

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: A Retrospective on Crafts and Commercialization Studies

‘The world of art and craft is as valuable as the world of science, philosophy or ethics. Like arts, crafts reflect the state of human society through the individual. Craft treasures like arts give us a glimpse into the core and kernel of the collective mind and societies through the mirror of individual mind that created them’

-(T. M. Abraham, 1964)

2.1 The Prelude

This chapter is a retrospective on the previous studies dealing with transformation and modification of traditional art and craft forms due to commercialization. The extensive literature highlights that ‘culture and tradition are not timeless and motionless but alters with social change by incorporating new forms and meanings while reshaping itself’ (Parsons, 1999 as cited in Moalosi, 2007). Section 2.2 focuses on commoditization and commercialization of crafts due to growing economic opportunism and explains how crafts have passed through the continuum from cultural artefacts to productive commodities (Chotiratnapinun, 2010). In Section 2.3, the patterns of change in crafts due to commercialization are discussed. Under Section 2.4, studies related to influence of tourism on the material objects is thoroughly presented. The succeeding two sections give information on commercialization related studies in India and Assam. In Section 2.7 direct and indirect interfaces of producers and customers are discussed. Sustainability and authenticity related debates are presented in Section 2.8 whereas section 2.9 throws light on importance of commercialization in the life of artisans.

2.2 Economic Opportunism, Commoditization and Commercialization of Traditional Wealth ‘Crafts’

Historically, handcrafted items were produced for ceremonial and daily needs of traditional customers (Popelka, 1989; Popelka and Littrell, 1991; Tyagi, 2008). Crafts produced in an artisanal society were more nearer to functional or utilitarian products category often produced out of necessity (Sanaka, 2008). Artisans, simply, crafted objects out of naturally available raw materials; regions gifted with trees developed

the art of carving (Teaero, 2002); gathering nature of man created containers and baskets, one of the most archaic forms of handicrafts (Ramakrishnamoorthy, 1996). Regions fortunate with good soil developed pottery (Teaero, 2002). Others were created out of similar utilities as with available materials in the surroundings. But objects made were relatively coarse and simple and remained unchanged (ibid). Craftwork at once, remained an act of self-expression and collective participation of people of a community (Glaveanu, 2012). Other than that, craft objects also articulated and asserted the group identity and provided tangible expressions to community ethos and belief (Morrell, 2005). Some crafts later acquired the status of folk art, perhaps due to the predominance of pleasure giving function or may have started as a master work (McCormick, 2013; Glassie, 1972) transforming functional work of art to cherished things giving joy (Chattopadhyay, 1984).

The societies of the earlier pre-capitalist times, mostly, remained self sufficient (Yadav, 2012). They consumed what they produced and mostly engaged in moral transactions and home consumptions rather than rational economic actions which wove communities and individuals together (Handique, 2012; Mauss, 1967; Wallace, 2009). However, the motivation for trade in traditional communities arose due to the desire for aesthetic goods (Smith, 1999). Communities started trading mundane items of daily needs for other objects (Hollis, 2013). Exchanges soon entailed some form of commercial relationship altering the repertoires of the crafts (Graham, 1991; Madisia, 2006). Later, as the capitalist economy penetrated into social life and extra social linkages developed, the purchase and sale of craft objects became a natural phenomenon; economic value overrode and shaped crafts into commodities (Blaton et al. 1997; Ondrusova, 2004). Growth of civilization created more wants resulting in increase of productive skill of community and surplus; exchange of goods became a necessity thus (Baishya, 1986). Artisan production arose to satisfy other's wants, which mostly served as a supplement to peasant farming (ibid). Apart from economic opportunities, poor living conditions of artisans also gave rise to subsequent need to sell the items of everyday life, and in order to accommodate the craft to the market, artisans modified their traditional designs to sell it to locals and outsiders (Grammajo, n.d; Parezo, 1981). Inventiveness and imaginative expression (Weiner, 2000) became habitual for communities for commoditizing their cultural resources (Wallace, 2009).

Thus, in rural societies consisting of peasant households, useful objects like crafts easily got commoditized (Cook and Binford, 1990).

In literary terminology, commoditization or commodification, in the context of trade, is a process by which things come to be evaluated in terms of their exchange value (Cohen, 1988; Prins, 2006). Commoditization in crafts redirects stylistic conventions giving way to modification in the longstanding aesthetics as producers seek to create crafts to be valued as niche commodities in new markets (Chibnik, et al. 2004). In third world countries, where material cultures like folk arts flourish, commoditization doubtlessly prevails (Cohen, 1988). In fact, the process remains more active as internal material objects are more promiscuously allowed to enter market exchanges for customers other than the locals (ibid). Crafts are repetitively produced for profit motive and satisfaction of customers (Hume, 2009) setting in motion the process of commercialization which only takes place where market prevails due to customer interests (Mokras-Grabowska. 2013). Commercialization of artisanal production bridges the contrasts in gift giving (prevalent prior to capitalist exchanges) and commoditized exchanges (often considered polar opposites of each other) (Appadurai 1986). Slowly, differentiation in craft becomes the most important factor (Hoyos, 2012) and change becomes indispensable for economic transaction (Cohen, 1996 as cited in Ballengee-Morris, 2002). According to Donkin, 'in industrialized societies craft processes are no longer necessary to produce certain objects for use'; perhaps because of this there has been a tendency for some crafts to aspire towards decorative crafts and fine art category (ibid). Artisans bring variations as it 'extends the range of decorative possibilities' (Hann, 2005). According to Chibnik (2008), commodification of arts directed by consumers' stylistic conventions creates opportunities for creative work and as artists produce art objects they try to seek market niches for their work.

In today's world, it is nearly impossible to have any conversation on crafts without escaping the commercial shadow (Goertzen, 2001) due to the emergence of many markets for crafts objects. External consumption at a global level has important contribution in shaping ethnic art into commoditized objects (Aoyama, 2007). Literature reveals that there are three significant markets for crafts viz. local, tourist and exports (Cohen, 2000). Crafts purchased basically for cultural or utilitarian reasons are still purchased largely by the domestic customers (Maulshree, 2011) but more of now, handicrafts describe decorative and ornamental properties transposed on

utilitarian crafts made to serve the upper echelons of the society (Jaitly, 2007 as cited in *ibid*). Domestic market still remains the main market for commercialized crafts and customers of this market has taste for 'traditional' crafts products (Cohen, 2000). But traditional products are modified to suit tourist and export markets (Woofter, 2011). Crafts can never remain static in an era where craftsmen are increasingly becoming aware of new materials, and are dazzled by modern requirements through information media (Vyas, 1984). Craftsmen show sharp transition from their reliance on local markets to new markets (Berg, 2013).

2.3 Commercialization and Transformation in crafts

Commercialization of traditional art and crafts has always remained a fascination for researchers. It can be exemplified by the volume of research that has taken place in various parts of the world. There are many literary notes where researchers have pointed out the changes accruing to the crafts. The foremost work on classification of art objects in the face of commercialization is by Graburn (1976). In his voluminous work on fourth world art (i.e. the art objects made by the aboriginal people for the dominant world), Graburn classified art objects as inwardly directed and externally directed ones. Inwardly directed arts are for the members' who are part of the community while the externally directed ones are in the form of tourist art or airport kitsch. Graburn points to the divergence between primitive art and tourist art by explaining the various categories of tourist art which define style and artistic typologies. He placed stylistic changes into the typologies of traditional or functional fine arts, commercial fine arts, souvenirs, reintegrated arts, assimilated fine arts and popular arts. In the functional fine art category, the basic structure and the sentiment and symbolic meanings are retained. Commercial fine arts are considerably modified from traditional forms and are exclusively for sale. Further, souvenirs are simplified and standardized objects with more economic and less aesthetic considerations. Reintegrated arts adapt new forms and materials from westernized society. Assimilated fine art producers are artists who took up the dominant society's art forms giving a tough competition to their conquerors; it is an amalgamation of western forms and indigenous compositions. The last category expresses characteristics appropriate to the new cultures. Another contemporary researcher Ronald May (1975 as cited in Kay, 1990) in context of Papua Guinea art, classified art objects as true traditional art consisting of pure traditional art and contact

influenced art, the later using new materials and designs. Other categories include pseudo-traditional art which are careful reproductions of traditional forms to stylized objects, adaptive art and wholly introduced art corresponding to Graburn's assimilated fine arts categories. Again, Keppler (1979) divided Polynesian art as traditional art, evolved traditional art which is contact influenced, folk art referring to living art of a community and much evolved art airport art produced predominately for sale. Kay (1990) classified the Hawaiian carvings and sculptures as replicas and reproductions of traditional art, revised reproductions and collectors' art, community art, adapted arts, fine art and souvenirs. Artistic changes can be seen in the light of informal selling approach as commercial capitalism brings changes in traditional forms of production (Jimenez, 2005). Artists who make craft objects to sell being aware of the requirements of appearance and use, perceives aesthetic properties and manipulate raw materials to produce useful objects (Jones, 1973).

Parezo (1981; 1982) found that religious sand-paintings of the Navajo community in Northern Arizona and New transformed into secular objects due to economic necessity but on lines of social and cultural sanctions. The painters started making exact replicas of sand-paintings in small sizes as souvenirs and wall decorations (ibid). Craftspeople change the way they produce crafts, the traditional form and material used only when the indigenous style presents lack of surety in earnings (Chartniyom, 2013). One common pattern Parezo (1981) found on the commercial paintings was substitution of a major or minor element found in sacred templates. Artisans added new figures without any change in the layout or number of main figures (ibid). Also some directional symbolism related colors were substituted or two colors were transposed to invalidate the rule of conservatism of the sacred paintings and turn them into secular art objects (ibid). Religious art was further made saleable by elimination and simplification of some sacred templates (ibid). Other than that, addition of figure or depiction of a subject matter not relevant to religious scrutiny was also practiced to overcome prohibition on its commercialization (ibid). Timothy (2005) presented a schema of stylistic changes in the design and patterns of crafts during various stages of commercialization viz:

- i. Traditionalism vs. innovation: In the early phase of the process, artisans basically stay inclined to reproduce neo-traditional motifs and designs that remain current during the period, sometimes even reverting to archaic designs and patterns.

Innovation is general adaptation of existing styles or introduction of new ones thereby making things attractive to suit outside customer demand. Traditionalism coincides with what Cohen terms as orthogeneity (1983).

ii. Naturalism vs. abstraction: During shift towards naturalism, symbolic significance of customary motifs are diluted and made readily available. Strictly restricted motifs come to be introduced in secular forms as was the case with Navajo iconography in the sand-paintings (Parezo, 1981). Abstraction takes place when motifs are stylized to modern and western forms.

iii. Standardization vs. individualization: Small and inexpensive art objects are homogenized through its mass production as souvenirs and export items in the former case, while in the latter one, artisans tend to leave personal imprints on objects by creating individualistic patterns.

iv. Simplification vs. elaboration: Artisans either attempt towards simplifying the baseline motifs or make them more elaborate when new materials and colors are available to them. It sometimes leads to lose of subtle detailing and originality.

v. Restraint vs. exaggeration: In this case, artisans tend to meet subtler tastes of western art forms by either reducing or exaggerating the ornamentation and color.

With respect to contemporary Lao textiles, Hall (2004) noticed immense modification in design aspects. The textiles, within the category demonstrating traditionalism, resemble traditional fabrics with indigenous designs, motifs and color components but in simplified forms produced mostly for outsiders (ibid). Hybridized textiles with blended motifs from several ethnic groups fall under innovation. Simplification, minimalism as well as enlargement or repetition of motifs can be seen in such textiles. The discussion on *huichol* art of Mexico reveals the varying degree of change in the traditional patterns meant for symbolic purposes (Barnett, 2009). The nature and natural object based patterns of the past have become unrecognizable now. Some conventional motifs like double water-gourd design giving impression of snake skin and double-headed royal eagle are found in modified forms (ibid). The latter motif is found wearing a crown indicating European culture influence. The *Huichol* artisans replaced natural fibres with synthetic yarns due to its availability in myriad colors, harder wearing and ease of handling (ibid); motifs on the traditional *huichol* bags now come in a range of designs inspired from both traditional and western themes that sell well among city buyers. Another important aspect of change in the *huichol* art is the

use of symmetry in the design and appearance of the bags which were earlier anything but regular (ibid).

Literature is replete with examples highlighting transformation in craft objects due to contact with people other than community members and due to the opportunity created through new markets. In Pennsylvania county, contact of Amish to neighbors brought noticeable difference in the quilt patterns (Boynton, 1986). In fact, the overlapping of the tradition and contemporary culture constitutes commodification (Lewis, 1991). The origin of silverwork among the Navajos is due to contact of Spanish and Indian jewelry (Thomas, 1969). They learnt the art not indigenous to their culture but it soon became ‘traditional Navajo’ style within the normal course of development (ibid). The Wayuu artisans of Guajira in Columbia substituted indigenous geometric designs to western logos (Grammajo, n.d). Artisans usually simplified the patterns, enlarged or widened them or changed colors to meet customer demand (Niessen, 1999; Tice, 1995). New materials are incorporated in Cherokee women’s traditional basket making as these materials are more accessible and cost effective (Hill, 1997).

Southern African artisans produce some of the most indigenous forms of baskets in variety of sizes and shapes, ranging from small beer pot covers to grain storage baskets, initially involving only locally available materials and techniques (Nettleton, 2010). Nowadays, African craftspeople are experimenting with imported materials and designs suitable for outside patrons (ibid). More than marking their African identity, these modern designs are produced to demonstrate their participation in modern world (ibid). Original basketry that involved simple and sparse decoration with seldom color introduction in grasses and leaves now show increased density of decoration and color due to demand from buyers (ibid). Conical baskets are transformed into circular wire plates for picture weaving and have now come to be used as decorative objects. Earlier forms of baskets are sometimes made big and surfaces are overdone with abstract geometrical motifs and texts are used to show modernity (ibid). Baskets made by Zulu tribes of South Africa when made for rural activities, designs on baskets were almost absent or limited, and still remain the same in areas not subjected to commercial weaving (Terry and Cunningham, 1993). In contrast, commercially affected areas has seen sophistication in design and style as

many traditional forms are re-adjusted to suit needs of interior decorations in western homes and has encouraged basket makers to keep tradition alive (ibid).

In contemporary *jok* textiles of the Tai community (in Thailand), traditional patterns can be seen arranged in unconventional ways with neutral or lighter combinations of natural silk or cotton yarn (Chunthone, 2013). Ancient *jok* textiles used visual elements for designs important for practical and religious lifestyles whereas modern ones are known more for rough textures and artificial materials (ibid). Batik used in clothing in *kebaya*, a traditional Javanese dress in Indonesia, is now used in furnishing fabrics, wall hangings, canvases and other accessories (Steelyana, 2012). Recent development in the *lukisan* batik of Indonesia is its production on frames for wall displays (Tolentino Jr, 2012). Motifs consisting of Hindu epics, creatures of natural world and geometric forms are often replaced with picturesque landscape or rural scenes and modernistic sketches verging on abstraction (ibid). Done to maximize outsider's appeal for decoration, the changes reflect the evident influence of western customers (ibid). *Topeng*, meaning masks, used in Javanese mask dances earlier were based on historical scriptures its characters showcasing gods, demons, royalties are not produced in the same form (ibid). Instead, masks with batik patterns are being designed to allure tourists and local consumers and are petrified versions of the traditional ones (ibid).

