Abstract

The Handloom is a traditional industry of India and it provides employment opportunities to millions of people in the rural and urban belts of our country. After industrialization, the handloom industry has been declining. Most of the problems faced by handloom industry are perpetual in nature and hence to sustain the cultural and economic importance of the industry the present study is an attempt to understand the various problems of Handloom Weavers of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. The problems are invention of new technology (power-loom), capitalist control, drop off in wages, increased price of yarn, and so on. The present study is descriptive in nature. The data have been collected through the in-depth interview, semi structured interview questions.

Keywords: Handloom, industrialization, capitalist control, power-loom, yarn price, wage system

Introduction:

The term handloom is defined as “any loom other than power loom” (The Reservation of Articles for Production Act, 1985). The concept of the handloom industry includes the process of operation by hand, of a wooden structure which is called the loom. In India, the handloom sector is one of the largest unorganized economic activities after agriculture and constitutes an integral part of the rural and semi-rural areas. India’s passage into modernity/ industrialization has centred, to a significant extent, on the cotton textile industry. Tracing the importance of the textile sector in the Indian economy also brings us face to face with the different components – such as the mill segment, the handloom segment and the power loom segment – that make up this whole. These segments differ in terms of volume of output, technology, the organization of production and so on and are often placed in competing positions with one another, competing for raw materials, markets, etc. These differences render futile any attempt to generalize about the textile sector as a whole. Indeed, successive textile policies of the government have been an exercise in striking a balance between these segments. The terms on which these various segments are appraised, however, have changed from time to time. For instance, while earlier policies stressed the employment potential of the handloom industry and sought to strengthen it with appropriate measures such as the provision of adequate yarn, reservation of products, etc., considerations such as productivity and competitiveness have become the ruling factors in judging performance of sectors over the last decade. Indeed, it was the textile policy of 1985 that announced such a shift
by setting up the single objective of increasing cloth production, without looking into the basic questions of credit and raw material requirements. (An overview of textile policies is provided in part III of this Report). The implications of this shift in perception, both for the lakhs of people employed in these sectors and for the industry as a whole have yet to be fully examined. The focus of this report is on the handloom industry. In the present economic climate where dependency on foreign capital and know-how is increasing all round, the handloom industry presents a sustainable model of economic activity that is not energy intensive and has low capital costs, as well as an extensive skill base. Its survival in, and adaptability to, a wide range of economic conditions also needs to be understood in a proper perspective, in order to underline the inherent viability of this enterprise. An objective appraisal of the handloom industry, therefore, is the need of the hour. The paucity of reliable information on this sector has often been strongly felt. Even as regards the information that is available, it is necessary to be aware of the specific viewpoints from which such data is collected. There is also the additional empirical difficulty of collecting such information, given the geographically dispersed and heterogeneous nature of the industry. This study attempts to provide a field appraisal of the industry as it obtains primarily in Andhra Pradesh, as well as comparative accounts and data from other states such as Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Such an appraisal helps in the identification of the specific needs of this sector, as well as orient research, as well as policy initiatives, in a more focused manner. These field accounts, along with the data already available on the handloom sector, will help in the development of appropriate institutional structures that support and strengthen the industry. A number of perspectives have come to bear on the handloom industry: (a) the governmental view of a traditional industry in decline, (b) the scholar/academic’s view of contextualizing these trends and documenting the industry’s continued resilience, and (c) the weaver’s own perception of day-to-day problems of livelihood and survival.

