

Report
on
Growth and Prospects of the
Handloom Industry

Study Commissioned by the Planning Commission

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Preface

The handloom sector occupies a distinct and unique place in the Indian economy, besides being the largest generator of non-farm rural employment. While available statistics indicate an economic sector of considerable size, there is still immense scope for expansion. The handloom sector is indeed capable of exponential growth, with proper identification of its needs, a reasonable level of resource input and structural attention.

Any initiative in this direction, however, is hampered by a paucity of detailed ground level data. The generation of such information is an urgent necessity today, since programme formulations for handloom weavers must be based on regional specificities and conditions of weaving. The objective of this study, commissioned to Dastkar Andhra by the Planning Commission, has been to generate such field data, which can become the basis for future interventions. It identifies areas of potential growth in the handloom sector, and indicates models for intervention based on ground realities. It focuses on different handloom regions of Andhra Pradesh, with a view to bringing out specificities in weaving and to identify particular problems. To put issues in a larger perspective, comparative accounts of handloom weaving in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and West Bengal are drawn on.

A unique feature of the study has been the active collaboration between the perspectives of primary producers (weavers), field researchers and academicians. As part of the study, a seminar was held on the theme 'Growth and Prospects of the Handloom Industry' (September 23-24, 2001), which provided an opportunity for interaction of the above groups with policymakers as well, leading to a stimulating discussion and debate on a range of issues pertaining to the industry. The Report incorporates primary field level data and secondary information on handloom weaving, followed by an overview of policy initiatives. It also sets forward specific recommendations based on the needs and problems identified in the study. In these efforts, we have been supported by the expert advice of Dr. D.N.Reddy, University of Hyderabad, as well as weaver organizations such as Rastra Chenetha Karmika Samakhya, Andhra Pradesh and Handloom Protection Forum, Trivandrum.

Part I. The Problem and the Context

Introduction: the need for an informed debate on the handloom industry

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 powerloom 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. The challenge lies in engaging with these and other perspectives critically, in order to create a context for re-defining the handloom industry in contemporary terms. A thorough understanding of the characteristics of the handloom industry is of the utmost urgency and importance in such an endeavour.

The handloom industry is largely household-based, carried out with labour contributed by the entire family. It is dispersed, spread across thousands of villages and towns in the country. The industry also exhibits considerable diversity in terms of products, organizational base, as well as in relations between actors within the production structure. This diversity is not reflected in the aggregate data on the industry. And unfortunately, it is often such aggregate data, which form the basis not only for people's impressions about the industry, but also in attempts to formulate policies for the sector. The point we

would like to emphasize is that there is no such thing as ‘the’ weaver, but rather, a diversity of conditions that characterize weavers and weaving. It is this heterogeneity that needs empirical elaboration. This Report seeks to provide this detail through accounts of handloom weaving from a number of regions, both in Andhra Pradesh and outside. This input from the field is intended to facilitate an informed debate on the handloom industry. Presenting regional specificities in weaving (in terms of product, organization, markets, etc) forms an important part of this Report. From our observations in the field, we find that the dominant narrative of decline in the industry is not uniformly borne out. In fact, as our field descriptions in part II of the Report show, handloom weaving industry has not only survived, but is doing well in certain regions. We have focused on the specific reasons for the expansion or contraction (as the case may be) of weaving in various centres. We also elaborate the features of the handloom industry, identifying its fundamental needs/ requirements and the different ways in which these are handled. This will allow us to identify areas of potential growth and reorganization, and also mark out areas for policy intervention.

The Report comprises of three parts. Part I seeks to provide a brief overview of the context of the current study and elaborates its framework. Part II consists of field reports. In the course of presenting these, we will address three main aspects - organizational modes, the co-operative effort and marketing. Part III analyses policy perspectives and presents the prospects of the handloom industry.

