

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF HANDLOOM WEAVING SOCIETIES
- A CASE STUDY OF WARANGAL DISTRICT**

Dr. B. Sadanandam,
Lecturer (P.T.), Department of Sociology
University Arts & Science College, Subedari, Warangal

ABSTRACT

Traditional Indian handloom enjoys a global reputation as well as huge demands in the local markets. However, the weavers face a number of challenges which affect their livelihood and overall wellbeing. Weaving practiced in India has been in existence for more than 5000 years. It is also found in Ramayana and Mahabharata that speak about length of craft. India has a rich cultural heritage of Handloom Industry having the largest Handloom Industry in the world. Thus it also makes major contribution to the economy. The study aims to analyse the socio economic condition of the weavers and offer possible recommendations to mitigate their plight. This study is based on primary data collected through interview schedules 57 active societies in Warangal district of Telangana State. The result of the study revealed that the weavers are facing a number of challenges like financial constraint, inability to purchase up-to-date machineries, poor working condition, meagre remuneration and the absence of government support.

Key words: *Handloom, Weavers, Socio-economic conditions.*

Introduction

Traditional hand weaving has been a part of India's cultural heritage. This sector occupies a position next to agriculture as it provides livelihood opportunities to millions of people. The handloom industry is expanding both nationally and internationally because of the demand for hand crafted artefacts and unique traditional design, but the socioeconomic condition of the weaving community is continuously deteriorating. The problems faced by the weavers are competing in the global markets, low level of income, poor market price of the finished commodity and inability to reach the buyers. The traditional handloom industry is taking a toll on the weavers of Telangana State. This study, based in Warangal district of Telangana State aims to understand the socioeconomic condition of the weavers societies in this area and offers necessary suggestion. This study is motivated by the findings of the other studies that show a gradual shift of the profession from weaving to government services because of the uncertainty that lies in this sector as well as lack of attention of the government towards the up falling condition of traditional societies.

History and Origin of the Handloom Industry

Weaving practiced in India has been in existence for more than 5000 years. It is also found in Ramayana and Mahabharata that speak about length of craft. India has a rich cultural heritage of Handloom Industry having the largest Handloom Industry in the world. Thus it also makes major contribution to the economy. Handloom products from India has a good demand in the global market and enjoyed internationally. Historically, a few famous hand woven textiles of India were Baluchar Sari of Varanasi, Bandamis of Kutch, Chandri saris of Madhya Pradesh, Georgettes of Mysore, (Karnataka), Sambalpuri Saris of Odisha, Jamdhani Saris of Bengal, Temple silk of south from Kancheepuram and others¹.

Literature Review

Emmanial. R (2012)² in his study reported that, (1) The age of Primary Handloom Cooperative Society in the undivided Andhra Pradesh varies from 5-6 years and more than 50 per cent of cooperative Societies have come into existence during the 1960s. Very old Societies which were established 50 years ago are located at Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh, (2) A large majority of co-operative Societies in the area of study have the membership between 101-200 followed by 501-800. Majority of cooperative Societies have expressed the supply of yarn

constituted the major problem. In addition to that, the Societies are facing other problems in various dimensions like financial problems, lack of marketing support and inability of cooperative management are there in Society operations.

According to a recent study conducted by Kumudha (2013)³, though the Handloom Industry offers massive amount of employment opportunities to lakhs of artistic weavers, recently it is facing lot of problems and it has been pushed towards the decline stage of the Product Life Cycle. According to him, to bring the industry back to growth stage the below mention problems have to be well addressed.

Tripathy (2009)⁴ made an attempt to study the problems and perspectives of Handloom Industry in Orissa. It was opined in the study that in decentralized handloom industry there are many problems due to illiteracy of the weavers, inadequate finance and vast interests, procurement of raw-materials, product developments, quality control, cost control, unable to fix a stable price due to fluctuation in yarn price etc. The study suggested that handloom product marketer should understand the customer preferences about design and colour combination in selection of Handloom products and they should consider product development as an essential exercise for successful marketing of Handloom products.