**Review of literature:**

Venkata Ramanan (1935) explores the nature of relationship between production and marketing of handloom products. The Study found that the system of production determines the method of distribution of handloom products. While the individual weaver sells his product mainly through paddling, the organised producers market their products through show rooms, commission agents etc. Gosh (1947) stressed the location importance of handloom industry. The study states that weaves with proximity to market enjoy the location advantage of marketing. The weaves who are away from market had to walk 20 to 25 miles losing 2 to 2½ days to market their products. At the same time, the location advantage need not be over emphasised. The study states that even though the outlook of the handloom industry is dismal at a macro level, in some states the industry has performed well. Hence a location specific study of the industry will provide better insights into the dynamics of handloom industry Sahai (1956) studied the handloom industry in north India, focussing the attention on the competition faced by handloom sector from power looms and mills. The study suggested that handloom weavers should learn more designs and the production technology should be improved to face the competition. The Government should take steps to impart training to the weavers, and supply design books and other instruments free of cost. Soundarapandian (2000) stated that a change should be brought out in the outlook of the weavers and they must be oriented at grass root level to the betterment of their skills, knowledge and
technology in order to ensure quality of product, improved efficiency and increased productivity. The study suggested that branding should be introduced in the handloom sector in order to enhance marketability. Kanakalatha Mukund, and Syamasundari (2001) observed that the market for handloom products is really growing. The study stated that the inability of the official agencies to market the handloom products effectively is the main reason for the failure of the handloom sector. The study recommended that the government should act only as a facilitating agency and give autonomy to weavers’ co-operatives. Krishna Anand, (2002) analysed the crisis in handloom sector during the globalisation era by examining the plight of handloom weavers in the country, Bharatham (1988) studied organisational structure of the handloom industry in Tamil Nadu; and suggested that the handloom industry should be developed under co-operative lines. The study recommendations include various measures to be taken by the government for the development of handloom co-operatives in Tamil Nadu. Kanakalatha Mukund, and Syamasundari (2001) studied growth and prospects of the handloom industry in Andhra Pradesh, and identified the areas of potential growth in handloom sector and indicated models for intervention based on the real situation of handloom industry Asha Krishnakumar (2003) stressed the need for developing a well-defined regional identity for the handloom products by way of regional specialization in India. In the present era of globalization, in order to meet the competition from countries like China, Bangladesh etc, identity of handloom fabrics must be protected and reinforced. The Government of Madhya Pradesh (2003) conducted a diagnostic study about Chanderi handloom weaving cluster, and it provides the socio-economic profile of the handloom cluster in Madhya Pradesh. The study presents SWOT analysis and deals with the major issues related to different economic segments in the cluster. According to the study there exists poor institutional base with limited capability for the capacity building of weavers, master weavers and traders in the cluster. The major issues remaining unresolved include competition from power looms, dyeing related issues, lack of adequate market information for the weavers and absence of efforts for building social capital.

**Objectives of The Study**

The main purpose of the study is to examine the problems of the handloom weavers in study area. The objectives of the study are

i. To study the present situation of handloom sector.

ii. To examine the problems faced by handloom weavers.

iii. To give the suitable suggestions to improve the handloom sector.

**Hypothesis**

1. To test whether the handlooms give the sufficient income support to the weavers or not.

2. To test whether there is any opportunity related to employment at present in the handloom sector or not.

**Need of The Study**

So many problems are faced by the handloom sector even it provides a livelihood to the majority of the people in the country. The sector faces various problems in many fields like production, marketing and finance. This study focuses some of the important problems faced
by the handloom weavers along with the suggestions to these problems. The problems are

1) Insufficient Finance
2) Lack of supply of raw material
3) Supply of poor quality of yarn
4) Malpractices of master weavers
5) No upgradation of looms
6) Underutilization of marketing channels
7) Absence of innovative designs and combination of colors
8) Lack of co-operation among the weaver members

In view of this, there is an inclusive need to undertaking a comprehensive study of the problems faced by handloom weavers covering aspects such as, the impact of problems of weavers, structure of handloom weavers living conditions.

Source of Data
The study is based on primary data and secondary data. We have collected primary data from 120 respondents by using a structured questionnaire and through personal interview method. The secondary data was collected from books, periodic journals, articles related to the present research.

Sampling techniques
Simple random sampling was used in present research. Handloom weavers in is the sample and Andhra Pradesh state are the population.

Data Analysis and Interpretation
The data are collected from 120 sample respondents by supplying the questionnaires, the data is analyzed by simple tables on the basis of financial problems, marketing problems, production problems, social problems and health problems.

A. Financial problems:
Handloom sector is extremely diversified in nature, in terms of product, it is capable of great flexibility in process, products and geographical shifts, it is decentralized, located both in rural and urban centers. The handloom industry can survive only if the government can provide a rehabilitation package similar to the many weavers in India work in extreme condition but still maintain the quality of the work. They put their heart and soul in their work one provided to the formers who have lost crop, to the handloom sector also.

The central and State Governments provide assistance to handloom weavers, weaver’s co-operative societies for strengthening the share capital, improving the management of societies and modernization of looms. Even then, the societies could not strengthen their financial position because, they are not able to repay in time the loan received and hence the societies have to pay interest to the District Central Co-operative Banks.

