

Impact of Globalisation of Silk Industry in Northeast India: An Assessment from Gender Perspectives

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Abstract

The Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) of 1974 has been replaced by the Agreement on Textile and Clothing (ATC) in 1994. The new agreement eliminates all remaining textile and clothing quota restrictions from developing countries by 1st January 2005 and thus infuses more competition among countries such as China, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, etc., to increase market share in global textile market. Companies need to restructure their production capacities to meet export orders, and to develop and offer value-added services to foreign customers in the liberalised textile era. There is a wide technological variation in production of textile in India with the hand-spun and hand woven sector at one end of the spectrum, and the capital intensive, sophisticated mill sector at the other. Women mostly work in the industry as unskilled labour. The high demand supply gap put additional pressure on unskilled workers to produce more in less time against an additional income that is less than proportionate increase in workload. Moreover, benefits in different socio-economic aspects such as gender disparity in wage and employment opportunities, child labour, working conditions, etc., are in question.

The present study attempts to analyse the impact of globalisation of silk industry in Northeast India from gender perspectives. The study is based upon secondary information collected for seven northeastern states viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizorm, Nagaland, and Tripura. The study found that, with respect to raw materials, globalisation has some negative effect in domestic market. The process of globalisation of the industry although generated economic gain from rapid growth of export, the negative aspects such as inadequate healthcare, education, training, and credit facilities are a few important problems that deprived mostly women workers involved in the industry.

Key words: Globalisation, Quota restriction, Silk, Gender, and Northeast India.

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Introduction

Liberalisation of trade play an important role on women's employment opportunities in a developing country like India where women are yet one of the deprived classes in the society. Developments in international trade may affect women as producers and consumers both positively and negatively [13]. It may results in improvement in income earning capacity of women, which in turn strengthen the incentive of investment in human capital of girls [7]. Shifting of intra-households distribution of income towards women is significant from a gender equity point of view. Women engaged in small-scale industries such as handicraft, weaving, etc., and having self-employment may take the advantages of growing export market provided credit, and information systems are accessible and organised. However, in certain cases in India, women relied exclusively on income from informal weaving activities when export-promotion policies threaten traditional livelihoods [11]. Therefore, there is a need to study the impact of globalisation of silk trade on women wage, employment opportunities, and development at sectoral, regional, and national levels in India.

The discriminatory trade measures of countries from North America and Europe against developing and least developed Asian countries has a link way back to late 1950s when Cotton Textile Agreement (CTA) was made. The restriction has been widened to other textile products such as synthetic fibres, wool, etc., through the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) of 1974, which initiated the restrictive import quota system mostly from developing countries. The agreement has been replaced by the Agreement on Textile and Clothing (ATC) in 1994. The new agreement had the provision of systematic elimination of all remaining textile and clothing quota restrictions from developing countries by 1st January 2005.

Global trade in textile and apparel has grown from \$6 billion in 1962 to \$ 342 billion in 2001 [18]. The global textile market has undergone a drastic change with the elimination of existing textile and clothing quota restrictions mostly from the developing and the least developed countries during 2005. It will be very interesting to see the impact of globalisation of textile industry across countries in Southeast Asia in general and India and China in specific. Globalisation of the industry infuses more competition among countries such as China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, etc., to increase market share in global textile market. Countries with large economies, cheap labour, and technological advantages may exploit the situation in their favour. However, more business may create more pressure on its

workers to produce more in less time if technology is outdated. As majority of the workers in the textile industries are women, who work mostly as ordinary labourers, helpers, etc., the pressure on women workers is more. This justifies the need for an investigation of the impact of globalisation of textile industry on different aspects of women workers. The present study attempts to analyse the impact of globalisation of silk industry in Northeast India from gender perspectives.

Silk Trade in Assam and Other North Eastern States of India

The history of silk industry in Assam is age old. It goes back to the 11th century, when king Dharma Pal invited 26 families of weavers to settle in Sualkuchi village in Assam. It became a full-fledged weaving village when Ahoms occupied the area in the middle of twelfth century [1]. 'Muga', the golden silk of Assam, is made known to the world way back in 1662 by a French traveller Jean Joseph Tavernier. The silk was the royal fabric of Ahom kings who ruled Assam for six centuries till 1826 [12].

