



From Tradition To Trade: Analyzing The Role Of Matak Community Costumes In Entrepreneurship Development In Assam's Dibrugarh District

Purandar Gohain^{1*}, Professor Varun Kumar²

¹Research Scholar, Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai

²Ph.D. Research Supervisor, Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intersection of cultural heritage and economic development by examining how the traditional costumes of the Matak community contribute to entrepreneurship in Assam's Dibrugarh districts. The Matak community, known for its rich cultural identity and distinctive textile traditions, holds significant potential for cultural based entrepreneurial ventures. The research investigates the traditional costume making practices, their symbolic and social relevance, and how these practices are being adopted into sustainable business models by local artisans and entrepreneurs. Using a mixed-methods approach, including field surveys, the study highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by community members in commercializing cultural attire. The objectives of the paper are to examine the traditional costume-making practices of the Matak community and understand their cultural, symbolic, and social significance. To analyze the role of traditional attire in promoting entrepreneurship among local artisans and community members in Dibrugarh district and try to identify the challenges and opportunities in commercializing Matak traditional costumes and to suggest strategies for enhancing their market potential and sustainability as cultural enterprises.

The findings suggests that with appropriate policy support, skill development and market access, the traditional costume industry can serve as a powerful catalyst for rural entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, and cultural preservation in the region. The paper concludes by offering recommendations to enhance the visibility and viability of such heritage based enterprises.

Keywords: economic development, Matak community, traditional costumes, entrepreneurship, culture.

Introduction:

Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in shaping the identity and livelihood of indigenous communities. In India's northeastern state of Assam, the Matak community stands out for its distinctive attire and textile craftsmanship. These traditional costumes are more than just garments – they are expressions of identity, heritage, and social values passed down through generations. In recent years, with growing awareness and appreciation for indigenous crafts, traditional clothing has gained renewed attention not only as a cultural symbol but also as a potential driver of local entrepreneurship.

Dibrugarh district, a prominent region in Upper Assam, is home to a significant Matak population. The community's intricate weaving techniques, patterns, and symbolic motifs reflect a deep-rooted connection to their history and way of life. However, in the face of modernization, global fashion trends, and limited economic opportunities, many traditional practices are at risk of decline. Amidst these challenges, there is a rising interest in revitalizing cultural assets through entrepreneurial initiatives. For the Matak community, this includes transforming costume-making practices into viable, market-oriented ventures that contribute to economic self-reliance and social empowerment.

This research aims to explore the evolving role of Matak traditional costumes in the economic development landscape of Dibrugarh. It investigates how traditional knowledge is being integrated into business models, the challenges artisans face in scaling their work, and the opportunities that exist for promoting heritage-

based enterprises. By analyzing the intersection of culture and commerce, this study seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how indigenous traditions can fuel sustainable entrepreneurship while preserving cultural identity.

The objectives of the paper are:

- i) To examine the traditional costume-making practices of the Matak community and understand their cultural, symbolic, and social significance.
- ii) To analyze the role of traditional attire in promoting entrepreneurship among local artisans and community members in Dibrugarh district and try to identify the challenges and opportunities in commercializing Matak traditional costumes.
- iii) To suggest strategies for enhancing their market potential and sustainability as cultural enterprises.

Significance of the Study:

This study holds considerable significance from cultural, social and economic perspectives. By examining the traditional costumes-making practices of the Matak community, it aims to preserve and document a vital aspect of indigenous cultural heritage that is at risk of being dilute or lost due to modernization and globalization. Understanding the symbolic and social meaning embedded in these traditional attires will contribute to the broader discourse on ethnic identity, heritage conservation and cultural pride.

Moreover, the study explores the intersection of tradition and entrepreneurship by analyzing how traditional costume-making can serve as a viable economic activity for artisans in the Dibrugarh district.

By identifying the challenges and opportunities in commercializing Matak-traditional costumes, the study aims to propose sustainable strategies for enhancing market potential without compromising the authenticity of the cultural product.

