



CRISIS OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY AND PROBLEMS OF WEAVERS IN TELANGANA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Mr.Seetha Laxman

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Osmania University, Hyderabad, T.S

Abstract

Handloom industry is oldest cottage industry in India. It is generating more employment opportunities to lacks of artistic weavers, but in the recent past it has been facing more problems and many of the silk weavers in particular and weavers in general committed suicide also. The handloom weaving sector plays an important role in the economic development of the rural areas. It contributes significantly by generating more employment opportunities and providing bread to the rural poor. Handloom sector plays an important role in state economy. Weaving is the basic process among the various manufacturing stages of handloom clothes. The human resource generation is very high in handloom sector as well as the choosing this occupation also by heredity or profession by parents only. In the present study, researcher analyzed the present crisis of handloom and problems weavers in Telangana state.

Keywords: *Handloom Industry, Employment Opportunities, Weavers, Human Resource, Occupation.*

Introduction

The Handloom Industry of India is essentially a traditional one. It is also a cottage industry in the best sense of the term, as the work is done largely in the home of the weaver himself. The loom just like the plough symbolizes the ethos of India. In fact, the handloom industry along with agriculture is the mainstay of our rural economy. The handloom textile is unique to mill made textiles and it has a very good glorious heritage, over the years. Handloom goods are no longer the choice of the poor alone, but a favorite of the elite in India and abroad. Next to agriculture the handloom industry accounts most of rural employment and income. It meets about a quarter of the clothing needs of the country. The handloom industry is a part of textile trade. Handloom weaving is the India's biggest cottage and labor-intensive sector, which has been playing a very important role in the country's economy by forming part of India's rich heritage and exemplifying the rich artistry of the weavers. As an economic activity, the handloom sector occupies a place second only to agriculture in terms of employment. From the time immemorial, Telangana has been a prominent State for production of handloom cloth. The present study based principally on socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers and various issues relating to organization of handloom industry in India in general and Telangana in particular is a modest attempt to present an integrated and comprehensive analysis of this most important household industry of the State. The study also analyzed the consequences of different policies implemented by the successive Governments, as a measure of discerning their impact on the growth and development of handloom industry.

Telangana is one of the important States in the Handloom Industry. Handloom industry has providing employment in directly 2.41 lakhs and indirectly 6 lakhs. There are about 82,435 handloom weavers in cooperative fold and 1, 58,902 in outside cooperative fold. There are 475 Weavers Cooperative Societies in the State consisting of Cotton-253, Silk-50, and Wool-44. Besides this, there are 128-Tailor and other societies. There is one Apex society i.e., TSCO for marketing the handloom products. The weaving community is spread across Sircilla, Pochampally, Gadwal and Narayanpet regions in the state. Handloom textiles produced by them, such as Ikat, are world famous and in demand globally. However,



the community has been severely distressed by debt, unemployment and worse. Sunday's announcement from the state governments, coming as it does more than two years after the formation of Telangana, is likely to give them a much-needed boost. According to Telangana Chief Minister KCR, the weaving community would be divided into three categories those who work on handlooms, those who now work on the power looms and those who left their age-old profession and are looking for alternative jobs.

For the handloom weavers, the government has decided to offer financial assistance to those weaving general cloth. Subsidy will be given on yarn and chemicals and the government will purchase the cloth weaved by them. The power looms, that are predominantly based in Siricilla, Pochampally upgraded "Our power looms should be on par with the Rapier looms," the Chief Minister said, adding that the management of the power looms too could get more profits with Rapier looms. For those, who have switched over to alternative employment, as they could not survive on the income gained from weaving, the government will help them.

Objective of the Study

The detailed objectives of the study are:

1. To study the present situation prevailing in the handloom industry with particular reference to the problems faced by handloom weavers in Telangana state.
2. To analyze the Socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers to find out their economic status and living conditions.
3. To examine the organizational issues having impact on the socio- economic conditions.

Methodology

Methodology adopted for this study is both analytical and explorative based on primary and secondary data collection. The samples collected from the different areas and clusters of Telangana and particularly Pochampally and siricilla.

