

CHAPTER - 5

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND AREA OF INTEREST

THIRD OBJECTIVE: To study the area of interest of women entrepreneur on traditional business as well as non-traditional business;

5.1 Interest of women entrepreneur

In Sonitpur, among all the productive sectors, agriculture makes the highest contribution to the domestic sectors and employs 80 percent (2011) of the workforce. Though infrastructure facilities for entrepreneurial activities are not adequate and also not up-to-the mark in the study area, yet women entrepreneurs are moving ahead in all the spheres of the marketing dabbling each possibility to whatever extent they can. Most of the respondents in the study area are interested in the traditional businesses. The first-generation women entrepreneurs are interested in the non-traditional business activities. A few of them are interested in carrying out the business of traditional items in modern looks – blending with market demands. This chapter explores the interest of women entrepreneurs towards the traditional as well as non-traditional items.

Women in the study area are not only venturing into the traditional business idea but are also ready to explore various non-traditional fields and prove their best capacity. While carrying out the field studies, it was quite encouraging to observe that against the various odds (like improper supply of the resources, including inadequate business premises, paucity of funds, inadequacy of business competencies and lack of skills especially in rural areas, difficulty in maintaining balance between business and family, shortage of power supply, low profit margin, etc.,) entrepreneurship among women is positively moving towards a positive direction. The entrepreneurship ventures have crawled into a variety of activities due to the increasing rate of literacy rate among women (60.73 percent, 2011); awareness of people; expansion of urban areas;

increasing tendency of self-employment through SHGs (Self Help Groups), etc. During the field study, in the rural areas, most of the respondents (76.19 percent) stated that they were interested in the production of traditional items like handloom and handicrafts, tailoring, embroidery, Assamese cuisine (traditional food items), etc. with the help of a primitive method, which is more conducive. Moreover, the cost of production of traditional items is comparatively lower than non-traditional items due to the plentiful availability of raw materials, which make the price of raw materials dip, be it for the greens, fish, meat, and flowers. Therefore, rural women entrepreneurs are mainly interested in traditional items like indigenous snacks (*tilpitha*, *tailor luddoo*, *Narikolorluddoo*, etc.), weaving, tailoring, and embroidery, preparing different food items like a pickle, jam-jelly, curry powder (rice, jeera, turmeric powder, etc.). Urban women entrepreneurs, on the other hand, are interested in both traditional as well as non-traditional items. In case of non-traditional items, they are interested in the ventures of beauty parlour, crèche, hobby classes (yoga, music, dancing, art etc.), financial consultant, cafe, restaurant, doll making, gift shop, etc. Urban women entrepreneur also interested in traditional items with modern looks like a boutique, Assamese cuisine, etc. They used new technology in their professions, e.g. in case of embroidery (traditional item), a few respondents (1.5 percent) used digital swing machines; for making ladies purse special machines are used to give different shapes with colourful designs and patterns; etc. Other traditional items that are traded mostly by respondents were basically handicraft items like printed textiles, pen stands, stone carving, embroidered goods and imitation jewellery, ornamental candles, dry fruits boxes, stuffed toys, wooden ware, timber design, scarf as art ware, have been some of the gadgets that fall into the bracket of seasonal demand or seasonal market. Generally, they are in demand at some point of festivals. The urban female is doing this kind of work in the course of the 12 months as it is time-consuming and also, they are geared up with a bulk of inventory when in demand. They organize for exhibitions, fairs/exchange gala's at distinctive places to promote their handicraft and handloom products. A few women have handloom machines and weavers at their residences or at unique locations for weaving clothes, which, now-a-days, have high demand in the

