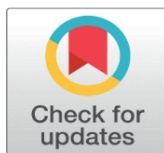


PROMOTING & REVIVING COTTAGE INDUSTRIES THROUGH SKILL INDIA MISSION: AVENUES OF EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AMONG YOUTH IN ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The land of Assam is full of diversity which can be seen both in physical or socio-cultural elements. Traditionally, Assam is rich in cottage industry which is basically depends on locally available raw materials. In comparison to its glorious past, these industries have been declining in present days due to various reasons. The Skill India Mission, launched in 2015 by the Government of India, plays a crucial role in empowering the youth by providing them with the skills and training necessary to enhance their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities. Like other states, unemployment is one of the burning issues in Assam economy. Within the broader vision of skill India mission, the various cottage industries of Assam can be revived with new ideas and skills thereby creating employment among youth. Grabbing the golden opportunities of skill India mission the glory of the cottage industries can be rejuvenated as well as providing new avenues of employment generation among the youth in Assam. So, this paper tries to make a simple study regarding the possible opportunities of employment generation through promoting and supporting the traditional cottage industries under skill India mission. The study is descriptive in nature.

Keywords: Cottage Industry, Employment, Youth, Skill India Mission, Revive

1. INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji father of our nation stated that "the salvation of India lies in cottage and small-scale industries" which highlights the importance of cottage industries for India's economic and social development, particularly rural development. Though he made the statement for the promotion of khadi production during national freedom movement it can be still applicable to all kinds of small-scale household industries. The beautiful land Assam is not only blessed with mesmerizing natural beauties but also natural resources also. Based on the locally available natural resources various types of cottage industries have been developed here from the ancient period. Assam hold a significant position for her production of cottage industries in the earlier periods. But in the recent past, these industries have been declining or functioning unsatisfactorily due to several reasons. Scarcity of raw material, outdated skill & technology, unskilled labour force, low capital investment is some of the basic cause behind it. On the other hand, unemployment is one of the serious issues of our economy. The rate of unemployment is gradually increasing among the educated groups. Unemployment leads to various socio-economic problems. At this crucial point, the Skill India Mission can definitely

support & revive the cottage industries of Assam thereby creating so many employment opportunities among the skilled labour force specially among the youth.

The Skill India Mission, launched on July 15, 2015, is a flagship initiative of the Government of India aimed at empowering the country's youth by equipping them with industry-relevant skills. It plays an important role in empowering the youth by providing them with the skills and training necessary to enhance their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities. The main objectives of this initiative are- increase workforce skills, enhance employability, encourage entrepreneurship, addressing regional imbalances etc. The major components of the mission are Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), national skill development corporation (NSDC), national skill qualification framework (NSQF), recognition of prior learning (RPL), Skill Development Centres (SDCs) etc.

The Skill India Mission has been pivotal in addressing the challenges of unemployment, underemployment, and lack of opportunities in rural areas of India, including Assam. Assam, with its predominantly rural population and rich cultural and natural resources, stands to benefit immensely from the Mission's initiatives. The Mission aligns closely with the state's need for rural development by empowering youth with skills that improve their employability and entrepreneurial potential. Therefore, within the umbrella vision of this mission, the cottage industries of Assam can be revived and thereby creating a wide range of employment opportunities. After creating opportunities, a large section of skilled workforce those are trained under the mission can be engaged. This can definitely contribute to the solution of unemployment problems among the youth to a large extent.

Objective

The basic objective of the paper is –

- To bring into light the avenues of employment generation by supporting and promoting cottage industries through Skill India Mission in Assam.
- To highlight the major challenges related to it.

Methodology and Data Base

To prepare the research paper secondary data are used. For the collection of the secondary data the help of various books, journals and websites are taken. For making the research easy and for better understanding a critical review of the previous work have done in this regard. The study is basically descriptive in nature.

Study Area

Assam, a land of natural beauty and rich cultural heritage is situated in the north eastern corner of Indian union and is one of the seven sister states of North East India. It is bordered by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh to the north, Nagaland and Manipur to the east, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Bangladesh to the south, and West Bengal to the west. Assam has a latitudinal extension of 24° N to 28° N and a longitudinal extension of 89°45' E to 96°00' E. Assam is the second largest state in the northeast in terms of area, covering 78,438 square kilometres. Assam has three main physical regions: the Brahmaputra River valley in the north, the Barak River valley in the south, and the hilly region including Karbi plateau in the south-central part of the state. Monsoon climate prevails here with four distinctive seasons.

Assam is the most populated state in the northeast. The people of Assam are a mix of various racial groups, including Mongoloid, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Iranian, and Aryan. The state is home to many tribes, each with its own culture, traditions, dress, and lifestyle. The native people of Assam are known as "Asomiya" and speak the Assamese language. The majority of the Assamese are Hindus, with most following Vaishnavism. About one-third of the population practices Islam, and many of the Scheduled Tribes have converted to Christianity.

Assam economy is basically depending on agriculture and its allied sector activities. Although at present time there has been a shifting of livelihood option from primary to secondary and tertiary sector, still it is not satisfactory. Except a very few large-scale industries, the scene of industrial development in Assam is pathetic. But the existence of small household or cottage industry is one of the important characteristics of economy specially, the rural economy which contribution is significant in several aspects.