I.1. An Overview of Textile Industry in India

The superiority and popularity of the cloth produced for centuries in India is a well-known fact that needs no reiteration. The production of cloth for local consumption, which was the mode long prevalent in rural India, underwent some change with the opening up of sea trade routes and the consequent expansion of export trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Certain changes in the organization of production ensued, the most noteworthy being the emergence of an intermediary class of trader-financiers mediating between the producer and the market.

British rule brought about further changes in the handloom industry and scholarly opinion is divided on the question of the kind of impact it had. The debate, to put it simply, has centred on whether colonial contact destroyed traditional Indian industry, or whether it created conditions for a creative re-organization of the institutional structures and adaptation of the handloom industry (Roy, 1999). The Marxist school of thought has argued that colonial contact destroyed pre-existing industrial systems and brought about economic retardation. Marx himself observes:

“It was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel. England began with driving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan, and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons. From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5200. In 1824, the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards, while in 1837 it surpassed 64,000,000 yards” (1979:128).

By contrast, historians and other scholars working for a little over a decade have documented the dynamism of the indigenous artisanal economy that, during the last century of British rule, responded by changes in the conditions under which cloth was produced and sold (Baker, 1984; Harnetty, 1991; Haynes, 1996; Roy, 1994, 1998; Specker, 1989). While this is a debate that can be extended with more studies on the division of labour, the nature of organization and so on, it is a fact that colonial contact brought about a disruption in hitherto integrated processes like the spinning of yarn and weaving of cloth.

Textile history informs us that with the setting up of textile mills in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, India's position in world trade was dislocated. This decline could be dated from approximately 1821, which was the year the first shipment of British textiles reached India (Das, 2001:19). Running parallel to this, of course, is the systematic use of India as a supplier of raw cotton. Britain had been on the look out for cotton supplied from outside, drawing first on the resources of Cyprus and USA; it then turned to India “as early as 1788 (with) British manufacturers...urging the East India

Company to furnish them good cotton for their rising industry” (Buchanan, 1966:195). Indeed, it has been well documented that this interest played a major role in the development of rail transport in India (Satya, 1997). India’s emergence as the primary supplier of raw cotton to Britain led to a series of other changes such as the decline in handspinning of yarn. In its place, imported mill spun yarn and cloth entered Indian markets. This not only displaced the livelihood of millions of spinners, but, over a period of time, also brought about significant changes in how the weaving industry was organized. For instance, the Report of the Fact-finding Committee (1942:6) says:

(W)hen yarn came from a distance and had to be bought, yarn-dealers and financiers became necessary, and as the average weaver had little credit, the industry fell more and more into the grip of middlemen. Thus the independence of most weavers disappeared and the great majority of them came to work for a Mahajan either on the contract or on the wage basis.”

Till about the first decade of the twentieth century, handloom still retained an edge in the domestic market. But this soon suffered due to the growth and consolidation of the mill sector. Not only did the handloom sector become dependent on yarn produced by mills, but also faced increasing competition from cloth production by mills, which began in the period of the First World War. A competitive relation between the two sectors emerged. The problems being faced by the handloom industry came to be first emphasized in 1928 by the Royal Commission on Agriculture, “which expressed the view that the development of this village industry on co-operative lines was essential to the survival of weavers in the face of increased competition from organized industry” (GOI, 1986-87:1). Between 1920s and 1930s, handlooms continued to grow. This could be attributed to the nationalist movement and the demand for swadeshi cottons as well as an increase in demand for cloth during the Second World War. However, yarn prices rose phenomenally due to war conditions (especially during the II World War) pushing raw materials out of the reach of weavers. According to one estimate, “compared to pre-War levels, the price of yarn had increased from 600 to 700 %, while the price of handloom products had risen only by 200 to 250%, with the consequent closing down of many looms” (ILO, 1960:7-8). It was realized around this time that the livelihoods of

handloom weavers would be adversely affected by the indiscriminate expansion of mills. Consequently, though the functioning of spinning mills was not interfered with, the growth of the mill sector was regulated. Certain concessions came to be given to the handloom industry, while excise duty was levied on mill cloth.

