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## THE PROBLEMS OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS A STUDY OF RAJANNA SIRICILLA DISTRICT – A PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The handloom weavers sector is one of the important cottage industries in India. A handloom is a loom that is used to weave cloth without using of any electricity hand weaving is done on pitlooms or frame looms generally located in the weavers homes. The important policy measures taken in the most comprehensive policy of 1985 such as shift in emphasis from employment potential to that of enhancing productivity, development of handlooms through co-operatives and corporations to be intensified, greater emphasis on modernization and new technology for improving productivity, quality and finish, special efforts to ensure the availability of raw materials through the operations of NHDC. In 1990 Abid Husain Committee suggested the strengthening of existing welfare schemes and the introduction of General Welfare Fund. It categorized handloom weavers into three such as high skilled, high earning, medium skilled medium earning and low skilled low earning. It also suggested the need for framing institutional mechanism a decentralized form of production successfully linked with a highly centralized market. The committee suggested focusing on weaver rather than looms and area based promotion to enhance weavers' earnings and productivity. This research paper is to be discussed about "The Problems of Handloom Weavers A study of Rajanna Siricilla District – A Perspective

**Key Words:** Handloom Industry, Textile Marketing, Weavers Community, Traditional Crop, Household weaving, Skill Weavers

### Statement of the Problem

*"I do regard spinning and weaving and a necessary part of any national system of Education".....Mahatma Gandhi*

The handloom weavers sector is one of the important cottage industries in India. A handloom is a loom that is used to weave cloth without using of any electricity hand weaving is done on pitlooms or frame looms generally located in the weavers homes. Weaving is a primarily the interlocking of two sets of yarn the warp (length) and the weft (width) which manufactures the hand-woven fabrics since time immemorial. As a cottage industry, the handloom sector is providing employment opportunities to many Indians, next only to agriculture. There are more than four million handloom weavers in India and one tenth of them render their services in Tamil Nadu alone. The Spinning, Handloom, Power loom, and Garments were perceived as four pillars of textile sector in India. In handloom sector, the traditional techniques and equipments are predominantly used with wide variation in weaving practices from region to region. Most of the handloom weavers are living in villages with differing living and working conditions depending upon their social circumstances. Since handloom is a low input - low output process, it holds the merit of providing employment to umpteen numbers of people. Apart from that this industry is a family based occupation, which entirely depends upon group activity, organized production process and building confidence. In each stage of the production process, whether it is pre-loom processing, weaving or finishing, every member of the house hold has a distinct role to play.

### Historical Perspective of Handloom Weavers

Historically, the handloom weavers were considered with high regard as skilled craftsman and artisans. Over time, handloom weaving has become dispersed and decentralized in nature. Handloom weaving identifies three types of weavers, namely, Independent Weavers (IW), Cooperative Weavers (CW) and Master Weavers (MW). Most of the



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handloom weavers depend on their very own resource of finance, for purchasing raw materials. Lack of credit facilities from banking institutions, force the weavers to exploitative relationships with money-lenders, who give them credit on exorbitant terms and rate of interest. Also the traders, who give in advance the production credit, use the leverage thus gained to suppress wages. To safeguard the handloom weavers from this situation, the union and the state governments have been implementing many social welfare programmes since last seven decades. With declining family incomes, changing designs and products and migration of relatively new labour, increase in the number of working units in the recent years has been phenomenal across the landscape of India. With imminent decline in wages, enabled by price competition, the living and working conditions are likely to be far from satisfaction.

Traditionally, weaving was done by men and the pre-loom activities were looked after by women. Presently, women share enormous work burden with no commensurate compensation system. Also, the children, in the school-going age group, in the rural areas, render their helping hands to their mothers and sisters, inquisitively to know the different processes of spinning and weaving, since their early age. Since handloom weaving is perceived as a strenuous job with low remuneration, weavers are shifting to other jobs such as construction workers or agricultural labourers and already a large number of them have migrated to other places looking for better options. Also, with the advent of mechanization, mill and power looms have encroached upon handloom sector's traditional market and continue to dominate textile production in India because of their comparatively low cost of production owing to small overhead charges and economies of mechanical production. Though handloom is also gaining ground, there are some serious problems like marketing, quality control, scale of operation with regard to rural industries that should not go unnoticed.

Today, in India Weavers handlooms industry holds a prime place for three obvious reasons viz,

- (i) It provides the largest employment among the traditional industries, next only to agriculture;
- (ii) Handlooms have maintained around one-fourth share (23%) of total textile production in the country; and
- (iii) The textile industry, including handlooms, is a major foreign exchange earner of the country. It earns more than 35 % of the total exports revenue made in our country.

### Handloom sector in Telangana

Telangana State is one of the important states in the handloom industry. There are about 40,533 handloom weavers including ancillary workers. There are about 35,762 powerlooms working in the Telangana State. There are 615 weavers cooperative Societies in the State consisting of cotton 259, silk-33 and wool-44, and it is also famous for Pochampalli, Gadwal, Narayanapet, Jogulamba, Siricilla, Warangal Sarees.

Weaving is a special skill that only certain communities living in certain specific places possess. As every human being possesses certain special skills, weavers' weaving skill can be considered as their human asset. Where it is weaved at the household level, it is still viewed as a family occupation. It is traditional and usually handed down from parents to their wards. In a weaver's family almost every one possesses the skill of weaving or some skill that is relevant to weaving. The skill level may vary even within the weaving communities. Some are conventional and saturated into the age old tradition while others are enterprising and are on the lookout for better designs that are market worthy and technologies that are less drudgery.

Handloom sector continues to employ large number of people in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of India. In some states such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, North Eastern states, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, this sector is visibly large and dominant in certain categories of clothing. Market for handloom products is still large and wide. There is good domestic market as well as international market. There are die-hard consumers who would support handloom products for every reason they can hold on to. It is simple, appropriate technology, the knowledge of which lies with the people. Knowledge dissemination is not locked in any consultancies, or training institutions. The very essence of this technology is that it can be assembled by anybody and expensive either to erect or dismantle it. Any industry, the world over, requires public policy support. Handloom sector is no exception, while it is true that handloom sector is major source of employment next only to agriculture. Its labour



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intensive character, decentralized nature and optimum utilization of scarce capital resources give handloom sector a unique position in the Indian economy. In the language of economics, handloom provides both self-employment and casual employment.

## Strategy of handloom weavers in handloom sector

Effective government policies, administrative institutions and processes (PIP) are recognized as essential in sustaining livelihoods. These form the context within which individuals and households construct and adapt livelihood strategies, whether they are handloom weavers or any other livelihood venture for that matter. This includes complex issues such as participation, authority, governance, policies, service delivery, and social relations. In effect, they determine the freedom that people have to transform their assets into livelihood outcomes. Handloom weaving provides livelihood to millions of weavers and crafts persons. The sector has not only survived but also grown over the decades due to its inherent strengths like flexibility of production in small quantities, openness to innovation, low level of capital investment and so on

## Role of women in handloom sector

Traditionally, weaving was done by men and the pre-loom activities were looked after by women. Women play a significant and unorganized role in all stages of handloom weaving. Trends continue to indicate that while male participation in crafts has been slowly decreasing over the years; female participation is on the rise, particularly in rural home-based crafts sector. The proportion of women employed in different handicrafts varies from 40 per cent to as high as 80 or 90 per cent. Women artisans dominate in trades like decoration of cloth (embroidery and lace making), dyeing and bleaching of textiles, weaving. However, over the years, women have also started entering those craft areas traditionally considered to be male bastions. Women engaged in hand printed textiles get the maximum rates followed by the cane-bamboo making industry and zari work. Women's work was closely related to the strength of the household weaving. Any weakening of the household weaving could diminish women's presence in the workforce. The role of women in the handloom sector is imperative. 60 percent of women engage in all weaving processes in general and pre-processes in particular. Women in the handloom sector act as a catalyst to achieve targeted and customer-need production. Usually women and girls perform warping of the yarn, winding the thread on to bobbins for use as weft yarn, and sometimes assisted by young adults, who are invariably boys.

About one in ten women in weaver families knew how to weave. In the textile industry, women's work – participation tend to be higher and so the presence of household weaving. But the situation has changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The household weaving was in decline and in some cases, being replaced by factories which work with migrant workers. Women often spin and cut thread and perform other important tasks that are usually labeled as secondary or menial. It involves sitting and working in uncomfortable position for as long as six to seven hours at once.

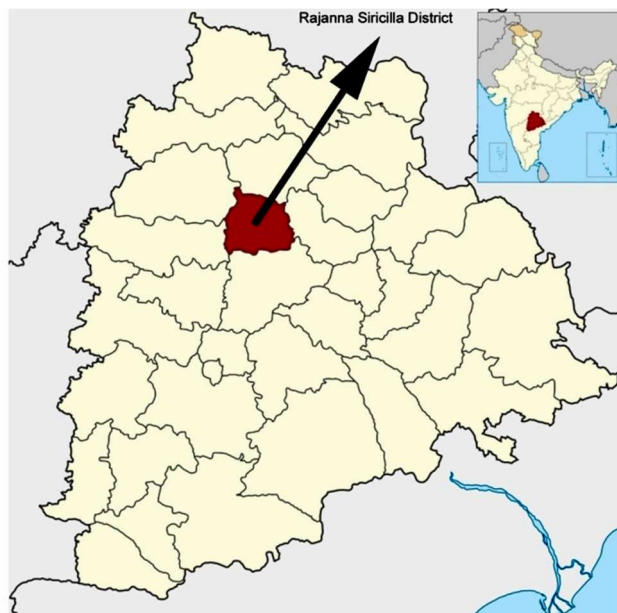
## Brief Profile of Siricilla Rajanna District

The district is spread over an area of 2,030.89 square kilometres (784.13 sq mi).<sup>[4]</sup> This district is bounded by Jagtial District in the North, Karimnagar District in the North East, Siddipet District in the South, Kamareddy District in the West and Nizamabad District in the North West.

<b>Demographics</b> Hinduism	94.75%
Islam	4.05%
Christianity	0.87%
Other or not stated	0.33%

As of 2011 Census of India, the district has a population of 552,037. Rajanna-Sircilla district has a sex ratio of 1014 females per 1000 males and a literacy rate of 62.71%. 48,751 (8.83%) were under 6 years of age. 116,892 (21.17%)

lived in urban areas. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes made up 102,110 (18.50%) and 22,990 (4.16%) of the population respectively.



This Siricilla Rajanna Districts carved out of erstwhile Karimnagar District as was formed on 11-10-2016. Siricilla located at 18.38° N 78.83°E. This district is bounded by Jagtial District in the North, Karimnagar District in the North East, Siddipet District in the South, Kamareddy District in the West and Nizamabad District in the North West. Total area is 2,019 Kms. This district covered by 13 Mandals 7 Revenue Division. Siricilla is a town and district headquarters. Kalvakuntla Taraka Rama Rao, is the current working President of Bharatha Rashtra Samithi is representing the assembly constituency of Siricilla Rajanna District.

This district known as a Textile Town at present large number of handloom weavers and also power looms textile processing and dying units. It is one of the biggest textile hub in the state of Telangana with over 40,000 powerlooms, 15,000 weavers are weaving in this industry. Most of them belong to Padmashali communities who were traditionally weavers as many as 139 mutually aided cooperative societies (MACS) and around 142 small scale industries (SSI) are situated. Hence, this study is confined to and concentrated on Siricilla Rajanna district due to its decisive role in handloom industry of Telangana State. Moreover, this district has export facilities to various industrial capitals cities of North and South Indian States.

