



Developmental Prospects and Problems of Bamboo Industry of Assam

¹Author Panchalee Baishya
²Co-Author Mrinmoyee Baishya

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ABSTRACT

The bamboo industry of Assam has great potential. Bamboo and cane products are universal of all the crafts practiced. The development of such industry will not only generate employment but also earn a huge amount of revenue to the state. But the industry has not got proper attention as it deserves yet. These industries need exposure and people related to these industries need proper vocational training to help the industries flourish. Skill developments of the employees related to these industries are the utmost need of the hour. Because of its eco- friendly characteristic it is seen as a new way of sustainable development. And in the era of globalisation we should definitely look up to the sustainable products for a better future. In spite of all the bamboo industry still today also lacks behind. In 2019, the Assam cabinet approved the Assam Bamboo and Cane policy for better utilisation of these resources but there are still many loopholes in the path to of development of such industry.

Keywords:

Sustainable, development, globalization, need, flourish.

¹ Corresponding Author : Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Nabajyoti College
Email – panchalee.baishya@gmail.com , Contact No. 7086083356

² Corresponding Author : Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Nabajyoti College
Email – mrinmoyeebaishya4@gmail.com , Contact No. 9864557505



INTRODUCTION

Assam has vast natural resources but has failed to utilize all the resources properly due to lack of technology, skills and training and also awareness. Poor infrastructure and insufficient communication have been major stumbling blocks to growth. This poor situation is faced not only within the region but also with the rest of the nation. Among all the natural resources, bamboo is one of the major resources of Assam. Its full ecological and economic potential must be recognised, developed, and promoted in a way that ensures ecological security for the state's long-term development and the security of its people's livelihoods. According to a survey conducted recently, In India, the bamboo has approximately 1500 known uses. Apart from housing (20%), non-residential applications (5%), rural uses (20%), fuel (8.5%), packaging, including baskets (5%), transportation (1.5%), furniture (1%), other wood industries (1%), and other (3%). It is largely used for creating paper pulp (35%). Total area under bamboo in Assam is about 2.23 million hectares. Assam is naturally abundant in the 'Green Gold'. The main bamboo growing areas of Assam are the districts of Cachar, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills, Nagaon and Lakhimpur. Bamboo is a versatile raw material that has been an integral component of Assam's culture, way of life, and economy since the beginning of time. During the reign of Assam's king, Bhaskar Varman (early part of the 7th century AD), bamboo-made products were mentioned in history.

In the twenty-first century, the state's bamboo goods are mostly created at the cottage industry level, as there has been no significant value addition or diversification. Because Assam has the highest concentration of bamboo, accounting for roughly 60% of the country's total bamboo, there is plenty of room for bamboo-based industries like paper making. Out of the 130 bamboo species available in India, 42 species are available in Assam. Bamboo's raw stock is worth around Rs. 400 crores. Sadly, bamboo has only



been used for local and traditional purposes. On a yearly basis, bamboo in Assam may easily earn Rupees 8000 crore with two fold value enhancements.

Bamboo has the potential to replace wood on many grounds. It has not only has huge economic potential, but many other potential too. Bamboo flooring is a hot trend, stain resistant and environmental friendly. Bamboo is also becoming more popular as a material for cabinets and panels. Bamboo charcoal is widely used in personal and healthcare products. Bamboo contains a variety of nutrients and active minerals that have anti-oxidant, anti-aging, anti-bacterial, and anti-viral properties. Potentiality of bamboo based industries can never be overlooked in terms of income and employment generation. Bamboo has a huge prospect of generating employment. Bamboos grown and managed properly in traditional household gardens can produce rural employment. It will also assist in the conservation of bamboo diversity without requiring much attention.

Although there is a global need for it, the market has yet to be fully explored. Bamboo should be promoted for the benefit and upliftment of the rural sector. A clear vision, a sound policy framework, and a blueprint are all necessary. There is a necessity of drafting bamboo policy.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Bamboo has an important role to play in the economy of Assam. But its potential has not come forward. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to find out the prospects and problems of bamboo based industry. The study is based on the secondary data collected from the various secondary sources i.e. published literature of the subject concern, newspaper, articles, websites, magazines, etc.



FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Prospects of the bamboo based industries:

- Bamboo is an environmentally friendly alternative to a variety of commonly used materials. Through improvements in processing technologies, product innovation, and the use of scientific and engineering abilities, it can technologically and commercially replace not just wood, but also plastic, steel, cement, and composite materials in structural and product applications.
- Bamboo based industry comes under the category of cottage and small scale industries which need low capital investment as compared to large scale industries. In a poor and capital scarce state like Assam such industry will be a feasible option.
- This industry can indirectly lead to skill development and enhancing the personal attitude of the people associated with it. Entrepreneurial skills, marketing skills, training and skills for the artisans etc. can be improved.
- The bamboo sector has the ability to add value and provide additional income and employment. Such industry is labour intensive. Many products and processes have a high employment intensity, which can lead to increased employment in the formal and informal sectors at various stages such as planting, harvesting, processing, product conservation, and marketing. Bamboo has the potential to be a key vehicle for widespread and sustainable development, increasing economic opportunity, income, and employment.
- Because of its longitudinal structure of fibers the bamboos of our state has long more processibility as compared to Chinese bamboo which has cross-sectional structure.
- It can be a subsidiary occupation for all the people residing in the bamboo



abundant areas other than regular ones.