The reasons for this were perhaps not internal to the handloom industry, but could have had to do with the emergence of a powerloom sector from the 1920s onwards. A combination of factors contributed to the consolidation of this sector, which consisted largely of hundreds of small units set up by enterprising individuals, each with not more than 5-10 powerlooms (usually those discarded by the composite mills). Some of these were owner-operated, others hired labour to work on the looms. In this way, they got all the benefits of a cottage industry initially, but because of their size, were exempt from labour laws. The powerloom sector thus emerged as an intermediary between the pre-existing handloom and mill segments of the textile industry. Apart from other issues, such as the competition it offered to handloom products, we also find a significant number of handloom weavers faced with dwindling demand switching over to work in powerlooms. According to a Report by the Ministry of Labour: “The growth of powerloom was so rapid that yesterday’s traditional handloom weaving centres also grew to be centres of powerloom industry. The traditional handloom centres like Malegaon, Ichalkaranji in Maharashtra, Burhanpur in M.P., Belgaum in Karnataka, Karimnagar in A.P., Erode and Salem in Tamilnadu...became powerloom centres as well” (GOI, 1988:3).

* * *

The textile industry, which encompasses the organized mill sector, the unorganized decentralized sector consisting of handlooms, khadi and powerlooms, plays a crucial role in the Indian economy today. Taken together, it contributes to 8% of GDP, 20% of industrial production, 35% of export earnings and employs around 38 million persons. However, there are also distinct differences between these sectors, with reference to production, technology, and so on. The sector-wise distribution of cloth is depicted in Table 1, which shows that the most drastic decline has been in the production of cloth by mills. Production of cloth in the handloom sector has stabilized around 18%.

Table 1. SECTOR WISE PRODUCTION OF CLOTH

(Million sq.mtr)

Year	Mill	Handloom	Powerloom	Hosiery	Khadi, Wool & Silk	Total
1950-51	3727 (73.0)	742 (14.5)	636* (12.5)	-	-	5105 (100)
1960-61	5127 (69.3)	1900 (25.7)	375 (5.0)	-	-	7402 (100)
1968-69	4699 (55.0)	2201 (25.7)	1646 (19.3)	-	-	8546 (100)
1980-81	4533 (36.4)	3109 (25.0)	4802 (38.6)	-	-	12444 (100)
1987-88	3178 (17.7)	4370 (24.3)	10429 (58.0)	-	-	17977 (100)
1988-89	2902 (14.2)	3993 (19.6)	13123 (64.4)	-	367 (2.8)	20385 (100)
1990-91	2589 (11.0)	4295 (18.4)	13348 (57.2)	2696 (11.6)	402 (1.8)	23330 (100)
1992-93	2000 (7.9)	5219 (20.5)	14644 (57.5)	3182 (12.5)	430 (1.6)	25475 (100)
1994-95	2271 (7.9)	6180 (21.6)	15976 (56.0)	3748 (13.0)	431 (1.5)	28606 (100)
1996-97	1957 (5.6)	7456 (21.4)	19532 (55.5)	5533 (16.0)	540 (1.5)	34838 (100)
1998-99	1785 (4.9)	6792 (18.8)	20689 (57.3)	6277 (17.4)	559 (1.6)	36102 (100)
1999-00	1714 (4.4)	7352 (18.75)	23187 (59.1)	6374 (16.25)	575 (1.5)	39202 (100)

Note: *includes powerlooms and hosiery. Figures in parentheses show percentage share in total. From 1994-95 production of cloth in mill sector include weaving units. Prior to 1989-90 the production of cloth by hosiery sector was included in the powerloom cloth production. From 1950-51 to 1987-88 production of cloth exclude Khadi, wool and silk

Source: 1. From 1950-51 to 1968-69, Various Issues of Five Year Plans, Government of India

2. From 1980-81 to 1999-00, Compendium of Textile Statistics (2000), Textiles Commissioner, Mumbai

Table 2 shows the fibre-wise production of cloth in the textile industry. Though the share of cotton has declined over the year, it is still holds highest share at 48.4% followed by 35% of non-cotton.