Weaving is one of the largest and oldest industry in Assam. It is a way of life in Assam since time immemorial. It is traditional in the sense that the primary qualification of a young girl for her eligibility for marriage is determined by whether she has the skill to weave or not. A soldier was sent off for battle with a dress material made overnight and it was considered as important as his weapon [2]. This explains the importance of weaving industry in the state and the role of women in the industry. However, silk industry in Assam has been in the dock with 1.72 million weavers producing 167 million meters of fabrics against a demand of 370 million meters in 2003 [15].

Assam produces three unique varieties of silk, the Golden Muga, the White Pat, and the warm Eri. Muga is produced from the muga silkworm *antheraea assama* that spins golden cocoons and feeds on the leaves of som (*machilus bombycina*), which grows in abundance in Assam. Muga silk is sumptuous, royal, heavenly, exotic, erotic and sensual. It is washable at home and is free from dry-cleaning hassles, unlike other silk fabrics. The muga silk filament due to less porosity cannot be bleached and hence cannot be dyed [2]. The eri is produced from the silkworm *philosamia ricini*.

Sericulture industry provides an additional income to 1.87 lakhs families. There are 9,173 sericulture villages in Assam. Families involved in rearing of eri, muga, and mulberry during

2004 were 132033, 23543, and 29715 respectively. During 2001-03, the state produced 599 MTs eri cut cocoon. The figures for muga and mulberry were 92 MTs and 12 MTs respectively [5].

The picture of silk industry in other states of northeast India is not encouraging. Arunachal Pradesh is one of the remotest states in India. It is the home of 110 scheduled tribal communities out of the total 219 scheduled tribal communities listed in the North East region. The women of this area are good weavers and they have a good colour choice and artistic designs of their own.

Except a few small-scale forest based industries, industrial development in the state is nil. The development of silk industry is also poor. The boarder market near Dewangiri is famous for trading silk and woollen cloth, handicrafts and other items.

Meghalaya is traditionally a silk growing state. The number of sericulture villages in the state in 2001-2002 was 1812 and families engaged in sericulture were 14000 [6]. Although eri silk is popular among garo tribes, mulberry and muga silk is usually produced in the state. The number of mulberry and muga silk reeling units in 2001-02 in the state was 4 each. However, if we look at the number of weaving training centres it is only 24 in 2001-02. The number of handloom demonstration cum production centres was also 24 during 2001-02 [6].

Among all the traditional handicrafts and industries, cultivation of silk had better potential for the development of industries in Manipur. In 1881, out of total industrial population of 3,042 Manipur had only 326 silk weavers [16]. However, as per the National Handloom Census reports 1996-97, there are 3.39 lakh weavers with 2.77 lakh different looms producing 86.40 lakh linear metre of handloom cloth per month [20].

Similar to other north eastern states silk weaving is an important source of rural employment in Tripura. The number of weavers involve in handloom activities in the state is 1,15,236 (commercial and non-commercial) as per National Handloom Census of 1986-87 [10]. About 4500 numbers of beneficiaries are involved in subsidiary occupation related to mulberry cultivation under Tripura Apex Weavers Co-operative Society. Different reeling units are coming up across the state with different production capacity. The annual production of silk yarn (golden thread) at Badharghat government reeling centre is 6 metric ton worth Rs. 60 lakhs [21].

Economics of Silk Trade in Assam and other North Eastern States

The silk industry in Assam is one of the major contributors to state revenue. It is also a major source of employment particularly in rural areas. Eri contributes Rs. 31.5 crores, whereas muga contributes Rs. 40 crores, and pat silk contributes Rs. 120 crores out of a total Rs. 190 crores generated annually through the silk industry in Assam [15].