Delimitation of the Study:

The study is subject to certain delimitation, which defines the scope and the boundaries of the research:

This study is subject to certain delimitations, which define the scope and boundaries of the research:

- a) The study is confined to the Dibrugarh district of Assam, where significant population of the Matak community resides. Findings may not be generalized to Matak communities in other regions without further research.
- b) The research is specifically centered on the Matak community, and does not include comparative analysis with other indigenous or ethnic communities in Assam or beyond.
- c) The study focuses solely on traditional costume-making practices and their relevance to entrepreneurship development. Broader aspects of Matak culture, such as language, rituals, or religious practices, are not within the scope of this research.

Methodology of the Study:

The research was conducted in selected villages and towns within the Dibrugarh district of Assam, where the Matak community predominantly resides. Simple statistical tools like random sampling, average, percentage etc. used for analysis of the data and a well planned questionnaire adopted for collection of data. The methodological approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to gain a nuanced understanding of traditional costume-making practices and their entrepreneurial potential.

Primary data was collected personally by selecting 100 respondents from the study area. Respondents were asked basic questions through a well sated questionnaire.

In a statistical enquiry, the necessary information is generally collected in a printed sheet in the form of a questionnaire. This sheet contains a set of questions which the investigator asks to the informant, and the answers are noted down against the respective questions on the sheet. Thus questionnaire is one of the most important and extensively used research choice of questions is a very important part of the enquiry whatever is its nature.

Review of Related Literature:

In the North Eastern region of India, Assam emerged as a pioneering state in promoting entrepreneurship development. During the early 1970s, the state faced a severe unemployment crisis. To address this issue, the Government of Assam, under the leadership of then Chief Minister S. C. Sinha, initiated an innovative approach to foster entrepreneurship. The government adopted the integrated model of entrepreneurship development designed by the Small Industry Extension Training (SIET) Institute, now known as the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NIMSME), Hyderabad. Following this model, Assam established the Entrepreneurial Motivation Training Centre (EMTC) with the aim of nurturing entrepreneurial skills among the youth of the state.

The British classical economist Adam Smith did not differentiate between a capitalist and an entrepreneur. He considered economic progress to be a natural and automatic process. Although he used terms like “projector” and “undertaker” as English translations of the French word “entrepreneur,” he referred to them merely as business proprietors. Classical economists in England, including David Ricardo, failed to distinguish the role of the entrepreneur from that of a capital owner. As a result, the concept of the entrepreneur was largely absent in their economic writings.

According to entrepreneurs are accountable for their own decisions. They are capable of making judgments and are willing to take risks in an uncertain environment. An entrepreneur is often seen as someone who takes calculated risks. While some risks involve uncertain outcomes, these outcomes can still be predicted to some extent using probability. Such risks can often be managed or reduced through insurance. However, there are other risks that are completely unpredictable—this is what we call uncertainty. Entrepreneurs are willing to face these uncertainties, and the profit they earn is considered the reward for taking on such unknown risks.

Knight argues that entrepreneurs make key decisions about risk and profit. He also notes that if change were entirely predictable, there would be no room for entrepreneurial profit. According to him, entrepreneurs possess unique skills and abilities that set them apart from others. These skills help them make better decisions about potential business opportunities. However, Knight also recognizes that in order to act on these judgments, entrepreneurs must have control over resources. He understands that entrepreneurs function within specific technological and environmental conditions. Participation in entrepreneurship, according to Knight, is shaped by access to local resources, facilities, and the potential for earning profits.

The importance of the entrepreneur as a central figure in economic development was first highlighted by Joseph Schumpeter. Schumpeter (1961) focused on issues like economic growth, instability, and transformation. He described the entrepreneur as an innovator—someone who drives change by introducing new products, technologies, sources of raw materials, markets, or forms of business organization. In this view, the entrepreneur is seen as a creator and a catalyst for change, capable of initiating major developments.