Artistic novelty is not new within traditional craft (Muchawsky-Schnapper, 2004). *Atayal* weavers enjoy making a range of woven handicrafts from traditional clothes to mobile cases embroidered with *Atayal*¹ symbols (Chang, et al. 2008). *T'nalak*, a traditional cloth piece used for special occasions as gifts and as a bride price in Mindanao Island is produced as everyday object like skirts, jackets, pillow-cases and blankets (Eko, 2004). Stephen (1993) identified transformation in indigenous *Teotitlan* textiles of Mexico for international consumers in the late 1950's from the initial domains of local consumption. They utilized new types of dyestuffs and factory produce yarn to speed up the production process for the expanding market; new motifs ranged from Mexican national symbol to Aztec calendar, abstract motifs from nature as well as adaptations from European artists (Popelka and Littrell, 1991). *Dasun* basketry from the interior of Sabah in Malaysia, mainly produced for daily

¹ *Atayal* are indigenous group of Taiwanese aboriginal people.

activities has now evolved into decorative items due to shift in its use in the contemporary life (Chua, 2006). The makeover can be seen in the use of synthetic materials and new designs in the traditional basketry range (ibid). *Zapotec* weavers of Mexico had been weaving for commercial exchange in regional markets long before tourist market flourished in the region (Stephen, 1991). Extensive commerce such as exports leads to more rampant adaptations in the cultural artifacts of a region. Iranian carpets sold today in the world market are a blend of many motifs and designs derived from Asian countries (Yazdani, 2007). Some of the adapted designs are the cloud pattern, dragon and phoenixes from China, *herati* pattern from Afghanistan, usually in somewhat simplified forms (ibid). Likewise, reliance on export markets led to many variations in the vernacular basket works of the Bangchaocha community in Ang Thong province of Thailand (Chuenrudeemol, et al. 2012).

High participation in crafting indicates the shift of the village level folk art into a commercial activity (Zhang, 2009). In Lhasa, Tibetan carpets transformed and commoditized due to demand from western buyers and the Chinese government policies for carpet development (Zhang, 2012). These were commoditized in Nepal by the refugee Tibetan diaspora (O'Neill, 1997). Initially made only as usable items, its commoditization culminated in homogenization when it entered the exchange-value regime (ibid). The carpets were standardized as *kha g'dan*, meaning seat carpets (ibid), which were tastelessly showy caricatures of lively Tibetan carpets (Worcester, 1992 as cited in O'Neill, 1997). Simultaneously, Swiss Aid Technical Assistance organization (SATA) to target nascent tourist market developed another seat carpet of a square foot size with traditional Tibetan designs like medallions, Tibetan auspicious symbols associated with Buddhism and dragons symbols (O'Neill, 1997). The lateral entry of European company OCM Ltd in 1976 led to the devolution of the authentic features of Tibetan carpets as it displaced original motifs to mere borders of the carpets which once covered the entire field of the product (ibid). Soon, warp wool was replaced with cotton signaling the loss of traditional texture of the carpet (Guta, 1978). As demand increased in foreign markets, original Tibetan wool was replaced by New Zealand wool (Odegaard, 1987; O'Neill, 1997).

Traditional bronze artisans of Ban Bu, Bangkok initiated the production of westernized items like plates, sugar and cream sets when traditional water jars were replaced by factory-made aluminium pieces (Chartniyom, 2013). New designs like

labbeh, a bird motif, developed within the repertoire of traditional Yemeni jewellery due to artistic merit of craftsmen and received wide acceptability in the market becoming a part of traditional jewellery line (Muchawsky-Schnapper, 2004). Enormously ethnic art of intricate designing of the Kuna tribe from Panama got global limelight only when the tribe stitched *molas*, famously known as *kuna molas*², after coming in contact with the outsiders (Leon, 2009). Mola blouses have become a commoditized object and an un-quantified cash source for the Kuna community since its production and marketing began for the outsiders in the 1970s (Swain, 1993). Throughout the century, geometric patterns (Parker and Neal, 1977) slowly gave way to contemporary designs reflecting aspects of the environment (Leon, 2009). *Mola* art has crossed traditional sphere to land on modern attires and high heeled shoes and purses (Leon, 2009).

In Mexico, modern weavers of *huipile*³ textiles increase or decrease the visual impact by making the patterns denser or wider, add more or less colors than before, but still keep traditional spirit alive (Goertzen, 2001). On the other hand, the Sakaka and Jalq weavers of Bolivia use distinct strategies like hybridization, standardization and simplification of designs to commoditize their works and augment sales (Wethey, 2005). Batik artisans of Yogyakarta, produce *lukisan* batik on wall frames employing pleasant sceneries, rural landscapes and modernistic sketches verging on abstraction, also carrying signature of makers, which befits the taste of foreign consumers (Tolentino, Jr. 2012). The traditional form of African *Akuba* doll figurine, symbolically interpreting the perfection of form and beauty in expectant mother (Wingert, 1962), is suppressed to mass produce it for external audiences (Jules-Rossette, 1984). Apart from mere commerce, influence of exposure to life outside the community brings visible changes that are clearly detected in the use of materials and decorative themes (Berkin, 2009). The cultural attire of Lesotho people of Africa, the *Basotho* hat, has seen many cosmetic changes in years since its commercialization for economic sustainability of the local artisans (Manwa, 2014). As cultural markers, artisans often inscribe the word *lesotho* on the hats for the customers who want its indigenous certification (ibid).

² The *Kuna* are the people living off the northern coast of Panama. *Mola* is the word for clothing or fabric in *kuna* language. *Kuna mola* means fabric, especially blouse meant for *kuna* women.

³ *Huipile* is a common female garment used by the indigenous women of Mexico. It is most commonly worn among the Mayas in Guatemala.

2.4 Tourism and Commercialization: Glimpses into Changing Forms of crafts Worldwide

Impact of tourism on culture and cultural products is by far the most extensively studied area in research (Cohen, 1984). According to Cant (2012), tourism forms an important background which influences artisans' creativity through commodified personas, nevertheless created within the ambit of historical structure but at the same time conforming to the client's expectation for a consumable craft object. Crafts largely flourish in tourism and leisure markets (Howkins, 2007; Whery, 2008 as cited in Chudasri, et al. 2012). There are many examples which provide a kaleidoscopic view of the influence.

In Peru, the tourist demand for little pottery church, originally placed on rooftops as a symbol of protection, gave way to its transformation into artistic objects of décor made in different shapes and sizes (Bankes, 1995). Religious pottery items like 'bull of Pecura' considered as a totemic animal are now commercialized tourist artefacts brightly painted against its traditional dull pink and brown clay hues (ibid). Even the remotest of the communities once visited by the tourists did not remain secluded. Thomas (1969) identified that ethnic Navajo weavers wove two types of rugs. First one was of excellent quality while second category included rugs which were of little inferior quality for tourists who did not want to pay more. The latter rugs were made in commercial dyes and were loosely woven (ibid). Ballengee-Morris (2002) found that the Guarani artisans of Brazil always differentiated between the products they make for the community and the outsiders. Tourist arts are made within cultural traditions but features, colors, materials and shapes are as determined by the market while crafts made for community members remained within traditional realms of cultural and spiritual purposes (ibid). In Panama, the Embera community women started commercializing their domestic baskets made from *chunga* palms (scientific name is *Astrocaryum standleyanum*) during the early 1980s due to the fuelling of national and international tourist market in Panama (Colin, 2012). Fine baskets were woven for international art collectors, and comparatively, average quality small items like plates, masks and other figures were woven for foreign tourists, later sold through occasional intermediaries travelling to their locations (ibid). Embera women's palm weaves are sought products as it is presumed to hold authentic traditions (Runk, 2005). Local artisans target their products on many markets which include local,

regional and international markets (Woofter, 2011). Tourist art or souvenirs are thus defined as objects produced primarily for westerners who are generally unaware or unappreciative of tradition but like to own a genuine art (Mount, 1974).

Handicraft development is often considered as ‘psychologically and economically related to tourism’ (Prin, 2006, page 4). Researchers, time and again, highlight the modifications and increased production of art objects as souvenirs for tourists and export markets (Chibnik, 2003; Little, 2004; Szydlowski, 2008). According to Garybill (2009), it is the business understanding that drives Amish artisans of Pennsylvania to create non-traditional and non-authentic products from traditional quilted pieces for the tourists seeking cultural products of the place. Traditional Amish designs like bars, diamond, sunshine and shadow are crafted on quilts used in Amish households (Boynton, 1986); but for tourists’ designs preferred are the dahlia, lone star, Dresden plate, etc. acquired from books, sometimes design specifically requested by buyers and mostly quilted from printed cotton or polyester blends (ibid). New products are the wall hangings and crib quilts (ibid). With new color combinations and new quilt patterns, the functional items like comforters, mouse pads, etc. made on Amish themes for the tourist consumer stays no longer authentic but is considered by the artists (ibid).

In Oceania post decolonization period since 1962, influx of tourists’ gave rise to demand of oceanic art forms (Teaero, 2002). As a result, local craftsmen, forced by economic necessity, started producing artifacts conforming to tourist expectations of primitive art (ibid). Tourism growth post 19th century in Mexico, increased the production of souvenirs based on replication of art objects with long standing cultural norms and significance along with the development of innovative and hybrid art forms (Chibnik, 2003a). *Sarape*, a form of wool textile normally traded in indigenous market of Oaxaca, Mexico, subsequently changed to interior decoration item for the tourists; characterized by the absence of neck slit with new motifs of pre-hispanic god-figures and other symbols in the centre, it now came to be called as *tapetes* (Popelka and Litrell, 1991). In later stage, *tapetes* utilized new designs outside the indigenous Zapotec tradition (ibid); size of *tapetes* was changed to accommodate the dimensions of wall hangings and rugs (ibid). Other commercialized Oaxacan t arts are the ‘antique’ wood objects resembling religious artifacts of the indigenous communities (Brulotte, 2012). Often for commercial purposes the Tileño artisans of

Mexico categorize their craft as commercial pieces, traditional pieces and fine pieces made along different lines of stylistic or visual characteristics (Cant, 2012). *Bul-ul* carvings representing anthropomorphic figures used in rituals are traditional *Ifugao* carvings, the quintessence of Philippine culture (Tolentino Jr, 2012). These figures are made more tourist-oriented by executing fineness and sensuality (ibid). Likewise, carved wooden food vessels called *kinnahu* and other figural spoons are also recast for tourists (Tolentino Jr, 2012). Other than these, novel products like ashtrays, sculptures of Mickey Mouse, laughing Buddha and American Indians are also widely produced and sold as curios (ibid).

Tonga, sole remaining Polynesian Kingdom 550 miles Southwest of Samoa, reportedly started having tourists in the late 1960s (Johnson Jr, 1976). Its impact was such that Tongan cultural objects started taking new values in the eyes of the Tongan producers. Manifestations of the tourists' preferences resulted in alterations and innovations (ibid). *Tapa*, once worn as clothing in Tongan ceremonial occasions of birth and death was made traditionally from the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree (Johnson, Jr. 1976). Tourism and its related economic incentive have bent tradition to accommodate contemporary styles conforming foreign convenience (ibid). Designs are condensed and patterns are consolidated into small pieces which can be used as decoration. Range of innovative items outside Tongan traditions are produced which include trays, ukuleles, and woven stuffed donkeys (ibid). Carvings on wood resemble Tongan gods and weavings are accommodated to placemats, baskets without any Tongan feature. But tourists tend to be indiscriminate about the indigenosity and authenticity of the crafts (ibid).

Touristic commercialization of handicrafts requires some amount of adaptation like gigantism or miniaturization of the original product as well as substitution of materials to make crafts durable and light (McKercher, 2008). Harris (2012) studied the changes in production, material and style of the Tibetan women's apron called *pang adan* under the rising levels of geo-economic change. The *pang gdan* apron was typically made with goat hair but also used softer wool for the apron made for the aristocratic women (ibid). But a paradigm shift has occurred in the use of raw materials for the apron in the last 20 years as artisans make use of Chinese silk now (ibid) due to its inexpensiveness. The very design of the *pang gdan* has been changed to suit the needs of the tourists and the new settlers from mainland China for brisk

business (ibid). Other than that, in some Tibetan neighborhood in Kathmandu the old aprons are converted into decorative wall hangings for tourists, foreigners and upscale hotels (ibid). In the arctic villages of Alaska, baskets made out of a keratinous substance called *baleen* (collected from the mouths of plankton-eating whales) is a tourist art produced by the Eskimos for the non-natives often considered as acculturated and modern (Lee, 1983). Prior to 1937, these baskets were produced only for local community members (ibid).

Tourist demand for cultural products intensifies the commercialization of arts and crafts and often leads to miniaturized versions with simplified designs and new raw material use (Revilla and Dodd, 2003). Miniature jars with aesthetic properties are manufactured by Buray artisans from Philippines which are suitable for interior and exterior displays (Cano, 2012). Artisans do surface decorations on pottery by appliquéing, impressing, perforating, incising or combination of a few to make the potteries decorative (ibid). Production directed towards tourist customers motivates changes in design of objects and the same market determines which craft continues to be produced after they are no longer used in the community (Berman, 2006). Miniatures replicas and small items which are easily transportable are sought more (ibid) while new arts are constantly developed (Ivory, 1999). Tourist outpour to Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s fuelled the commodization of the Toraja⁴ material culture, most notably the wooden effigies or the dead called *tau-taus* (Adams, 2008). Soon local carvers started accommodating effigies of tourist interest by stylizing *tau-taus* with well-worn traditional sarongs and miniature sculptures (ibid). Some other carvers introduced Balinese styled *patung* models which are small doll sized carvings of Toraja village men (Adams, 2008). Diversification has reached the heights where carvers shape everything from miniature humpbacked man carrying canes to stout youth toting animals (ibid). *Tau-taus* transformed from a ritually symbolic object to a craft of economic significance and an emblem of Toraja identity (ibid).

Artisans of Dong Ho village in Vietnam have diversified their trademark paintings reflecting pastoral history and Vietnamese folk tales to non-traditional imaginary; they expanded product line for tourists to calendars, postcards and greetings with contemporary as well as conventional messages (Szydłowski, 2008). Cultural symbols

⁴ Toraja are ethnic people indigenous to South Sulawesi in Indonesia.

like chickens, ducks, farming activities strongly connected to Vietnam's pastoral history, images of Buddha and paintings representing folk tales are yet depicted but new images are also incorporated on non-traditional objects like calendars, postcards and greetings (Szydowski, 2008). Popularity and tailoring of Dong Ho paintings has resulted due to the growing tourism in the village, however, their market is very small (ibid). On the other hand, artisans of Ngoc Dong village rather not influenced by tourism are producing for an entirely different reason and has benefited due to the growth of exports of their crafts (ibid). Artisans here take the help of export houses to sell their crafts who in turn give training for specific items (ibid).