The below table I shows the financial problems of respondents in the Thanjavur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial problems</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data
According to the above table majority of the respondents have financial problems. That is out of 120 respondents, 93 (77.5%) weavers are facing financial problems. The lowest number 27(22.5%) respondents are not facing financial problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE -2 Production Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>production problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

According to the above table majority of the respondents have production problems. That is out of 120 respondents, 111 (92.5%) weavers are facing production problems. The lowest number 09(07.5%) respondents are not facing production problems.

**Marketing problems**

There are a number of reasons for the failure to create value for handloom products in the domestic market. There is a wide-ranging opinion that the handlooms ignore the market trends and consumer tastes. This disconnect creates a place for a role which includes reading the market preferences and converting them into design and taking responsibility for making it possible at the production level. Marketing is the central problem that calls for the drawing up of a suitable strategy. Handloom is not only altering dominant market norms, but also changing the nature of the market transactions. The industry has been pursuing the sales-oriented philosophy. Inadequate marketing services and facilities have resulted in periodical accumulation of stocks, resulting in underemployment and unemployment among weavers.

The below table-3 shows the marketing problems of respondents in the Thanjavur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE -3 Marketing Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

According to the above table majority of the respondents have marketing problems. That is out of 120 respondents, 108 (90%) weavers are facing production problems. The lowest number 12(10%) respondents are not facing marketing problems.

**Health problems:**

Everybody knows that health is wealth. Good health can be defined as the state of wellbeing where a person is free from all kinds of physical or mental illness. Better health is one of the prerequisites for improved productivity and production. It is too common for handloom weavers to suffer from a variety of occupational health problems and these problems become severe and acute, as they become aged. Some of the health problems associated with handloom weavers include: poor eye sight, cataract, high or low blood pressure, heart diseases, damage of lungs, filaria, back pains, joint pains, knee pains and so on. A majority of the weavers appear much older than their age.
According to the above table majority of the respondents i.e., 52 out of 120 (43.33%) are suffering from back pain problem. The lowest number 07 (5.83%) respondents are suffering from the problem of lungs. According to the data 38 respondents (31.67%) are suffering from eye-sight and cataract. And 23 respondent weavers (19.17%) are suffering from knee pain and joint pains.

**Wage problems**

The handloom sector is a labor-intensive sector where wages should be satisfactory. But in general, there is a belief that the workers in labor intensive sectors receive lower wages than the capital-intensive sectors. The handloom sector is not exemption to this. The handloom weavers also get low wages in terms of their productivity. A handloom weaver gets normally Rs.400 to 600 for a saree. For weaving one saree it takes 4 to 5 days. The average income is Rs.100 to 150. The below table shows the average income of weaver respondents per day.

**TABLE-5 Wage Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average income of a weaver per day</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 100 to 200</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 201 to 300</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 300 above</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above data, majority of the respondents 69 out of 120 (57.5%) get Rs.100 to 200 as their daily wage. The lowest number 14 (11.67%) respondents get above Rs. 300 as the daily wage.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Weavers have to change their attitude from traditional to modern. Change of designs as per market requirements, creation of a local brand image, and quality in products, product innovation and utilization of modern technology in marketing strategies enhance the domestic and international market. Up-gradation of technology in production activities, maintenance of specific work hours, development of production infrastructure and skill development improves the production as well as quality. The government has to implement skill development programs, create awareness on technological changes that are suitable for the handloom industry, financial support for up-

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**Table-4 Health Problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health problems</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eye-sight/cataract</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back pain</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee pain/joint pain</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem of lungs</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** primary data
gradation of technology, providing credit facilities, development of marketing facilities, strategies for ensuring confidence in youth for taking handloom as a profession.

Conclusion
Handloom weaving plays an active role in the growth process of the state as well as the nation. This sector has been considered prominent because of the traditional artisan craft skills of the weavers which meet the local needs and demands. Handloom sector has different strengths in the modern economy. It is simple, and is associated with appropriate technology. The world, which is seeking for clean air and water, handlooms are well suited because they are eco-friendly in nature. Handloom sector has self-sustaining mechanism, training for irrespective of gender. The inheritance of skills and capacities is beyond the realm and reach of any modern training and educational institution. There is a sufficient flexibility for all types of communities to take up handloom weaving as a profession.

The decade 2008-18 is the decade of manufacturing for India. So there is a need for focused attention to the specified sectors of manufacturing which are labor intensive and also enjoy competitive advantage. To enhance the scope of weaving activity, measures should also be taken to provide raw materials, finance, marketing facilities and other requirements. To enable the sector to realize full potential, the bottlenecks which hinder the development must be removed. Both the central and state governments should recognize the role of handlooms in achieving sustainable development.

References: