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The Living Looms: Traditional Art, Craft, and Hereditary Occupations in the Economy of Assam

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Abstract

Assam's traditional arts, crafts, and hereditary occupations form an essential part of the region's cultural identity and rural economy. Handloom weaving, pottery, brasswork, woodcarving, mask-making, and folk performances have been sustained through generations by hereditary artisans who transmit skills through family and community traditions. These crafts not only preserve cultural heritage but also provide livelihoods to thousands of rural households. The study explores the relationship between traditional craftsmanship, informal economies, and socio-economic resilience in Assam. It highlights how artisans adapt to globalization, modernization, labor migration, and changing market demands while striving to retain their cultural identity. The paper also examines the role of cooperatives, haat markets, tourism, e-commerce, government schemes, and private initiatives in strengthening the craft economy. Despite facing challenges such as declining youth participation, market competition, and labor mobility, Assam's craft traditions continue to evolve through innovation and sustainable practices. The study concludes that preserving and promoting traditional arts and hereditary occupations is essential for safeguarding Assam's cultural legacy, strengthening rural livelihoods, and ensuring inclusive economic development in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: Traditional Arts and Crafts, Handloom Weaving, Hereditary Occupations, Craft Economy, Cultural Heritage, Rural Livelihoods, Artisans, Sustainable Development, Cultural Identity

Introduction: Weaving a Nation of Colors

Like a living loom, Assam's arts, crafts, and hereditary occupations weave together a vibrant economy, a rich culture, and a deep, resilient identity. The visual arts manifest across diverse materials, forms, surfaces, and colours, yet they remain harmoniously interlaced into a coherent whole, like the famous Assam silk itself. To understand these themes more deeply, we can approach them through technical heritage, informal economies, hereditary occupations, and resilience, since each aspect sheds particular light on the overall fabric.

Assam's traditional art forms are widely remarkable for their beauty, complexity, regional variation, and crucial yet often invisible role in the economy. From both popular and scholarly perspectives, they attract considerable, even growing, interest—yet this interest usually misses much of the economy they sustain. The craft economy here is nuanced, intricate, and sophisticated, as well as dynamically evolving in response to changing markets and needs. It encompasses numerous professions, livelihoods, materials, media, and motifs, and it is embedded in local, culturally significant everyday life and widely celebrated festive occasions. Exploring this art form assists with grasping the underlying economy and associated formal and informal transitions. Moreover, it provides insight into the relationship between hereditary artisanship, adaptation, and identity.

In Assam, cultural preservation remains a pressing concern, driven by multiple pressures from modernity, globalization, and migration. The concepts of heritage and transmission are therefore vital for policy and for the multi-faceted major craft economy. *Heritage at Work: Traditional Arts and Crafts of Assam*

Life in Assam, a land of blues and greens, where weaving is a way of life continues to be enriched and admired. With maturity and wisdom, textile artistry is performed by artisans who are surprisingly, not formally trained but have learned the art and the associated skills from their ancestors and seniors the traditional way through apprenticeship. !!!!

Cultural expressions such as sarees, the Bihu dance and its costumes have been intertwined with life in Assam in its entirety. The making of Assamese sarees consists of sophistication, patience, and attention to detail that creates elegance in style, design, and motifs. The sarees echo the sentiments of the wearer, expressing grief and happiness. Each saree tells a history of its own, containing within tales of life, philosophy, and myth.

Almost every family in Assam has a material link with pottery, brasswork and wood carving. These crafts have their roots firmly entrenched in the ages of the forefathers. The motifs, designs, and themes particular to an area mark the signature of the God-gifted ancestral fingers of the artisans. The farmers complete harvest cycle of cultivation is mandatory for mother earth to bless them with the next hay. They give cultural importance to every phase of agriculture cycle to maintain the balance of nature. The echoes of the forefathers blend with contemporary thoughts to give birth to the countryside songs.