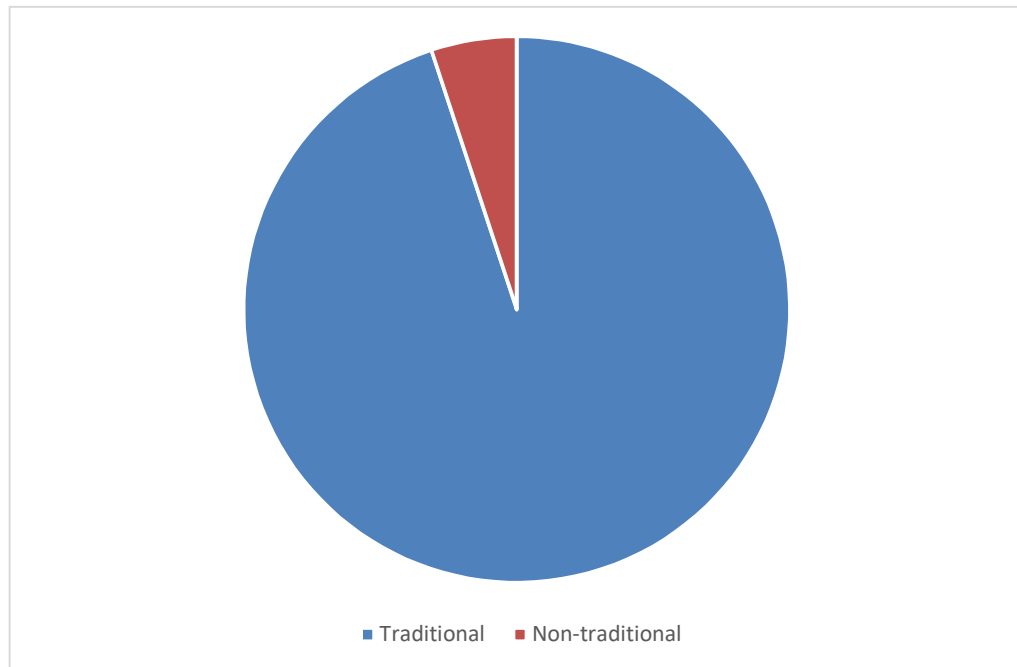
gala's and marriage seasons. They usually produce common objects (like Gamusa, mekhela chadar kurta, etc.) in accordance to the demand of the customers. Presently, usual items with modern looks like mekhela chadar and handloom salwar kurta piece, muga shawl, men's kurta, shirt, etc. have the perfect demand in the market. But the problem of entrepreneurs in this sector is the high cost of production; the paucity of funds, lack of well-arranged room; shortage of weavers and strength supply. In India, handicraft and handloom manufacturing is a foremost structure of employment subsequent to agriculture and constitutes a great part of the export effect economy. In the case of boutiques, different types of dresses and accessories are available according to the fashion designer's design based on the customer's choice. In jewellery sectors also, traditional designs are used in modern shapes like ornaments of *kesa gold* (JoonBiri, Loka para, dug dugi, gum kharu, etc.) and special ornaments of Barpeta, etc. Most of the respondents both in urban and rural areas run restaurants with traditional methods. For example, cooking in baanharsungat (bamboo tubes/ hollows). There are some herbs like *mani-muni*, *bhedailota*, *norasingha*, etc., that are easily available in a rural area than in urban areas. In some restaurants, these herbs are used to cook traditional dishes. Normally, Assamese cuisine holds many incredible recipes related to fish (*masortenga*), meat (duck curry, chicken, and bamboo shoots curry, mutton, pork, etc.), *aloo pitika*, *khar*, *ouukhatta*, *dal kosuxaak*, among others (*TilPitha*, *Tilorladdoo*, *Narikorladdoo*, *Goororpayash*, *Mango delight*, etc.).

Table 5.1. Classification of respondents based on the specialisation of products (Traditional items / non-traditional items)

S.N.	Items	Urban		Rural		Total	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Traditional items	98	44.55	160	76.19	258	60
2	Non-traditional items	122	55.45	50	23.81	172	40
3	Total	220	100	210	100	430	100

Source: Primary data

Figure- 5.1 Percentage distribution of respondents based on the specialisation of products (Traditional items / non-traditional items)



Source: Primary data

Interpretation

Table- 5.1 and figure–5.1 reveal that rural respondents were interested mostly on traditional items (76.19 percent) than non-traditional items (23.81 percent). This is mainly because of the low cost of production, availability of raw materials, and mostly, they can run their entrepreneurial activities from their houses. In the case of non-traditional items, urban women entrepreneur (55.44 percent) was more interested in these items than traditional items (44.55 percent). Due to the existing high demand and market opportunities, urban respondents were interested in non-traditional items. Moreover, trained and skilled women entrepreneurs in urban areas try to explore new innovations, therefore, they were interested basically in non-traditional and on traditional items.