### Cooperative handloom sector in Rajanna Siricilla District

The cooperative handloom sector has unquestionably been going through periodic crises and the situation has been particularly acute in the last couple of decades. It shows a decline in production under cooperative structure which resulted in the erosion of rural livelihoods in weaving and also a displacement of labor. There have been several new developments in the nation for the last twenty years that need to be taken seriously and new strategies to deal with the situation have to be worked out. Rather looking at the cooperative handloom sector in isolation, it would be necessary to consider parallel developments in the wider economy over time and see what effect these have had on cooperative handloom weaving. Market interventions must build on proper understandings rather than be guided by preconceived notions regarding markets. The pre-requisites for a healthy handloom industry are a broad and vibrant production base and appropriate marketing mechanism that suit it. The understanding of handloom weaving is not just a matter of academic curiosity, but essential to identify the varied needs and problems of weavers and can provide the basis for formulating



appropriate policy measures. The general thrust of a government policy on handlooms has to be based on a clear recognition of such needs. At the same time enough attention has to be paid to the macro – economic environment and how it affects the performance of the handloom industry. What is needed is a realistic appraisal of the industry, facilitated by direct inputs from the field.

Rather than take the so-called decline in cooperative handloom weaving as given, it is preferred to go into specific reasons for expansion or contractions in particular areas. Based on these field accounts, it will be possible to identify key problem areas as well as to indicate certain lines of intervention in dealing with these problems. A contraction in the scale of handloom weaving in one area is offset by a regeneration and even expansion in other areas. For example Karimnagar is famous for Chaddars and Towels the links with local markets sustained some cooperatives.

### **Social Economic conditions of the Weavers**

By analyzing the socio-economic conditions of cooperative handloom weavers, in many ways of cooperative weavers live on inadequate and unbalanced diet, their housing conditions are appalling and in the absence of opportunities for education due to their hereditary character of poverty their outlook towards life became unscientific and irrational.

Further research is needed for better understanding of the implications of results and impact of various schemes introduced recently by the state government on the welfare of the weavers such as Cheneta Mitra, TFSSS and Netannaku Bhima. It can be also studied the women empowerment of women weavers and allied women workers working under the cooperative structure of weaving. A further research may also be done regarding the problems and prospects of primary handloom cooperative societies in the district with analysis of their functioning, administrative mechanism, profits, losses, sales, number of days employment provided to the weavers, production, type of products, reasons for the closure of societies and the schemes taken up by the handloom societies.

### **Production of Weavers**

It is noticed that to produce large production in short time with less labor to get better wages the cooperative handloom weavers shifted to power looms and other profession. These cooperative handloom weavers felt that they cannot sustain their life with handloom earnings under the cooperative fold. It requires instant care and attention to address the problems which are in the cooperative handloom sector. So the policy framers have to realize the significance of cooperative handloom sector in the district and allocate required funds and grants for the utility of weavers to avoid further decline of weaving community from cooperative fold. And further handloom products are unique. The strength of handloom sector depends up on the promotion of innovations and experiments. A team effort should be needed to bring back the previous stage of growth which accelerates the ability of cooperative fold handloom sector and also the earnings and standards of living of the cooperative handloom weavers in the study area.

### ***Cloth raw material processing by weaver at Rajanna Siricilla District***



***The researcher observing preparation of cloth raw material by women***



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## State Government and allied supported Schemes

With regard to welfare schemes, many are introduced at the state and central level. It is true that post industrial revolution era witnessed the disruption of handloom weaving and also showed the resilience of hand weaving against the onslaught of modern techniques in weaving in India. The 20<sup>th</sup> century as mentioned earlier was not only the emergence of mill industry but also the decentralized sector which has now become the serious competitor to the handlooms. In the pre-independence era little efforts were taken to develop handloom industry until 1935. Apart from this the discriminatory colonial ruling made every possible effort to encourage the use of machine made cloth and yarn from Lancashire. In 1945 All India Handloom Board was set up to address the issues of raw material supply and marketing of handloom products. The handloom sector witnessed greater emphasis in the policy formulation in the post independence era. All five year plans had given emphasis for the promotion of industry. The major thrust was on the cooperativization of handloom weavers. The level of co-operativization stands at 20.3% as on 2005-06. A crucial role was assigned to the cottage industries by industrial policy resolution passed in 1948. It was made that the acquisition and installation of power looms were prohibited without the prior approval by the Textile Commissioner. The cotton textile order was issued by the Indian Government in which the mills were prohibited from producing certain varieties of cloth.

## Various Boards and Committees National and State Level

All India Handloom Board was reconstituted in 1952 to develop handloom sector on co-operative lines to increase production and help in the marketing of cotton. The government announced RBI scheme to assist handlooms by supply of yarn and in return purchase of cloth in the same year. The government passed Khadi and Other Handloom Industries act of 1953 in by which additional excise duty was imposed on the cloth produced by mills and the amount was spent for the development of handlooms. The Hand loom Rebate scheme was introduced in 1953. The Karvey Committee set up in 1955 (on village and Small Scale industries, Second Five Year Plan) not only recommended the ban on the products coming from both mill and power sector at existing levels but also recommended deferring of any proposal for additional spinning capacity in the mill sector in order to promote the spinning sector. The RBI scheme for handloom Finance, 1952 was widened to extent working capital to handloom weavers' cooperative societies for production and marketing of cloth. The 90% loss guarantee scheme was introduced in 1956 for providing guarantee cover to co-operative banks in respect of losses from non-recovery of loans to handloom weavers' societies. The Janata government announced its textile policy in 1978 to assist the growth of handlooms, the capacity of the power loom and mills sectors were to be frozen at existing levels with expansion allowed only in handloom and Khadi sectors. The 1981 policy emphasized on the need for the revival of dormant looms as well as sustained modernization of handlooms. It also provided for the setting up of National Handloom Development Corporation which will ensure the procurement and distribution of adequate yarn at low prices to the handloom sector.

The Mira Seth Committee which was set up on handlooms focused on increased earnings to weavers. It recommended the strengthening of existing provisions for timely and adequate credit, technological up gradation and so on. It stressed on the training of weavers through Weavers' Service Centers in Computer Aided Designing (CAD) and Computer Color Matching (CCM) to meet the challenges of globalization and export oriented strategy to keep the handlooms alive. The Satyam committee which was appointed in 1999 recommended that cone yarn be converted to hank yarn by weavers to meet the needs of handlooms i.e removal of hank yarn compulsion of mills to handlooms, 50% of weavers to change over to weaving for exports and conversion of 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of handloom weavers producing plain and low cost items to 1<sup>st</sup> tier handloom units producing commercial items or into 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of power loom weavers with semi-automatic looms, research and development design intelligence, testing, training and HRD support would be provided by ESC and IIHTs, establishment of marketing complexes in the main commercial centers, setting up of IT booth for weavers and strengthening of the database with regard to the regard the handloom sector.



Weaver involving to be produce quality sarees in Powerloom House



The researcher observing marketing system of Quality Clothes

The Government of Telangana recognized the role of handlooms and initiated various assistance programs and welfare schemes for the upliftment of the cooperative handloom weavers. In order to encourage cooperative system a separate advisory board was established in the beginning of plan period.

