

A Study on Problems of Handloom Weavers

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Abstract: The Government of India is aware about the constraints/problems being faced by the handloom weavers throughout the country primarily due to low productivity, stiff competition from power loom and mill sector, inadequate inputs supply and marketing facilities as well as insufficient credit flow from institutional sources. For the overall development of handloom sector and welfare of handloom weavers, the Government of India has taken policy initiatives and schemes interventions like cluster approach, technological up-gradation, marketing promotion, revival of viable and potentially viable societies through loan waiver and recapitalization assistance, availability of subsidized yarn and credit, besides, providing health and life insurance cover to the handloom weavers. This study tries to identify the problems faced by handloom workers.

Key words: handloom, government, marketing, finance, problems.

INTRODUCTION

The handloom industry has an important and distinct place in the Indian society and it plays a significant role in the nation's economy. Handloom industry is the largest generator of non-farm rural employment in India. As an economic (Handloom census 2009-10) activity, handloom is the 2nd largest employment provider next only to agriculture. The sector consisting of 27.8 lakh handlooms provides employment to 43.31 lakh persons. Out of which, 10% are scheduled castes, 18% belong to scheduled tribes, 45% OBC (Other Backward Castes) and 27% are from other castes. Handloom weaving is one of the ancient indigenous unique skill that has been dwindling rapidly in the recent past due to high mechanization and technological advances that have been cost efficient. This in turn is rendering handloom industry and weavers vulnerable. Cost efficient mechanization on one hand and lack of remunerative earnings to weavers on the other are tantamount to intimidating the survival of handloom industry in the long run. It is a fact once this unique skill and acumenhip becomes extinct, it may not be possible to revive it by any means. But at the same time there is a scope for improvement and growth with necessary policy interventions and structural reforms, as hand-woven cloth occupies distinct

position in the consumer mind due to its inherent merits like safe guarding from different weather conditions. Small handloom weaving industry in East Godavari has its own unique identity in producing high quality output at reasonable cost. It has immense scope for expansion but the weavers are not able to deliver the required output due to various problems. Though the government is making serious efforts to help the weavers, the benefits are not up to their expectations. The plight of the weavers in this district is worrisome. In this scenario the authors have made an attempt to conduct an in depth field oriented survey to know the socio economic status of weavers in order to help them. Socio-economic problems being faced by weavers include; low earnings, lack of incentives, occupational hazards, less awareness of government welfare schemes, lack of accessibility to formal financial system / services etc. The weaver earnings (Nayak et.al-2007) vary from Rs. 18000-30000 per annum. The average is likely to be in Rs. 20000-24000 range. It is inappropriate to ascribe this fully to the current slump. If market conditions improve vastly, the worker earnings are likely to improve marginally because the weaver forceactive and passive-is so large. There has been absolute decline in earnings @ at least 30% to 40% over last 10 years. A weaver who was getting Rs. 100 per day in mid - 1990's gets Rs. 60 per day now Weaving sector is an important cottage industry in India and an age old profession. Weaving is considered almost an art form, considering deployment of skills and knowledge. The changes in the society in the last 100 years, there have been growth of mechanized textile production across the world, principally driven by Industrial Revolution and by Western countries. Gradually, due to competition and for other reasons, handloom has lost much of its markets, and is almost nonexistent in most countries. Despite the significant position enjoyed by this sector, it is vested with a series of problems which ultimately culminated in starvation and suicide deaths of weavers in India. It was noticed that the most of the weavers living in poor conditions like food insecurity, malnutrition, anemia and other health related problems such as tuberculosis, asthma and gynecological illnesses among women, homelessness and a high dropout rate

among children, increased dependency on micro finance were some of the issues that have characterized the multiple deprivations among the workers. However, in Tamilnadu, majority of handloom and power loom weavers were facing manifold problems like poverty, low standards of living, hunger, poor health, malnutrition, illiteracy, diseases, and poor sanitation, housing, and communication and infrastructure facilities. These reasons were growing indebtedness, increasing risk, price uncertainty and low income levels are ultimately leading to frustration and force them to commit suicides among the weavers to end their lives as they were unable to provide a square meal for the members of their families.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Prabhakara Sharma and Joglekar (2002) have emphasized that the area under cotton cultivation in Indian is the largest in the world. India has the second largest spinning capacity after China in hand weaving sector and a long tradition of producing some of the finest and costliest fabrics in the world. India is the biggest yarn exporter with the share of 28 per cent of the world market and is known for the quality of its fine count cotton yarns. Through the contribution of the state handloom to the Indian culture as well as to the national exchequer presents a satisfactory picture. An insight into the socio-economic and working conditions of the weavers is tough one. At present, most of the weavers are leading miserable life for which the main reason is due to improper technology and also the fruits of the industry are actually grabbed by the middlemen

Srinivasulu (2004) presented an overview on the policies of handloom sector and suggested the ways to cope up with the international market. It is important to rethink about the handloom sector so as to make the sector competent by reorganizing the strategies; he advocated the state to protect the existing employment with necessary changes and strive for their well-being. The above are select research studies reviewed, but still there is huge scope for full-fledged in depth research studies at complete industry level that should include; weaver socioeconomic problems, weaver cooperative society effective and efficient business models, marketing arm like APCO and at consumer level to find out consumer behavior and vivid marketing strategies.

