

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND CONSTRAINTS OF WEAVERS IN SITAL PATI PRODUCTION IN COOCH BEHAR DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL

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**S**ital patis or sital mats render a feeling of coolness (thus rendering the name 'Sital' or 'Sheetal') to the person sitting or sleeping on it and are intimately linked with everyday rural life <sup>1</sup>([http:// www.coochbehar.nic.in](http://www.coochbehar.nic.in)). Murta (plant, used for making cool mat) is the main ingredient in mat weaving. The cool mat is locally called as sital pati in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal in India. The making or production of sital pati is purely household entrepreneurship. It can be used for multi-purpose work, the ancient people used to make different items all around the years. According to the sital pati makers, the art of making cool mat was started for a long time back in the district, and in some families, it became a tradition. It was said that the art of making a cool mat initially was considered auspicious regarding the rituals and religious purposes in Barak Valley. Donate cool mat in Hindu marriage is ritual or tradition for a long time back and still going on. Generally, Murta grows on marshy or waterlogged areas or damp hill slopes. Pankaj Kr. Rabha, 2012 reported that the minor forest resources provide the entrepreneurs raw materials to produce broom (Jaru) comments (sital pati), cane hats (japi) etc. (There is two common variety are observed in this area or a nearby state. 'Khag is one of the varieties which has no joints or internodes in the plant, but there is another variety which has joints or internodes in the plant. While making a cool mat, actually men carry murta from the field to their houses or working area then prepare the cane slips cutting, where women do the weaving work. Many of the artisans engaged in this craft in different parts of Northeastern states especially Assam and Bengal and various parts of India. Many places in Cooch Behar district the people are



engaged in this activity. The role of women workers is very significant in the handicrafts industry as 90 percent of workers in sital pati and Madur industry are female workers (Sarkar, 2012). It is seen that most of the families in some parts of the district are totally dependent on this activity for his/her livelihood sustainability. It is totally homely made activity, and it does not require any specific or larger space to run the activity. It can be done during the rainy season, also if the material (murta) is available. At present, the emerging use of plastic causes greater harm to our society as well as the environment to a larger extent. Though the people were of it but did not care for it. The entrepreneurship cool mat weaving need to be the focus because it is sustainable, economically, and sociable viable, suitable for the environment nowadays.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted at Ghugumari, Varokodali, Deocharai and Dholuabari village of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. The study area is mainly dominated by the different community, and the majority of the household is engaged in the preparation of cool mate. Randomly 40 numbers of respondents who are fully engaged in this entrepreneurship were selected for the study. An interview schedule was designed to collect the primary information for the selected respondent. Secondary data were collected from village panchayat pradhan, middleman, literature, research paper and internet.

### **Finding**

#### **Exposure**

In the study, it was found that the majority of the weaver has not received any training on it. Because they have learned it from their parent or grandfather and neighbours. Now a day, in various places, many micro teaching centres were established and every block conducting training in this entrepreneurship development, but it was seen that 85% of the participants were young aged person/lady. Old aged weavers thought that the need for professional training on this is not required as the knowledge or skill related to cool mate enterprise had been acquired from parents or grandparents.

### **Previous occupation**

It was found that the majority of the mat weaver engaged in this activity since their childhood and their parent and grandparent were also in the same profession. It was also observed that some of the mat weavers were cultivated rice only for home consumption but not for commercial purposes.

### **Pricing of sital pati**

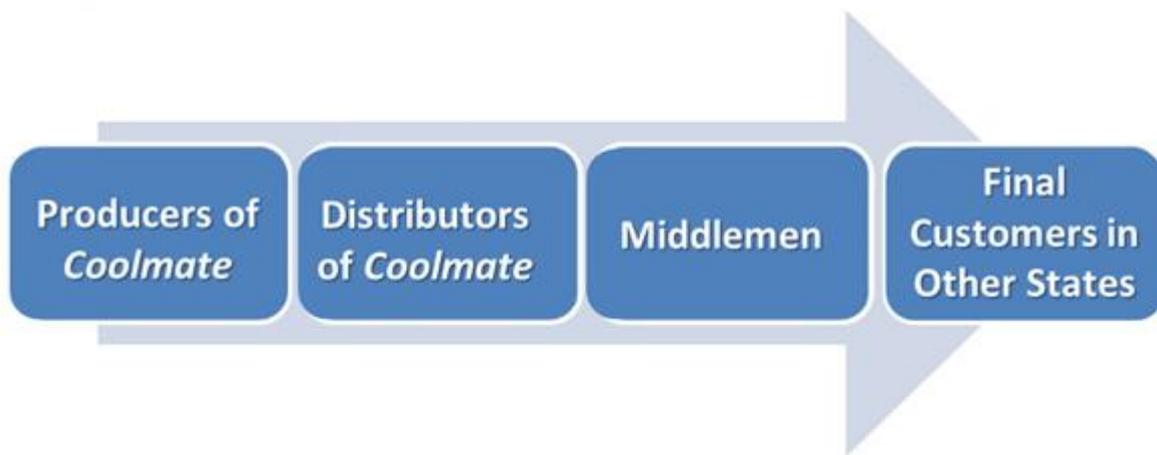
During the study, it was found that the size of the mat defined the price of the product. The producers or weavers make the mat in different sizes i.e., 5x7 foot, 6x7 foot and 3x6 foot. The price of the normal sital pati or mat ranges from Rs. 350/- to Rs. 750/-. The sital pati having the size of the 5x7 foot is considered as a standard size and has more demand in the market compared to the other side of the mat. The cost of the 5x7 foot size mat is Rs.350/- and it takes fourteen hours to make the mat by the weaver or producer. Whereas the cost of mat size of 3x6 foot is Rs. 200/- only.

