APPENDIX 1

Samples of traditional work in Muga (above) and Pat (below) silk woven by the women of Sualkuchi.

[211]
APPENDIX ii

That skill in weaving gave the Assamese women a certain measure of self confidence is evidenced from the following Bihu song:

Oh, let me go away in a boat,
Why should I get myself trashed?
Instead of staying with a co wife
I would rather live on my weaving.

The handloom has been so closely related to the life and thought of the Assamese women that they have inevitably drawn upon this institution for imagery to express some of their deepest sentiment:

When I was a child, I tended to the cows,
Being young I sit at my loom,
Right and left I ply the shuttle,
Come my love and give the call

Some Bihu songs mock at the lack of weaving skills of the housewife:

This calls her a Weaver that calls her a weaver
She is a weaver indeed,
She takes a month to set up her loom, she weaves for six months
The weaver takes a full year.

---

1 Praphulladatta Goswami., *Bohag Bihu of Assam and other Bihu Songs*, (Guwahati 1988)p65
2 Ibid p63
3 Ibid., p76
APPENDIX iii

Anima Rajbhonsi around 20yrs of age hails from Barpeta. She works in the factory of Tapan Kakoty of Ragharh. She stays in what is described as a mess attached with the factory with 6 other co-workers. The room is dingy and dark. A 60 watt light bulb is their source of light. Behind the factory are their toilets. Their “bathroom” consists of bamboo chatais roughly sewn together. Anima told us that she had the freedom to spend the money as she likes. But when we enquired further, she told us she has to send money home three to four times a year and that her folks especially her younger sisters back home expect her to give them gifts during festive seasons. So she often has to work overtime so that she can complete her orders and take in new orders and earn a little more.

APPENDIX IV

I went on the 30th of May to meet the Joint Director of the Textile and Handloom Department and to get the latest status of the working of welfare schemes in Sualkuchi. I was told to come back the next day. On the 31st May, in between numerous interruptions from staff eager to get the their bills passed before the end of the financial year, and calls to and from the accounts Departments and a good one hour’s waiting, I was finally able to extract some relevant information. While he evaded my specific query on the working of the STEP or Scheme for Support and training and Employment program for women

---

4 Interview with the respondent on 1st January, 2007

[213]
weavers in Sualkuchi, I was told that there was only one scheme in operation in
Sualkuchi but that he had no further details of the working of the scheme. I was
told that I could come back another day if I so desired.

APPENDIX V

The popular perception of women’s status in the region is revealed from
the following advertisement phamplet obtained from the NEDfi office in, Ulubari,
Guwahati. Its financial schemes for women discussed earlier also does not seem
to show any awareness of ground realities.

“Women have always played an important role in socio economic
development of the society since ancient times. In the North East, they enjoy a
special status in the society because of their entrepreneur desire and ability,
hard working nature and matrilineal society in some areas of the region.
Moreover, women of the region enjoy a comparatively higher status in society
because of the liberal outlook of the region.(emphasis mine) They contribute
significantly to the development of the society.

NEDfi, as a financial institution has been working for the
economic upliftment of the women of the region by providing them training and
financial assistance under Micro Finance Scheme North East Equity Fund
Scheme..................AS NEDfi is committed to the development of the region, a
special scheme has been prepared exclusively for women entrepreneurs in

[214]
liberal terms and conditions where financial assistance would be provided for any viable income generating activity. It is expected that the scheme will go along way in helping women for taking up business ventures and will lead to economic development of the region. Skilled women entrepreneurs in the age group of 18-50yrs are eligible for soft loan at 7.35% rate of interest."