- Bamboo has dual advantage. Bamboo Drip Irrigation, an ancient form of rain water harvesting is the hilly and plain terrains to cultivate betel leaf and black pepper using bamboo pipes. This is a sustainable form of irrigation which requires absolutely no cost or technical expertise to execute. More use of such irrigation process will not only enhance the importance of bamboo but also indirectly increase the production of betel, betel leaf and black pepper. Thus it will lead to more revenue generation for the state.
- The region is endowed with a rich store of art and craft, accounting for nearly a third of India's entire handcraft production. But the share of bamboo in India's handicrafts exports is estimated at less than 1%. So products like bamboo can reap the export potentiality to the fullest.

PROBLEMS OF BAMBOO BASED INDUSTRIES

- The fundamental problem faced by the bamboo industry is that most of the people related to it are below poverty line, illiterate and belong to remote areas. And most importantly young generation are not interested to carry on with it.
- Insufficient credit availability for both working and fixed capital.
- Technology obsolescence thus low efficiency and low quality of output, no correct sizing, no sensitive adaption and no accurate costing and lack of branding of the bamboo made products.
- Lack of marketing skills among our people related to bamboo industry.
- These industries are mainly the middleman's taking over the huge profit margin of the product and main artisans get less than 5% of the end price.
- There is no specific target area for the products produced.



- Lack of knowledge about the export potential among the people related to bamboo industry.
- The irregular and scarce supply of bamboo for entrepreneurial use has been the most significant constraint to the development of a bamboo-based economy.
- There is no provision for artisans to receive training in order to create more inventive items.
- Lack of promotional measures taken up by the government to make the bamboo made products popular among the masses.
- Lack of market intelligence, which can make the products suitable to cater to the need of the consumer market.
- In present scenario, The Nagaon Paper Mill and The Cachar Paper Mill are suspended since September 2015 and March 2018 respectively. Where total of around 1500 people were engaged in both the units directly and around 2 lakh people were indirectly engaged starting from bamboo cutting to production for their livelihood are now unemployed.

SUGGESTIONS

- There is need to protect and conserve rich bio diversity associated with bamboo forest and re- growth areas and their future development.
- Private bamboo farming is being promoted as a significant core area for Assam's future economy.
- Through scientific management and study, bamboo resources can be developed and used in a sustainable manner.
- Bamboo production as a commercial crop and an important component of the agro-forest to produce money and meet the sporadic needs of Assamese rural



households.

- Promotion of bamboo as "Green Gold" among farmers, traders, and industry men in the State in order to fully harness its potential and energize the rural and industrial sectors in the State.
- Promotion of rural employment through bamboo being the main component of agri- business.
- The establishment of bamboo enterprises and industries in the cottage, small and medium industries sector linked to the need for bamboo products within and outside the State, such as manufacturing bamboo mat board, chop stick, bamboo shoots, incense sticks, and other handicrafts products, shall be encouraged under the bamboo policy framework. Bamboo industry development should be prioritised, with accompanying incentives and subsidy frameworks designed to support the establishment of such businesses.
- High-value goods will require efficient and appropriate manufacturing processes, as well as market and export connections. Joint ventures with firms outside the state, especially international enterprises with technology, finance, and export links, will be encouraged by policies. This arrangement will route resources into domestic and worldwide markets via local traders and industrial companies, generating substantial revenue for the state.
- Economic and ecological importance must be determined, surveyed, delineated, and devoted to bamboo producing area on a permanent basis.
- Government grant is a vital requirement to manufacture more unique items.
- Easy accessibility of credit.
- Training facilities should be provided to artisans in order to create more inventive items.
- Involvement of Media and IT network is needed for the promotion.



- Collaboration with agricultural universities and other technical universities for tackling with problems and research regarding the bamboo plantation and development.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Assam has taken various initiatives to achieve the goal of harnessing the huge potential of the bamboo industry in Assam by revitalising and promoting local traditional Bamboo Craft and Art with improved technology, design, and market linked trade for value added items for generating assured income. The goal is to establish connections between top technologists, industry experts, and our own bamboo cultivators and local industrialists, with the goal of bringing innovative bamboo product industries to Assam in the not-too-distant future. Recently Bamboo Technology Park has been set up in the Kamrup District of Assam with an investment of Rs. 62.28 crore with the objective to offer bamboo entrepreneurs with infrastructure and encourage them to use it economically to the fullest extent possible. As the part of "Advantage Assam" the park will play a vital role in altering the state's economic and industrial landscape by bringing cutting-edge bamboo processing technology, talent development, and job creation of entire state by making Bamboo as the "Green Gold".

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