Review of literature

Jayachandra, K. and Subramanyam Naidu, L. (2018) study focuses on the handloom weavers' cooperative societies in Chittoor district Andhra Pradesh highlighting the importance of cooperative societies and its benefits to the weaving community. The study shows how the weaving communities have become workless. It also highlights the functioning of the cooperative societies. The findings of the study demonstrate how cooperative societies are not active in the recent times due to various reasons. It concludes that the government must take care and provide the essential support to rejuvenate the industry.

Venkateswaran, A. (2014) study brings to light socio-economic conditions of the weaving community in Tirunelveli District. The study findings show the socio-economic conditions of the weaving community in the district are not good, due to the poor income earnings, non-availability of credit and the competition of the readymade industry etc. The study suggests that there is a dire need to take welfare measures for the wellbeing of the weaving community. Apart from the welfare measures, the subsidiary mechanism has to be provided by the state to uplift sick handloom industry.

Naga Raju, G., and Rao, K. V. (2014) conducted a study on the socio-economic conditions of the handloom community in Andhra Pradesh. The study has been highlighted across Guntur district and also discusses the health conditions of the weavers. It is known from the study that the economic status of the weavers is not up to the mark due to their low income from their profession. In addition to the above



issues, the study presents the perception of the youth of the community members and their attitudes towards their traditional profession. The findings of study reveal that the majority of the youth from the weaving community are reluctant to continue in the profession and they want to prefer or change to other professions.

Financial Problems

Handloom industry is one such delicate organization, which has been totally capital-starved at all the time. By and large, sound financial assistance from government alone could improve the competitive urge among handloom co-operatives. The Government of India and State Governments provide assistance to handloom weavers, handloom weavers' 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. Presently, there are no subsidies for handloom sector. They are completely withdrawn. However, they need to be continued. There are no taxes. However, the benefits go to the traders and not the weavers.

Raw Material Problems

The success of any industry is based on the availability of raw material. The unavailability of raw material is one of the crises faced by the handloom sector. Cotton yarn, dyes, silk and jute are important raw materials. Cotton handloom weavers have been largely dependent on spinning mills to provide them yarn, but nowadays, these mills find it more profitable to work with the power loom sector and weaving mills. Moreover, since the concentration of handlooms is higher in rural and semi-rural areas handloom weavers have to travel for to get the yarn. Also, the raw material used by this sector is not available at a low cost since cotton production costs are high in India. With the government now encouraging yarn export, there could soon be a further shortage of yarn. So, handloom weavers are today facing a raw material crisis.

Marketing Problems

The wake of new trends in fashions with man-made fibre and yarn fabrics having made in roads up to the rural areas it is but natural that handloom fabrics face difficulties in marketing and sales promotion. Marketing is the central problem that calls for the drawing up of a suitable strategy. Otherwise, any amount of aid given to this industry at the production level will turn out to be of no help. 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.

Independent weavers, outside the co-operative fold, are not always able to dispose of their cloth directly to the consumer. They have to approach the middlemen. In case of weavers working under master weavers on wage basis, they return the finished cloth to the master weavers. The co-operative societies are wholly dependent on the TSCO for marketing of their products. In our state, TSCO is not performing well and not in a position to lift the finished products and make the payment timely. The efforts are directed to sell the quantity through the purchase of handloom cloth by the government departments, army personnel, local bodies and rebate schemes and other programmes that are directed to push the product to the market.

Weavers Suicides

From the pre -independence period, the handloom weavers' community and their profession have received special attention. Even the Mahatma endorsed handloom as a vital instrument of Indian politics.



The struggle of the community was symbolized through the charkha. But today, despite being a 5000-year-old vocation and receiving great political importance, weavers continue to suffer a life of despair, poverty and agony. The charkha, which emerged as a symbol of the nation, which went to take on the mighty British Raj through its novel ways of Satyagraha, now seems to be a symbol of poverty for millions of weaving professionals. Places like Sircilla and Dubakka in Telangana are well-known not only for the quality of their handloom products, which are sold the world over, but also for the alarming rate at which weavers have committed suicides. Government reports identify scant wages, exorbitant debts, high cost of production, and Competition from other textile products as well as power looms as the fundamental reasons behind these deaths. Before choosing the option of ending their lives, these weavers live a life of starvation, ill-health, agony and prolonged stress. A close look at the issue reveals that the entire problem is primarily economical. Being an economic issue, the scope of solving it, theoretically, is also high. But the reality is different. Telangana state has witnessed 1000 deaths of weavers out of which some were due to starvation and the remaining were suicides. Majority of weavers ended their lives due to various problems they come across in their profession.

Telangana government steps in to help weaving community

As weavers' suicides continue in Telangana, the state government has decided to help this distressed community with some welfare schemes which are expected to give a boost to the handloom and power loom sectors in the state. Even after the separate Telangana state was formed, there were many suicides by weavers, mostly because of the debts which they failed to repay and lack of enough buyers of their product. Many weavers are not making any profit and running the looms just to keep them running. Both the handloom and power loom weavers are equally suffering in the state. Now the sector is all set to get a subsidy on the yarn and chemicals. The government will purchase the cloth weaved by them, thus partially saving them from marketing issues. This cloth will be used for uniforms for children in government schools and welfare hostels and for bed sheets to be used in the government run hospitals. Power loom sector is badly affected as the productivity is very low and the grey cloth that they produce is not marketable. As the crisis deepened, the weaver community has gone through a lot of depression and many have chosen an alternative option."Now the government is giving them a few orders as it sees that the product is much better and improved,"

There are some highly famous weaving towns in Telangana including Sircilla, Pochampally, Gadwal, Narayanpet, Koyallagudem and Puttapaka. Sircilla is home to powerlooms and the government has promised to upgrade them and keep them on par with Rapier looms, the kind which is used in Surat. While the Rapier looms produce over 150 mts a day, the looms in Sircilla can only produce up to 40 mts in a day. Sircilla is the district headquarters of the Rajanna Sircilla district and has gained notoriety because of the number of suicides from the community.

National textile policy

Until 1985, the National Textile Policy aimed to restrict the number of power looms, in order to protect the handloom sector. Employment protection of the handloom weavers was one of the major purposes of the textile policy, and power looms were seen as detrimental to the handloom sector. It was estimated by the High-Powered Committee (1974) that one power loom could replace six handlooms and one power loom worker would make 14 handloom workers jobless (referred to by Mukund and SyamaSundari, 2001, p. 30). From 1985 onwards, however, efficiency, productivity and competition between the three textile sectors (the mill sector is the third one) became important policy goals. In the words of Jain, 'Protection for handloom against unequal competition from mills and power looms has hitherto been the cornerstone of our textile policy. This has been knocked out and with it any possibility of saving the



handloom industry, with all its significance for rural employment Not only all capacity restrictions have been withdrawn on mills and power looms but all conceivable financial, fiscal and other assistance has been offered to enable them to occupy the market rapidly, leaving little space for the handlooms except for some controlled space. The problem with the earlier policy, according to Jain, was not so much the policy itself, but its implementation. It was deliberately violated ‘by private profit-seekers and government’s own political and administrative elite and enforcement machinery’.

Table:1- annual expenditure of the family (in rupees)

| Expenditure | Co-operatives | Master weavers | Independently | Total |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------|
| up to 20000 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| | 0% | 1.6% | 0% | 1.2% |
| 20001– 40000 | 12 | 42 | 4 | 58 |
| | 25.5% | 22.0% | 33.3% | 23.2% |
| 40001 - 60000 | 17 | 85 | 5 | 107 |
| | 36.2% | 44.5% | 41.7% | 42.8% |
| 60001- 80000 | 16 | 43 | 1 | 60 |
| | 34.0% | 22.5% | 8.3% | 24.0% |
| 80001 - 100000 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 11 |
| | 2.1% | 4.7% | 8.3% | 4.4% |
| Above 100000 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 11 |
| | 2.1% | 4.7% | 8.3% | 4.4% |
| Total | 47 | 191 | 12 | 250 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Source: Compiled from collected data

Table (1) shows about the indebted rates of the respondents. Through the above table it is come to know that majority of the respondents are struggling with indebtedness, of the total respondent’s 72.8 percent have more indebtedness and only 27.2 percent to be reported no indebtedness. It is indicating the gap between income and expenditure of respondents. So, the respondents are not getting the sufficient income to full fill their minimum need that why majority respondents are depending on in debts. Nearly one by forth respondents have relaxation from indebtedness.