According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurs are unique individuals who have the ability to make significant changes happen. They experience a sense of satisfaction in creating and achieving, often leading to what he called “creative destruction”—where existing ways of doing things are replaced by new and more efficient methods. This process disrupts the status quo and challenges older products and systems.

Similarly, Peter Drucker (1964) emphasized that entrepreneurs constantly look for change, respond to it, and turn it into an opportunity. Like Schumpeter, Drucker believed that innovation is the core function of entrepreneurship. He also insisted that innovation must be guided by market needs and demands.

Nadkarni (1982), in her study titled *“Ladies Entrepreneurs: A Social and Economic Study with Reference to Pune”*, presented her findings on the issues and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs across various industries.

Harinarayana (1991), in his study titled *“Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs: A Brief Comment”*, sought to identify the challenges hindering the growth of grassroots entrepreneurship among women. The scope of the study was limited to participants of the entrepreneurial awareness and promotion campaigns conducted by the District Industries Center in Anantapur.

Similarly, Rani (1986), in her research *“Potential Women Entrepreneurs”*, identified that the primary motivating factor for women to initiate business activities was their desire to become independent. The respondents for her study were selected during a Training Program for Potential Women Entrepreneurs, conducted in Hyderabad in October 1985. The program was organized by APITCO in collaboration with the Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

A.H. Cole (1959): Cole wrote in his book “Business Enterprise in its social setting” as Entrepreneurship is the purposeful activity of an individual or a group of associated individuals, undertaken to initiate, maintain or aggrandizes profit by production or distribution of economic goods and services.

Albert Shapero (1975), in his book, ‘The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship’, mentioned the concept of entrepreneurship from sociological point of view. He conducted his studies across nations and cover peoples and the ethnic groups and how they connected with entrepreneurship. He concluded that if individuals displaced from their normal lives due to war, poverty, unemployment, natural calamity etc. it forced them to become entrepreneurs. Shapero found a high correlation between “economically displaced” people and starting of new ventures.

J. Bema (1960) in his study that was conducted on fifty manufacturing firms engaged in the production of different kinds of light engineering products in Madras City and Coimbatore. Bema studied the background and origin of entrepreneurs and he successfully examined that the initial entry into industry was open to persons of with different social standing and economic position. He opines that caste and tradition played an important role in the emergence of entrepreneurs and the growth of enterprises achieved in the face of formidable obstacles. He thought that the medium and small-scale industrial entrepreneurs could be improved their performance, if certain technical knowledge of production and management was provided to them.

Reddy and Murthy (1979) have done a study on Strategy for the Development and Entrepreneurship and studied 18 units in Anantapur District of Andhrapradesh. They found that family and educational background of an entrepreneur's did not play important role to the success of the entrepreneurs.

Staley & Morse, (1965): They wrote in their book, 'Modern Small Industry for Developing Countries' explained that managerial training, industrial research, quality products, industrial services are the key factors for development of entrepreneurship.

David Ricardo a contemporary of JB Say supported Smith opinion that industrial manufacture and agriculture farmer synonymously as entrepreneurs through his book "The Principals of Political Economy Taxation." According to him the farmer and the manufacture can no more live without profit than the labour without wages. So, there should be a prime motive of every entrepreneur to facilitate capital formulation and economic development.

Archana Mali (2011) have done a study on Entrepreneurship Development in Assam - An Analytical Study with an objectives to explore various approaches to entrepreneurship development and also to analyze the growth trend of entrepreneurship in Assam. The researcher in her study revealed that for optimum use of natural and human resources a strong entrepreneurial base is required. Entrepreneurship creates employment and self-employment opportunities. It also helps in solving social problems like unemployment and also search and utilization of talent of individuals as well, leading to development of economy and contribute to socio-economic change.

She concludes her study that, the entire field of entrepreneurship fulfilling the aspirations of less developed countries. Entrepreneurs face many challenges in start-up and running an enterprise. Challenges mainly relate to the filled of marketing, raw material, manpower, finance, power, procedural formalities and machinery. In addition to these, entrepreneurs also face social problems like frequent bandh, corruption, donation etc.