In the survey, an average size (5x7 foot or 6x7 foot) of pati which is sold by the producer to the distributor is cost around Rs.350/- and the distributors sell it to the middlemen at Rs.500/-. The middlemen again sell it outside the state at an average price of Rs. 2000 or more.

### **Market and marketing channel**

The distribution of the marketing channel of handicraft products, especially in sital pati is not in proper shape. Three categories of the agency are associated in this marketing process. In the first category, the middleman collects the pati or mat from the doorstep of the producer at a cheaper rate. After the collection of pati or mat from the producer, the first agency will sell the product to the second agency who has financially stronger than the first one. And the second agency was act as distributors of the products. The third party is the middlemen which exist in all systems. The second party or distributor will again sales the products to the middleman with some margin in the weekly or daily local market. The middlemen will sell the products outside the state at a higher rate. It has good demand in South India and even in foreign countries. Thus, an entire process, the middleman earned maximum benefits with minimum investment, time and manpower. In someplace it was also seen that when the producer had many nos. of pati or mat to sale, then he/she used to sell the product directly to the second party in the local market instead of selling it to the first party.

**Fig 1:** Marketing channel of Sital pati in Cooch Behar district



### **Value addition**

The value addition of pati is a very common instance among the entrepreneurs when there is assure demand in remunerative prices. Actually, the value addition process in making the cool decorative mat. For this reason, many of the weavers are not interested in value-added product development.

### **Communication enhancement**

The development of an enterprise through the successful implementation of different embedded activities related to the production aspect and marketing aspect enhancement professional skill of communication with the people due to fixing the price during negotiation. It also develops the communication network for product and marking of entrepreneur products through the establishment of linkage among the middleman, buyer, marketing personnel, govt official and agencies.

### **Attitude towards enterprises**

It has been found that the weavers are quite satisfied with their cool mat enterprise. The plausible reason behind this may be that they can prepare the cool mats within their house premises, which not only saves their time but also helps them manage their various important household activities. Moreover, they can engage their children in some activities related to cool mat preparation. This again reduces the cost as well as enhances the profit of the enterprise; that is why the pati producers have developed a favourable attitude towards the enterprise.

### Occupation diversification

The Muslim community is also perceiving the interest towards this enterprise as it is less labour intensive, and the family members can also be utilized.

**Table.1.** Ranking of various constraint faced by the weaver in making of coelomate

Sl. No.	Problems	Rank
1.	It is a time-consuming and laborious activity.	VII
2.	Expected benefits were not obtained from the product.	I
3.	The women workers engaged in entrepreneurship suffer from back pain, eye problems and spondylitis.	VIII
4.	It required land for cultivation, otherwise, landless weavers need to buy the murta or slips from the outside or market.	IV
5.	No established market is available in rural areas where they can get a satisfying price.	V
6.	In mat, the weaver is still practicing manually. There is no modern technology was developed for the mat weaver. At present, poor technology is affecting their production both in quality and quantity in the competitive market.	VI
7.	Popularization and reduced at the price of plastic in the market giving threat to the coot mat weaver in the handicraft industry.	II
8.	The network for credit facilities by the financial institution to the micro and handicrafts sector is very poor.	III

Though the many weaver difficulties in the production process but still many people considered it a source of sustaining livelihood. The enterprise does not require a specific place to start and can be produced whole round the year.

The prior problems associated with this enterprise is the non-realization of expected benefits followed by less popularity of cool mate due to plastic mat and unavailability of the credit network.

## Conclusion

The sital pati is economical and profitable entrepreneurship for rural women, landless and marginal farmers in the rural area. Nowadays, many people or communities are engaging in this entrepreneurship for the sustainability of their livelihood. The government needs to focus on this entrepreneurship seriously in the promotion and popularizing the activity because it is economical, sustainable, environmentally viable and pollution-free but now a day's emerging plastic materials causing pollution to our environment greatly. Improvement in infrastructural facilities, development in entrepreneurship qualities, adequate institutional credit support and use of modern technology in the industry would ensure the long-term growth of entrepreneurship.

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