The frequent interests of external public like researchers and interested visitors in the tiger mask performance of Mexico, led to specialized production of tiger masks in Santa Marta Huazolotitlan (Beissel, 1996). The ritualistic masks exclusively produced for the tiger fights were commercialized indeed but preserved the integrity of tradition handed down through generations (ibid). The designs of the masks did not change but the use of new materials like artificial colors and western clothing in the masks were indicative of the commercialization introduced (ibid). Trinket items and miniaturized accessories and decorative objects were categorized as tourist products in Samoa (Lucas, 2008). Hume (2009) shows the shift in the intention of arc shaped 'boomerang' from a hunting tool to an artefact of cultural organization and cohesion and then finally to tourist art. This indigenous object seems to retain its culturally embedded aesthetics and form though becoming a part of the market economy (ibid). Tourist influenced western imagery and motifs of animals blended with traditional symbols and Australian map are patterned on smaller and uniform sized boomerangs exclusively meant for sale. Also there are rudimentary poker works carrying no symbolic aboriginal meanings but simply decorative to make mere 'practical demonstration of ancient aboriginal technology' to the probable tourist (ibid).

Touristic use and local use handicrafts have some difference as the earlier one is adapted from original type in such a way that it appeals to the tourist. Its commercialization for new customers requires certain changes in size, style as well as material used (Muller and Petterson, 2001, as cited in McKercher, 2006). San Juan artisans in Guatemala produce textiles from cheap yarns in soft and muted hues for their mostly North American tourist customers while for personal consumption, expensive high-quality yarn is preferred (Modesto, 2001). Moreover, weavers produce

different textile items for tourists but themselves do not wear their produce (ibid). But, due to rise in touristic demand for naturally dyed textiles, the once abandoned natural dyeing, a closely guarded secret among the Mayan people was revived (Modeston and Neissen, 2005). Producers often lower the prices of the products to induce more sales to tourists and other consumers while for the organic ones, the price is raised (ibid).

Foreign tourists prefer objects that are useful, decorative or otherwise suit their lifestyle, while being less concerned with authenticity or tradition (Cohen, 2000). They perceive modern design combined with indigenous markers to be more authentic than traditional design (Xie, et al. 2012). According to Graburn (1976) easy portability, inexpensiveness, understandable, cleanable and usable nature of crafts, back home, are necessary features of tourist souvenirs. Size, fragility and manageability are important attributes of air travelers (Pysarchik, 1989). Because of emphasis on profitability and large volume production, tourist art or ethnokitsch (Graburn, 1976) are often crude and shoddy (Bascom, 1976; Goldwater, 1964) and are poor in quality (Ritcher, 1980). In Sarawak, Malaysia *Iban* weavers have simplified the craft designs to stay competitive (Berma, 1996). Their traditional ceremonial cloth *pua* is modified into small handbags and mats for the tourists. Substitution of natural thread and colors to nylon strings and chemical dyes is also seen to save time on producing them traditionally (ibid). However, this has resulted in diminishing quality of the craft products even obvious to the untrained eyes (ibid). But on the other hand, commercialization has generated new interest among artisans as they have gained access to new markets. As a result, modification as well as simplification and standardization in craft forms have taken place under the forces of existing demand and supply (ibid).

Palm woven baskets, toys and figures with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic features in Mexico has been transformed to decorative works for external markets which is today produced with non native palm fronds and colorful plastic raffia (Flechsig, 2004). Prettified *topeng*⁵ masks, hand-painted with batik patterns, are usually made for tourists and souvenir seekers in Jakarta and Bali (Tolentino, Jr. 2012) which are free from religious and stylistic canons (ibid). Teotilan artisans of Mexico produce

⁵ *Topeng* means mask in Indonesia. Basically it is a form of dance drama in which dancers wear masks. Hence is known as *topeng* masks.

rugs with designs inspired from work of European artists such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee and M. C. Escher and make other contemporary products like wallets and jewellery with pre-columbian motifs for tourists and export markets willing to buy new crafts with no long-standing cultural significance (Chibnik, 2003a). In the Kathmandu valley, *thangka* artisans are producing miniaturized Tibetan scrolls of 15 by 15 cm for the tourists that are much smaller than the traditional ones (Bentor, 1993). The painting depictions on the scrolls have changed from memorializing of pilgrimage of the patrons to holy sites in Kathmandu valley (Banerjee, 1989; Slusser, 1985 as cited in Bentor, 1993) to depiction of temples and other tourist attractions of Nepal to camera wielding tourists (Bentor, 1993); iconography depicting eternal combats between gods and demigods are transmuted to fierce war scenes between Tibetan monks and Chinese soldiers painted in bright pastel colors (ibid).

To tap tourist market, Hopi and Indian artisans of Arizona modified their full-sized water pots and jars into smaller ones and even developed new articles like sugar bowls and salt-pepper shakers which were cheaper than the traditional crafts (Wade, 1976). New earthen vessels like fruit-bowls, ashtrays, lidded jars resembling chickens, and canisters with traditional Hopi designs, not having any roots in Hopi culture were produced (Allen, 1984). In Okavango delta, artisans are producing agricultural storage baskets with intense decoration and styles for the tourists which are made much smaller to facilitate its transport (Lenao, et al. 2015). Toba Batak wood carvers in Sumatra are making replicas of antique objects resembling religious artifacts having cultural significance in indigenous lifestyle for the tourists and art collectors (Causey, 2003 as cited in Brulotte, 2012). Mapuche artisans of Argentina have invented new designs than their traditional abstract weaving patterns (Sullivan, 2013) and Guarani artisans of Brazil use indigenous techniques to produce tourist art but use color, shape and materials determined by the customers (Ballengee-Morris, 2002). Tourism market directly influences sales and stimulates the reproduction of ancient artifacts (Evans-Pritchard, 1993). Commodity value of artifacts comes from politics of connoisseurship (Kaiser, 1990). Ainu craftsmen of Hokkaido in Japan produce their art for tourists to reinstate their identity and earn cultural satisfaction meanwhile exploiting commercial profit (Hiwasaki, 2000). Their recreated commercial products are admittedly distinctive markers of ethnic identity in prompt response to touristic encounters; it reflects the creative adaptation to changed world (ibid). Ainu wood

carving known as *kibori* patterns on sheath of swords and ritual tools such as wooden staff and prayer sticks has remained a deep rooted religious and social custom for Ainu people (ibid). The custom still continues but in newer wood carvings like cranes, salmon, owl, foxes and Ainu fairy-like figures known as *korpokkur* as well as in jewellery items which are now appreciated tourist souvenirs (Hiwasaki, 2000).

Tourism has revived some of the traditional utensils like wooden bowls (*kumete*) and religious wooden images of Rarotongan gods in Cook Islands into some decorative articles and souvenirs (Pryor, 1988). Lake Titicaca Island in Peru saw increased demand for their textiles from tourists in recent years (Lopez, 2012). Tourism has led to the boom in production of textiles with designs not produced before; new range of concrete motifs with more colors is added to the line of few existing abstract motifs (ibid). Some new commodities like calendar belt depicting twelve different designs having symbolic meaning, one assigned to each month are created for tourists (ibid).

The review presented in this section, very well explains that exposure to outside world prompts artisans to change their craft from utilitarian articles to tourist art and commercial objects (Swanson and Timothy, 2012). Changes led by commercialization have become inevitable. Most commercialized arts and crafts of the world belong to the 'transitional' dynamics changing perceptibly though slowly over time (Cohen, 1983).

2.5 Scenario of Traditional Crafts of India in the Contemporary World: From the Perspective of Commercialization

Indian arts and crafts blended every tradition it confronted and adopted new elements and designs to please the mind and soul apart from practical human needs (Swarup, 1957). It is unfortunate that our principal literary sources describe a little on the highly prevailing instances of such modifications rising due to cultural contacts, exchanges and most importantly due to commercialization. Nevertheless, enough evidence from some anecdotes still exists to show that changes have occurred throughout decades in our traditional crafts.

International researchers like Hauser (2002) present a fine example of commercialized scroll paintings in West Bengal which initially originated as an oral tradition. The *patuas* or story tellers earned their living by narrating the mythological stories painted in the scrolls by the *patuas* and *chitrakars* i.e. painters. But by the beginning of 1980s,

their customers shifted from being mere listeners of the stories to purchasers of the scrolls. This gradual shift and interest of the public mostly aristocratic ones and foreigners initiated the commercialization of this folk art. As soon as scrolls became a commodity, the stylistic changes in the paintings were also introduced. The pictures in the paintings became less in number and without any details but some *patuas* still maintained the stylistic attributes of folk art even while adapting to new customer liking; scrolls were made much smaller and updated for wall decoration in the elite households (ibid). The change of *patua* folk art to commercialized scroll arts is also substantiated by another study done by Jefferson (2014). *Patuas* started separating wholesome stories into individual panels and portraits for visitors seeking a piece of Bengali art. The scrolls which delineated brighter colors were now produced with ready water colors; stylistic presentations changed to contemporary urban subjects of the time (ibid).

Pattachitra, a form of narrative art patronized in royal courts in Bengal, dates back to 10-11th century, (Bajpai, 2015b). The *patuas* earned a living by displaying their scrolls at various households and narrating the stories of local folklore and *puranas* (Holy Scriptures of the Hindus) depicted therein (ibid). By the last quarter of 19th century, the art took the form of scrolls often depicting deities as the demand for it as performative art declined (Bajpai, 2015a; Palit and Datta, 2016). In recent times, narratives based on urban culture (Jefferson, 2014) and themes like global warming, awareness against superstitions, pollution, women harassment are also found (Bayen, 2013; Palit and Datta, 2016). Their stories have evolved according to the events of various periods (Bayen, 2013). For survival, artisans have diversified the art of *patta* painting (Sarkar, 2016) to lifestyle products, modern garments and even small postcards (Bayen, 2013; Palit and Datta, 2016). *Pattachitras* are produced nowadays on cloth and paper rather than on traditional dried palm leave canvas (Palit and Datta, 2016).

The overtly religious *Patta* paintings in Orissa show high degree of modernity today. Primmed cloth base utilized in the much past is now substituted with much costlier *tasar* cloth; the paintings are also made on coconuts nowadays (Tripathy, 1998). Though the story context surrounds gods and goddesses but is now looked at more from the artistic viewpoints as customers changed from pilgrims to tourists (ibid). Colors are abundant on the canvasses which traditionally were painted only in

primary colors (ibid). The paintings are available in different sizes in the forms of invitation cards and greetings (ibid). This magnanimous art still preserves the Hindu religious essence depicting mythological epics and its characters, but the artists' context has changed from efforts of continuity of the art to seeking economic prospects (ibid). R. C Mohapatra (2005) and H. K Mohapatra (2008) discussed the influence of tourism in the modification of the crafts in the Pipli town of Orissa. They identified that the interface of tourists with artisans producing appliqué craft have led to change of this utilitarian art form into decorative pieces. Traditional items like *pasa-pali* or the dice mat have given way to modern items such as wall hangings, cushion covers, etc. Artisans constantly update their art with new designs in order to monopolize the item to gain more profit in the market (ibid). The appliqué craft dispersed from religious fabric pieces to day-to-day items like *batuas*, and *kothalimuni* (letter holder); the art latter saw more diversification in its traditional motifs and embellishments due to surge in its demand among tourists visiting Orissa (Samall, 1998). As a result, some important elements in appliqué were simplified and new materials were used; mirror pieces and now even plastic frames are used in decoration while the central floral part is replaced with *suryamukhi* or sunflower motif which is much easier to stitch and looks fashionable too (ibid). Ladies bags in appliqué and garden umbrella based on the traditional *chhata* for *dol jatra* are immensely purchased by customers from India and abroad (Mohapatra, 2005; Samall, 1998). Artisans have substituted natural colors to prepare the base of the appliqué cloth with easily available synthetic colored cloths (Mohapatra, 2005).

In North India, Kashmiri shawls were commercialized as early during the European conquest of India and even prior to that when these were known export items (Maskiell, 2002). Weavers in Kashmir modified their designs according to European customer preferences and wove many types of goat hair products like trousers, carpets, linings, neckerchiefs to target consumers from particular geographical regions (ibid). Maskiell (1999) further cites example of the changing patterns of the *phulkari* art of Punjab which were more linked to the changing fashion of dress. Women embraced imported lighter cloth to embroider *phulkari* against cumbersome *khadi* material (Steel, 1887 as cited in Maskiell, 1999). As soon as *phulkari* art turned into commodity, artisans shifted to synthetic fiber and chiffon rather than utilizing the traditional handspun cotton in its make (Kaur and Gupta, 2014). Punjab has a fine

practice of traditional crafts from basketry to mud-ware and metal art. Peshawari Pakkhe and Kundalhar Pakkhi, a little smaller bamboo hand fans than the former one, are women oriented basket art much in demand and fascinated objects among tourists (Rajput and Kaur, 2016). Colorful potteries depending on their shapes dictate its usage in the customer market and the Punjabi toy dolls made of mud and wood and decorated with sparkling beads, satin cloths and mirror pieces representing dynamic artistry and social values are sought tourist souvenirs (ibid). Traditional *pidhis* are small wooden tools conventionally used for sitting but are now made colorful and lively to create more attention and the handcrafted footwear known as *jootis* are fancied wedding attires even in modern societies. The modern embellished *duaries* and *phulkaris* are other weaving craft which is now fashioned on contemporary coats, skirts, *dupattas* and jackets (ibid).

Eastern Indian crafts too show various degree of modification. *Maithil* paintings worldwide known as *madhubani* art has its very root in ancient Indian city of Madhubani in Bihar. These paintings were originally developed as murals. However, post 1934, the art took the turn to papers and canvasses and has been growing since then in varied forms with a far greater range of topics. Neel Rekha's (2011) photographic essay depicts the clear change in the style of Madhubani paintings from rural lifestyles, and mythology surrounding Ramayana tales to newer feminist themes depicting importing roles played by women in various spheres due to its commercial surge as art object. Bankura art form is an ancient art form of West Bengal (Shaw, 2011). The Panchmura village located at a distance of about 40 km from Bishnupur in West Bengal is known for its traditional terracotta horse (ibid). The *bankura* horse has more erect neck and ears and looks more dynamic. Their jaws are wider, their set of teeth can be seen, eyebrows are drawn and their forehead is decorated with *chandmala*. The original function of these horses was a ritualistic one. These horses have now become decorative items for tourists (ibid). Efforts are taken to modernize terracotta craft of Bishnupur by introducing some modifications in style (Satpathi, 2011). Sourish Bhattacharya sees the flourishing market of metal craft of Dhokra, West Bengal in the markets of United States and London if efforts are made to innovate the designs (Bhattacharya, 2011). Dasgupta (2010) looked into the tradition of metal craft in Bengal and reported some changes in the metal craft throughout history from medieval times to present. The description is largely related to

technology changes and the introduction of new alloys in the medieval period, the introduction of Islamic style in the 16th to 18th century A. D. and the shift from regular religious imagery to Dokra style (ibid). She described about the introduction some new items comprising of dinner plates (*thala*), bowl (*bati*), glass, jug, tumbler (*ghati*), pail, *kalasi*, tray, gongs and utensils of religious purposes (ibid).

Traditional handlooms of many communities in India have found a breather due to its increasing use in contemporary products like home furnishing and decors. One such handloom work is of the Rangani community of Dhalapathar. The community has adapted the art to weaving napkins and door screens widely known as Dhalapathar parda and has even introduced a unique *saree* known as *kusumi kasta* (Nayak, et al. 2011). According to Ronald (2012), the textile art and craft of the Chippa community of Rajasthan is re-aligned to meet global market demands. Aesthetic changes particularly in design and motif were introduced under the guidance of local entrepreneurs and exporter and modern blouses or jackets were developed with the fabric (ibid). However, certain motifs like *buti-butah*, typical to Rajasthani tradition did not undergo modification but instead were produced on hippy dresses for western countries. Ronald has also found the increasing influence of NGOs in the design discourse in present times; however, at the same time some handful youngsters are entering into the traditional occupation and giving it a new direction in terms of design development (ibid). Designs are main components of *bandhej* art of Rajasthan and as said, traditional animal and bird motifs and *buti* (floral), *ras-leela* motifs still infuse life in *bandhej* textiles; however, growing demand for geometric designs and its easy replication on fabric is making artisans use the not so very minute designs produced earlier (Jain and Tiwari, 2012). Artisans have substituted traditional dyes made of roots, flowers, leaves and berries to chemical ones for ease of use and availability (ibid). Similarly, *ajarkh*⁶ art from Gujarat is now available on variety of modern textiles other than its traditional use on *kamarbands* (kind of jewellery worn round the waist) and turbans (Karolia and Buch, 2008). Unlike Bandhej, its indigenous motifs are still intact but have added some geometrical lines in its latest addition with variety of chemical colors (ibid). Rogan, the traditional hand painted textile of Gujarat, has been associated especially with the garments of the women of the artisan community as well as on bed sheets and quilts but is now more visible in commercialized wall

⁶ Ajarkh is a unique form of block printing especially practised in Sindh, Kutch, and Barmer.

hangings, table covers and other furnishings (Pandya and Vishwakarma, 2010). Traditional hand-woven *khana* material used as a surface embellishment in the *choli* or blouse of rural women from Karnataka is diversified to suit contemporary needs of the urban society (Namrata and Naik, 2008).

Bhatia (2005) in her doctoral work on the *zardosi*⁷ embroidery craft has picturesquely presented the historical trajectory of the craft through ages. She mentions that commercialization of *zardosi* craft in terms of adaptation to the present taste has taken the traditional court and temple embroidery to common public and have provided larger market (ibid). Stylized animals and floral motifs of the medieval past have been diversified to geometrical shapes of chevrons, stripes, checks and circles as well as human figures and naturalistic shapes of foliage and flowers with increasing use of acrylic and cotton threads (ibid).

Mention is also there about transformation of some tribal art works from Gujarat. The *pithora*⁸ wall painting of the Rathwas, Bhilais, Nayaks and Tadi tribes of Gujarat and western Madhya Pradesh has ritualistic importance in the life of the tribal people. Done within sacred enclosures, the paintings contain pictorial depiction of the world of Gods, animals, the sun and moon and the depiction of class structure with farmer, cowherd, king and the *bania* (merchant) collaged in a perfect presentation (Gandhi-Moirangthem, 2013). However, there has been some paradigm change in the art in the contemporary times due to the growing opportunities in global market phenomenon and the tribes urge to become a part of the mainstream society (ibid). The tribal artisans have now introduced airplanes, computers, architectural edifices, trains and other modern elements to de-contextualize it from ritualistic meanings for its sale (ibid). Gradual shift is seen in transmitting the craft from mud walls to cloth to pave way for wall hangings, and modern fabrics. Materials like easily available paints and brushes have replaced the natural colors and brushes made from tender stems (ibid). However, it must be acknowledged that the Indian handicrafts sector is extremely decentralized and hence it is difficult to estimate the value of handicrafts production (Kathuria, 1988). Commercialization of many crafts has been seen due to the growth of exports especially in gems and jewelry, carpets, art metal ware, wood carvings and

⁷ Zardosi or zaradozi is a Persian embroidery form flourished in the 17th century under the patronage of Mughals. Zar means gold and dozi means embroidery.

⁸ Pithora is a ritualistic painting done on walls by several tribes like Bhilalas and Rathwas from Central Gujarat.

embroidery whereas the basketry and earthenware market is governed by domestic demand (ibid).

2.6 Salient Features of Craft Studies in Context of Assam

With respect to literature on crafts of Assam, there is no dearth of studies explaining the history of the crafts, the problems associated with marketing of crafts, the socio-economic conditions of the crafts-persons. However, the vacuum is created when it comes to literature formalizing the transformation in the crafts and modifications due to commercialization. The existing literature provides only tit-bit of information in a line or two hinting towards commercialization. Nevertheless, enough evidence from some anecdotes still exists to show that changes have occurred throughout decades in our traditional crafts.

As early as in 1969, Barkataki observed that fine decorations are used on traditional bamboo and *tokou* leaf umbrella, the *japi*, which is ‘used by fashionable people for interior decoration’ (page 79). Not much before, this hat, almost made six feet in diameter, was used by respectable women of the society as *purdah* or veil while the coarse one of the same was used as a headgear by peasants (ibid). It hints towards the shift in the utility of the headgear to decorative object. This information hinting towards commercialization of *japi* is further substantiated with several other reports. It is found that artisans from Balamugkuchi village of Nalbari are making good income by selling the traditional headgears as exquisite decorative headgear to facilitate VIPs (Bora, 7 April, 2016). It even sells higher during election time (Kashyap, 7 April, 2016). BorSaikia (2012) under the MSME scheme undertook a diagnostic study on the *japi* cluster of Mugkuchi in Nalbari. She found that the artisans of the cluster are making decorative *japis* which are only intended to serve as drawing-room decorations. Different types of new raw materials like velvet papers and cloths, laces, shining stickers, etc are used these days to decorate the *japis* (ibid). *Japis* have also been fashioned into heart shapes in several sizes. Apart from the regular production of *japi*, artisans of the cluster have also started producing other decorative products like jewelley box, pen stand, tray, hangings, etc. (ibid). Likewise, Dutta (2012) and Nilufar (2012) also presented a need assessment report on Kahikuchi and Sipajhar bamboo and wood craft cluster of Kamrup and Darrang

respectively. The reports highlighted the commercial production of the crafts in the cluster and the government's sponsorship for design development.

Goswami's (2005) work substantiates that religious masks from Majuli till 2003 were produced only to meet occasional demand for religious plays as it was not seen as a commercial proposition. However, recent references indicate towards the commercialization of the product for tourists visiting Assam. Masks have become smaller in size to fit the tourist bag (Bhattacharya, 2010). The mask craft of Majuli studied by Vaidhya (2015) in its entirety but the doctoral work emphasizes largely on the socio-cultural importance of masks in the cultural fabric of Assam. SITA Travel India letter reports the commercialization of the masks of Majuli (2013, March 31). Earlier, masks were sought by customers, especially theatrical parties, only during the *Raas*⁹ Festival, but since the mask makers modified the craft into prettified smaller versions, masks have picked up sales as souvenir objects (ibid). The demand for masks from Majuli was only during the religious *bhaona*¹⁰ festival in November but its commercialization into smaller masks and souvenirs, of late, has increased its demand and sales (SITA Travel India News Letter, March 31, 2013). Other coherent views on commercialization of Majuli masks reflect in newspaper reports which highlights the transformation of these *bhaona* masks into decorative objects sought by tourists from abroad ('Mukha...recognition', The Hindu, 11 April, 2013). Report by Deori (2013) highlights the four hundred year old tradition of mask making in Sivasagar district of Assam which is presently practiced by two families alone. It suggests the need for interventions in design aspects of the masks used only for religious plays in the satras and made only on requirement basis; these masks hardly have any commercial value and do not cater to retail customers (ibid).

One of the exclusive studies on changing dynamics of textile craft of the state was conducted by J. D. Sarma (2009). In his thesis, he speaks of changes reflected through new designs due to cross-cultural contact, which he agrees is a long time process (page 218). He also highlights the change of fashion and taste (page 161) and influence of foreign and national markets in the development of home furnishing items like quilt, curtains, table and bed lines, kimono, etc. from indigenous silk fabrics

⁹ Raas is a religious festival observed by Hindu community of Assam wherein traditional dance dramas that depicts tales from Hindu mythology are showcased.

¹⁰ Bhaona is a traditional form of entertainment developed by Sankardev in the 16th century in Assam.

of Assam (page 225). However, his attempt is limited to describing changes but not change as process. S.N. Sarma expressed the view that indigenous crafts had undergone changes in motifs, designs and technique from time to time as a result of the infusion of blood from new elements of production (as cited in Handique, 2010). The author rightly observed that the medieval crafts of Assam must be considered as making a new phase in the history of cultural development in Assam (ibid).

Earlier weaving was done to fulfill the clothing requirements of the households and to gift near and dear ones with woven fabrics. Today, though people still weave for their households, they also weave for selling the clothes in the market. Huge number of references exists in reference to *pat*, *eri* and *muga* silk which highlight the increasing trend of adaptation and modification of the craft (Rahman, 2003; Rahman, 2013). Kakoty's (2012) article cites examples of Assamese entrepreneurs diversifying *pat*, *eri* and *muga* into modern fashion products and accessories like shirts, cushion covers, ladies purses, etc. apart from the traditional attire for national and international customers. Rahman (2013) cites another example of entrepreneur orientation towards changing times; from shawls *eri* silk fabric is now fashioned into saris, *salwars*, scarves, shirts, jackets and modern dresses. The demand for *eri* fabrics has increased and hence production of clothes in the villages has also gone up. A few weavers becoming aware of the market trend have taken initiative to be innovative. The *eri* fabric is finding favor for making shirts and *kurtas* for men (Begum, 2010). Bora (2015) sees the prospects of *eri* silk in the markets of Germany. International intermediaries are taking interest in diversifying the *eri* product by combining it with wool for creating products suitable for the cold European countries. Some information related to the export of diversified *eri* products is also found in book by Nath (2009). However, it has been seen in the non mulberry silk sector of Assam, especially *muga* and *eri* that weavers still rely on traditional looms which makes the items inappropriate for foreign markets (Bhattacharya, 2015). Traditional narrow width looms is deemed unsuitable for the production of exportable yarn (ibid).

Likewise, references can also be found citing the commercialization of brass metal work of Barpeta. In Baniyakuchi and Haldibari, artisans have started producing new decorative items like banana tree, tray, peacock, and other small objects other than making traditional *xorai* ("Brass metal ... doldrums", 17 May, 2013). Kalita (2007) in his doctoral work opined that the traditional bell metal sector is yet to introduce

product diversification for realizing its potential for further development. Sah (2011) conducted a survey on the brass metal industry of Barpeta. Diagnostic report on bell metal cluster of Kondagaon in Chattisgarh by Tiwari (2002) gave slight hint towards diversification of products in the 1990 to 2000 period. The 300 year old tribal idol making industry got technical and training related support from some organizations and the government which resulted in some modification (ibid). Kalita (2007) found that some brass artisans of Hajo are producing decorative items like images of animals along with regular items of daily use.

Asharikandi is one of the single largest terracotta and pottery cluster in the country. The artisans in this small hamlet traditionally produced pitchers, water containers, earthen rings and few terracotta toys like dolls and horses (Dutta, 2014). But some recent studies highlight the product diversification efforts of the artisans. New range of items in recent years includes terracotta photo-frame, peacock type tubs, pen stand, wall hangings, etc (Ghosh, 2014). Sah (2011), under the MSME scheme, also conducted a survey to assess the pottery and terracotta craft status of the cluster. He found various types of decorative terracotta art being produced by the artisans but assessed the need for further diversification and development of the art to compete with other advanced terracotta craft of the country. Some notes even hint towards the use of colors suggesting evolution of the craft (Chatterjee, 2010). In yet another study, Hoque (2016) discussed about the shift in the making of terracotta toys from horses and elephants to figures like rhino as well as to new representative figures like Buddha, Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesha, Jesus and renowned political and religious personalities for the emerging decorative markets.

Sarmah (2001) undertook an ethnographic study on the pottery craft of South Kamrup discussing the conventional and special or ritualistic types of pottery used in the region. She mentions about some utilitarian items and some toys representing symbols of religious beings or some mythological activity. However, the researcher does not mention the transformation of the craft products while mentioning the craftspeople's occupational mobility and other socio-cultural demographics. Medhi (1992) made another study on the Hira and Kumar potter community in Nalbari district of Assam. She described about the various types of traditional pottery products and the production techniques. Information related to commercialized pottery products in Gauripur exists in the study by Nurul Islam (1989-90). Modern toys like motor-bike

Hatima produced on old model and many other innovative products like ash tray and various types of lamp stands are described in the study diverting attention to the commercial nature of the craft (ibid).

Goswami (2012) makes analysis of traditional crafts sector of lower Assam with special emphasis on the history of brass, bell metal and bamboo crafts. Another study by Kakati (2010) highlights the marketing of folklore items among some communities in Assam. It gives some hint on the transposition of some sacred designs especially used in religious cloth called *gosai kapor*¹¹ on the women garments in present times indicating toward artisans' disposal to increasing attractiveness for marketability (ibid). Bismitar's (2012) report on Bodo textiles of Tezpur in Assam highlighted the efforts of rural tribal women's organization Sparsh. With the Ministry of MSME and NID sponsoring its efforts, it reflects upon the training of the artisans in artificial and natural dyeing processes and training on various other methods like Bandhani techniques and embroidery.

In the context of India and Assam, the commercialization concerns have not been easily or often very fully incorporated by researchers analytically. Yet it is argued that commercialization of the crafts is taking place. Authors mention about the types of products but do not basically try to see the transition taking within the art form. Different products are available in the market made of the same age old craft but how and why these modifications have encrypted is not discussed elaborately through a proper framework. The only eminent work of understanding commercialization from the perspective of spontaneous and sponsored interference on the traditional craft sector of Assam is done by Sarma (2016). In his ICSSR sponsored work, he has cited the changes taking place due to commercialization on the style, form and structural dynamics of tribal *Mishing* garments like *galuk* and *ege* as well as the famed pottery & terracotta artwork of Asharikandi and *japi* craft Nalbari. However, such works are just a beginning towards understanding of the commercialization as a process. Should we more understand the transition of our crafts from "tradition" to "modernity", we better place ourselves in understanding the dynamics of our society, culture and economy as a whole. It is significant as it engenders ethnic pride as well as provides revenue (Mitchell, 2000).

¹¹ A kind of religious clothing used in Assam for deities.