Bijumoni Das (2012) studied on Prospect of Entrepreneurship Development in Small and Medium Enterprises in Assam with special reference to Nalbari District of Assam. The main aim of their research was to examine the prospect of creating new enterprises in SME sector along with examining the entrepreneurship as a source of income generation through self-employment. Researcher also tried to find out the innovative potentialities among the youths and to identify the socio economic problems faced by the entrepreneurs.

She conclude that a common attitude prevailing among some of the existing as well as the first generation entrepreneurs that they have taken entrepreneurship as a career option owing to their failure to secure white-collar job especially in the public sector. Thus, entrepreneurship for them is a task of second preference, which naturally lacks dreams and ambitions. She also revealed that, "It is necessary to create an entrepreneurial environment among the present generation youths. For this, a designed set of master plan has to be prepared by different entrepreneurial promotional agencies for the present youths to make them more aware about the opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurial career."

Sayad Mortaza et.al((2014) in their study on 'A study on the effect of entrepreneurship on economic growth' depicted that for development of entrepreneurship, both formal and informal education is very important. The formal educational institutes like high schools, colleges and universities must take initiatives along informal institute like vocational education centers. Universities have to consider required education for developing entrepreneurship and establishing culture as a priority. Research and Development (R&D) departments of companies are also important to impart knowledge and must be provide support entrepreneurs. The role of entrepreneurs and motivation for excessive labour to produce a new product and new procedures in production should be valued.

Tripda Rawal (2018) conducted his study on 'A study of Social Entrepreneurship in India' with an objectives to find out the roles and responsibilities of social entrepreneurs and its overall contribution of social entrepreneurship and social enterprises in India. The authors in their study revealed that the Social entrepreneurship is a best way to find the social problems by combining the social service and entrepreneurial skills. Social entrepreneurship has the capacity to innovate social issues or problems, which

are prevailing in India. The growth of social entrepreneurship has reflected upon the employment and infusion of skills among people at the bottom level.

Social entrepreneurship is facing many challenges in India. Therefore, the growth of social entrepreneurship is very low as compared to the other regions in developed nations. Government is slowly realizing the worth, affecting of social entrepreneurship in India, and taking proper actions to increase the aptitude of people towards social entrepreneurship.

Ms. Indira Kumari (2014), conducted a study on 'Entrepreneurship Development Process in India.' In her study, she tried to find out the entrepreneurial processes in India and how the different Entrepreneurship Development Programme helps in economic growth of a nation. She stated that the entrepreneurs are unable to use available local resource due to lack of proper knowledge. Proper utilization of resources will help to establish a healthy base of industrialization. Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) can help in the proper utilization of locally available resources by through the proper training, guidance and education to the potential entrepreneurs. EDPs also help in establishing more and more enterprises that aid to provide more employment opportunities and help in increasing the earnings of the people. Finally, the overall aim of an entrepreneurial development programme is to stimulate a person for adopting entrepreneurship as a career and to make him able to identify and exploit the opportunities successfully for new ventures.

Nadeem Akhtar et. al in their study 'Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of the Punjab Province, Pakistan' with the objectives to critically examine and identify the differentiate vulnerabilities' and factors in influencing the choice or decision-making between employment and entrepreneurship amongst the youth in Pakistan. They also make a focus on household income level, generated by the CBMS, for identification of crucial gaps in youth policy implementation for involvement/participation of youth in employment and entrepreneurship. They conclude, self-employment is an economic activity to promote entrepreneurship without pressuring the government of the country. They importantly focused on extracting the key factors that contribute positively towards the promotion of self-employment and entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

J Jose Prabhu (2019) undertook a study on 'A Study of Community Entrepreneurship Development Research: A Resource of Clarification and Forecast' concludes that community entrepreneurship extensively, as a procedure including the imaginative use and mix of assets to seek after chances to catalyze social change or potentially address social and community needs. He thought that Community entrepreneurship takes on various structures, depend upon economic and social conditions.