Ghosh and Akter (2005) studied the factors affecting the Handloom Sector in Bangladesh. The study is analyzed by using factor analysis in order to identify the predominant factors which hit the Handloom industry in Bangladesh. It is identified that

shortage of working capital, high cost of raw material procurement, lack of organizing capability, inadequate technology and efficiency, and lack of policy support are major forces which are bitterly hit the handloom industry. It is suggested in the study that the Government monitoring cell under Handloom Board of Bangladesh has to monitor activities of those wholesalers and retailers who are engaged in selling raw materials for handloom products to prevent any unfair advantage.

Annapurna (2006) stated that despite many anticipations of its decline, the spirit of the handloom market in India demonstrates an inherent quality of the product as well as the many intangible associations it carries for its customers. The study deals that the exhibition marketing allows producers to produce product at own space by controlling their routine production cycles and to gauge customer preferences. It is also stated that buying the products in exhibition becomes an experience than a day exchange, through which the human dimensions of craft production is carried over in to the market transaction.

Shailaja et.al. (2006) studied the traditional handloom industry Kinnal village of northern district of Karnataka. They observed that the problem of marketing handloom produce is mainly due to lack of demand, low productivity, lack of financial facilities and competition from power looms, they opined that there is a great need to improve and expand the marketing facilities of the handloom products. While there are suggestions (Sudalaimuthu and Devi) that handloom sector should increase its design in response to changes in the market, the bottlenecks are many. The lack of change is not due to the weaver not being amenable to change, as is banded. Rather, it is due to unwillingness of the investor to take risks and provide incentive to weavers for affecting the change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the financial and other problems faced by the Handloom Weavers.
2. To formulate the policies and subsidies provided by the Central and State Government.
3. Suggestions given for promoting handloom weavers status in Negamam Panchayat

Research Design

In this study the researcher has adopted **Descriptive research design** to investigate and study the give problem. The major goal of descriptive research is to describe the event, phenomena and situations.

Universe:

The universe of this research work forms all the Handloom weavers in Negamam Panchayath, Coimbatore District of Tamilnadu, South India.

Sample size and selection procedure:

A sampling methodology was developed based on the data obtained Sri Sowdambika Negamam Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society was selected for conducting interview.

ANALYSIS**Table No: 1****Distribution of the respondents according to their Educational Qualification**

| S. No | Educational Qualification | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentage |
|-------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Illiteracy | 36 | 12.0 |
| 2 | Middle school | 72 | 24.0 |
| 3 | Secondary | 120 | 40.0 |
| 4 | Higher Secondary | 54 | 18.0 |

The table No 1 depicts the educational qualification of the respondents, more than one-third (40 percent) of the weavers were completed secondary level of education, 24 percent were completed middle school, 18 percent were completed upto higher secondary level of education and remaining 12 percent of the handloom weavers were illiterate.

Table No: 2**Distribution of the respondents according to their Annual Income**

| S. No | Annual Income | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentage |
|-------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Below Rs. 30,000 | 108 | 36.0 |
| 2. | Rs. 30,00 to Rs. 60,000 | 156 | 52.0 |
| 3. | Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 90,000 | 36 | 12.0 |

The table No 2 reveals that half (52 percent) of the handloom weaver has the annual income range between Rs. 30,000- 60,000, one-third (36 percent) of the respondents has the annual income range of

below Rs. 30,000 and remaining 12 percent of the respondents has the annual income range between Rs. 60,000 -90,000. This shows that the income and living standard of the handloom weavers are very poor.

Table No: 3**Distribution of the respondents according to their Periods of engaged in handloom profession**

| S. No | Periods engaged in handloom profession | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentage |
|-------|--|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Below 10 years | 18 | 6.0 |
| 2. | 10-20 years | 84 | 28.0 |
| 3. | 20-30 years | 72 | 24.0 |
| 4. | Above 30 years | 126 | 42.0 |

The table No 3 depicts that a majority (42 percent) of the respondents were engaged in handloom profession is above 30 years, 28 percent of the respondents were engaged 10-20 years, 24 percent were in 20-30 years and remaining 6 percent of the respondents were engaged in this profession below 10 years.

Table No: 4**Distribution of the respondents according to their Reasons for involving in this profession**

| S. No | Reasons for involving in this profession | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentage |
|-------|--|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Getting Enough Income | 164 | 54.6 |
| 2. | Proper Income | 64 | 21.33 |
| 3. | Continuous Employment Opportunity | 180 | 60.0 |
| 4. | Availability of Resources | 140 | 46.66 |
| 5. | Secure Job | 180 | 60.0 |
| 6. | Job Satisfaction | 80 | 26.66 |
| 7. | Family Occupation | 246 | 82.0 |
| 8. | Respect From the Public | 144 | 48.0 |

| | | | |
|-----|---|-----|-------|
| 9. | Encouragement Given by the Co-Operative Societies | 104 | 34.66 |
| 10. | Availability of Raw Materials | 138 | 46.0 |

* (Non-addictive percentage)

The table No 4 reveals that reasons for involving in this profession, a significant (82 percent) of the respondents opined that handloom weaving is a primary occupation for their families because they are traditionally followed it. More than half (60 percent) of the respondents opined that handloom weaving is a secure job and it provide continue employment opportunity for their families.

Table No: 5
Distribution of the respondents according to their opinion on monetary assistance received

| S. No | opinion on monetary assistance received | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percent |
|-------|---|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. | Yes | 90 | 30.0 |
| 2. | No | 210 | 70.0 |

The table No 5 explain that one-third (30 percent) of the respondents received monetary assistant from the government for improving their handloom profession and remaining 70 percent didn't get any kind of assistance from anyone else.

Table No: 6
Distribution of the respondents according to their opinion on social contribution towards handloom weaver

| S. No | opinion on social contribution towards handloom weaver | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentag |
|-------|--|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Providing financial assistant | 90 | 30.0 |
| 2. | Monetary Benefits | 90 | 30.0 |
| 3. | Encouragement from Society | 140 | 46.6 |
| 4. | Government Support | 104 | 34.6 |

* (Non-addictive percentage)

The table No 6 reveals that their opinion on social contribution towards handloom weaver, 46.6 percent of the respondents opined that handloom weavers were received encouraged from the society, 30 percent of the respondents were received government support in the form of monetary assistance and 30 percent of the respondents were received financial assistance and monetary benefits from the society.

Table No: 7
Distribution of the respondents according to their opinion on problems of handloom weaver

| S. No | opinion on problems of handloom weaver | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentage |
|-------|--|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Difficulties to accept new job | 90 | 30.0 |
| 2. | Not willing to change traditional job | 18 | 6.0 |
| 3. | Financial Difficulties | 90 | 30.0 |
| 4. | Lack of marketing | 18 | 6.0 |
| 5. | Lack of government subsidies | 30 | 10.0 |
| 6. | physical and psychological problems | 54 | 18.0 |

The table No 7 revealed that problems of handloom weavers, 30 percent of the respondents had financial difficulties and difficulties to accept new job, 18 percent of the respondents had physical and psychological problems, 10 percent of the respondents had lack of government subsidies and 6 percent of the respondents were not willing to change their traditional family job.

Table No: 8
Distribution of the respondents according to their opinion on problems in marketing their products

| S. No | opinion on problems in marketing their products | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentag |
|-------|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Competing of powerloom | 230 | 76.7 |
| 2. | Lack of design and market facilities | 90 | 30.0 |

| | | | |
|----|---|-----|-------|
| 3. | Inefficient marketing | 190 | 63.33 |
| 4. | Lack of government support | 198 | 66.0 |
| 5. | Transport | 192 | 64.0 |
| 6. | High price | 180 | 60.0 |
| 7. | Government regulations | 120 | 40.0 |
| 8. | Heavy taxes | 180 | 60.0 |
| 9. | Suffering due to lack of occupational training and skills | 240 | 80.0 |

* (Non-addictive percentage)

The table No 8 explain that a significant (80 percent) of the respondents were suffered by marketing their products due to lack of occupational training and skills, 76.7 percent of the respondents were faced competition from the powerloom weavers, 66 percent of the handloom weaver suffered by lack of government support in terms of availing loan, 64 percent of the respondents had problems in transport, 63.33 percent were affected by inefficient marketing facilities and 60 percent of the handloom weaver affected by heavy takes levied by government and high price. However, 30 percent of the respondents have had problems in lack of design and market facilities.