2.7 Commercialization as a Process: The Influence of Clientele and the Direct and Indirect Customer Interface

Commercialization of art and crafts take place when there is movement toward mass production which in turn, creates a further stimulus for audiences' response leading to reinterpretation of the art works (Jules-Rosette, 1986). More than a general definition, 'commercialization' of folk arts and crafts is a systematic process and takes place in many ways. Crafts 'change hands in complex, multi-stranded commodity chains' that ordinarily link artisans to consumers (Chibnik et al. 2004). At times, artisans and customers overcome the chain network and confront face to face. This particularly so happens in regions where tourism grows its roots and communities get chance to interpret their material cultures. Many examples highlight these communications.

Jones made (1973) an impeccable inquiry into the violations of artistic standards in folk crafts and the total system of folk art production and consumption. He studied the attitudes of community artisans towards objects produced in the community to investigate the standards of violations (ibid). He posited that technical and aesthetic standards are also transmuted due to the direct or indirect consumer influence (ibid). The infractions result in the beginning, when craftsman has begun to learn the craft, and who later on, mastering the requisite skills, seeks to create a style outside traditional realms owing to personal reasons (ibid). In addition, translation in technical standards and aesthetics is also attributed to consumer influence wherein the customer evinces specifications, which is in contrast to producer's values (ibid). The paradigms of change can be studied from the craftsmen as well as the consumers' perspective. Examining from the craftsmen category first, differences in creations results owing to the skill of the craftsmen. Specialist craftsmen examine objects objectively on the basis of fitness for use and visual appeal whereas the amateur craftsmen tend to possess low artistic excellence (ibid). Though it is not always so. Skilled artisans also produce crude craft devoid of artistic grace when the consumer is he himself or when he is paid less (ibid). From the consumer's category, several subgroups exist in the i) local consumer and ii) urbanites categories iii) researchers (ibid). The local customers further comprise of individuals on low and high socio-economic ladder. Those in the modicum socio-economic strata evaluate products in terms of fitness for use, and consider ornamentation as superfluous; the latter group belonging to wealthier background gives greater emphasis on visual appeal and

technological excellence (ibid). Urbanites are considered as individuals living outside local area of the craftsmen community who has inclination toward folk-made objects which brings nostalgia due to their relation at some point of time to the community. But they still emphasize upon visual excellence for prestige enhancement due to their present stay in new groups; however, they do not enforce technological enhancements (ibid) as inferior and hence dismiss aesthetically and structurally brilliant crafts as non-folk items. In such consumers, craftsmen produce inferior objects though the craftsmen may himself consider it imperfect. Finally, there is the researcher or the connoisseur of folk art as customer who approaches art with or without bias (ibid). In the discourse, Jones discussed ways craftsmen as well as customers act as factors responsible for violation of aesthetic standards. The customer influences are direct and indirect depending upon their category. Usually, craftsmen are charged with artistic violations and production of inferior objects; however, craftsmen may transgress for many reasons, depending upon the production for a specific consumer type as well as the level of skill possessed (ibid).

In yet another study, Jules-Rosette (1986) identified the markets for which commercialization of art takes place. She classified the art market into four types' viz. village markets, conventional urban market, curio trade and gallery trade market. In the village market, the village setting serves as ecosystem for tourist art. Douglas and Ritcher describe village markets as the one in which craftsmen make objects for ceremonial use simultaneously producing novel items for commercial sale (as cited in Jules-Rosette, 1986). Artisans, in this market, have indirect connection with ultimate buyers as objects are sold through vendors who approach them; producers hence possess only indirect control over the extent and character of the market (ibid). Middlemen and agents convey the appeal related information to the artists. The conventional urban market is one in which traditional craftsmen produces conventional items of the village milieu which are again sold through middlemen. Curio trade is the primary form of tourist art production where division of labour is complex and production is more. Gallery trade is associated with outside exposure and contact of artisans with western sources. The quality of the craft produced depends on the structure of the market and type of demand (ibid). Jauss and Benzinger (1970) highlighted the concept of aesthetics and stylistic evaluation to be actively influenced by consumer connections. It is the distance between the horizon of

expectations (of consumers) and the familiarity (of artisans) with the work which determines the height of artistic nature (in crafts) (Jauss and Benzinger, 1970).

Redeveloping his previous work, Graburn (1984) identified processes under which transformation in tourist art takes place. Transformation from A) functional art to commercial-traditional occurs due to tourists' frequent attempt to purchase functional embedded arts (ibid, pages 398-399). In this movement, near traditional forms are adhered to while producing exact replicas of crafts just for sale. The socio-cultural setting of the artisans thus moves from isolated traditions to modern pluralistic participation shifting the sacred and religious crafts to periphery of secular ones. The conditions for this transformation are: 1) the continuity of traditional aesthetics and the role of the artist 2) the ability of the artists to separate sacred elements from the secular. 3) Continuing supply of original materials not outstripped by tourist demand 4) a wealthy market of buyers who could buy large and intensively handmade pieces considering and caring about the crafts' traditional features and demanding authenticity. The change from B) commercial to souvenir arts also results due to departure from traditional rules and restructuring of conditions of production. Herein, basic motifs and forms remain same dilution takes place due to decrease in size and complexity of the craft and use of different materials and formats. Its conditions includes: 1) mass tourists markets who happen to travel fast and light 2) producers willingness to depart from laid traditions due to economic reasons 3) depleting traditional raw materials and availability of new materials and cheap techniques 4) mass market who care little about authenticity. During this shift, sometimes completely new souvenirs may arise which are in no way related to local aesthetics and traditions. These are often imported or are made by cheaply by outsiders for outsiders. Without any cultural stake, local artisans feel less motivated to produce such crafts; it is also due to their less understanding about the outsider wants as well as inability to compete with their indigenous tools and techniques. The process from C) Re-integrated to souvenir art follows the same trend as A). Its source, the functional-traditional art, may in reality be an incorporated or re-integrated art from previous historical era which is merely the latest introduction in the present series of traditional art objects. These fairly new art works are of superior qualities due to their new induction in community life and hence are safe from 'grossest exploitations of the market' (Graburn, 1984). Transmutation from D) Assimilated to Popular art forms

often take place in less developed countries which have seen cultural acculturations from time to time. Assimilated art resembles mainstream metropolitan genres and evolve when minority artisan society falls under ‘heavy pressure from dominant outside world’ through ‘missionization, formal education and restructuring of the economic system’ (ibid). The conditions include: 1) easy material accessibility of the dominant art system 2) ability to see or buy art of the dominant class 3) no objection from the dominant society artists on being copied 4) dominant-society public’s disposition to buy such art works made by the minority society members. In this process, the popular art work of the dominant society simply gets assimilated.

Again, Popelka and Litrell (1991) produced another schematic to understand the evolution of traditional textiles of Oaxaca, Mexico. They identified the evolution period of the products as: 1) product transition period which targeted the market shift from community audiences to tourists, 2) product expansion period in which production was made for export market and 3) target market segmentation period which included product development and production for specific markets (ibid). Based on Jules-Rosette’s (1991) idea of product change on direct and indirect feedback, they identified vendors as the main communication link in the feedback system. Producers of the crafts sold products through vendors like retailers but followed trends in the demand which was an indirect form of consumer related information (ibid); they only established direct communication link when sold to tourists visiting personally (ibid). This limited direct interaction ‘cannot be interpreted as representative of a larger body of consumers (ibid). It is important for researchers to address the communication links by which producers identify consumer tastes and engage in product modification (Popelka and Littrell, 1991).

Popelka (1989) identified four types of craft producer-entrepreneurs; externally oriented mass producers who orient towards the need of non-traditional clients, internally oriented local showroom producers, outdoor market producers who utilize traditional markets for their craft sales (page 49), and design entrepreneurs with creative expression (page 52). Later, she explains the three periods during which these producers changed or modified the products. In the initial stage at the very onset of tourists’ inflow, product experimentation was used to identify handcrafts for tourists’ acceptance (page 83); the second stage was of product expansion wherein identified

product the *tapetas* were made with many new designs and materials from outside the Mexican culture (page 85); in the third period extending from the late 1970s, the production was expanded to commercial exports (pages 87, 88).

Jules-Rosette (1984) identifies commercialization process in terms of aesthetic distance between the art objects and the expectations of audience. This aesthetic distance arises due to communication problem rather than taste of customers. Art objects generally land in the hands of ultimate customers through middlemen and vendors. As a result, in commercialization, there exist a gap between conceived art object and the range of expectations of the audience.

The most recent work on translation of cultural elements from one society to other through contact is studied by Ember and colleagues in 2008. According to them, ‘cultural elements are borrowed from another society and incorporated into the culture of the recipient group through the process of diffusion (ibid). Diffusion takes place through direct contact and intermediate contact (ibid). In the first case, neighbouring societies take up the cultural elements of the other society which continues to spread farther. Diffusion by the second process occurs through some third party or intermediary like traders who takes the cultural trait from the society that originated it to another society. The last pattern is stimulus diffusion in which knowledge of a trait belonging to another culture stimulates the invention or development of a local equivalent (ibid).

However, the only preeminent work in the category of understanding commercialization as a process of interaction between producers and customers was done by Prof. Erik Cohen in 1989. His classic work stems out from his previous work in which he studied the stylistic changes in crafts in a systematic framework in 1983. The study was basically on tribal weaves of the Meo and Yao groups at the height of the political upheaval taking place in Thailand. He explained the differential dynamics based on four principal variables with each permutation of these variables presenting a different dynamic (1983).

1. Perpetuation and innovation: This first variable pair refers the extent to which artisans merely reproduces the existing art objects or produces new objects.

2. Orthogeneity vs. heterogeneity: In orthogeneity the existing style is merely replicated in its entirety whereas in heterogeneity some extraneous or heterogeneous elements are created.
3. Internal vs. external audience: This third set relates to the production for designated audience. Internal audience is from within the artisan community while external audience is from outside the community of the artisan embracing domestic and foreign tourists and other groups.
4. Spontaneous vs. sponsored production: In spontaneous production the source of initiative for new artistic productions is from the artisan community while in sponsored one outside agents initiate the production.

Based on the findings, Cohen (1989) published his work giving a framework to understand the commercialization process of the crafts of these groups. Later he increased its extent to covering the crafts of Thailand in his voluminous book in the year 2000, 'The Commercialized Crafts of Thailand'. In his classic work, he argued that crafts commercialize under spontaneous process and sponsored process. In spontaneous commercialization, craftsmen initiate the production for the outer community themselves and sell their crafts either directly to customers or through middlemen; whereas in sponsored process, outside sponsoring agencies exploit the local skills of artisans who are relatively isolated from wider world and lack direct access to markets to making new range of products. It is the geographical isolation and cultural hiatus that creates a distance between artisans and consumers, filled later by intermediaries which ultimately influence the production (Cohen, 1993). Aspelin (1977) used the term indirect tourism for the external market for which local native craftsmen are employed by external or sponsoring agencies to produce crafts. Another definition cited in reference to commercialization is by Sarma (2008) wherein he proposes spontaneous commercialization as 'a process that sees changes occur gradually through growing contacts with the outsider' terming it as a naturally occurring process. He further accentuates the fact that 'the products that go through this process may not be termed as un-authentic though it may not have a smooth transition (ibid). Sponsored commercialization was considered as a process that 'happens more rapidly due to certain sudden changes, development or historical intervention when craftsmen use local skills to meet outside demand which is not necessarily related to the producer's culture (ibid).

Based on Cohen's (1989) framework, Bentor (1993) studied the commercialization process of Tibetan *thangkas* in Nepal. He found that modes of commercialization depend on history and cultural background of a craft and the artisans. His study identified complementary and rehabilitative type of commercialization as exiled Tibetans in Nepal were sponsored to produce for external markets (ibid) but still maintained original culture and iconography for the limited internal Tibetan audiences (ibid). However, he found another revolution in the process, as non-Tibetans started producing the same Thangkas as tourist art with more abstract and geometrical motifs other than the indigenous forms, thereby, initiating a substitutive commercialization (ibid). Markwick (2001) found different dynamics and consequences of commercialization for Maltese handicrafts but highlighted that the phenomenon of emergence of entirely 'new' craft different from local culture developed in response to new opportunities was rarely investigated. She termed it as 'sponsored innovative commercialization' (ibid). However, Sponsored innovative commercialization, according to Sarma (2008), is a type where an outside agency sponsors the whole process of commercialization. 'Account of craft commercialization ordinarily describe how objects that were at one time integral parts of indigenous cultures become transformed as the result of global market place' (Chibnik, 2003a).

A case study on Mapuche artisans of Argentina focused on the selling practices of the crafts in the touristic region of Lacar and Huiliches (Radovich, et al. 2010). Geographical nearby located craftsmen market their products without any intermediaries during the heavy tourist season and originality of style and design depend on the artisans (ibid). On the other hand, communities located far off from the tourist location rely on intermediaries who purchase their crafts and sell them in shops at the destinations (ibid). These intermediaries, thereby, direct craftsmen to produce items with indigenous materials but exigencies include designs or prints which are unrelated to Mapuche iconography (ibid). In the third process, the craftsmen is completely invisible from the producer; shops owners either visit communities and buy the products or set up small workshops in a way that customers do not have direct access to craftsmen (ibid 44). The fourth way to commercialize their products is through trading in fairs and events which give artisans a field to communicate with different actors. This structure is provided by traditionalist state organizations, native-activist organizations and NGOs linked to the producer community (ibid).

Other prominent study identifying the communication between customers and producers was conducted by Wethey (2005) in Bolivia. It examined the role of NGO and local middlemen in the commercialization process. It found that geographical isolation of the Jalq weavers' (ibid) was reduced through the interference of middlemen as a connecting agent to the developing tourist market who rather exploited the weavers by buying their products cheap; whereas the NGOs and cooperatives by manipulating their textile production assisted weavers to enter directly into cash economy (ibid). Middlemen influenced the mode of textile production. She observed that weavers differentiated between commodified textiles produced for sale and personal use (ibid). In San Jua, Guatemala, textiles are targeted on small number of tourists on short hikes (Modesto, 2001) and for indigenous customers who do not weave the textiles anymore but still prefer woven goods (ibid). Large quantity is exported through international development agencies, individual foreign patrons and fair trade organizations (ibid).

Bas Prins (2006) focused on the steps in the commercialization of the crafts in Dominican Republic. He basically studied the supply chain of handicrafts divided into production, intermediary and sales stage and suggested a possible understanding that same organization or entrepreneur can execute one or more actions in the various stages of the process. Fabeil and colleagues (2012) categorized commercialization as dedicated or formal and modest commercialization. While modest commercialization refers to production from home, generally working part time, formal or dedicated commercialization is workshop based production on a full time basis (ibid).