Mathiraj and Rajkumar (2008)⁵ made an analytical study on Handloom products production and marketing. The study narrated the production related problems of the Handloom Weavers' Societies and reviewed the marketing process carried out by the Weavers' Societies. It was found in their study that the Societies in Ramanathapuram District are facing wide fluctuation in yarn price, lack of availability of skilled labour force. It was suggested that the production pattern, sales design may be formulated to accelerate the handloom products in the market and modernization of handloom industries can be made with a moderate cost to ease down the problems of weavers.

Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies

Warangal District is one of the leading districts in handloom Industry in Telangana State. There are 45 Weavers' Co-operative Societies in the District at present providing work to 74,905 members. The main products are Sarees, Dhoties, Lungies and Towels. In addition to the above common varieties, export varieties of Shatranjies of Shatranji "Handloom Weavers" Co-operative Society Limited", Mattewada, Warangal, Silk Sarees of Jangaon area and Mercyrized Tie and Die variety Sarees and Mercyrized Dhoties of Ghanpur area are unique and pride products of the District.

Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies as a backdrop to assess their performance. Three categories of Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Societies-Cotton, Cotton and Silk, Wool are selected for the present study where the selected Handloom Cotton Weavers' Co-operative Societies are situated in Warangal District and the profile of selected Co-operative Societies which belong to the category of Handloom Cotton.

There are 57 Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Societies in Warangal District. Out of which, 45 Societies are Active and 12 Societies are dormant Societies. Some of the Societies, it is in a declining state as the years progressed namely Bhavanarushi HWCS Ltd., Neermela, Devaruppula (M) of Warangal district, which was 145 membership during 2003 and fallen to 100 during 2012 and Shatranj and Nawar Handloom Co-operative Society, Mattewada, Warangal which was 580 membership during 2003 was fallen to 303 during 2012.

It is also found from the survey that one Society by name the Bharath Terricott and Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society limited, Jangaon of Warangal District has the maximum membership of 511 member-weavers for the last 10 years continuously, followed by Venkateshwara HWCS, Kothapally of Lingala Ghanpur (M) with 396 members and Markandeya HWCS Ltd., Ellanda (V&M), Warangal district with 333 members. These Societies have no change in the membership for the last ten years. Nawar and shatranj HWCS Ltd., Mandibazaar has a decline in membership from 198 during 2003 to 168 in 2012. Other Societies have shown a fluctuation in membership during their ten years.

Statement of the problem:

As the available literature reflects, there is no much studies conducted on socio-economic status of Warangal district. In spite of various schemes implemented for the development of social and economic conditions of weaving communities yet there is no much improvement seen. They faced more vulnerability especially due to weak organisational structure, administrative failures, financial

disincentive, poor infrastructure, decentralized looms, poor marketing etc. Thus the present study aims at exploring the socio-economic profiles of the weaving community to examine their status in Warangal district of Telangana State.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the social conditions prevailing among the handloom weavers societies with an objective to find out there place in the society.
2. To analyse the economic conditions of the handloom weavers societies and find out there economic status.

Data and Methodology:

To fulfil the objectives of the study primary data has been collected from the respondent weavers. Both qualitative and quantitative technique of research has been used in the study. Interviews have been qualitatively analysed and interpreted. The Study was conducted in Warangal District of Telangan State. Purposive sampling method was used. Primary Data was collected from 57 handloom weavers societies in Warangal District. Interview schedule contained both open ended as well as close ended questions.

The study on handloom weavers aimed to assessing the socio-economic conditions of handloom weaving in order to identify the reason of decline and evaluate the different components of handloom sector. The major findings are weavers must get benefit from the government so that they would enjoy a better standard of living development in their socio economic status in the society. The weavers are facing problems in marketing, finance, supply of yarn are highlighted also various policies adopted by the government for the development of handloom industry.

In most of the Societies, the Elected Male Directors are at Maximum. Out of the 45 Societies under study, Maximum of the Societies have 7 Male Directors and 2 Female Directors. One Society has 7 Male Directors and no Female Directors. This is an indication that the Board of Directors is sloping only towards the Male Directors.