1. Saree, Bihu Dress, and Weave Culture

Assam allures with its rich traditions of indigenous crafts that embody the aesthetic aspirations of the local population and showcase their technical expertise. Significant among these are the textile traditions centred on the making of sarees, Bihu dresses, and the various artefacts connected with daily domestic rituals. These traditions, especially in the wide variety of culturally distinctive sarees woven across different regions of the state, offer a glimpse into the local ethos, environmental ambiances, economic development, and desired aspirations of people. Such textiles embody and reflect Assam's intricate material culture and weave the different socio-cultural layers into a rich

fabric of life. The Bihu dress, with its circular motifs and representations of daily life, and ceremonial artefacts crafted from naturally available raw materials well expresses the Assamese relationship with their surroundings and commitment to sustainable living. These socio-environmental connections are further enhanced through the stories, folklores, and rituals associated with textiles (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016).

Bodo and other ethnic groups like Karbi and Tiwa have their dress ensembles akin to the Bihu dress. Regionally specific motifs dot the accompanying artefacts that vary with the socio-religious practices and material availability of the locality concerned. Artefacts like the clay black-ware pots from Chaygaon and brass items from Bansbari further testify to the distinct production systems seen in adjacent areas. In the capital, Guwahati, these typically have a potential market value of ₹500–15,000, and a complete kitchen set consisting of about eight utensils may command an even higher price, encouraging limited-scale production.

2. Pottery, Brasswork, and Woodcarving: Echoes of Ancestral Hands

Echoing the vibrations of tribal roots, the second panel of the Living Looms tapestry highlights a triad of traditional crafts—pottery, brasswork, and woodcarving—that embody the sacred ethos of Assamese material culture. Terracotta—one of the first media used by mankind—remains a preferred choice for both ritualistic and utility items among diverse ethnic groups, from the Kacharis of Baksa district to the Dimasas of the Northern Bank. Brass utensils produced in Kamrup still evoke the grandeur of royal and ministerial households, and antiquities of the Ahom Baro-Kachari period continue to be revered as ancestral heritage. Botanically-based, the woodcraft industry extends across the entire Brahmaputra Valley. Venerating the Mahatma's message to "use the things that meekly burden the land and trees," the Kachari community carves wood into evocative representations of their worldview—ascetic, spiritual, or animalistic—while the Mishings fashion totemic representations of local deities to adorn traditional bands—such as the famous Dhol Ura Bands, Bakar Dhol, Lakhimi Biyah Boi Paan, Togo Pujoni Boj Baithani, and Togo Muisonti Bedhi Boi.

Assamese pottery, brassware, and woodcraft reflect—and are reflected in—the local economy, forging a lineage of well-recognized products and

settings that remain intact even as techniques evolve. The potters of Nowgong, Nagaon, and Karbi Anglong, for example—often labelled the “Kamrupi” potters—have traditionally used an array of fermentation techniques involving rice-malt or black chanting (a subtropical mycelium readily available from pools or hollows) to create kombok, khoria, and chukai to distinguish their wares. Kamrupi potters also add a paste made from soil, ash, and tamarind seed to accelerate drying and produce a polished ache without added heat. Uzanbazar craftsmen, similarly classified as a “Maisa” group, value the drum-style ghinta for nuptial, mu-nai, and other ceremonial occasions, yet older benedictions lay dormant, amending the wider space between hitherto production and pop songs (Gomes Noronha, 2012).

3. Musical Traditions, Masks, and Puppet Lore

The living arts of Assam include performed and performative traditions, which are equally central to the process of weaving the economy and identity of the region. Across ceremonies and occasions, songs and dancing—and the masks and puppets that enhance the appeal of the performances—offer a fully integrated contribution to traditional Assamese culture. In addition to being an essential component of Bihu celebrations, music illustrates the richness of the spoken language and the diversity of meanings. Viable artisanship can emerge in the performance art forms as well, enabling new economic opportunities while also satisfying the need for a strong cultural identity. This discussion focuses on dances and music, masks, puppetry, and the other expressive art of Assam.