It is quite possible that two different types of commercialization act simultaneously or progress one after the other. In case of Samoa, crafts at first changed to match the commercial pursuits of missionaries and traders, and at later stages, modified under local consumers and touristic influences (Lucas, 2008). The artisans of Tarahumara in Mexico started crafting dolls in pine wood other than carving animals as toys which soon gained market and caused related explosion in carving of variety of figures (Burns, 1996). Further craft innovation resulted when catholic missionaries started encouraging artisans to make traditional baskets for sale especially in miniaturized forms (ibid). Wood carvers of Banaue and Hapao in Indonesia are obliged to adopt the disposition of foreign traders and local traders to produce sculptures of Mickey Mouse and Laughing Buddha as well as figures of American Indians, and curios such

as phallic ashtrays apart from recasting traditional *bul-ul* and *kinnahu* carvings (Tolentino, Jr. 2012). Traditional patterns of Hmong textiles, the *Paj ntaub*, of Thailand were influenced by external sources like tourist visitors and latter influenced by missionaries providing access to export markets; it demonstrated introduction of new colors and designs (Craig, 2010). The Kuna women of Panama produced colorful *molas* (blouses) more as an art for the tourists rather than commercialized locally and sold it directly to them; at the same time, the *molas* were exported to many parts of Europe and United states through foreign middlemen (Stephen, 1991). Majority of the textiles produced in San Juan, Guatemala, are sold in main tourist markets while rest is sold through fair trade organizations, individual foreign clients and development agencies (Modesto, 2001). Commodification of Amish crafts, according to Garybill (2009), is partly determined by tourist preferences, partly by Amish themselves who may or may not have control over their own representations, and to some extent, by tour guides who behave as cultural brokers.

William (1976) documented the development of aboriginal artefact trade at Yirrkala under several mission stations for inexpensive objects like small carvings and suitcase size bark paintings. Moxon (1999) sheds light on the development of the Inuit carving and arts in the Canadian arctic region in the 1940s as a result of direct involvement of the Canadian Handicraft Guild and the federal government in marketing of the products. The Guild produced booklet of traditional designs and products with instructions and provided the catalogues to the Inuit craftsmen who later joined to produce crafts for sale (Graburn, 2004). Still there is very limited communication between the carvers and the outside community (Moxon, 1999). Inuit carvers of the Kinngait region of Canada produce many expensive items as well as small souvenir items which are sold to art galleries throughout the world (ibid). Modern Inuit art though grew out of desire of non-Inuit agencies and persons (Graburn, 2004), primarily, it was the economic incentive that encouraged Inuits to commercialize their figurines for sale to outsiders; traditional carving thus evolved into a culturally peripheral activity (Martijn, 1964; Moxon, 1999).

Berman (2006) identified the trend of modification in carpet production in Turkey. In the context of petty production and home-based production, she found that weavers did not distinguish between carpets for personal consumption or sale; weavers were free to choose any design they like and their motifs stayed in line with traditions with

some space for market taste (ibid). It is common to see designs from one region reflect in the carpet of another region. However, simplification in motifs was noticed when made exclusively for sale in retail and tourist market. On a whole, when carpets were produced independently, the modification rested in the hands of the weavers. Under workshop based production, women had no say in design aspects; carpets were conventionalized with standardized curvilinear patterns derived from sophisticated patterns. With respect to materials used, synthetic dyes have replaced natural dyes (ibid).

Such types of information related to modification of crafts and involvement of various actors in the process of commercialization occur in numbers, but does not present the process of commercialization as a set of systematic stages. In her thesis on Rajasthani block prints of Chippa community, Ronald (2012) has found the increasing influence of NGOs in the design discourse in present times; however, at the same time some handful youngsters are entering into the traditional occupation and giving it a new direction in terms of design development. Youkhana (2010) gives example of the role of NGO in the commercialization of crafts in Yaxuna, Mexico. Proyecto Productivo Artesanal (PPA) provided visible help in the new handicraft design and style development as well as marketing support for commercialization in view of the tourism project undertaking in the region by the Government (ibid). There are further examples of intermediary involvement but to the extent of marketing of the crafts. Outlets such as African Art Centre acted as broker between indigenous craft producers and a new clientele (Jolles, 2012). Artisans started introducing miniaturized pots as beer bottle, salt-cellars and vases for the tourists (ibid). Intermediaries typically do not modify any craft but simply function as a link between producers and retailers procuring bulk products and redistributing the merchandise for a profit (Swanson and Timothy, 2012). Intermediaries, according to Moreno and Littrell (2001), market cultural objects without any input from originating culture. However, this significant layer of intermediaries has not received the kind of attention it must have received in scholarly platform (ibid).

Some companies like Ngoc Dong improvises traditional basket wares and also innovates new items to appeal to larger export markets (Szydlowski, 2008). Increasing involvement of various organizations has resulted in commercialization of woven products like palm baskets in Caprivi, Namibia which were primarily used for

storing grains (Suich and Murphy, 2002). Likewise, in Thailand, middlemen sometimes requested the bronze artisans of Pradittorakan to develop products according to sample pictures provided by customers from abroad (Chartniyom, 2013). Outlets such as African Art Centre acted as broker between indigenous craft producers and a new clientele (Jolles, 2012). Merchants acting as the link between artisans and market find that traditional crafts sell better once transformed according to appeal of customers (Chibnik, 2003). Traders and middlemen have increasingly inspired basket makers of Bangchaocha community in Thailand to include more colors in ladies' handbags exported to Japan; traditional rice containers like kra-bungs are adjusted to fit the fancy of the domestic and export markets (Chuenrudeemol, et al. 2012). Quechua weavers of Mexico commercialized the crafts through organized networks consisting of local merchants (Stephen, 1991).

Diversified wood carvings in San Martin began with experiments by wood carvers themselves as an attempt to increase sales and at the same time government sponsored competitions also encouraged carvers to create artistic pieces (Chibnik, 2003a). Oaxacan woodcarvings in Mexico differed greatly in styles as wood carvers tried to increase their sales by creating something distinctive yet attractive (Chibnik, 2000). As a result, initial 'rustic' carvings which bore natural, cultural and spiritual images changed to carvings of often complicated and heavily ornated non-indigenous faunas (ibid). Often carvers carved elaborate and expensive pieces, and on the other end, less complicated ones which require minimal expenditure of money and time on their part but still sells well (ibid). Artisans innovated and experimented on their own to create niches in the market sphere (ibid). Wayang, a puppet play folk art from Java and Bali also saw massive transformation in recent years (Rath, 2003). Along with the change in traditional storyline, the artists have also brought visible changes to their flat wooden puppets or the Wayang figures. Some artists have spontaneously created Wayang figures like ogres and demons in bright colors totally atypical to the traditional figures (ibid). Another puppet art that has modified in terms of its characters and storyline due to commercial influence is the Nang Talung puppetry of Thailand. Mythological stories represented by princes and princesses in forest and hermit settings changed to cowboy and cowgirl characters for modern audiences (Koanantakool, 1989). Indirect customer influence arises due to artisans growing knowledge about customer taste which he applies to change his crafts (Jones, 1987).

Some crafts are revived by government agencies. In Kasongan, Indonesia, pottery and ceramic art changed rapidly to more advanced level due to initiatives of experts from the government departments (Gustami, et al. 2014); traditional artwork and contemporary style are mixed to create new products (ibid, 46). In India, Central and state governments are making valiant efforts to sustain *chikankari*¹², once patronized by the Mughals, by opening workshops to train artisans (Chakravarty, 2003). Some traditional crafts in Thailand receive governmental and royal patronage and are developed through training programs (Chotiratnapinum, 2010). Similar was the fate of once famed Jamdani and Kantha works in Bangladesh. Artisans had long given up the tradition of quilting and weaving to the extent that these marvelous art works could be found only in closed glass boxes of the museums. BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) initiated its redevelopment with a few artisans with almost forgotten knowledge of the art but having requisite skills (Chen, 1984). BRAC started providing market for the produce through its retail outlets. Now a trend has prevailed in Bangladesh wherein Jamdani has become the traditional marriage wear which was once substituted for silk saris from India. Songket, the traditional Malay fabric woven with only silver and gold metallic threads to form songket motifs, was originally a dress of the Malay royalty (Kheng, 2010). Due to the opportunity from new markets, this silk fabric is now converted into many types of apparels and accessories like bags, mats, and cushions; the use of polyester and cotton blend and metallic threads in many shades has proliferated now (ibid). Other than that, YTNZ foundation under the royal patronage has initiated its commercialization as premium gifts, wall panels and fashion and furnishing related products (ibid).

Batik in Jambi, Indonesia was first revived by the provincial government to augment the income of the artisans (Hitchcock and Kerlogue, 2000). The government developed the art by developing batik skills and creating local markets for the craft (ibid). The Mapuche artisans of Argentina sell their crafts through government companies like Artesanias Neuquinas; the artisans themselves control the quality of the products and diversification of the crafts (Sullivan, 2013). Some traditional crafts in Thailand receive governmental and royal patronage and are developed through

¹² Chikan/*chikankari* is a traditional embroidery style from Lucknow in India.

training programs (Chotiratnapinum, 2010). In Asia, *phulkari*¹³ art was rediscovered in Hazara, Pakistan as a result of the conscious effort of some NGO which asked traditional *phulkari* embroiderers to produce the art on modern *kurtas* (Malik, 2011). Since then it has shown tremendous change in original motifs, materials and color usage; cheaper material is used against traditional khaddar base and the quality has degraded to a great extent (ibid). In Bolivia, Jalq community textiles saw rapid decline in quality and output (Richardson, 2013). ASUR, Antropolos del Sur Andino, an anthropologists' led organization founded in 1992, initiated the revival of Andean textiles of the region with the help of the remaining few master weavers (ibid).

Commodification of traditional textiles of Candelaria in Bolivia started since 1988 when a partnership project with ASUR materialized which focused on recuperating the indigenous weaves (Woofter, 2011) by suitably altering them to touristic items (ibid). The structure and design of the women's traditional wear ak'su was altered to produce small and large wall hangings while older designs which consisted of abstract geometric motifs were modified to include figural scenes, festivities and fables (ibid). ASUR also convinced weavers to create new products like purses, pillowcases, placemats, etc. and became the intermediary by purchasing the artisans products and selling them in local, national and international markets (ibid). Traditional patterns of Hmong textiles 'the Paj ntaub' of Thailand were influenced by external sources like tourist visitors and latter influenced by missionaries providing access to export markets; it demonstrated introduction of new colors and designs (Craig, 2010).

Bhattacharyya (2015) has discussed the finished product market of non mulberry silk in Assam. The market is represented by various channels acting between the weaver and the consumer. In case of the *muga* market, the weaver sells the products to the consumers through retailers (ibid). It also happens that traders as well as the retailer become the channels making the market a four step platform. Similar, is the case with *eri* too. However, *eri* weavers sometimes overpass the intermediary stage to sell their products directly to the consumers (ibid). Ministry of MSME of Govt. of India, Development Commissioner Handicrafts and several NGO involvements through special trainings and assistance programs have furthered the diversification of *patachitra* to wall hangings, mirrors with *patachitras* frames, and flower vase,

¹³ Phulkari is a kind of floral embroidery practiced in India and Pakistan, especially Punjab region.

costumes, cushion covers, even bags, impressed with patta paintings (Jefferson, 2014; Palit and Dutta, 2016). Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) implemented Rural Business Hub (RBH) on handlooms under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India sponsorship in Golaghat district covering Madhya Kaziranga Gaon Panchayat (Anand, 2011). With two training centres it imparts training to weavers on production of traditional textiles as well as other modern products like table runners, table mats and cushion covers. Weavers sell their products in local markets as well as weave for IORA retail outlet at Kaziranga (ibid). Various trusts and NGOs are working with the tribal population of Assam at several handloom clusters and are providing marketing as well as design related support to the weavers (AIACA, n.d.).

This brings to forefront the communication between the customer and the producers of indigenous art and place of the agencies as one of the actors in the commercialization process of the crafts. Till date, no other systematic comparative typology of the processes of commercialization is yet available (Cohen, 1989) at least for understanding the process in the traditional crafts sector of Assam. In present world of globalization and communication, craft practices have intersected with techniques of mass production but commercialization still sounds antithetical whereas in reality it is far more complex (Dadi, 2003). In spite of its commercialization, traditional crafts, undoubtedly, embodies the ‘harmonious balance between aesthetics and function, physical and ideological purpose, economic and ecological decision’ (Nugraha, 2010).

2.8 Commercialization of Material Wealth ‘Crafts’: The Debate on Authenticity and Sustainability

Ever since its’ first coining in 1973, the notion of authenticity and sustainability in the face of commercialization has grown bigger and bigger only to become more complex and multi-faceted in the recent times. The identification of the term authenticity has a complex ideology, especially in the cultural connotations, interpreted and re-interpreted by many scholars. According to Shiner (1994), there is a double tracking discourse on the term called authenticity. Ironically, while articles from small-scale societies made to serve ritual and sacred practices within the society are relegated to the status of art, articles produced within the same society but for sale in the outside society due to its visual appreciation are juxtaposed as tourist fakes (ibid). Its authenticity is always surmised, since it utilizes non-traditional materials, techniques

or even style possibly for saving money, time, and resources or to suit the aesthetic needs of consumers (ibid). The advertent idea that art should be made strictly within traditional local style, technique and for ritualistic purposes only is misguided and false due to continuous cultural exchanges and advances (ibid). "In the prison house of tradition and authenticity, any change may be seen as a contamination and loss of identity" (Rowlands, 2002).

Commercial forms are disassociated from the sacred and aboriginal art forms and are not received with the same reverence but are never considered as extraneous by the community. Rather, these are reckoned as expressions of value inciting the community's sense of creativity (Tolentino Jr, 2012). Oakes emphasizes on the paradox of authenticity by writing that authenticity vaporizes only when it is searched for 'to the extent that this need leads one on a journey, a quest for something or somewhere authentic' (Minca and Oakes, 2006). In this sense, authenticity is modernization's own creation (ibid). O'Connor (2012) even went further to argue authenticity is unattainable.

Researchers often debate the artistic merit and authenticity of hybridized crafts (Chibnik, 2003a). According to Greenwood (1977), commoditization of cultural objects often alters the meaning and destroys the cultural elements. It is also said to destroy the genuineness or authenticity of cultural products as objects are contrived for staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). Some art critics like Kalyan Kr. Chakravarthy deplores the idea of re-creation of folk arts for its commercialization as this process rips art of its essential virtues ("Commercialisation of tribal art forms deplored"). Shanks (1994) believe that commodified crafts produced as souvenirs do not have the appeal of high-culture art. Commercialization and growth of external markets are responsible for the loss of authenticity in material culture worldwide (Morrell, 2005) as it coerces artisans to diverge from the customary techniques and practice (Waterbury, 1989). Simplification of the craft forms for commercial purpose leads to artificial characteristics (Mokras-Grabowska, 2013). Researchers cited examples wherein, commercialization ripped the traditional features of many crafts and made them un-authentic.