Antoinette Lombard et al (2011) conducted a study on 'Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship finds that Social entrepreneurship can create opportunities to the youths for employment and income generation. It also provides the opportunity for an inclusive model for economic development through which vulnerable people can become empowered to have a voice in their own development and live with human dignity. Social workers are changing agents and they are well positioned to create and utilize opportunities for community development as an avenue to integrate social and economic development projects within their roles in community development.

Swamy Tribhuvandana T V(2017) in his study 'Rural Entrepreneurship Development for rural transformation with Special reference to selected villages in Karnataka State' tried to find out the variables that affects the annual income of an rural entrepreneurs and also to identify the predominant motivating factors that influences the individuals to become entrepreneurs and the various challenges they faced.

The rural entrepreneurship is an extremely important part of rural India. Entrepreneurship is a main source of income for women, small farmers and landless workers, as well as for the rural youths. Organized business enterprises in villages only account for a small part of rural nonfarm employment. Most rural entrepreneurship arises in service, trade, and household manufacturing like handy craft, handloom activities. These were dominated by small, part-time, mostly family businesses. The success of rural entrepreneurship depends to a large extent on local and regional market demands and tends to grow rapidly in the context of rapid agricultural growth.

Kanoi, Sangita (2020) in her study on Role of government in developing entrepreneurship in Assam revealed that the Government of India has been taking various measures to promote entrepreneurship in the country. Government provides various incentives to the entrepreneurs based on the industrial policies declared by the Government from time to time. However, the success level of these policies is not satisfactory the basic reasons in this regard is an implementational failure for which the mechanism of the government, entrepreneurs and the society as a whole are responsible. Thus, the researcher concluded that promotion as well as development of entrepreneurship is possible only when all the government agencies/institutions implementing EDP programmes/schemes, the financial institutions and the entrepreneurs under these

programmes/schemes realizes their responsibilities and duties and performs their function well in co-operation with each other.

Barman, A. L. (2014) in his study, 'Socio-economic status of Scheduled Caste people in Kamrup District of Assam', mentioned that the socio-economic status of the people of Scheduled Caste is comparatively low with the other section of the society. They failed to provide adequate facilities of education to their children. The various groups of SC peoples are not equally developed financially as well as mentally. They are not in a position to take advantage of reservation policy and other programmes evolved to improve their situation. There should be a constitutional framework or required specific provision to bring scheduled Caste into mainstream of the national life. The effective implementation of various development programmes/policies for Scheduled Castes is necessary for the purpose of inclusive growth.

Findings:

The Matak community, primarily found in Assam, is known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional values. Originating as a distinct socio-political group during the 18th century under the leadership of Swargadeo Sarbananda Singha, the Mataks have preserved their identity through unique customs, religious practices, and traditional attire. They follow the *Mahapurushiya Dharma* propagated by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, emphasizing devotion, simplicity, and community harmony. Traditional festivals, folk songs, and dances form an integral part of their social life, reflecting their deep-rooted connection to Assam's cultural fabric.

The major Traditional Costumes of Matak Community:

Tongali: Among the Matak community, two types of tongali (a traditional cloth worn around the waist) are in use—one worn by devout Vaishnavites and the other by young men during the Bihu festival. Members of the Mayamara Matak community wear a white *tongali* while performing devotional music and dance (Gayan-Bayan) in traditional attire with Jama (Traditional Dress). The tongali worn by devotees is typically 6 to 8 inches in width and about 3 feet in length. The one worn by young men during Bihu is slightly longer in comparison.

Paguree: The devotees of the Mayamara Matak community wear the Paguri during rituals and other religious ceremonies. There are two types of Paguri commonly used—red and white. Especially during Borsobaha and Namjanani ceremonies, senior devotees wear red Paguri, while the other devotees wear white ones. The Paguri is typically 9 feet 8 inches in length and 13 or 14 inches in width. It is made from cotton thread.