Table 5.2 Classification of respondents engaged in different sectors (Traditional & non-traditional) in the study area

Variables	Urban women entrepreneur		Rural women entrepreneur	
Traditional	Traditional			
	Number	%	Number	%
Handloom	23	10.45	39	18.57
Handicraft	19	8.64	23	10.95
Assamese cuisine	14	6.36	15	7.14
Cutting, Tailoring & embroidery	26	11.82	34	16.19
Curry powder	10	4.55	18	8.57
Indigenous snacks (Tilpitha, tilorluddoo, narikolluddoo, goororpayash, etc.	19	8.64	20	9.52
Non-traditional				
	Number	%	Number	%
Beauty parlour	29	13.18	22	10.48
Boutique	19	8.64	08	3.80
Financial consultancy/agent	13	5.91	10	4.76
Café	10	4.55	05	2.38
Crèche	10	4.55	00	00
Hobby classes	10	4.55	08	3.80
Restaurants/Dhaba (Fast food)	18	8.18	14	6.66
Total	220	100	210	100

Source: Primary data

Table – 5.2 shows the interest of women entrepreneurs in both traditional and non-traditional sectors. Urban women entrepreneurs are more interested in the non-traditional items than the traditional items. The highest number (13.18 percent) of the respondents (urban area) is engaged in beauty parlour followed by boutiques, restaurants, and financial consultancy, cafe, crèche and hobby classes, respectively. Then again, rural women entrepreneurs are more interested in the traditional items than the non-traditional items. 18.57 percent respondents are engaged in handloom (weaving, cutting, embroidery, tailoring, etc.) followed by handicrafts, making indigenous snacks, curry powder, and Assamese cuisine. In case of non-traditional sectors, 10.48 percent respondents are engaged on beauty parlour followed by restaurants/dhaba, financial consultancy, cafe and hobby classes. During the field study, no crèche was seen in the rural areas. This is due to the lack of working women and the existence of a joint family system.

Figure 5.2 Area-wise (Urban) classification of respondents engaged in traditional and non-traditional items

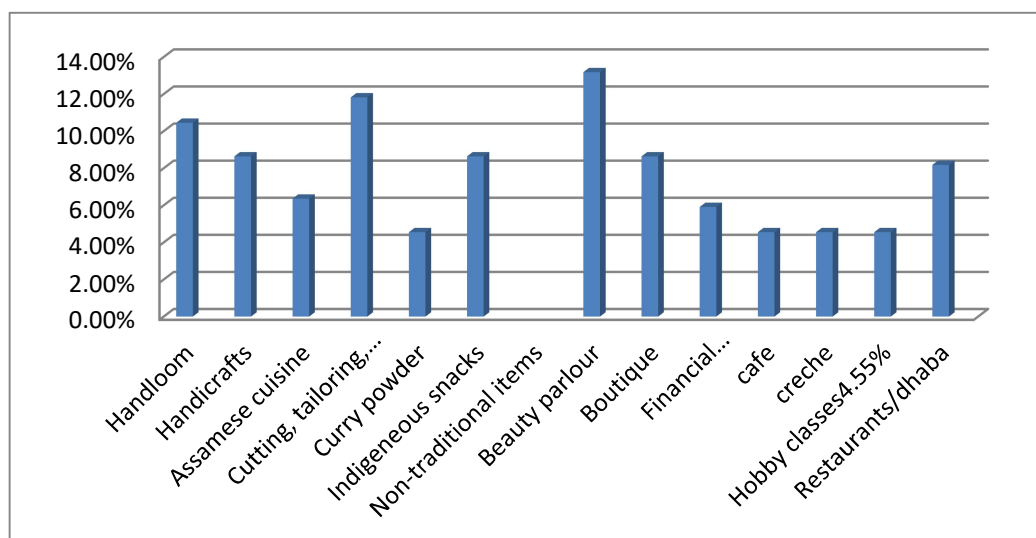


Figure- 5.2 shows that the urban women entrepreneurs engaged in different traditional and non-traditional activities. During the field study, it came to notice that the urban

respondents were more interested in non-traditional items than the traditional items. Most of the respondents (13.18 percent) were involved in the beauty parlour business. Basically, their entrepreneurial activities included boutique, restaurants, and financial consultancy, cafe, crèche and hobby classes. Urban women entrepreneurs are also involved in the traditional items fused with modern looks because of the high demand of the urban societies. In case of traditional items, most of the respondents are engaged in cutting, tailoring and embroidery (11.82 percent) followed by handloom, handicrafts, indigenous snacks, curry powder and Assamese cuisine. During the investigation, it was observed that urban women entrepreneur was engaged both in traditional and non-traditional activities.