Waterbury (1989) believes that the growing tourist trade of embroidered blouses in San Antonino, Mexico, resulted in the deterioration of the quality craft; blouses were

no longer attached with wedding practices and hence lost their symbolic significance with its commercialization. Unlike the old motifs, new figures on *hinggis*¹⁴ did not have any symbolic meaning but were mere decorative scenes (Anas, 2005 as cited in Howard, 2006). Mishra (n.d.) documented the buyer-centric commercialization of Madhubani paintings of Mithila as a reason for the degradation of its original aesthetic essence. No doubt, the translation of wall and floor paintings into canvasses in the late sixties helped preserve the art. It further paved way for other mediums and transferred to greeting cards, dress materials and sun-mica which saw great success. But it seemed to have caused serious harm to the art as new artisans from communities other than the traditional ones started producing the craft with themes and designs, mostly decided by the buyers. As a result, the rhythm and meaning of the traditional motifs and color has changed and has threatened the originality of the folk painting. In this regard, Mishra opines that selling art for a living is not a bad practice but surrendering indigenesness to the whims of customers disturbs a traditional art work. Production of crafts for exports also leads to radical heterogenization in forms and designs as it debases artisan communities' from cultural background (Chudasri, et al. 2012). Traditional weaves of the Jalq and Sakaka weavers (of Bolivia) degraded in quality when it was commoditized for tourists and export markets (Healy and Zorn, 1983:7). The commercialization of *bul-ul* and *kinnahu* wood carvings of Philippines for souvenir hunters and importers, once considered consecrated and used as religious paraphernalia, has resulted in gradual disappearance of traditional forms due to its disassociation from original role (Tolentino Jr, 2012).

According to Wolff (1981), art is rather an activity which should remain 'unaffected by capitalist relations and market constraints' to truly preserve its iconographic and social meanings. Since art and craft are inseparable from culture, inherited part of culture dies when it is allowed to grow into a commercial piece (Wade, 1981). Commercialized artworks are represented as mere 'hollow echo of the past, repeating a technique without the former spiritual content' (LaDuke, 1981). Critics believe that cultural legitimacy can only be achieved when production of artifacts is protected from the negative effects of commercialization (Morrell, 2005) like degeneration of crafts (Mary-Russell, 1931 as cited in Parker 1997). Some researchers like Clifford are even more stringent with norms and characterize authenticity as something that have

¹⁴ *Hinggi* is a kind of textile produced in the island of Sumba in Indonesia.

not changed which stereotypes and underestimates everything else as inauthentic (cited in Ballengee-Morris, 2002).

While there are many who discredit commercialization led commoditization for the lost authenticity of traditional crafts, some researchers argue that only because crafts meant as commodities are produced for external markets but not used by indigenous producers themselves, 'in-authenticity' is labeled even to traditional crafts which still would carry imprints of the living culture (Phillips and Steiner, 1999). The indigenous identity persisting in artifacts cannot be reduced to 'an essentialising 'otherness' defined by outsiders' (Tolentino Jr, 2012). Commercialized replicas of folk crafts are 'authentic reproductions' (Bruner, 1991). However, authenticity has no significance in post modern society (Terziyska, 2012). Authenticity for many consumers of material culture is irrelevant (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). Commoditization and change in cultural objects 'cannot be described as unilaterally beneficial or detrimental' (Sullivan, 2013). The same way, authenticity in cultural objects is also not a static social connotation or a primitive given (Cohen, 1988); it is rather 'negotiable' and 'fluid' (Squire, 1994 as cited in Zhu 2012); more so experiential rather than categorical (Grunewald, 2009). Authenticity is thus a relative term rather than being absolute or measurable; it evolves in response to both external and internal stimuli (Xie, 2001). It shares a 'delicate balance between the old and new' and has credibility for it reproduces the elements of old in the new (Yu, 2009).

Ideal craft object remains arguably authentic with precisely right balance of understandable tradition and palatably aesthetic features (McKean cited in Goertzen, 2001). For, example, touristic pillowcase, an untraditional item hand-woven in traditional ways presenting modern version of sacred, religious and ancient designs of the Maya culture of Mexico originally patterned on huipiles, an elaborate hand-woven blouse, is a witness to authenticity itself (Goertzen, 2001). There are examples wherein commodified objects are purchased by tourists' as authentic. Quilts made by indigenous Amish artisans from Pennsylvania are sought by customers as authentic expression though neither design nor colour or functions are traditionally Amish (Garybill, 2009). Even new quilted products like placemats, beach bags, appliance covers, vests, etc. and Amish themed ornaments, mouse pads, dolls, etc. are highly produced by the Amish crafts woman as it offers good business (ibid). Such mass produced objects are authentic as they are legitimate forms of cultural expressions in

modern forms (Steiner, 1999). Bajpai (2015) presented a doctoral thesis by considering application of traditional *Chowpuran* art work done on floors to be produced on Varanasi handloom brocade for making both the traditional forms sustainable.

Commoditization of culture occurs only when culture is in its decline due to the impingement of many external forces preceding tourism (Cohen, 1988). In such situations, the emergence of tourist markets acts as facilitator for preserving culture (ibid). Again, it must be remembered that culture and tradition are progressive elements which changes over time as innovations come to be reinterpreted as cultural continuities (Lewis, 1991). Commoditization in this case, essentially, is perceived less of a devil to the community members where it actually prevails than it appears to the outsiders (Cohen, 1988). Actors engaged in the process in reality do not perceive it to be transforming their cultures but in contrast find a degree of continuity between old and the new (ibid). Old meanings do not necessarily disappear but remain silent, on a different level for internal public (ibid). Artists do not completely give away traditions in instances of economically benefiting activities. For example, Toraj weavers of Sadan (in Indonesia) still produce their traditional fabric with indigenous components while crafting distinguishing products like tablecloths, placemats and miniature replicas of their ceremonial weaves for the tourists (LaDuke, 1981). *Chikan* craft once stitched only on Deccan muslin cloth permeated inexpensive mill cloths, with designs also modified into simpler forms under the influence of commercialization; but the craft itself did not vanish (Chakravarty, “Chikan – A Way of Life”). Even in commoditization, culture may not be lost necessarily as artisans judge the genuineness for themselves separately (Stronza, 2001).

Commercialization is not always harmful. Sometimes it brings renewed interest among artisans and resurgence in skillful craftsmanship though it promulgates shoddy and non-traditional crafts (Berma, 1996). Folk products can be salvaged through its commodification even though it seems contradictory for preservation of traditional art (Maskiell, 1999). It can be one of the ways to preserve cultural heritage along with other means (Setyagung et al. 2013). In many instances, growing interest in crafts among industrialized countries and tourists has helped in preservation and revival as well as innovation of crafts in many fourth world countries (Prins, 2006). Tourism has led to a flourishing handicraft industry in Malta and has helped to preserve traditional

art and indigenous elements (Boissevain, 1977; Stephen, 1991). In Tana Toraja, Indonesia, the inflow of tourists produced huge demand for curios thereby reviving the tradition of *ikat* patterned ceremonial blankets (Howard, 2004); growth of this external market also led to the emergence of new style of *hinggi*¹⁵ in Sumba, Indonesia (ibid). But somehow, tourism induced commercialization is termed as a degenerator of crafts and its authenticity and is more an exaggeration than a fact (Vencatachellum, 2008). Rediscovering of values in cultural products like crafts among tourists, give artisans' a window to reclaim their threatened materials from extinction, by putting them into demand oriented productions (Nash, 2000). Ronald (2012) observed that the traditional block printing art of the Chippa community of Rajasthan survived explicitly because of the community's adaptability to use synthetic dyes and printing the indigenous motifs on modern materials against the traditional cotton fabric. Old motifs and designs when produced on modern artifacts are 'reinvention of tradition' (Leigh, 2002). Even in the face of commerce, Malay craftsmen of Kaula Kangsar region have successfully preserved tradition through continuity of the craft and balancing local and fresh inspiration on pottery and metal works (Kamaruddin, et al, 2013); old motifs, aesthetics and designs are retained due to its high value in the society (ibid).

The sustainability of a craft rests upon availability of market. In fact, Blumer (2004) wrote, 'trade in pottery saved the (Catawba) nation from extinction'. Unless artisans get economic benefit, they willingly surrender tradition. Artisans continue with tradition only till the requirement persists at household levels. Once it can be fulfilled through other means, tradition no longer sustains. Insisting artisans to stay within the bounds of traditional designs and styles is limiting their creativity (Mitchell, 2000); status quo artistry museumizes artisans (ibid) and minimizes the crafts importance as a significant means of survival (Alvim, 1983 as cited in Mitchell, 2000). Stringent authenticity disregards the crafter's own aesthetic (Venkatesan, 2009). Modernization of tradition is rather an act of 'genuine succession of, but not rebellion against, nor destruction of tradition' (Soetsu cited in Kikuchi, 2004). Crafts carry tacit knowledge and communal body of knowledge and thus are defined by actual knowledge; imitation and originality issues are hence irrelevant to the identity issue of crafts (Dormer cited in Kikuchi, 2004).

¹⁵ *Hinggi* is a kind of textile produced in the island of Sumba in Indonesia.

With quality, traditional crafts also need to be beautiful and cost effective in order to find a place in competitive market (Jena, 2010). It has been seen that traditional craft objects sell better once transformed in ways to suit the needs of foreign tastes (Chibnik, 2003a). Proper designing keeping in view traditional features and consumer taste can contribute to sustainability of crafts (Chudasri, et al. 2012). According to Nugraha (2010), designing new objects inspired from tradition thereby transforming tradition is a way towards keeping old traditions alive. If the hierarchy of knowledge flow in artisan community fails, we might lose the tradition in toto and reconstructing lost knowledge is a difficult work (Dormer cited in Nugraha, 2010). Transforming tradition is thus worth doing as it make things sustainable (Madan, n.d; Nugraha, 2010). Redeveloping a traditional object which is about to vanish is in fact preserving it when it is still alive (ibid). Traditional coconut utensils which disappeared from Java, Indonesia have once again been brought to life by integrating modern and traditional features through coconization process (ibid). Traditional batik, normally done on fabric, has also been reproduced on wood. Artefacts in their new form and space reflect the continuity of traditions and to preserve it one has to continue developing it (ibid). Traditional crafts if revived and encouraged can help in economic regeneration of village artisans (Ramakrishnamoorthy, 1996). Unless crafts are adapted to contemporary taste and demand, rural craftsmen will be driven out of the markets (ibid). Additionally, Chen (2015) puts thrust upon invention of tradition in case of folk arts with its simultaneous preservation, reconstruction and remaking. Discovery of modern tourist interest in stone art culture led to innovation; people have created different social meanings, functions and values of the natural materials (ibid). Preserving maintains the originality, reconstruction and remaking recovers tradition when added with contemporary components to meet contemporary tastes while invention creates a new local culture utilizing local resources (ibid).

‘Modern influences do not necessarily destroy traditional folk arts’; arts survive though in changed form (Cohen, 1983). The ritual Mithila wall paintings of Bihar became successful both commercially and artistically due to its transposition from wall to canvas (Wilkinson-Weber, 2004). In Indonesia, traditional utensils made of coconut shell had almost disappeared from normal use. But ‘coconization’ gave new life to old products in new forms which are today sold in markets in Java (Nugraha,

2010). New materials like solutions are used to join the wood to coconut bowl and laminated wood is used to give the product more shine (ibid). Artisans have also transformed old traditional baskets into new shape with new functions. Likewise, old batik technique generally done on fabric has been transformed onto other pieces of craft like wooden bowls only to be known as ‘pieces of art’ (ibid). The traditional round shaped *indhi*¹⁶ of Haryana created artistically through braiding and decorations are used in rural areas by women for carrying water filled pitchers on head. These artistic pieces are converted into small sizes for decorations (Gill, et al. 2012); it may lose some utilitarian value but its modification ensures the sustainability of the art (ibid). In Kutch, Gujarat women artisans introduced their embroideries in new products to give a new dimension to the centuries old art highlighting an artisan driven change (Frater, 2012). The Kala Raksha foundation developed a unique way of ensuring sustainability of the rich tradition by engaging artisans to explore creativity within their traditional realms; it was self guided (ibid). Design intervention can help bring in the much needed empathetic understanding and holistic vision to connect and integrate the various efforts towards a positive outcome (Kapur and Mittar, 2014).

Commercialized craft can entail more profit than its original ‘day-to-day usability’ characteristics. But, while focusing on the material craft, it is also important to focus on the embedded art and the skill that has to be restored for the restoration of a traditional craft; even if it means modifying and adapting a traditional craft. Commercialization of crafts can be seen as a way for sustaining traditional elements of culture besides providing means of sustenance to artisans. It is important to use the ingrained power of tradition to persistency and continuity in crafts (Harrod, 1997 cited in Chudasri, et al. 2012). Commercialization may have affected styles and design but has kept traditions alive (Terry and Cunningham, 1993). Artisans make changes in their use of materials and designs to match buyers’ need (Sullivan, 2013). They alter their products to become a part of the market (Ballengee-Morris, 2002). As an example, contemporary masks from Bali allude neither to history or folk mythology nor are these made for any dramatic or dance performances as before (Tolentino, Jr. 2012). But somehow, these commercial masks carry the stylistic features of traditional topengs (masks) and employ batik elements borrowed from textiles which ultimately links to antecedent Javanese culture (ibid). Creative product

¹⁶ *Indhi* is a kind of round disc shaped craft object used on head for carrying water-pitchers.

development does not necessarily alter traditional design and form but instead fashions itself in a way to suit contemporary demands. Commercialization, in fact, keeps traditional crafts alive; indeed in its absence traditions would die (Berma, 1996; Cohen, 1983; Parnwell, 1993). It is important to study the marketing system comprising of producers, products, vendors and consumers to understand the need of modification in crafts (Berma, 1996). Commercialization of crafts through product diversification and mass production is efficacious in restoration of declining art forms (Palit and Datta, 2016). Adaptable initiatives among crafts persons with outside support can help artisans survive (Madisia, 2006).

Rusu (2011) opines that ‘adaptation, change and innovation are as old as humanity and they will continue their path as part of creativity’. Contemporary artisans adopt artistic discourses alien to their tradition not just to accommodate consumer tastes, but more so to reposition themselves in the changing milieu of the craft market (Tolentino Jr, 2012) and create a sense of their importance in the modern society (ibid). Commoditization is an unavoidable process but not bad in a sense that it can act as a solution to cultural deterioration (Reisinger, 2009). Due to commoditization, cultural artifacts which had been left long ago, gain recognition among various categories of customers, thereby, enhancing its value though in adaptive terms (ibid). Craftsmen continuously reinvent tradition knowing that they cannot live in a society value becomes non-value with time (ibid).

2.9 Commercialization of Crafts and Socio-Economic Conditions

Another important and related aspect to study is the socio-economic conditions of the artisans due to the commercialization of the crafts. It is a known fact that artisans working in traditional craft sector live in destituteness (Singh and Naik, 2009). Poverty among artisans is not due to inadequacy in exploiting opportunity but is due to lack of opportunity itself (Forbes, 1977). In the above section 2.8, repeatedly it has been mentioned that commercialization gives sustainable mode of sustenance to artisans.