Jama: The people of the Matak community traditionally wear Jama (a traditional robe) while performing devotional songs and music during religious ceremonies. They wear this attire at the Guru's house, in the Bornaamghar, during the Namjanani of Nasharaniyal, and at the beginning of Bhaona in Bordhemali. This garment is stitched from approximately 33 feet 6 inches of cloth. It is white in color and is worn from the waist down to the feet.

Borkapur: Borkapur is a primary traditional garment of the Matak community, also known as "6-kathia cloth." It is approximately 19 feet in length and 3 feet 8 inches in width. One of its unique features is that every household in the Matak community owns this cloth. The Borkapur carries a distinctive identity of the Matak people. Men wear it during religious ceremonies and it is also used to protect against the cold during the winter season (Jaar).

Women traditionally wear the Borkapur before the arrival of winter (Jaar). During the ritual of 'Sharan' women wear this garment from head to toe, covering their entire body so that no part is visible. In traditional Matak weddings, after the bride takes a ceremonial bath, she is dressed in new clothes and then wrapped in a Borkapur. The edges of this cloth are colored golden (muga-colored), while the main body of the cloth is white.

Cheleng Chador (Tinikothiya kapur): The Cheleng Chador is a significant traditional garment of the Matak community in Assam. It holds deep cultural, religious, and social importance in Matak society. The Cheleng Chador is a long, rectangular piece of cloth typically draped over the upper part of the body, similar to a shawl. It is worn along with other traditional attire such as the mekhela (lower garment). The chador is usually white or light in color, symbolizing purity. Decorated with fine borders and sometimes adorned with traditional motifs or minimal embroidery.

The Cheleng Chador is not just a garment but a symbol of modesty, respect, and tradition for Matak men and women. It is an essential part of a woman's during religious events, and other cultural rituals. Wearing the Cheleng Chador is a mark of identity for Matak community, reflecting their heritage and community values.

Gamusa: The word ‘Gamusa’ (or Gamosa) is derived from the Assamese words “ga” (body) and “musa” (to wipe), meaning a cloth used to wipe the body. However, its meaning and use go far beyond a utilitarian object—it’s a symbol of respect, love, and cultural identity across Assam.

Matak Gamusa: Detailed Description

Typically, Matak Gamusa is hand-woven and using cotton threads. Sometimes silk versions are made for special occasions. Weaving is done on traditional looms, often by women of the community. The Matak Gamusa is distinct in design from the standard Assamese Gamusa. It includes floral patterns, symmetrical designs, and geometrical shapes that represent tribal and nature-inspired themes. The border (known as phool) may have intricate motifs specific to Matak aesthetics. The community used this traditional item during cultural festivals, rituals, and social functions. A symbol of honour and respect, offered during Bihu or when welcoming guests. Matak Gamusa plays a key role in Matak religious and traditional ceremonies, such as weddings and death rituals. The Matak Gamusa has become a symbol of identity and pride for the community. In recent years, it has also been part of cultural assertion and efforts to preserve Matak heritage. The Matak Gamusa is not just a piece of cloth; it is a cultural emblem, a story of resistance and pride, and a living tradition that carries the history and identity of the Matak people. As Assam continues to evolve, such ethnic textiles help keep alive the rich and diverse cultural mosaic of the region.

Uka Gamusa (Plain Gamusa): Apart from the decorative Phulam Gamusa (embroidered or motif-rich gamusa), the Uka Gamusa or plain gamusa also holds a significant place in the cultural traditions of the Matak community. The Uka Gamusa typically features green borders and stripes at both ends, while the central portion remains white and plain. This simple piece of cloth carries deep social and ritual value.

During funeral rites, it is commonly used by Matak Community people placing it on the head or shoulder. Another remarkable use is when a Haluwa (a traditional farm labour) comes to a household for monthly agricultural work under a customary agreement; the householder presents three or four Uka Gamusas as a gesture of respect and welcome and expected to use these Gamusas throughout the entire farming season, until the work is complete. Besides agriculture, the Uka Gamusa is also used in various domestic chores within the household, making it a functional and culturally symbolic item.