There are different kinds of raw material used for clothing. They use raw material for Shirting, Suiting, Sarees, Carpets, Towels, Lungies, Dothies, Silk Sarees etc. They use the varieties like 2/40, 2/6, 2/12, 2/20, 2/30, 2/60/30s, 2/120, 2/60 etc., for weaving the cloth. They do get those varieties from APCO, NHDC, Hyderabad, Warangal, Pochampally Buyers, Bangalore and others. The finance for these varieties of cloth by the Societies taken up either by Bank Loans or individual financiers.

Table – 1
PER CENTAGE OF PROFIT BY THE SOCIETY

Per centage of Profit	Number of Societies
below 5	15
5-10	26
10-15	4
15-20	0
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table – 1 reveals the per centage of profit gained by the Societies. 26 (52%) societies out of the 45 societies have gained a profit of 5 – 10 per cent, 15 (33%) societies have gained below 5 per centage of profit and 4 (0.9%) have gained 10 – 15 per cent and there was no society which gained more than 15 per cent.

Table – 2

CAPACITY OF STOCK RAW MATERIALS OF THE SOCIETY

Amount of stock in rupees/month	Number of Societies
Below 50,000	3
50,000-100000	5
100000-150000	13
150000-200000	8
Above 200000	16
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table 2 reveals that a major number of societies (16) out of the 45 societies maintain a stock of raw material for above Rs. 2,00,000. 13 (35%) of the societies maintain for about Rs. 1,00,000 to 1,50,000. It is found that only 3 (7%) societies maintain a stock below 50,000.

Table – 3

PROBLEMS IN PROCUREMENT OF RAW MATERIAL BY THE SOCIETY

Problems in Procurement of Raw Materials	Number of Societies
Transportation	11
Quality	2
High price	9
Non availability of credit	11
Transportation and quality	5
Transportation and high price	2
Transportation and non-availability of credit	5
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table 3 shows the problems in procurement of raw material by the Societies. When asked about the problems faced regarding the procurement of raw material, the managements have responded differently. 22 Societies have a problem of Transportation and Non-availability of credits each with 11 and 11 respectively. Nine Societies opined because of High price and others quality and transportation etc.

5 (9%) of the Societies opined that it is because of Transportation and quality, 2 (4.3%) because of Transportation and high price and other 5 (9%) because of Transportation and non-availability of credit problems.

Table –4

PROBLEMS REGARDING STORAGE OF RAW MATERIAL BY THE SOCIETY

Problems Regarding Storage of Raw Materials	Number of Societies
Lack of godown	15
Durability of material	6
High cost of storage	15
Any other	4
Lack of godown and durability of material	5
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

The problems regarding the storage of raw material by the Societies are shown in Table 4 regarding the storage of raw material, it is found that a majority of the Societies are facing a problem of Godowns and high cost of storage. 30 Societies, out of which 15 Societies are facing the problem of lack of Godowns and 15 Societies face the problem of high cost of storage. 6 (11 per cent) Societies out of the 45 Societies opined that it is because of the durability of material, 5 (9 per cent) opined because

of sometime lack of godown and durability of material and other 4 (8 per cent) Societies because of other reasons.

TABLE: 5
AVERAGE PRODUCTION OF HANDLOOM CLOTH BY THE SOCIETY

Sl. No.	Handloom Variety	No. of Societies
1.	Cotton	35
2.	Terri-cotton	19
3.	Silk	4
4.	Nawar	1
5.	Shatranj	24

Source: Field Survey.

Table 5 shows the average production of handlooms cloth by the Societies. The Societies responding to Cotton Handloom Weaving is at Maximum i.e., 35 (65 per cent) out of the 45 Societies under study. Apart from this, Shatranj handloom Weaving takes the next place i.e., 24 (58%) of the Societies under survey, 19 Societies produce Terri-cotton, while 4 Societies produce silk and only one Society produce Nawar. 90% (31) of these Societies own a workshop on their own.

Table –6
WORKING DAYS IN A YEAR PROVIDED TO THE WEAVERS BY THE SOCIETY

Number of days/ year	Number of Societies
150-200	1
200-250	10
250-300	30
300-350	4
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Most of the Societies (30/45) provide 250-300 days of work for the member-weavers, 10 Societies provide upto 200-250 days while others provide less than 200 days. It is found that the lack of knowledge to the latest technology has forced them to be at a back on the competitive field. Some Societies opined of financial problem (11/45), Non-availability of improved tools (2/45) etc., these are the reasons for the Societies to be at the minimum level. 4 (8%) out of the 45 Societies provide work for 300 – 350 days, while only 1 (0.2%) provide work for 150 – 200 days.

The designs selected for the cloth are Graph/Chart design, APCO, Hyderabad and are according to the designs given by APCO Weavers Service Centre, Nampally, Hyderabad and others. When the weavers do not understand the designs, that personnel undertaken the training make them understand and do the required design. It may take from 3/4 hours to 2½ hours for designing Suiting, Shirting, Carpets, Sarees, Dhoties, Towels, Silk Sarees etc.

Table – 7
DIFFICULTIES FACED IN IMPLEMENTING TECHNIQUES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SOCIETY

Difficulties Faced	No. of Respondents
Financial	11
Lack of Knowledge as to the latest technology	18
Non-availability of improved tools	02
High Prices	06
Any others	08
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table 7 reveals the reasons for the problems in implementing the techniques 11 (24%) respondents out of the 45 respondents opined it is because of finance, 18 (40%) respondents because of lack of knowledge of the latest technology, 06% (13%) because of high prices and other 08 (19%) because of all these reasons and other reasons.

Table – 8
SYSTEM OF MARKETING BY THE SOCIETY

System of Marketing	Number of Societies
Selling to APCO	15
Selling through own retail outlets	1
Selling in weekly bazaars and Selling through own retail outlets	2
Selling in weekly bazaars and Selling through middle men	1
Selling through middle men and Any other method	1
Selling to APCO and Selling through own retail outlets	
Selling to APCO and Selling through own retail outlets	21
Selling to APCO and Any other method	4
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table 8 reveals the system of Marketing adopted by Member Weavers. The system of marketing that most of the Societies follow is both selling to APCO and through own retail outlets. Out of the 45 Societies 21 Societies sell through APCO and own retail outlets. 15 Societies sell to APCO and others depend on their own sales perspectives either on retail outlets, selling through middlemen, on any other method. The competition or handmade cloth is from different sources. It is at a maximum from power looms (36/45) and different sources like mill made cloth, plastic products, etc.

Most of the Societies fix up their prices of various products through APCO Yarn Costing. 1 per cent of expenditures on sales production to sales of the Society is observed in the study. The Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Societies do participate in exhibitions, local fairs etc., at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Warangal etc. They do receive assistance from Government under Marketing Development Assistance Scheme and it is upto 6% of which is utilized for the welfare of the weavers. The Marketing Development Assistance Scheme encourage the weavers to produce more cloth by assisting them through different schemes.

Regarding the share capital incurred by member-weavers, 28 Societies are in a negative answer and 17 Societies answered positively. It is because of the financial background of the member-weavers and also the in-efficiency of the members to know about the good and bad of different schemes.

Table – 9
NATURE OF COMPETITION

Nature of Competition	Number of Societies
From mill made cloth	1
From plastic products	1
From power looms	36
From mill made cloth & From plastic products	1
From plastic products & power looms	3
From mill made cloth & From power looms	3
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table 9 shows the nature of competitive for the Societies. The most number of the handloom Societies have a great competition from power looms. 36 (80%) out of the 45 Societies face this problem. 3 (6%) Societies face from plastic production, 3 (6%) from mill made cloth and power looms, 1 (2%) from mill made cloth and 1 (2%) from plastic products. Only a minimum of the Societies (6/45) get their assistance from APCO and get their subsidy from State Aid Industries Act.

Table – 10
RELATIONSHIP MAINTAINED WITH APCO BY THE SOCEITY

Raw material	23
Marketing	2
Raw material and marketing	17
Any other	3
Total	45

Source: Field Survey.