It has been observed that commercialization of crafts essentially helps artisan families to improve their low standard of living and encourage a renewed pride among community members (Burns, 1996; Chibnik, 2003a). There are several examples

which rationalize the idea. Sullivan's (2013) investigation led her to the conclusion that Mapuche community benefitted economically and culturally from the production, marketing and selling of their indigenous crafts. She observed that increase in demand for traditional artifacts by non indigenous people ultimately restored the dying tradition and culture meanwhile providing income opportunities for the artisans. Connelly-Kirch's (1982) detailed examination of Tonga craftsmen' of Pacific islands revealed that commercialization of handicraft provided much needed cash to the artisans. Continued production of artifacts as tourist art also provided income opportunities for artisans in Toraja which provide socio-economic benefit to the families (Morrell, 2005). For Taquilean artisans of Andean island, production of traditional textiles for customers outside the community became an important source of income (Zorn, 2004). In Okavango delta of Botswana, commercialization of traditional agricultural and storage baskets to modified tourist souvenirs resulted in increased income for the rural communities (Mbaiwa and Darkoh, 2009). Artisans in Pakistan are compelled to find new markets for their traditional works; but find it difficult to accommodate as traditional crafts are often not saleable because of its form, style and color (Khan, 2011). In his Master's thesis, Woofter (2011) studied the commodification of weavings and the benefits accruing to women and the households of the Quechua speaking community of Bolivia. He found that commercialized traditional weaves like ak'su and pallyay designs into aesthetic objects like pillowcases, placemats, etc. created a source of income for the women. With respect to craft commercialization, Chibnik (2003a) observed that it has improved the standard of living of many artisans. Artisans want their children to acquire the knowledge. Where art is remunerative, artisans willingly train their children to continue the tradition.

Shaw (1992) states that commodification of heritage industries have long term positive effects on culture, economy and environment. Yang (2008) presented some case studies of successful commercialization of local crafts from China. Miao craftsmen from Taijiang County benefitted from commercial handicraft production according to emerging tourist market in the county (ibid). Within few years 95% of the villagers could see increase in net income from a meagre 550 Yuans per head in 1998 to 3160 RMB in 2005 (ibid). The villagers' household assets also rose in subsequent years. Another example cited is the commercialization of the batik clothes

from villages to city markets in Guizhou, which led to overwhelming increase of the daily income of the craft producers to several thousand RMB (ibid). Even small-scale commercialization of traditional bamboo and rattan baskets among the Batak community in Palawan region of the Philippines has re-activated the production of traditional woven items (Novellino, 2006 b). Decorative items fetch good price in the market (Census of handicraft artisans, Jharkhand, 2009-10). Berma (1996) suggests that by improving crafts according to the suitability of the new market segments, Iban artisans of Sarawak in Malaysia can promote sustainability of their traditional crafts. Commercial handicraft production with improved and modified designs was found to be a viable income generating opportunity and it helps to provide support basic family requirements (ibid). In *eri* craft at Kamrup, it is found that the income from innovative and ornamented products like scarf is generally higher than plain *borkapor* or *chadar* (Baishya, 1986). In *eri* weaving villages of Kamrup in Assam, it is seen that weavers marketing their products through own or through government agencies and NGOs are comparatively earning more than those having heavy dependence on local traders and intermediaries (Choudhury, 2011).

Several studies drive attention to the problem of low commercialization of traditional crafts and its pertinent impact on the socio-economic conditions of the artisans. Modesto (2001) found that though weaving for a small tourist market, with most of the purchase sold only to indigenous internal customers, the returns of the textile craft in Guatemala is inferior. It is stated that only some changes have occurred in the textiles (ibid) which might be a possible reason for less income. Other than the constrictions of updating crafts to market needs, several other factors are also found to influence the commercialization of the crafts. Mohapatra and Dash (2011) found that artisans in Orissa are facing problems in updating their artisanal products according to the rapidly changing consumer tastes and added to that the exploitation by the middlemen is also making the work un-remunerative. There is another study conducted by Singh and Naik on the Banarasi silk weavers in India that proves the paradox of low income and commercialization. It has been observed that in spite of modification and variations in the motifs and use of new raw materials like *zari*¹⁷, most of the weavers are earning meager annual income in the range of Rs. 21,400-44,652 due to poor marketability of the crafts (Singh and Naik, 2009). Artisans mostly

¹⁷ Zari is metallic wire used in the garments especially in brocade works.

relied on master weavers and cooperative while direct selling to customers was done by only few as majority of artisans (66%) worked as wage workers working for more than 10 hours a day (ibid). Dash (2015) found that more than 65% of artisan households in Orissa had less than Rs. 5000 per month earning while 8% made more than Rs. 12,500 which shows that income distribution among artisans is skewed but has potential of higher earnings. Rs. 5001-10,000 and Rs. 15,000-20,000 comprised around 24% while only 15% earned Rs. 20,001 and above (Dash, 2015). The study also observed that artisans producing artworks for direct tourism sector were earning significantly higher income (ibid).

Crafting is one of the activities which provide employment opportunity for most or all members of a rural household. In a study conducted by Yadav (2012), it was found that 94% of artisan families have all members of the family being involved in the craft activity. It also highlighted that for 78% of the artisans, marketing area for crafts did not extend beyond the village level (ibid). Sahoo (2014) in his doctoral work found that commercial production of handicrafts have made 57.5 % non-tribal and 44% tribal artisans economically empowered and 12.5% non-tribal and 10.55 tribal artisans have positively responded to the change in lifestyle and standard of living with more social standing. The commercialization of religious sand-paintings to decorative and secular art objects opened arena for women to pursue the craft which was initially restricted for women (Parezo, 1982).

According to Gjerald (2005) other socio-economic impacts of commercialization are labour force displacement, changes in the form of employment, change of ownership, increased standard of living and changes in the economical and political system. Apart from that, impacts are also seen in female work participation, seasonality of employment, wages and social status. Illuru and Thondawada (2012) made an analytical study on the socio-economic plight of the rural artisans of Andhra Pradesh. They observed that physical and material factors like illiteracy, poverty and ignorance coupled with socio-political and cultural exploitation stifles initiative and creativity. Saikia (2012) observed occupational shift among the traditional brass artisan community as a common trend in the changing economic situation of the 20th century. Lal B. Suresh in his paper on artisans' in Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh examines potters living and working conditions, land holdings and spending patterns

and their use of technology (n.d). It has been seen that commercialization of indigenous Teotitlan textiles of Mexico has led to increased weaving hours among the women artisans (Stephen, 1993). The same observation resonates in Richardson's (2013) study of Andean textiles in Bolivia.

Also, increase in commercialization increases the involvement of women in the craft production along with man (Zorn, 2004). Stephen (1991) has highlighted this in her book analysis on weaving households in Teotitlan, Mexico. Stephen also described about the increase in the income of households due to successful commercialization. Commercialized *phulkaris* were found to giving employment to women (Kaur and Gupta, 2014). Cornwall (2003) on her reflections on gender and participatory development states that women's participation in development projects, especially those in peasant communities, are often restricted. However, commercialization of crafts brings in opportunity for women to engage themselves in a craft not earlier open to them. Commercialization of crafts opened opportunity for rural women in Vietnam to work in wood carving in which earlier women could not participate due to religious sanctions (Le, 2009). With the growth of export markets, for the Vietnamese artisans, women also entered into wood carving of items like statues and pictures (ibid), which was initially preserved only for the males as it was related to religious construction like pagodas, temples, palace, etc. Women's involvement in production increased when sculpting for export market grew (ibid). The expansion of the wood carving industry needed bigger work force which eventually opened doors for women members in Vietnam (Le, Duc and Dung, 2009). Women find employment where meticulous, polished and detailed work is required (Miralao, 1988). Intricate crafts can create a niche for female artisans (Chibnik, 2000). Joseph (1988b) studied the socio-economic conditions of the batik artisans in Indonesia and found that income and wage rate are dependent on the intricacy of pattern and quality of work.

Even when women are integral part of the production process, their rights limit only up to production within the four walls of home. Women wood carvers in Vietnam yet had to struggle for going out of the village as traders of their products (Le, et al. 2009). With respect to women engaged in artisanal activity, Modesto (2001) found that women weaver's in San Juan, Guatemala produce the textiles for customers but never sold the products on their own. Women are not allowed to travel outside to

market their weaves as it was under male control (ibid). Berman's (2006) work shows this disparity with respect to carpet weavers in Turkey. The finished carpet products of the women are sold by the male head or other male member of the family with the women rested only with the responsibility of production (ibid). Swain (1993)'s gender study indicates craftswomen's raising empowerment within family and community and at the same time their limit to empowerment in the external market. France-Lise Colin's (2012) study on women's basketry work revealed that in spite of economic contribution by women to their households through the craft, dominant patriarchal and authoritative society still underplays women. Detailed analysis of participation of rural women in market and non-market activity was done by Ray and Phukan (1999) which indicated that only 31% participate actively in market activities. In Guatemala, Modesto (2001) found that women still depend on male members of their family for selling their textile productions in main tourist cities of the region. Contrary to that, Sahoo's (2014) doctoral work on women artisans in Orissa reflected that 87% of the tribal women engaged in commercialization of handicrafts have full autonomy to sell their products at their own will while only 49% from non-tribal category have the autonomy to sell their products on their own. According to Colin (2012), commercialization helps involvement of craftswoman in production. Increasingly, women are also getting involved in the marketing and selling of the crafts by themselves wherein formerly only men were responsible. Women are periodically going out of their houses to market products (ibid).

Craft sales help women contribute to family income which circuitously increases their self esteem. As noted by Lynd (2000), women weavers from San Juan, Guatemala find their weavings being valued in the society. The book *In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World* (Gianturco, et al. 2004) vividly describe the contribution of women in improving lives of their family by participating in commercialization of crafts and thereby maintaining the crafts tradition alive. It focuses on the driving forces like desire to provide for their children that compels them to enter the crafts sector. Engagement in commercial production of baskets among Cherokee women brought them sense of personal pride other than income (Hill, 1997). Similarly, Appalachian women artists' decorative pottery objects (Deakins, 2008) based on ancient traditions became means of personal expression and gratification (ibid). Citing examples of crafts production among women from rural India, Wood (2011)

corroborates that it increases bargaining power of the women in the household and uplifts her socio-economic status.

Artisans of Orissa blend modern and traditional designs to for locals as well as tourists (Acharya and Lund, 2002). Increasing business opportunities have opened up avenues for women in a male dominated market space (ibid). Apart from direct sales to tourists and local customers, the normal mode of sale of crafts in Orissa is through commercial intermediaries who act as links between registered and unregistered exporters. Contract production for NGOs is found more profitable by artisans (ibid).

Sarmah (2006) made a socio-economic study on the women weavers of Kamrup district in Assam. The study investigates background of the artisans in terms of demographics, income, and decision-making status of women in the household but make no reference to the commercialization related impact on the socio-economic status. Another study by Das (2008) looked into the marketing problems of the handloom products of Sualkuchi in Assam. Begum (2010) studied the socio-economic status of women weavers engaged in the *Endi* craft in Rampur of Assam. Kakati states that commercialization of folklore items help is the economic up-liftment of artisan communities (2010:144). A study on traditional brass workers of Kamrup district shows that conventional form of utilitarian vessel making is not a sustainable livelihood activity (Medhi, et al. 2012). Presence of middlemen limits direct selling of the products thereby, bringing stagnation in artisan wages; traditional brass item manufacturing pays only Rs. 6211 annual per capita income minimizing their ability to save and leaving the hereditary occupation for other occupations (ibid).

Pottery craft studies in many parts of the world reveal the diminishing demand of the regular utilitarian jars and utensils used in households because of the increase in the number of alternative objects of storage (Cano, 2012). Conventional pottery no longer provides stable income to the artisans (ibid). Hence, Buray artisans from Philippines have resorted to producing decorative jars called planters and other miniature jars to fit contemporary aesthetic practices (ibid). In Assam's Karimganj district, it has been found that only 44 families out of a 262 families engaged in production of conventional pottery items of daily use are presently working in this craft (Haloi, 2012). The artisans are abandoning the craft as they are not able to earn a minimum income for their subsistence (ibid). On the other hand, a study by Ghosh (2014) shows

the gain to the artisans of Asharikandi pottery and terracotta village resulting due to commercialization of the traditional pottery craft. Artisans are now able to fully remain involved in the activity round the year, once they started developing decorative terracotta products apart from their conventional utilitarian product range (ibid). Artisans engaged in conventional form of production in other crafts are also found to have difficulty earning sufficient income for livelihood. A socio-economic study of the *dokra* cast metal sculptors of Dariapur village in West-Bengal foregrounds the pitiable conditions of the craftsmen families. Almost 70% of the artisan families earn a meagre income of average Rs. 5000 with which it is hard to maintain an average family size of six (Samanta, 2015).

Das in 2007 conducted a study on *eri* silk culture in the state of Assam, especially Barpeta district. His research work is confined to studying importance of *eri*-culture in Assam and its role in generation of employment and income. His study found that there was an overall 11.54% decline in poverty in the sampled villages due to *eri* related activities (ibid). However, his work reflected only on the production of conventional *eri* shawls for men and the women. But again, he reports that there has been a changing trend among *eri* weavers towards making modern products like jackets, *kurtas*, fashion accessories, ties, scarves, stoles, bags, file folders, wallets, skirts, *maxis*, *dokhana*, *mekhela chadar* and many more (ibid). Das also found that some sections in the society accord low status to the *eri* silk rearers and weavers. Hence, fear of losing social status in the society drives them out of this occupation. Bhattacharjee (2009), while conducting her survey on the women weavers of Sualkuchi found that women involve actively in the weaving while the end product is marketed by the male member of the household. Moxon's (1999) observation showed that commercial opportunity increased the production of carvings among the Inuit artisans of Canadian arctic region of Kinngait simultaneously bringing product quality concerns. The most important contribution of craft production for external consumers is that it fortifies and reaffirms the craftsman's culture and identity and disseminates value within the community (ibid). Commodification of a community's cultural objects brings increased sense of pride and identity (Cole, 2007). However, it is also seen that due to laborious work and non-reliable nature of craft production, artisans want their children to take on different careers other than their own (Modesto, 2001).

United Nations Environment Programme identifies certain socio-cultural impact indicators like commodification, standardization, loss of authenticity and staged authenticity, adaptations to tourist demands, culture clashes, economic inequality, income inequality, deprivation of local people's access to natural resources, ethical issues, etc. Peck and Lepie (1989) found that the development of tourism led commercialization tends to change the composition of the family within society. They argue that it is responsible for increase in smaller family sizes, mostly nuclear families. Crafts council of India's crafts economics and impact study (2011) observes nuclear family becoming a fast norm in craftsmen families. The Ministry of Textiles, GoI 12th Five Year Plan for handicrafts emphasizes on providing sustainable livelihood for balanced socio-economic development of the artisans (p. 14). According to Rahman (2013) commercialization of crafts generates opportunity for income and hence it should be promoted. It has been seen that artisans who do not adhere to the demands of commercialization struggle to compete economically (Ballengee-Morris, 2002). Crescenzi and Rodriguez-Pose (2011) highlights the importance of capability to produce and access innovation for economic success among craftsmen.

2.10 Wrapping up the Chapter

This chapter has presented a comprehensive evaluation of earlier scholarship for assessing the scenario of commercialization in the traditional crafts of the world. It highlighted the development of folk crafts to objects or commodities. The review discussed the various schemas under which crafts are classified. In section 2.7, the process of commercialization of different crafts as conceived by researchers has been discussed. Addressing such directions helped in understanding the lacuna in craft sector of Assam. It was found that commercialization as a process is an understudied topic in Assam. Little more than passing information has been made regarding commercialization of traditional crafts of Assam.