Chali Gamusa: Chali Gamusa is a type of cloth used by both men and women when they go to religious gatherings. It is used to carry essential items while going to such events. One end of the cloth is fashioned like a hanging bag, suitable for storing various items, while the other end is used to tie smaller belongings. This gamusa is as long as the traditional Phulam Gamusa (decorated gamusa).

Eri Chador: The Eri *Chador* is a traditional cloth used by the Matak community during winter to keep themselves warm. It is hand-woven at home using threads spun from Eri cocoons. This cloth is mostly used by elderly members of the community. An Eri Chador is typically about 7 feet long and around 3 feet wide. For the Matak people, this garment is more than just clothing — it is a symbol of pride and cultural identity.

Chali Dhora: Chali Dhora is a special cloth used to wrap betel nuts and leaves (tamul-paan) during religious or ceremonial occasions. It is traditionally hand-woven at home by women, with one half of the cloth left plain and the other half beautifully decorated with floral motifs. When used, the plain side is kept at the bottom while the betel nuts and leaves (tamul-paan) is wrapped inside.

Mekhela Chador: The Mekhela Chador is the traditional attire of women from the Matak community. In earlier times, women would wear the mekhela tightly secured with a fold at the chest, known as Methoni. While this style is less commonly seen among younger women today, elderly women, especially in certain regions, are still often seen wearing the mekhela in the traditional way with the Methoni fold at the chest.

Chadoro: Matak women traditionally wear a chador (a shawl-like cloth). It is draped over the Parkani (a cloth tied around the waist). Elderly women usually wrap the chador around their shoulders, while younger or newly married women often wear it over their head like a veil, with the front end tucked in as an Uroni (veil).

Parkani (Kakalmora): The Parkani is worn with the Mekhela after it is folded tightly at the chest (known as Methoni) and tied around the thighs (Kakal). The main part of the Parkani is white. Among the Matak community, it is believed that if someone doesn’t wear the Parkani, the mekhela appears incomplete or improper. It is considered disrespectful, especially for elders or respected individuals, to appear without the Parkani properly tied.

Riha: Matak women typically wear two types of Riha. Usually, they wear white-colored Riha while black-colored Rihās are used for weddings or special ceremonies.

Traditional dress of ‘Gach-tolar Bihu’ (Bihu under the tree) of the Matak community: During the ‘Gach-tolar Bihu’ (Bihu under the tree) of the Matak community, young girls wear mekhela of greenish (leafy green) color along with a white Chador that has a green border. They wear a Parkani over the mekhela and then drape the chador, paired with a greenish (leafy green) colored blouse. This traditional attire makes the Bihu performance under the tree look very attractive and appealing.

Problems faced:

- i) Lack of Commercial Exposure:** Traditional Matak costumes are deeply rooted in cultural practices but lack visibility in mainstream fashion or commercial markets, limiting their entrepreneurial potential.
- ii) Insufficient Skill Up gradation:** Traditional artisans often rely on age-old techniques without adequate training in modern design, quality control, or market-oriented production.
- iii) Limited Market Access:** Entrepreneurs from the Matak community face challenges in reaching broader markets due to inadequate marketing strategies, e-commerce access, and distribution channels.
- iv) Financial Constraints:** Lack of funding, access to credit and financial literacy restrict the growth of small-scale businesses around traditional costumes.
- v) Cultural Dilution vs. Commercialization:** Balancing the preservation of cultural authenticity with the demands of commercialization poses a dilemma, often resulting in either loss of identity or reduced market appeal.
- vi) Government and Institutional Support Gaps:** Insufficient policy support, lack of awareness of government schemes, and poor implementation hinder the development of costume-based entrepreneurship.
- vii) Low Youth Engagement:** Younger generations often show limited interest in traditional crafts, posing a threat to the continuity and innovation of costume-based enterprises.