Music plays a major part in Assamese life. A sizeable number of the songs are connected with the seasons in their occurrence, and their sources of themes can be traced to the landscape, the people, and their way of life. Folk songs represent the living Assamese tongue in its unspoiled purity and depth of meaning. The subject matter of the songs is wide and varied, expressing the love of the land, the rainy season, love of youth, and the sorrow at separation, as well as mysterious ideas of birth, death and the Eternal. A separate category of folk songs known as Sisit determined to the simplicity and rustic purity of the rural Assamese. The appeal is direct, simple and imaginative.

The Economy of Craft: Income, Markets, and Livelihoods

While the steady rise of a craft economy can be traced from the loom to the marketplace, artisans clearly find themselves between informal and formal value chains (Frater, 2002). Based on information from the Directorate of Handloom and Textiles, Assam, a weaving cycle often unfolds as follows: the artisan gathers yarn from a centre or commission agent, spins individual threads into a single yarn, and weaves it into a simple dhoti or gamusa to attract buyers. In distinction to the handicraft sector, which takes precedence in contemporary discourse, the handloom sector prevails in Assam’s craft economy. Whereas handicrafts like pottery, bamboo, and woodwork accomplished by master artisans operating small enterprises alternate with non-local tuning of handicrafts, co-operative structures have yet to arrive in the broad field of handicrafts. Together, they constitute the informal economy, in contrast to the formal economy, where government institutions grant assistance contingent upon achieving formal status.

1. Informal to Formal: Value Chains of Artisans

Unlike earlier capacity-focused studies that overlooked seasoned artisans’ role, new investigation of Assam’s craft economy illuminates craftsmen value, income dependence, and trade interlinkage. In diverse products and competencies, Assam’s economic loom shapes state identity, emerges from interactions with major river systems, and offers live models extending globally. If casual labour supplanting craft deeply frustrates artisans, some embrace modernity while innovating without identity loss (Clifford, 2018) ; (Frater, 2002).

2. Rural-Urban Bridges: Co-ops, Haat Markets, and E-commerce

In Assam, the economy of craft hinges on the existence of bridges between rural and urban areas. Artisans situated in rural and semi-urban areas depend on marketing support from organizations located in urban areas, where the bulk of customer demand also remains concentrated. This dependency poses a challenge since clients expect faster delivery and often demand a considerable proportion of payment upfront. Consequently, market networks have emerged to address this gap. They include cooperatives that help artisans reach markets more efficiently, “haat” markets where rural producers earn immediate cash for saleable

products, and, more recently, digital marketing platforms. The latter have particularly gained ground following the COVID-19 pandemic, as e-commerce saw a significant uptick during lockdowns.

Cooperatives serve running orders, enabling artisans to access orders less frequently compared to sole marketing endeavors. Clients posting orders on e-commerce platforms expect all specifications to be provided upfront, whereas cooperatives facilitate the partial transmission of customized orders. Besides patronizing local markets, artisans receive assistance from cooperatives in procuring raw materials, further enhancing efficiency. Certain cooperatives undertake after-the-sale promotional activities, and cooperative links are believed to be helpful in securing loans. The Bodo and Karbi communities furnish examples of cooperatives operating from rural settings. The Bodo Handloom Development Corporation Limited markets handloom products through its three cooperatives, namely the Bodofa Gana Sangha, Bodofa Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society Ltd., and Bodo Sahitya Sabha Central Handloom Co-operative Society. The Karbi Anglong Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society Ltd. provides a distribution point for rural artisans belonging to the Karbi community.

Haats are periodic rural markets offering a range of daily necessities, agricultural produce, crafts, and more. These markets serve as essential nodes within the wider network of Assam's economy, with artisans occasionally traveling significant distances to participate. The lockdowns associated with the pandemic disrupted normal access to haats, prompting some artisans to seek national e-commerce options. During this period of hardship, others appear to have formulated entirely new household economic strategies.