Figure-5.3 Rural Entrepreneur engaged on Traditional and Non-traditional items

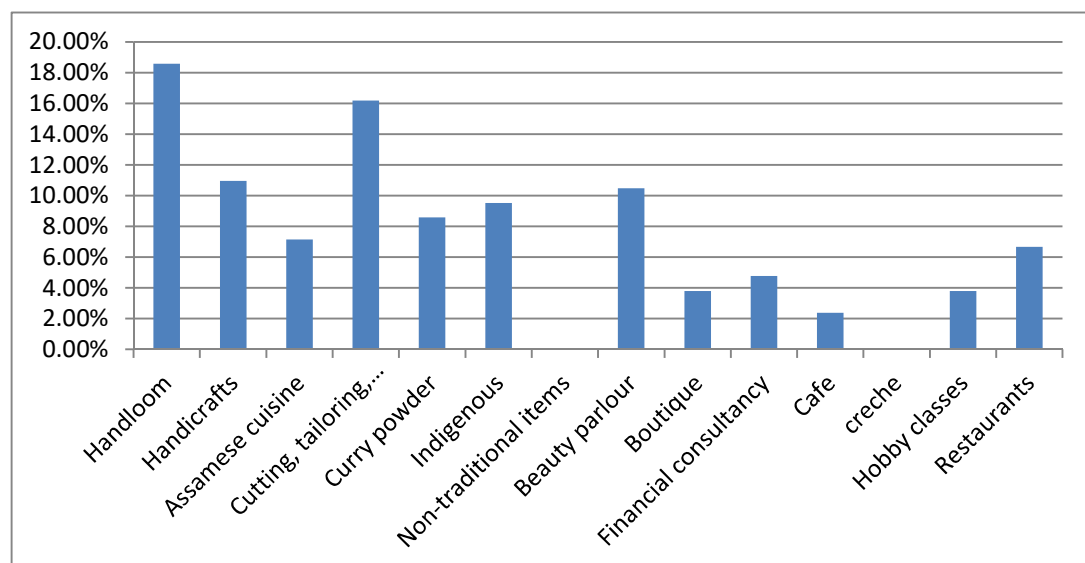


Figure-5.3 reveals that the rural respondents were basically engaged in the making of the traditional items. Most of the respondents (18.57 percent) were involved in the handloom sector followed by cutting, and embroidery, handicrafts, indigenous snacks, curry powder and Assamese cuisine. This is mainly due to the availability of raw materials, required less skilled and primitive methods of production. Moreover, they can run entrepreneurial activities from their own houses. On the other hand, rural

women entrepreneur's interest in non-traditional items is comparatively lower than traditional items. The reason behind is that lack of adequate market for such products, the high cost of production, the absence of enough skilled personals and the paucity of funds. 10.48 percent respondent was engaged on beauty parlour followed by restaurants/dhaba, financial consultancy, boutique, hobby classes, and cafe. Throughout the field study, no crèche was found in the rural areas. Recently in India, production of non-traditional goods produced by women entrepreneur has been gradually increasing. It is an encouraging fact that the market for the traditional items in modern looks are also increasing as it shows hopes of the preservation of authentic identifications of the places. Now-a-days, the trend of respondents on both traditional and non-traditional items is positive and also encouraging in the study areas despite the existence of some odds.

¹Bangladesh's export earnings are determined by the export of traditional items like a readymade garment, leather, footwear, jute products, and frozen food items. Bangladesh earned US dollar 34.8 billion for 2017-18 fiscal year.

From the above analysis it can be concluded that most of the respondents (60 percent) were engaged on traditional products and 40 percent were engaged on non-traditional products in the study area. In case of traditional products, most of the respondents (18.57 percent) were involved in the handloom sector followed by cutting, and embroidery, handicrafts, indigenous snacks, curry powder and Assamese cuisine

5.2 Chapter Summary:

Field study has shown that women are interested in doing business both in traditional and non-traditional items irrespective of the categories of areas (urban and rural). Generally, the traditional businesses of women entrepreneur focus on the preservation of the handlooms and handicraft works. The study shows that rural respondents enter the business to help their family financially. On the other hand, most of the urban women entrepreneurs enter in entrepreneurial activities mainly to keep them busy and

to earn money so as to raise their standard of living. In this case, if the government intervenes with a promise to provide more training facilities, financial and marketing assistance, then definitely it would be able to increase the entrepreneurship among women. There is a need for adequate training facilities for both traditional and non-traditional sectors. For this, government must lay emphasis on publicizing the various schemes announced from time to time to encourage women entrepreneurship.