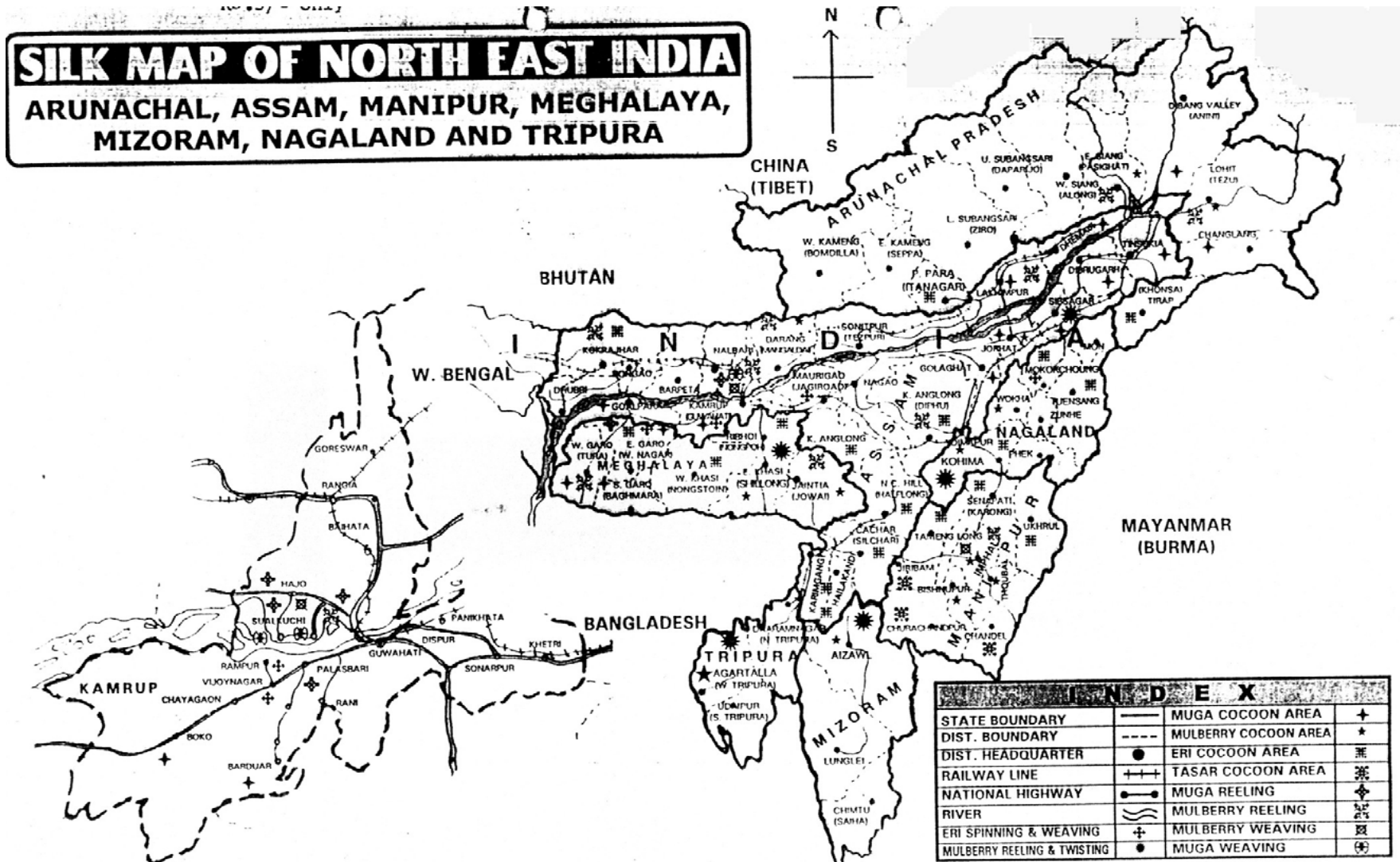
The tassar silk is posing serious threat to muga silk due to high cost of muga yarn and time consuming method of its production. The price of muga yarn varies from Rs. 3200.00 to Rs. 5000.00 per kg while tassar cost ranges from Rs. 1500.00 to Rs. 2000.00 a kg [8]. Production of muga yarn is a household industry in the state and although the demand and value of muga yarn had increased over the years, still the technology used is traditional.

The daily demand for pat thread is estimated over 1000 kg, with market price of Rs. 1.5 million. This demand was met by importing raw material from China and Japan till 1963. Thereafter fabrics from Karnataka fulfilled the demand. However, liberalisation of silk trade in recent years pave the way for the Chinese fabrics, which has competitive advantage in terms of quality and price. This negatively affected the domestic business of silk fabrics particularly in Karnataka.