Self-employment under digital platforms surged nationwide, strongly influenced by national-level schemes urging digital adoption. In response, many artisans in Assam adopted social media for marketing purposes; while their initial efforts yielded limited success, such outreach significantly broadened their networking scope. Given the prevailing policy attention devoted to micro-enterprise, many saw potential benefits in aligning themselves with these efforts.

3. Government Schemes and Private Support: Nurturing the Craft Economy

Craft is an important part of the economy of Assam. Craft-based economic activities are classified as 'Hereditary Occupation' under the Craft Sector. These occupations support a significant number of people and have been included in the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). Over the years a number of government schemes in the craft sector were initiated to uplift the rural economy and the craft sector. The importance of craft in the rural area has given rise to new private sector initiatives to promote handicrafts and handlooms across the economy. The Livelihood Support Scheme of the Government of Assam identifies potential weavers and facilitates loan support through the funding agencies under the Chai Bagan Samarbha Sahajog Yojana for the promotion of fibre-based handicrafts (Clifford, 2018). The aforementioned schemes and the groundwork laid by the Government of Assam to identify potential weavers have also attracted new private sector funding in the economy (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016).

Hereditary Occupations: Continuity and Change

Assam's hereditary occupations—handloom weaving, bamboo and cane crafts, pottery and terracotta, brass and bell-metal craft, mathewari fabrics, masks—trace a history of knowledge and technique transmission (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016). Many crafts remain embedded within families, but traditional occupations now face pressures from economic, political, and technological change (Frater, 2002). Economic reform, modernity, and globalization affect knowledge transmission, craft sustainability, and community cohesion. Occupation-based village migration leaves some artisans without economic, cultural, or social ties, threatening continuity. Traditional craft still conveys cultural, aesthetic, and social value both locally and globally; modern designs incorporate contemporary stylistic elements while preserving heritage. Reviving and sustaining indigenous art and craft promotes regional identity, community well-being, and individual pride. A study of contemporary Assamese craft identifies transmission modes—family, government, NGOs—continuity, legacy, local and external support, and opportunities for revitalizing traditional art forms and techniques.

1. Social Fabric: Family Traditions and Transmission of Skill

Handloom weaving and other craft techniques are transmitted as matrices of social relationships. Rather than accepting apprenticeships, craft-makers train within the family, ensuring that clients remain familiar. The weaving profession is mostly family-based. When the clan matriarch retires at an advanced age, her weaving activity usually passes to a daughter-in-law, grand-daughter, or niece. Grandmothers often teach weaving to grand-daughters, as seen among Assamese Muslim weavers. Craft is only an added resource to the basic agricultural economy; other occupations similarly form the social structure of an Assamese family (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016).

Assamese women systematically expose younger ones to delicate needlework and weaving as soon as their hands can grasp a needle, so that these skills become second nature. Weaving thus becomes not only a skill but also a time-honoured style. Patterns reflect developments in religious thought or wider historical changes but never erase older features and remain linked to women's felt experiences. Women "expect their daughters to weave par excellence and also impart certain patterns and motifs through embroidery of traditional garments". Integral to women's artistry and their capacity for economic independence, beautifying language constitutes a means of sublimating passion and deceit.

2. Challenges: Modernity, Labor Mobility, and Market Pressures

A cycle of labor mobility threatens Assam's economic heritage, undermining the very handicrafts and occupations that sustain it. In the wake of disruptive globalization and persistently dampened local economic opportunities, a growing share of Assam's skilled labor force has abandoned the crafts of their forebears. Young artisans flock to urban jobs in search of guaranteed, if meager, wages or leave the state altogether for more remunerative opportunities. The increasing communalization of Assamese identity among the dispersed diaspora of Assamese-speakers—both Hindus and Muslims—has further stimulated reconsideration of territory, practices, and occupational choices. An essential plurality of reflections on regional belonging and transcendence weaves Assam's economic and cultural fabric.