Table :2- Indebtedness of the Respondents

| Do You Have Any Indebtedness | Co-operatives | Master weavers | Independently | Total |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------|
| Yes | 31 | 142 | 9 | 182 |
| | 66.0% | 74.3% | 75.0% | 72.8% |
| No | 16 | 49 | 3 | 68 |
| | 34.0% | 25.7% | 25.0% | 27.2% |
| Total | 47 | 191 | 12 | 250 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Source: Compiled from collected data



Table (2) revealed the majority 68.1 per cent respondents struggling with indebtedness for full their home needs only, 14.8 per cent respondents thronging in to indebtedness for their children marriages. Income which has been earning on the present work has not met the home need. It is very panic situation of respondents because all respondents have struggling with insufficient income.

Table:3- Health Conditions of The Respondents

| Disease | Respondents Working under Category | | | Total |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------|
| | Co-operative | Master weaver | Independent | |
| Sight | 34 | 115 | 6 | 155 |
| Blood Pressure (B.P) | 9 | 36 | 4 | 49 |
| Diabetes | 4 | 17 | 0 | 21 |
| | 11 | 22 | 0 | 33 |
| Paralysis | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Cancer | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hernia | 17 | 39 | 7 | 83 |
| Piles | 14 | 29 | 4 | 47 |
| Orthopedic | 5 | 52 | 0 | 69 |
| Cardiac | 0 | 3 | 0 | 8 |

Source: Compiled from collected data.



Findings of the Study

- 79.6 per cent respondents are males are engaging in weaving occupation only 20.4 per cent respondents are females engaging in weaving occupation the male respondents have dominating position in this industry.
- 32 per cent of majority respondents are between 51- 60 years age group, above 60 years age group respondents have 24.4 per cent and least percent 4.4 of respondents are in 20 -30 years age group. Younger generations are not choosing this profession.
- 90.8 per cent respondents have white ration cards, 6.8 per cent respondents are living without ration cards and only 2.4 percent respondents have pink ration card.
- The majority respondents have total family annual income is 20001- 40000, only. The above 100000 annual income getting families are only 3.2 per cent.
- The majority 42.8 per cent respondents have total family annual expenditure is 40001 - 60000. 6) The above 100000 annual expenditure families are 4 per cent and very least 1.2 per cent families' annual expenditure is up to 20000 only with compare annual income the expenditure is very high.
- Majority respondents are struggling with indebtedness, nearly only one by forth respondents have relaxation from indebtedness.
- So, the respondents are not getting the sufficient income to full fill their minimum need that why majority respondents are depending on indebts.
- Most of the respondents are struggling with multiple health issues especially Sight, Hernia, Orthopedic and B.P, Piles are major health problems.
- Weaving Cooperative societies are poor performance importantly fake societies enjoying the fruits.

Suggestions

- Government should take proper measures to provide the food security.
- Should provide minimum wage employment programmes to all categories of the weavers. As a result, their level of income will increase and full fill their basic needs. The gap between the income and the expenditure should come down.
- NGOs intervention yield a desirable progress as they work need based, rather the project mode.
- Government should take necessary measures to reorganize the defunct co-operative societies and take necessary actions on them.
- There is a need for inclusive legislation on occupational health and safety for the handloom sector.

Conclusion

First, despite the various welfare policies, weavers remain poor and vulnerable, and their economic situation remains precarious. One can probably argue that the (negative) impact of the National Textile Policy on the welfare of weavers is more important than the (positive) impact of the various welfare policies. Second, perhaps it is possible to argue that the various kinds of policies are successful with regard to affecting a restructuring of the textile sector, more or less along the lines foreseen and predicted by the government. It is clear that the restructuring is bound to result in incredible hardship for the weavers, particularly because the various welfare policies do not provide sufficient compensation for loss of income and work. finally it can be conclude from the analysis that in present situation handloom industry is in crisis and weavers who are depended by occupation facing many problems in the country and in Telangana state particularly.



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