Silk grown all over the state find their way to Sualkuchi, 32 kilometres from the state capital Guwahati (**Map 1**). It is geographically located at latitude $26^{\circ} 10' 12''$ North of the Equator and longitude $91^{\circ} 34' 11''$ east of the Prime Meridian on Pagenation of the world Map. It is the largest village in Asia and is the largest silk producing village in the world [12]. The village is often called Manchester of the East. The village of nearly 50000 people employ over 20000 weavers and helpers. 60 percent of the workers in the industry are women. It produces over six million meters of muga and pat fabrics every year and exported to Japan and other countries, which earn a total turnover as much as Rs. 30 billion [17]. During 2003-04, the state produced only 652 MTs of eri cut cocoon, 95 MTs of muga raw silk, and 8 MTs of mulberry raw silk [5].

Production of silk in Arunachal Pradesh is not that popular. As per 2001 census the state has only 25 sericulture demonstration centre and 76 weaving/ knitting centres. However raising silkworms for the production of raw silk is becoming popular among the tribes bordering Assam.

Map 1: Silk Map of North East India



Source: Central Silk Technological Research Institute, Central Silk Board, Sualkuchi, Assam

Under Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) special project for development of eri silk in Arunachal Pradesh has been implemented. The project aims to develop host plant, quality egg production and supply, training and skill up gradation, technological support in pre-cocoon and post-cocoon process, and market promotion with product design, development, and diversification.

Production of silk became popular in recent years in Meghalaya. The quantity of raw silk production has increased from 768 kg in 1996-97 to 2391 kg in 2001-02. The production of mulberry cocoon has increased from 9,000 kg in 1990-91 to 17,750 kg in 2001-02 [6]. Major production of mulberry cocoon comes from Garo Hills (East and West) and Jaintia Hills. Production of eri cocoon increased from 1,40,040 kg in 1990-91 to 3,73,790 kg in 2001-02 and the major contribution came from Garo Hills (East and West), West Khasi Hills, and Jaintia Hills. In case of muga cocoon production increased from 46,89,000 numbers in 1990-91 to 182,19,000 numbers in 2001-02. East Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills were the major contributors to this production [6].

Government of Manipur in a fresh attempt gave emphasis on the development of small-scale and agro-based industries such as sericulture, which received priority. Attempt has been made to increase the area under silkworm-food-plants, as it can generate employment for rural population. In 1868-69, one of the major export items from Manipur to Burma was silk. However, this trade was not smooth because of the state policy of higher tax on different items [3]. The opening of Moreh – Tamu boarder trade in 1995 resulted in increased boarder trade with Myanmar.

The production of silk yarn has increased in Manipur from 216 MTs in 1996-97 to 324 MTs in 2001-02. During 9th plan new sericulture project with funding from Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan has been started with a production target of 60 MTs of silk yarn and an additional employment of 9090 families under the project. The total silk yarn production in the state has been projected as 1300 MTs [14].

Nagaland in recent years has given much more importance in production of eri silk in the state. The Department of Sericulture has implemented Eri Silk Development Project (ESDP) under Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) during 2001-02 and 2002-03 in Mokokchung and Wokha districts. Out of 108 MTs of cocoon and 648 MTs of eri pupae set

for production during 2002-03, the beneficiaries have produced 75.02 MTs of eri cocoon worth Rs. 112.53 lakhs and 564.60 MTs of eri pupae worth Rs. 395.22 lakhs from sale of eri pupae. The monthly earning per beneficiary during 2002-03 was Rs. 2350.00 [4]. However, during 2003-04, 76.05 MTs of eri cocoons worth Rs. 114.75 lakhs and 580.00 MTs of eri pupae worth Rs. 406.00 lakhs have been produced and the monthly financial income generated from the business was Rs. 2410.00. There was a direct self-employment generation for 1800 persons and an indirect self-employment generation for 3600 persons under pre-cocoon activities. Another 120 persons got direct and 240 persons got indirect self-employment under post-cocoon activities.

The 2nd phase of eri Silk Development project operational at Mon and Tuensang districts covered 4000 acres of area under eri silk food plants with 4000 beneficiaries. The Catalytic Development Programme (CSB) covered another 100 acres of area with 200 numbers of beneficiaries. Under United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sponsored Eri Silk Development Programme, during 1999-2002, beneficiaries produced 8.15 lakhs eri disease free layings worth Rs. 16.30 lakhs. The beneficiaries have also produced 64, 75, 000 numbers of eri seed cocoon worth Rs. 12.95 lakhs and 31.52 MTs of eri spun yarn worth Rs. 94.56 lakhs [4].