Major Cottage Industries of Assam

The cottage industries of Assam are diverse where reflection of culture and heritage is important element. These industries are small-scale, labour-intensive, and provide significant employment opportunities, especially in rural areas. Traditionally, Cottage industries in Assam plays an important role in rural economy, by providing livelihoods to a

significant portion of the population and contributing to the preservation of local traditions and craftsmanship. Despite their cultural and economic importance, Assam's cottage industries are facing numerous challenges that threaten their survival in the rapidly changing global and local economic landscape. Some of the significant industries are mentioned below:

1. Handloom Industry

One of the iconic cottage industries of Assam is handloom industry. It is one of the oldest and most popular cottage industries in India which showcases the rich textile tradition of the state since historical era to till now. Assam's Muga silk known as the "Golden Silk of Assam," is now occupies a remarkable position in the international market also. Like Muga, the demands of Eri textile also gradually increasing due to frequent promotion in recent times. Besides the pat silk of Assam is another popular and integral part of Assamese culture. Basically, women are engaging with this sector yet male engagement cannot be negligible.

2. Cane-Bamboo & Sitalpati Craft

Cane and bamboo are naturally available in the forest of Assam in abundance, due to which cane and bamboo craft turns into a prominent cottage industry. Various household, agricultural and decorative items are prepared from it. Sitalpati, a kind of mat, is perhaps the most notable and popular product among the handicrafts of Assam. Unlike other kinds of mat woven in North-East India, Sitalpati is more expensive.

3. Sericulture

Assam is renowned for its unique silk production, particularly Muga silk, which is exclusive to the state. Besides Muga, Eri, Tussar silk is also produced. Handloom industries get their raw materials from the sericulture sector which support a significant no of families in the rural Assam.

4. Brass and Bell Metal Craft

Another traditional craft of Assam is brass and bell metal craft. Sarthe Bari in Assam is famous for this craft. Utensils, decorative items, religious artifacts etc are basically produces which are widely used in Assamese households and rituals.

5. Traditional Jewellery Making

Various traditional jewellery designs which reflect Assamese culture is produced under this section. Ranthali village of Nagaon is famous for it.

6. Pottery and Terracotta

Pots, vases, toys, idols, and decorative items are produced in rural areas due to access to quality clay.

7. Japi Making industries:

Japi is a traditional conical sunshade made from bamboo and palm leaves, often decorated with vibrant colours. At present it is widely used in various occasion to represent Assamese pride and culture.

New avenues of employment generation among youth in cottage industries through Skill India Mission

In comparison to earlier days the cottage industry of Assam lost its glory. The decline of cottage industries in Assam can be attributed to various interconnected factors. The major challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability are - lack of modernization and technology, insufficient financial support, poor marketing and branding, decline in raw material availability, migration of skilled labour, limited government support, lack of innovation etc. On the other hand, skill India mission is designed in such a way that it encompasses a wide range of framework which are enough to deal the challenges face by the cottage industries of Assam. The mission can support the development of Assam's handicrafts in various aspects such as - bridging the skill gap, promoting self-employment specially among the youth, boosting confidence and social mobility, reducing unemployment, skill development programs, market linkages, infrastructure development, sustainability and innovation, financial support etc. If this implementation is really applied into the ground fields, then it surely helps the cottage industries to beat themselves not only in the national but also in the international market too. At such point, they can automatically create a wide range of job within its sector where mostly educated and skilled youth can be engaged.

So, it can be assumed that The Skill India Mission plays a significant role in fostering employment opportunities in the cottage industries of Assam by addressing several issues. The mission contributes towards employment generation among youth in following ways:

Skill Development for Traditional Crafts

The mission conducts skill development programs to Assam's traditional cottage industries, such as handloom weaving, pottery, bamboo craft, and sericulture. Workers are trained to adopt modern techniques, enhancing productivity and quality while retaining traditional craftsmanship.

Promoting Entrepreneurship

It supports promoting entrepreneurship by offering training in business management, financial literacy, and marketing strategies. The mission helps artisans and small-scale producers access government schemes like Mudra loans and other financial support.

Market Linkages and Digital Platforms

It offers Training for artisans to sell their products online expands their market reach. Skill India collaborates with organizations to create supply chains and market linkages for handcrafted goods from Assam.

Reviving Traditional Industries

Focused training ensures the survival and growth of Assam's heritage crafts, attracting a broader customer base thereby making them competitive in national and international markets.

Job Creation through Micro-Industries

It plays a vital role in encouraging cluster-based development in cottage industries to generate employment locally. Many initiatives under Skill India target women and young individuals, enabling them to participate in income-generating activities.

Collaboration with Local Governments

The Skill India Mission works in collaboration with Assam's state government programs like the Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM) to focus on region-specific industries for not only enhances the employability of individuals in Assam but also ensures the growth and sustainability of the state's vibrant cottage industries.

2. LIMITATION OF SKILL INDIA MISSION

The Skill India Mission is pivotal in transforming India into a skill-driven economy and ensuring that its vast youth population is equipped to contribute effectively to national and global development. In spite of its wide range of potentialities to generate employment in cottage industrial sectors of Assam, it has to face several challenges. Some of them are-mismatch between skills and industry demand, geographical imbalance, inadequate awareness and outreach, high dropout rates, insufficient employment, linkage lack of soft skills development, underutilization of technology, funding challenges etc. So, it is necessary to work on these issues.

3. CONCLUSION

The Skill India Mission is a transformative step toward realizing India's diversities by addressing the skill gap and fostering a culture sustainability and innovation. With consistent efforts to overcome challenges, the mission has the potentiality to transform Assam's cottage industries into globally recognized one full of skilled labour, driving economic growth and social development. The Skill India Mission has been pivotal in addressing the challenges of unemployment, underemployment, and lack of opportunities in rural areas of Assam. Assam, with its predominantly rural population and rich cultural and natural resources, stands to benefit immensely from the Mission's initiatives. The Mission aligns closely with the state's need for rural development by empowering youth with skills that improve their employability and entrepreneurial potential. So, it is very necessary to work on the loopholes of the mission. Only then it can foster avenues of employment generation among youth within cottage industrial sectors of Assam.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

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