Labor mobility generates a crisis of inner and outer meaning for craft tradition. Crafting garments or implements of culturally resonant materials is linked to adulthood; ceremonial milestones reinforce continuity. Rural-urban bridges expect artisans to travel less distance and invest fewer resources; the importation of materials from neighboring states signifies a loss of embodied connection. Declining reliance on elders further marks erosion of traditional articulation. Continuing to engage vernacular ancestral forms or collaborating toward new hybrid expansions of their semiotic fields enables artisans to project a distinctively Assamese voice—however peripherally situated—onto nationally and globally networked conversation spheres.

3. Adaptation: Innovation without Erasing Identity

The practice of Assamese textile arts remains attuned to their traditions and community roots, while adapting to evolving contexts. Aspects of these arts have changed over time in response to innovations, yet continuity connects them to their erstwhile practices. Contemporary expressions of craft—be they new usages, forms, or designs—incorporate heritage and sustain traditional production. Notably, collaborations occur between local craftsmen and professional designers who work within Assam and beyond. Textile arts maintain their association with Assamese identity, as do other traditional products, crafts, and forms of artistic expression that realise a shared heritage. At the same time, Assam is re-establishing itself as a region on the global stage; Assamese textile arts are thus attuning to international perspectives on craft, sustainability, and branding. Innovations and adaptations underscore the continuing relevance, at home and abroad, of these living arts; the act of innovation without renouncing heritage is, consequently, an inseparable part of the very process of safeguarding that heritage (Clifford, 2018); Soni et al., 2016).

Cultural Identity and Economic Resilience

Tourism can play a role in restoring a vibrant crafts market within Assam (Ji & Mokashi Punekar, 2019). Assam has a wealth of unique cultural traditions that have persisted through generations. Tourism can create financial support and attract new artisans, while crafting can enrich the economy by attracting greater tourist flows beyond farming and traditional livelihoods. Experiencing Assam's traditional Bihu dance at a festival can

foster a deeper connection, while traditional handloom products can accompany that journey.

Today various organisations seek to promote and develop Assam's cultural landscape, which can help to frame how creativity plays a role in cultural and societal continuity. Various Bihu concerts offer a space for Bihu performances while Kharoni Sarad Mela in Khatowal (Sonitpur district) gives an opportunity specifically centered on Bihu, images of which enrich daily life while varying according to seasonality. To ensure sustainability, transparency, and authentic representation of traditional motifs throughout modern adaptations must be maintained.

1. Tourism, Cultural Festivals, and Brand Assam

Crafting a detailed plan for preserving and promoting Assam's traditional arts and crafts requires multilateral, multi-genre approaches, recognizing diverse transmission modes and heterogenous semantics, and mapping intricately linked key components such as identity, economy, heritage, resilience, and sustainability within Assam's locality and across the globe. The finer sensitivity of creative, ethnographic, and ethnomusicological lenses becomes especially essential in the context of expanding aesthetic capitalism and cultural imperialism that commodify and, potentially, erase the very mind of Assam's heritage.

A triangular classification of crafts, constructed upon the stratification of form, mode of transmission and participation, and the social milieu surrounding the craft, appears to promise a broad-based but relevant systemic perspective that integrates the living, the traditional, and the vernacular elements of Assam's arts within the fold of ever-dynamic contemporary realities, and points toward tentative but concrete policy suggestions. In the context of festival events, tourism promotion, and the desire for recognition as a global craft centre, the co-evolution of materials, methods, and meanings and the rise of supporting agents, venues, and occasions exemplify Assam's widening physical and conceptual influences.

Tourism and digitalization advance Assam's traditional arts economically, socially, and symbolically, linking local aspirations to global movements and expanding Assam's living heritage as a global profile, yet introducing new pressures. Exchanges amplify semantics that enrich meaning without erasing identity. The balance between the

global and the local, the cosmetic and the core, the relic and the living retains paramount importance. An ethical craft economy that privileges contemporary relevance—accessibility, affordability, ease of maintenance, unified aesthetics, multi-sensorialities, innovative rejuvenation, and multi-dimensions—across generational divides whilst honouring local vernacular practices, environmental sustainability, and socio-cultural readiness forms a vital aspect of an emerging conceptual framework. Although policies exist, many crafts lack platforms that mainstream contemporary relevance, because traditional models of heritage remain dominant (Ji & Mokashi Puneekar, 2019).

2. Globally Connected Craft: Export Potential and Ethical Trade

Crafts are woven into the cultural tapestry of Assam. From its lush tea gardens and temples to the Himalaya-protected Brahmaputra, the state possesses a world of beauty. Assam's people live their lives intimately connected to the land and river. From sacred rituals to festive celebrations, heritage flows through every occasion. Traditional practices—all handed down through generations—remain an intrinsic part of daily life, from the kitchen to the loom, the fields to the potters' wheel (Chudasri, 2015). Handcrafted materials and goods express local traditions, reinforce regional identities, and respond to environmental conditions. Though time-honoured, they adapt to changing lifestyles, demanding new skills and methods (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016). In Assam, design is an active dialogue across materials, functions, ages, and cultures. Traditional crafts echo the society that creates them.

In recent decades, Assam has witnessed a boom in its craft economy. Craft co-operatives and associations proliferate, as do haat markets and exhibition fairs. Rural and urban artisans circulate between these markets and leverage e-commerce to widen their reach. Government schemes and private initiatives provide goodwill support, proactive reform, and financial backing. Yet several challenges persist. Economic and physical pressures loosen the bonds of cultural continuity that shape Assam's crafts. High rates of labour mobility diminish the number of artisans and community-level commitment to craft. Global changes in livings standards, commodity cycles, and consumer tastes distort craft economies. Markets sometimes reward marginal innovation or

even craft-killing imitation rather than curated creativity. During times of great change, culture, values, and identity can erode. And when such disjuncture arrives, the tempo and character of craft—as tradition-laden design and careful adaptation—tend to vary. Herein lies the relevance of this cultural mapping exercise, as the craft economy undergoes profound transformation. Connected to a global culture of craft and sustainability, Assam has a huge untapped export potential. The Indian Government supports craft-focussed export and trade promotion. Assam's traditional crafts echo in the work of artisans worldwide. Certification systems for ethical trade and sustainability support the transparency of craft goods. Assam is well placed to form partnerships with exporters from other regions to facilitate such access. Support from well-regarded local designers boosts national and international recognition. Remotely crafted hand-seat furnishings, patients' privacy curtains, and hospital-grade masks promise new material links.

Policy Pathways: Nurturing Tradition in a Dynamic Economy

The challenge for Assam, is maintaining its rich traditional arts and crafts in an era of rapid modernisation. The contemporary economy emphasises keeping up with global trends, which can be at odds with preservation of heritage techniques and practices. Traditional artisans have been embracing change through adaptive innovation rather than abandoning the traditional in favour of the new (Clifford, 2018). Assam's craftsmen continue to combine their art with contemporary materials and designs which still maintains a rich connection to the culture and identity of the state. Raw materials are now sometimes procured from a distance because of the state's rich biodiversity; urban space is incorporated into traditional motifs; and marketing involves websites and social media. Additional marketing strategies help to empower collective groups by heightening awareness of rich traditions and art, while also allowing the secrecy of techniques and designs to be kept within the group (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016). Attracting youth attention to a craft ensures schools can incorporate those same techniques into their lessons. Nurturing this living tradition enables adaptability without erasing the central core of what defines it.

The core of contemporary Assam craft remains the art of weaving, with the region's craftsmanship still

dominating the creative landscape. Traditional saris have nevertheless adapted to modern requirements concerning metro, marketing and workmanship. Given the low educational and cultural linkage to traditional performing arts and crafts, Assam's craftsmen are expected to innovate forms which still remain connected to their core. Education centres established decades ago continue to operate, yet neither accept nor issue certificates needed for further studies, employment and migration. As a response, Assam has established a school specifically covering state crafts.