Prospects of Entrepreneurship Development among the Matak Community through Traditional Costumes:

The Matak community of Assam possesses a rich cultural heritage reflected in its traditional costumes, such as the Tongali, Paguri, Jama, Borkapur, Cheleng Chador, Gamusa (Phulam, Uka, Chali), Eri Chador, Chali Dhora, Mekhela Chador, Chadoro, Parkani, Riha, and attire for Gach-tolor Bihu. These garments are not only important cultural identifiers but also hold great potential for entrepreneurship development in the region. The following points outline the key prospects for such development:

1. Reviving and Preserving Indigenous Textile Traditions

- The Matak community's traditional costumes involve unique weaving techniques, designs, and symbolism.
- Training and engaging local women and youth in traditional weaving help preserve these cultural skills and ensure intergenerational transmission.
- By formalizing the production of these garments, the community can create a **sustainable cottage industry** centered on heritage textiles.

2. Creation of Local Employment Opportunities

- Traditional costume making can offer self-employment to weavers, tailors, dye-makers, and embroidery artisans within the community.
- Through collective units, self-help groups, and cooperatives, large-scale production and sales of traditional attire can be managed.
- Seasonal demands (e.g., for Bihu, weddings, religious functions) can lead to **periodic surges in production and employment**.

3. Tourism and Cultural Promotion

- As Assam becomes a more prominent cultural tourism destination, authentic Matak attire can be marketed as cultural souvenirs.
- Cultural festivals, fairs, and Bihu celebrations are platforms where Matak costumes can be promoted, demonstrated, and sold.
- Cultural home stays and eco-tourism centers in Dibrugarh and surrounding areas could include experiences like costume dressing or weaving workshops.

4.Scope for Online and Offline Marketing

- With the rise of e-commerce and social media marketing, Matak costume products can reach national and even international markets.
- Platforms like Amazon Karigar, Flipkart Samarth, and dedicated regional crafts portals offer spaces for indigenous products.
- Offline markets such as state handloom expos, craft fairs, and rural haats can provide grassroots-level selling opportunities.

5. Support from Government Schemes and NGOs

- Initiatives like Skill India, PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme), and NEHHDC (North Eastern Handicrafts and Handloom Development Corporation), Matak Autonomous Council provide funding and training support.
- NGOs working on women empowerment and tribal livelihoods can help in organizing capacity-building workshops and improving business literacy.

- These efforts can contribute to the scaling of micro-enterprises rooted in Matak traditional costume making.

6. Women Empowerment through Weaving

- Most weaving and embroidery are traditionally done by Matak women, making this sector a natural space for promoting women-led enterprises.
- Formation of women's cooperatives can ensure financial independence, leadership opportunities, and collective bargaining power.
- Weaving centers can also act as safe community spaces for training and social interaction.

7. Export Potential and Cultural Branding

- With the growing global demand for ethnic and eco-friendly textiles, Matak garments made from cotton and Eri silk have export potential.
- Proper branding, highlighting the garments' cultural story, environmental sustainability, and artisanal quality can make them competitive in the global market.
- Certification (e.g., GI tagging of special garments like Matak Gamusa) can further increase value and recognition.

8. Educational Integration and Research-Based Promotion

- Institutions can integrate Matak weaving and costume-making into vocational curricula and community learning centers.
- Researchers, anthropologists, and designers can collaborate with Matak artisans to document, innovate, and market the costumes.
- Modern adaptations while maintaining traditional essence can attract younger customers and fashion designers.

Conclusion

Traditional costume making among the Matak community holds immense promise as a vehicle for socio-economic empowerment, cultural preservation and sustainable entrepreneurship. With the right mix of skill development, marketing support, policy assistance, and cultural promotion, it can become a model for community-led economic development rooted in heritage. By transforming these textiles into commercially viable products, the Matak community can celebrate their identity while building a resilient economic future.

Notes and References:

Primary Data:

- i) Field Survey

Secondary Data:

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