribution, and difficulties in the handloom industry.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The Assam handloom sector has had a mixed impact from globalization, including increased competition from less expensive, machine-made textiles and new export and market opportunities. Opportunities exist through design development and collaborative efforts to achieve economies of scale for a better market, but challenges include a decline in weavers and looms due to low returns, rising raw material costs, and a lack of modernization.

4.1 Positive Impact of Globalization on Handloom Industry of Assam

Assam's handloom sector has benefited from globalization by opening up international markets, protecting cultural heritage, and empowering weavers—particularly women. It has made it possible for the state's distinctive handloom goods, like Muga and Eri silk, to expand and gain renown.

- **Global market access:** Assamese weavers may now market their goods internationally due to globalization through the assistance of groups like the Assam Apex Weavers and Artisans Cooperative Federation (ARTFED) and the North Eastern Handicrafts and Handloom Development Corporation (NEHHDC). The industry's exports have increased dramatically as a result of this access to international markets for distinctive textiles like Muga and Eri silk.
- **Wider customer base:** Weavers' reach has expanded beyond conventional local markets to the internet and e-commerce platforms, which have put them in direct contact with consumers all over the world. By lowering the power of intermediaries, direct marketing enables craftspeople to make more money.
- **Designer collaborations:** Assamese weavers are increasingly working with national and international designers. This blending of traditional weaving methods with modern designs draws in new clients and keeps the sector current while evolving.
- **Product diversification:** Assamese weavers are expanding their product line beyond traditional clothing like Mekhela-Chador due to exposure to international styles. They are expanding their

appeal to a larger market by producing additional products including home décor, purses, and furnishing textiles.

- **Employment generation:** The market for Assamese handloom goods has grown as a result of globalization, giving lakhs of households direct job prospects. By offering a different source of income, it has also assisted in lessening reliance on agriculture alone.
- **Increased income for weavers:** Many weavers' yearly income has significantly increased as a result of access to international markets and more equitable prices for their goods. This raises their general standard of living and helps them escape poverty.
- **Technological upgrades:** The adoption of new technology for marketing, production, and design has been aided by globalization. In order to increase the value and marketability of their products, weavers are being trained to combine ancient techniques with contemporary designs.
- **Improved quality and standardization:** Weavers are concentrating on quality control and standardization in order to compete in the worldwide market. The Handloom Mark is one initiative that has helped increase the confidence of weavers and reassure consumers about the originality of the product.
- **Women's empowerment:** Given that women make up more than 80% of Assamese weavers, the handloom sector plays a significant role in empowering women economically. These women now have more financial independence because of globalization's increasing profitability and market access.
- **International recognition:** Assam's distinctive handloom legacy, especially its silks like Muga and Eri, has gained international recognition as a result of globalization. Muga silk has been given a Geographical Indication (GI) badge, which has helped safeguard the commodity and highlight its uniqueness globally.
- **Preservation of craft:** Globalization ensures that the next generation is encouraged to carry on the traditional craft of weaving by offering a profitable and sustainable means of subsistence. This keeps cultural identity and tradition from eroding.

4.2 Negative Impact of Globalization on Handloom Industry of Assam

Assam's handloom sector has suffered as a result of globalization, which has made traditional crafts less valuable, increased competition from mass-produced, cheaper textiles, and worsened the social circumstances of weavers. Modern patterns and international markets have been introduced, but these advantages have mainly failed to empower the rural, unorganized weavers who make up the industry's core.

- **Competition from machine-made textiles:** Compared to traditional handwoven items, power loom products and synthetic blended fabrics from major industrial centers are far less expensive. Weavers find it challenging to attract clients and keep reasonable rates for their superior goods because of this unfair competition.
- **Limited market reach:** Due to their limited access to larger markets, rural weavers are compelled to sell their goods to intermediaries and traders at distress sale prices. These intermediaries make money by either reselling the goods or passing off less expensive mixed textiles as silk.
- **Higher costs and low productivity:** Compared to mechanized operations, the handloom industry has lower output and greater production costs due to its labor-intensive and time-consuming weaving process. Because of this, Assamese goods are more costly and less competitive.
- **Decline in weavers and traditional knowledge:** Due to low pay, unpredictable revenue, and lack of financial support, competent artisans are leaving handloom weaving for more stable employment, which has led to a sharp decline in the number of handloom weavers. Many weavers do not have access to official finance or government support designed to help the sector. The cooperative system, which has the potential to offer market access and financial support, is frequently ineffective and dependent on government help.
- **Shifting consumer tastes:** The prestige and demand for traditional indigenous dress have decreased as a result of newer generations' preference for Western fashion due to globalization and exposure to Western media.