Women in Silk Industry

Assam

Traditionally weaving is a household activity for every woman in Assam. Silk industry is one of the largest industries where women workers depend very heavily for their livelihood. In many areas in the state it is their part-time informal activity. As employment opportunity in the state is very poor, the industry provides a good source of earning mostly for women in the rural areas. The high demand-supply gap also encourages the situation. The percentage of women out of total workers in the industry is more than 60. The figure is quite comparable with other neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh (90%), Viet Nam (80%), Madagascar (75%), etc [18].

The association between women and silk industry in the state is age-old. Mentioned earlier the skill of weaving is considered as an important qualification of a young girl for her eligibility for marriage. During Ahom dynasty it was a common practice that a soldier was

sent off for battle with a dress made overnight. This dress was considered as important as his weapon [2].

Women perform the major role in the industry at different stages. They are involved even in rearing of silk moth and production of cocoon. However, most of the owner/ weavers purchase yarn from market. Through different stages these yarns is being transformed into different silk products. In the production process women work as part time helpers, unskilled workers as well as skilled workers (mostly weavers). However, majority of the women workers in the industry work as ordinary helpers, unskilled and a few skilled workers. Male counterpart is involved as helpers, and mostly in marketing of products. Because of this male workers in the industry enjoy a higher status and predominant earning.

In addition to eri, pat, and muga, assamese women weave mekhlas, rihās, and gamosa (towel) from cotton yarns with design of birds, animals, humans, flowers, foliage, etc. In tribal areas Kumbung, Kocha lufung among Rabha tribe, Dhakana among Bodo tribe, Mirijim work among Miri tribe, etc., are popular. Women mostly use throw-shuttle loom in non-tribal low lands. However, in tribal areas loin-loom, fly-shuttle loom, etc., are common. **Photograph 1**, and **Photograph 2** shows women making traditional dresses in Assam. This is similar even in other states of northeast India.



Photograph 1: Women making traditional dresses in Assam



Photograph 2: Tribal girl at her loom [22].

Arunachal Pradesh

Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh have a tradition of weaving which solely women do. Dresses such as tudung jackets, sherdukpan shawls, monpa bags, apa tani jackets and scarves, adi skirts, mishmi jackets, wanchu bags, tangsa lungis and bags are common among different tribes. Loin-loom is the instrument frequently used for weaving.

Manipur

Manipur is said to be the original home of mulberry silk. Later on it spread to nearby northeastern states and other nearby countries such as China. Eri silk weaving is very popular in the state and in recent years weaving of tassar silk is increasing.

The state is popular for traditional fabrics such as moirangphee, leirum, lasingphee, phanek, etc. Loin-loom is common across the state. Although weaving is mostly an activity for women, men are seen in professional weaving. Snake motifs, animal motif such as horse are popular design. Phaneks (woman's lungis), morang phee (traditional sari), lasing phee, samilami, etc., are common textile in the state.

Meghalaya

It is the home of tribal population such as Khasis, Garos, Jaintias, and Hajong. Women mostly use back-strap or loin-loom with exception of Garos who also use frame-loom. Khasi women wear jainsem. However, on formal occasions women wear 'Ka jainsem dhara' (long piece of Assamese muga silk). Garo women wear damanda, daksari, etc. However, among different tribes in Meghalaya endi (made from eri) silk weaving is quite common because of its texture and durability.

Mizorm

Weaving is a tradition among the Mizo women and they learn the art at a young age. Like Manipur loin-loom is popular in the state. During monsoon period, when agricultural activities are very less, weaving among women and handicraft activities among both women and men are common across the state. Puans (lungis), traditional shawls, shoulder bags, etc., are the common products.

Nagaland

Weaving is an integral part of Naga culture. They uses bright colour and textile dyeing is a significant art among the different hill tribes of Nagaland. Each tribe has its own specific design and motifs and within each tribe, on the basis of shawls they wear, there is a distinction among classes. Women usually do the traditional shawl weaving in narrow loin-loom. However, fly-shuttles are used for other weaving. Women in the state wear dresses such as pulusi, kamphie, etc. Designs of human heads, animals such as elephants, tigers, mithuns, etc., are common.