- **Share Capital investment:** Assistance has been sanctioned by the state government to the handloom societies by way of contribution towards their share to strengthen the own funds of the weaving cooperative societies.
- **Processing Units:** The modern dying units have been running with the help of the government of India with a capacity of processing 12 bales of hank yarn in a day at Siricilla, Karimnagar and Warangal.
- **Share Capital Loans:** The scheme is introduced with the objective of bringing the handloom weavers into cooperative fold who are outside of cooperative sector in phases by channelizing the assistance through the weavers' handloom societies by granting share capital loans to the societies.
- **Modernization/Replacement of looms:** The scheme is intended to switch over from traditional production varieties such as plain sarees, dhothis and towels to the new designed and diversified items to meet the consumers' over changing tastes and preferences and market demand to solve the recurring problem of marketing. The





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replacement of existing looms by placing modern looms to enable them to get more wages resulting their economic status can be improved. Under this scheme matching contribution from the state and central government comprising of 2/3 as loan and 1/3 as grant for the purchase of latest appliances such as frame looms, chittaranjan looms etc. are provided to primary weavers cooperative societies.

- **Interest Subsidy:** It provides subsidizing the interest margin 3% foregone by the state and central cooperative banks in sanctioning cash credit loan to the weavers of cooperative handloom societies. As a result of incentive of subsidy to the financing banks the quantity of credit limits having by the handloom cooperative societies from NABARD is progressively increased.
- **Appointment of Paid Secretaries:** As the handloom societies have non-qualified or untrained staff, they could not get the services of well trained and experienced staff owing to their limited sources. This scheme which was introduced in 1985-86 enables the societies to get the services of qualified and trained personnel of handloom and textile without taking salary to work as paid secretaries
- **Work Shed cum Housing Scheme:** This scheme will provide the member weaver a house which provides a room for setting up of looms for residing and weaving in the room. This scheme is categorized into rural and urban areas with a unit cost of Rs.9, 000 and Rs.15, 000 respectively.
- **Marketing Incentive:** this scheme provides 20% rebate on the retail of handloom cloth to the consumers with a purpose to encourage the handloom cooperative societies to improve their sales and also to provide continuous employment to their member weavers.
- **Revival, Reform and Restructuring (RRR):** Under this scheme the central and state government will provide Re-capitalization assistance to the selected handloom cooperative societies.
- **Life insurance scheme Mahatma Gandhi Bunker Bima Yojana:** The age group of 18 and 59 year weavers are eligible. The individual handloom weaver has to pay an amount of Rs.80 per annum towards the premium and the central government and LIC contribute the remaining amount of Rs.390 to each individual weaver. The risk coverage Rs.60, 000 and Rs.1, 50,000 will be paid to the nominees of the individual weavers under the natural and accidental deaths respectively.
- **Pavala Vaddi Scheme:** It was being implemented with an objective to lower the burden of interest on weavers' co-operative societies; independent weavers who are availing artisan credit cards scheme and weavers self help groups. The differential rate of interest collected by the bank more than 3% will be reimbursed by the government to the cash accounts of the respective cooperative handloom societies.
- **Handloom Reservation Act-1985:** This act has reserved 11 handloom items for the production of handlooms exclusively viz Bed Sheets, Durry, Dress material, Kambals, Blankets, Shawl, Woolen Tweed, Chaddar, Saree, Dhoti, Towel for the endurance of handloom sector.

Above all of the schemes the two main important schemes TFSSS Telangana Handloom Weavers' Thrift Fund Savings and Security Scheme ( Netannaku Cheyutha) and Cheneta Mitra directly help the weavers in the form of cash credits which will increase their income. The important policy measures taken in the most comprehensive policy of 1985 such as shift in emphasis from employment potential to that of enhancing productivity, development of handlooms through co-operatives and corporations to be intensified, greater emphasis on modernization and new technology for improving productivity, quality and finish, special efforts to ensure the availability of raw materials through the operations of NHDC. In 1990 Abid Husain Committee suggested the strengthening of existing welfare schemes and the introduction of General Welfare Fund. It categorized handloom weavers into three such as high skilled, high earning, medium skilled medium earning and low skilled low earning. It also suggested the need for framing institutional mechanism a decentralized form of production successfully linked with a highly centralized market. The committee suggested focusing on weaver rather than looms and area based promotion to enhance weavers' earnings and productivity.

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