Table No: 9

Distribution of the respondents according to their suggestion given by handloom weavers

| S. No | suggestion given by handloom weavers | No. of Respondents (n = 300) | Percentage* |
|-------|---|------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Financial assistance needed from the co-operative society | 168 | 56.0 |
| 2. | Educational loan for their children | 176 | 58.7 |
| 3. | Need more concession in raw | 190 | 63.3 |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| | materials | | |
| 4. | Encouragement for handloom products | 244 | 81.33 |
| 5. | Need restriction for powerloom | 256 | 85.3 |
| 6. | Union and fixed income | 278 | 92.7 |

* (Non-addictive percentage)

The table No 9 explain that a quantum (92.7 percent) of the respondents suggested for having handloom weavers union and their daily wage is fixed, 85.3 percent of the respondents opined that there is a need for restricting the domination of powerloom weavers and 81.33 percent of the respondents suggested for encouraging the handloom products. However 63.3 percent of the respondents needed more concession in raw materials, 58.7 percent needed educational loan for their children and 56 percent expected financial assistance from the co-operative society.

SUGGESTIONS:

The researcher observed from the study and suggests the following measures for improving handloom industry in rural areas:

- ➔ Government should give attention in up gradation and modernization of loom, equipments and infrastructural development for the betterment of the handloom industry.
- ➔ Redesigning of the existing traditional products. The existing product can be made softer, good textures and with standard size. The existing traditional motifs can be used for new product development and diversification and will give the product a local identity. Society should try to make damask fabric.
- ➔ Training to enhance the skills of weavers in manufacturing and marketing aspects in changing business environment. Effective implementation of various policies and programs could be successful when there would be proper integration, cooperation and coordination from the government. Skill and design development exercises can be conducted for the weavers which will help them to understand and develop new product range as well as improve their design sensibility.
- ➔ Societies should give more importance to promotional strategies and government should give promotion subsidy to well established societies. Society can employ interesting sales promotion tools like coupons, free gifts etc to create interest and excitement to the customer to buy handloom product. Publicity is one of the essential factors, which influence the sale of the

products. Therefore government should provide special publicity drive to promote handloom products.

- ➔ The Government should organize more awareness programmes in popularizing the handloom mark to create unique brand image for genuine Handloom Products. Branding of products and youth icons should be used to make handloom fabrics into a fashion statement.
- ➔ To bring superior quality in handloom products, the pre and post loom process development should take place. Innovative and faster weaving processes and techniques to increase efficiency of weavers as well as loom will make handloom more competitive and profitable. Weaving of damask fabric for national or international market could be an added attraction.
- ➔ Using various finishing techniques and product packaging for better marketing. Calendaring unit can be set up in weavers' service centre of each district.

The researcher also observed that the Handloom Textiles constitute a timeless part of the rich cultural Heritage of India. The element of art and craft present in Indian handlooms makes it a potential sector for the upper segments of market, domestic as well as global. However, the sector is beset with manifold problems such as obsolete technologies, unorganized production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing link, overall stagnation of production and sales and, above all, competition from power loom and mill sector. As a result of effective Government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes, the handloom sector, to some extent, has been able to tide over these disadvantages. Thus, Handloom forms a precious part of the generational legacy and exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of the weavers.

CONCLUSION

From the present study it is concluded that Handloom weavers in Negamam are traditionally weaving as their primary occupation are in a pitiable condition, owing to poor socio-economic condition. However various unfavorable factors lead to decline on the aspect of socio-economic conditions. Majority of them are wage weavers working for more than 8 hours day accompanied by the entire family. Majority weavers working under the control of master weavers. The findings of the study have been considerably related to the techniques to improve the socio-economic conditions of handloom weaver

households. Handloom industry gives employment to lakhs of people it is thus productive as employment generator in the rural and urban areas it focuses on development. Handloom weaving is a noteworthy industry that utilizes lakhs of individuals in the nation. It is important to expand on such qualities while articulating the prospects of the business. A growing inclination, which has ended up progressively proclaimed today, is to see the prospects for the handloom business in corner (both national and universal) markets. So as to do this, a real move in the current points of view on the business will be important. Handlooms must be drawn nearer as a profitable industry and as a significant generator of business. The researcher found that weavers, are using their traditional weaving machines without any up gradation of weaving machines, nor great working conditions, not to mention access to capital or any sort of standardized savings, no proper shed weaving. Thus the study finds out the lacuna in the handloom industry it tries to find out the problems and highlight them in different aspects and tries to highlight the impact of handloom sector. Few suggestions for fulfilling the basic need of people for growth and improving living standards of the weaver and his family. Having studied on the socio-economic conditions of weavers, an attempt has been made to offer few suggestions for improving the plight of handloom weavers. Awareness for education among the weavers society, government shall take necessary measures for the weavers by giving them a common working shed, there is a need of creating awareness, and providing capacity building series to help weavers to meet safety standards, government should provide technical training to women.

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