Tripura

Weaving is a age old activity among the Tripurians, the single largest tribe in the state. It is predominantly a women's activity although men are found occasionally in professional weaving. Traditional cloths such as riha, chaddars, saris, lasingphee, etc., are common handloom products in the state.

The Impact of Globalisation in the Industry

The elimination of restrictive quota system by the developed countries may affect the textile business in the developing and the least developed countries of Southeast Asia in a positive

or in a negative way. The positive features may be reflected in i) new employment opportunities result from higher demand, and market share, ii) enhance wage structure, which may lead to better standard of living, iii) development of related businesses, iv) development of infrastructure, etc. However, the negative affect of globalisation of the industry may be reflected in i) more pressure on workers to produce more in less time, ii) exploitation of women and child, etc.

Female work participation rates have increased in most of the north eastern states between 1991 and 2001 (Census of India 2001). However, majority of the women workers are in low-paid occupations such as in farms, handloom, sericulture, jute craft, silk industry, terracotta and pottery, brick klin, factories and sometimes as saleswomen and number of self employed women are relatively low. Although women wage earners are increasing, in most of the cases they do not have control over what they produce because of poor education and technical skills, poor social status, etc. Without adequate technological up gradation, the workload on the ordinary workers will be tremendous. However, in several cases the increase in daily wage against their added workload is not in proportion. The wage is relatively less for the unskilled labourers in specific. As most of the unskilled workers in the industry are women, they are the worst sufferers. This may deteriorate further the already poor working conditions as labour standards are hardly maintained in most of the developing and the least developed Southeast Asian countries. So, globalisation of the textile industry may result in economic gain for many Asian countries at the cost of society in general and women workers of the industry in specific. The process of globalisation may increase employment opportunity of women for paid works as casual labourers. However, it increases job insecurity, deteriorates working conditions, right and status of workers [19].

Size of country's economy also has an important role to play in this process. Countries with large and stable economies such as China, India, etc., have a comparative advantage in comparison to countries with smaller economies such as Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, etc. It is because of stages of development such as developed, developing, least developed, etc. The developmental stage is important as it has a link with tariffs, which is again a crucial source of government revenue particularly for a poor country. The developing countries with stable economy will definitely enjoy an added advantage to expand their market share in comparison to the least developed countries of Southeast Asia.

India still continues to be the second largest producer of silk in the world and has the distinction of producing all the four varieties of silk such as mulberry, muga, tasar, and eri. However, there is a wide technological variation in production of silk in India with the hand-spun and hand woven sector at one end of the spectrum, and the capital intensive, sophisticated mill sector at the other. If we look at the impact of globalisation of silk industry in India, a clear picture is yet to come out specifically after the elimination of remaining quota restrictions. However, two contrasting pictures are emerging in India in recent years. One, the country may gain economically from increased export to Europe, America, and other developed countries as observed in the past. Last few decades has experienced manifold export growth of cotton textiles (yarn and manufactures) on account of their competitiveness in the international market. During 1970-71 and 2002-03, export of cotton yarn and manufactures increased from Rs. 75 crores to Rs. 16, 217 crores [9].

In contrast, with respect to raw materials, globalisation may have some negative effect in our domestic market. This is becoming prominent particularly in the yarn business in the northeastern and the southern states of India. As mentioned earlier, till 1963, raw materials for the industry in the northeastern states have been imported from China and Japan. Thereafter, the import has been declined drastically and fabrics from Southern Indian states fulfilled the demand. However, liberalisation of silk trade in recent years paved the way for the Chinese fabrics, which has competitive advantage in terms of quality and price. This negatively affected the domestic market of silk fabrics particularly in the southern states of India. Without adequate competitiveness in price and quality of domestic products, the economic gain from globalisation of the industry may not be properly harvested.

The other aspects of globalisation of the industry may be addressed from the standpoints of working conditions, labour reforms, etc. There is nearly 60-times increase in global trade in textile and apparel during the period between 1962 and 2001. Against this higher growth rate with major contributions from the developing and the least developed countries, there are certain factors crucial for Southeast Asian countries in general and India in particular.