- **Raw material scarcity:** Even though Assam is a significant producer of silk, weavers must contend with shortages and growing prices for premium raw materials like Muga silk yarn. Some choose to employ less expensive, synthetic substitutes as a result of the increased production expenses.

4.3 Strategies for Overcoming the Negative Impact of Globalization

Using the state's distinctive tradition to strengthen market resilience is necessary to counteract the detrimental effects of globalization on Assam's handloom sector. The sector can acquire a significant competitive edge over low-cost, mass-produced textiles by combining policy protection, branding, technology, and market diversification.

- **Strengthen the Handloom Mark:** By successfully promoting the Handloom Mark, which ensures the authenticity of handloom goods, you may increase consumer awareness and trust. Make use of QR codes and smartphone apps to assist clients in confirming the authenticity of their purchases.
- **Expand export markets:** Attract a worldwide audience by showcasing Assamese handlooms in international fairs and exhibitions. Weavers can register and take part in these activities with the assistance of state and apex cooperative groups. Establish and maintain online marketplaces where weavers can sell their goods directly. Their market reach extends beyond neighborhood fairs and shops through e-marketing.
- **Enforce bans on power loom replicas:** Enforce the Handloom Reservation of Articles for Production Act, 1985, which prohibits the sale of power loom replicas of indigenous Assamese textiles like the gamosa and mekhela chador. Give handloom weavers legal assistance to combat theft of intellectual property. Use Geographical Indication (GI) tagging to legally preserve the origin and quality of goods like Assamese silk, and strengthen the Copyright Act's rights for traditional designs.
- **Prevent middleman exploitation:** By doing away with middlemen and purchasing hand-woven goods directly from state agencies, programs like the "Swanirbhar Naari" scheme guarantee that weavers receive fair compensation.
- **Promote eco-friendliness:** Promote Assamese handlooms as an ethical and ecological fashion option to draw in contemporary customers. Emphasize the use of natural fibers, such as Eri and Muga silk, which appeal to a worldwide market looking for environmentally friendly goods.
- **Introduce modern techniques:** Conduct systematic research and development in collaboration with organizations such as the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) to enhance looms and accessories.
- **Provide modern design training:** Modern methods, design trends, and consumer preferences should all be incorporated into training curricula. This enables traditional weavers to maintain their distinctive craftsmanship while producing goods that appeal to a modern consumer base.
- **Leverage new technologies:** Use computer-aided design (CAD) software to assist weavers in developing and experimenting with contemporary designs, boosting their output and inventiveness.
- **Organize weavers into groups:** To offer individual weavers more negotiating leverage for raw materials and marketing, organize them into cooperatives or Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Accessing institutional credit is another benefit of this setup.
- **Enhance access to capital:** Give weavers easy access to low-interest loans and financial aid, like the Weavers' MUDRA loan program, to help them manage operating capital and make investments in new equipment.
- **Ensure raw material availability:** Strengthen the yarn supply scheme and ensure that quality raw materials like Muga and Eri silk are available to weavers at reasonable, regulated prices. This prevents price shocks and dependence on middlemen.
- **Engage the youth:** Create educational initiatives and activities that inspire the next generation to pursue weaving as a successful career. To encourage a sense of pride and ownership, emphasize the craft's cultural significance.
- **Conduct awareness campaigns:** Teach consumers both inside and outside of Assam how to recognize and value genuine handloom goods, highlighting how they differ from less expensive power loom substitutes.

V. CONCLUSION

Opportunities and challenges have joined to drive the globalization process in various parts of the world; while certain industries have seen impressive growth, others have seen a downward trend. It may be concluded that Assam's handloom sector has experienced both positive and negative growth trends. Silk has room to grow even though production and income are trending downward. The demand for silk appears to be increasing globally. Assamese traditional handloom weavers are particularly susceptible because to the current economic climate of liberalization and globalization, fierce market competition, and shifting circumstances. It has been discovered that the growth of the power loom industry has negatively impacted a number of handloom weaving-related aspects. Over time, the weavers have developed coping strategies to avoid the accompanying livelihood insecurity. To sustain the impoverished at the marginal level, however, state actions are required. Above all, policies and programs must be used in concert to help Assamese weaving communities develop actual adaptive capacity.

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