Table 10 reveals the relationship maintained by the Societies with APCO. APCO provides the raw-material to most of the Societies, 23 (51%) of the Societies get assistance from APCO and 17 Societies get through both APCO and Marketing and other 5 (2 Marketing and 3 others) through other sources. There is no stipulated problem with APCO except in the supply of raw material and high quality of yarn. The Assistant Director of Handlooms does not provide any financial assistance. He gives assistance in providing details of all the Government Schemes to Societies. All the Societies do produce annual accounts regularly to the Assistant Director of Handlooms.

Table – 11
PROBLEMS AND ASSISTANCE FROM APCO FOR THE SOCIETY

No. of Respondents	Problems Faced		Assistance Received	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
45	21	24	19	26

Source: Field Survey.

Table 11 shows the problems faced and assistance received by the Societies from APCO. Out of the 45 Societies, 21 (49%) face problems with APCO. It is because of the quality of yarn supplied and transportation problem. 24 (95%) of the respondents have no problems with APCO. About the assistance received from APCO, 19 (47%) respondents responded positively that they are satisfied with APCO, while 26 (53%) opined negatively with the assistance received from APCO.

50% of the Societies under survey have women weavers as their member-weavers. But, they are paid less when compared to the Male member-weavers. They are paid only Rs. 60/- per day as the Male weavers are paid 100/- per day. The women member-weavers are provided crèches for their children from the Societies.

Most of the women member-weavers are engaged in the production of Sarees and Carpets. The literacy rate of women member-weavers is very less. Most of the Societies which provide employment to women contain members below S.S.C. The financial assistance given to women weaver-members is very less. Only 6 Societies out of the 45 Societies under survey have women as Office-bearers. Instead of it, 44 women are appointed as Directors out of the 45 Societies under study.

FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is found from the study most of the respondents under study are in between the age-group of 35-50 years. It is found that middle aged and married are engaged in this profession because of their ancestral profession and also because of unemployment. The raw-material supplied to the weavers is of low quality and as such they go for alternative sources. Most of the member-weavers are assisted by their family members. Most of the respondents earn a monthly income of Rs. 2000 – 3000 and as such they are not satisfied with the profession. A maximum of 143 respondents are engaged in the production of Shatranjis in Warangal District. 90 per cent of the weaver-members do not have membership in their Societies.

Some of the member-weavers depend on other secondary sources of income like Agriculture, Private Service or other occupations. The amount of wages for the production of cloth will be paid on piece-basis. The Societies provide pensions to the permanent weavers who retire from work.

90 per cent of the Societies under study were established during or earlier to 2003. Different kinds of raw material are used for weaving by the Societies. Most of the Societies provide 250 – 300 days of work for the member-weavers. The designs selected for the cloth by the Societies are Graph/chart design or according to the designs given by APCO Weavers' Service Centre, Hyderabad.

The study explained the importance of Handloom weaving community. People are following the traditional occupation and it is highly concentrated. The strength of Handloom lies in innovative designs. The weavers are classified into various categories – Independent weavers, weavers working under master weavers, weavers working for co-operative societies. Thus the Handloom Industry is household based work carried by the entire family spread across thousands of villages and towns in the country. The basic objective of Handloom is to bring about socio-economic development of weavers by accessing wider markets, working capital etc. Thus Handloom Industry is required to strengthen adequately for meeting the emerging challenges of the socio-economic life of the traditional weaver. The sector needs well thought strategies for the emphasis of development of markets and export markets in both at national and international level. Field study done by researcher on factors affecting the handloom industry like social and economic conditions of the weavers societies there is no up gradation of technology, markets etc. Thus it is necessary to realize the specific issue for wider economic growth and prospectus of handloom sector.

Conclusion

From the present study it is concluded that Handloom weavers in Warangal District are traditionally weaving as their primary occupation are in a pitiable condition, owing to poor socio-economic condition. However various unfavourable 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. While my field visits I 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 societies, an attempt has been made to offer few suggestions for improving the plight of handloom weavers societies. 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. The following are the findings of the study for improving the socio-economic condition of Handloom weavers Societies in Warangal District however various unfavourable factors led to its decline.

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