India is such a country where major labour reform is yet to commence. There is little enforcement of international labour standards in the sector. Reform is important in the sector specifically with respect to working conditions, working hours, child labour, gender disparity related to wage structure and training facilities, etc. India stands low relating to the above

areas. Although elimination of remaining textile and clothing quota restrictions by January 1, 2005 is in operation, the poorer working conditions and inadequate labour reform will give tooth to the developed world to restrict the aggressive export growth in textile sector in India and other Southeast Asian countries. These issues should be addressed in right perspectives in India at both regional and sectoral levels.

The situation is more or less the same across India. In Northeast India too basic norms related to working conditions, child labour, gender equality in wage structure and training facilities, etc., are difficult to find. As mentioned earlier, women are the main sufferer and usually have a lower social status.

Lives of women are changing rapidly along with the process of globalisation in northeast India. They are no more dependent totally on traditional dresses, rather started depending more on readymade garments. Their work pattern started changing from weaving to tailoring, embroidery and related works, computer related works, etc., and many of such works are outsourced on contractual basis. Although these has generated some jobs on casual basis, risk of losing a job is relatively high as most of them are temporary in nature and women are used here mostly as a cheap ordinary labour.

Major Problems in the Industry

Silk industry is one of such industries where majority of workers are women across the world. Women in rural areas particularly in India consider it as one of their important source of livelihood. Although many of the problems they are facing in the industry are location specific, some of them are common across rural areas in India and even related to other activities. However, a few specific problems prominent in Northeast India in particular are described herewith.

There is no escape rout for vast majority of weavers in the state from the cocoon of exploitation from village moneylenders. As credit facility to the small weavers are not easily available, it facilitates exploitation of weavers by local moneylenders and middlemen. Lack of education aggravates the situation as well. Female literacy rate in most of the north eastern states except Mizoram are below the national average. The poor education results in poor innovativeness, which is again having a link to inadequate training facilities common in northeast India. The workers are mostly self-trained and work as unskilled workers. This

poses a bigger challenge for the industry to live up to its business potential and handloom industries in many north eastern states such as Manipur, etc., are declining. Moreover, the inadequate training facilities for the workers to improve their skills deprive them from availing higher salary, social status, etc. This blocks the entrance for other new unskilled labour to join into the industry as ordinary labour, and thus limit employment opportunities in the industry.

Non-availability of good yarns from local producers is another important bottleneck that force the industry in northeastern India to buy raw material from other parts of India such as Karnataka and from other countries such as China. Availability of good yarns from local producers may reduce cost and add competitive advantages to the products from local silk producers/ suppliers to be marketed internationally. Another important bottleneck to the industry is natural factor such as flood. This is quite severe in northeastern region in general and Assam in specific. The silk industry in Assam has incurred severe economic loss in 2004 when flood severely damaged Sualkuchi village, the backbone of silk industry in Assam. Many families lost their homes as well as their looms in 2004.

Among different problems related to health, eye problem is one of such problems common among the weavers in the industry. The workers in the industry suffer from different eye problems because of prolong working hours without adequate breaks. During the festive season i.e., from October to April the workers even work continuously for three to four hours. This affect not only their health, it decreases their efficiency, as working conditions in most of the production sites are poor and unhygienic. Poor communication in the state is another important bottleneck the industry usually face. This is common in most of the rural areas in India. However, it is worst particularly in the northeastern states in India. This results in higher cost of production, non-availability of loom and its equipments in time, difficulties in transportation of final products, and poor mobility of workers.

Conclusion

The impact of globalisation of silk trade plays a crucial role for a country like India. The process may result in positive economic gain from rapid growth of export in terms of generation of employment opportunities, more earning capacity for rural women, etc. However, negative sociological features specifically in relation to gender disparity, child

labour, poor working conditions, etc., are also increasing. Northeast India is not different from these positive and negative aspects. Location specific problems such as non-availability of good yarn, poor infrastructure, inadequate healthcare, training, and credit facilities, natural calamities such as flood, etc., are a few other important problems the state is reeling after. Government machinery should come out heavily on solving the problems related to credit, healthcare, flood, etc. To cope up with the international competition, adequate training facilities should be arranged locally to infuse innovativeness in the industry. Attention is necessary in relation to maintenance of international labour standards besides adequate healthcare, credit, and work conditions facilities.

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