1. Education, Mentorship, and Apprenticeships

Elders, Masters, and Patrons: Transmitting Craft Knowledge

The Living Looms, Assam's traditional arts and crafts emerge through family lineages, where knowledge, skill, and creativity pass from parent to child. Hereditary artisans acquire tacit and explicit knowledge of craft during childhood through individual experience, observation, imitation, assistance, field visits, and dialogue. The family remains the primary avenue for knowledge transfer, but the challenge of communicating nondocumentable knowledge persists. Young artisans, alongside or independent of their families, seek external mentors with the support of patrons. A strategy for even more efficient skill acquisition combines training on basic skills with ongoing assistance and advice from an expert (Clifford, 2018). The education system's desperate need for reform includes curricular modifications, specialized hands-on craft programs, qualified instructors, technical institutions, and enhanced roles for craft masters, youth, and patrons.

The craft economy's fragility comes into sharper focus with the erosion of the informal spread of craft knowledge. The transfer of craft know-how remains informal, which is generally viewed as a strength, yet the need for external training and incentives during the initial stages has nevertheless emerged. Awareness of aging craftspersons and the need for intensive knowledge transfer to younger generations has also grown.

2. Finance, Insurance, and Risk Management for Artisans

Artisans need access to affordable credit and insurance that can help them mitigate risk. Credit must be adaptable to different production cycles without rigid repayment schedules that fall due during dry periods, support pre-production needs (material sourcing, payments to artisans), offer

subsidies or interest-free credit and revolving funds for cooperatives, and cover transport and other expenses. Similarly, insurance must take the livestock and products of artisans and organizations into account, with premiums adjusted to make it affordable. State government-initiated measures for providing micro-finance in villages through Self-Help Groups should be strengthened and popularized. A good grasp of the risk factors in an occupation, the ability of artisans to manage them and a stable and high income from that occupation can make it less stressful and better place artisans to face risk.

The market for availing finance should be broadened through setting up, strengthening and maintaining regional cooperatives, which can provide smooth access to required finance without decimating profit margins. Support from banks, state governments and NABARD for developing good credit rating of these cooperatives can improve access to institutional finance and thereby lower the cost of finance. The Union Government must permit capital investment subsidy for cooperatives. The SHGs also must receive assistance in sitting up micro-enterprises for production of handicrafts. Setting up of general cooperative banks should be encouraged.

The insurance policies also need to be different from the existing policies, especially regarding the occupancy or clustering. Price information also needs to be checked before settlement of insurance claims. Because of the small scale nature of the business, artisans feel the premium as a great burden a simple product with less premium and adequate coverage would encourage more and more artisans to avail of insurance.

Conclusion

For more than two millennia, the art and craft traditions of Assam have been part of the socio-cultural fabric of society. Generations of artisans have made invaluable contributions to the rich artistic glory of Assam. A myriad of sustainable and eco-friendly artisanship exists in the region that has mesmerized mankind over the centuries. Traditional art and craft is rooted in the socio-cultural and economic life of the people of Assam. Any study of the socio-economic development of Assam is incomplete without an analytical knowledge of these sustainable sources of livelihood.

Traditional arts and crafts reflect the identity, culture, and economy of Assam. They

communicate the joys, sorrows, aspirations, hopes, and tribulations of the common people. Over time, society has evolved, bringing political upheavals, globalisation, technological advances, and rapid urbanisation. These social changes have threatened the continuity of these invaluable legacies. In the face of modernity, the heritage of arts and crafts has witnessed numerous challenges, leading to the gradual decline of the economy of craft. Several forces have changed the socio-economic trajectories of contemporary society (PhD. Reena & Pooja, 2016). Nevertheless, craftsmen are adaptively transforming the traditional art of Assam to fit modern consumption patterns while preserving the richness of the oral narratives, symbolism, and the essence of the culture of Assam (Tania Parvin & Haque, 2017).

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