Table 2 . FIBRE WISE PRODUCTION OF CLOTH BY THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

(Million sq.mtr)

Year	Cotton	Blended	100% Non-Cotton	Khadi, Wool & Silk	Total
1980-81	8368 (76.2)	1270 (11.6)	1350 (12.2)	-	10988 (100.0)
1987-88	12626 (70.2)	1815 (10.1)	3536 (19.7)	-	17977 (100.0)
1988-89	13658 (67.0)	2321 (11.4)	4039 (19.8)	367 (1.8)	20385 (100.0)
1990-91	15431 (66.0)	2371 (10.0)	5126 (22.0)	402 (2.0)	23330 (100.0)
1992-93	16343 (64.1)	2684 (10.5)	6018 (23.7)	430 (1.7)	25475 (100.0)
1994-95	17019 (59.4)	3661 (13.0)	7495 (26.2)	431 (1.4)	28606 (100.0)
1996-97	19841 (57.0)	4888 (14.0)	9569 (27.5)	540 (1.5)	34838 (100.0)
1998-99	17948 (49.7)	5700 (15.8)	13725 (33.0)	575 (1.5)	39202 (100.0)
1999-00	18989 (48.4)	5913 (15.1)	13725 (35.0)	575 (1.5)	39202 (100.0)

Note: Cloth production figures in 1980-81 is in linear metre, Figures in parentheses show percentage share in total
Source: Compendium of Textile Statistics (2000), Textile Commissioner, Mumbai

Table 3 shows production, consumption and export of cotton yarn. Data on production and consumption of cotton yarn shows that production has always fallen short of consumption. At the same time, export of cotton yarn was on the increase which has led to increase in the domestic prices of yarn. This has rendered cotton textiles expensive and consequently, there has been a shift in demand in favour of cheaper non-cotton textiles.

Table 3 PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION AND EXPORT OF COTTON YARN

(Million kg)

Year	Production	% Change	Consumption	% Change	Export	% Change	Shortage
1993-94	1697		2051		179		-354
1994-95	1696	-0.1	2065	0.7	229		-369
1995-96	1894	11.6	2295	11	260		-401
1996-97	2148	13	2566	11.8	466		-418
1997-98	2213	3	2719	6	489		-506
1998-99	2022	-8.6	2485	-8.6	486		-463
1999-00	2204	9	2652	6.7	555		-448

Source: Compiled from Compendium of Textile Statistics (2000), Textiles Commissioner, Mumbai

Handloom Sector

The handloom sector, contrary to the general notion that its share of production has declined, however, has stabilized around 20% for the past two to three decades. At present it stands at 18.75% of the total cloth production. The major contribution of handloom sector is however in terms of providing employment to 124 lakhs people and thus stands next to agriculture. Out of this, 60% are women, 12% SC and 20% ST (Ministry of Textiles: 2001). There are 38.91 lakhs handlooms in India. Though its share in total textile exports is 10% (EXIM: 2001), its labour intensive character, decentralized nature and optimum utilization of scarce capital resources give it a unique position in the Indian economy. It weaves a range of fibres like cotton, silk, tussar, jute, wool and synthetic blends. Table 4 represents fibre wise production of cloth by handloom sector.

Table 4: FIBRE-WISE PRODUCTION OF CLOTH BY HANDLOOM SECTOR

(Million sq.mtr)

Year	Cotton	Blended	100% Non-Cotton	Total
1980-81	2600 (97.0)	60 (2.2)	20 (0.8)	2680 (100)
1987-88	4254 (97.3)	72 (1.7)	44 (1.0)	4370 (100)
1988-89	3911 (98.0)	26 (0.7)	56 (1.3)	3993 (100)
1990-91	4237 (98.6)	11 (0.3)	47 (1.1)	4295 (100)
1992-93	4686 (89.7)	8 (0.2)	525 (10.1)	5219 (100)
1994-95	5429 (87.8)	13 (0.2)	738 (12.0)	6180 (100)
1996-97	6441 (86.4)	52 (0.6)	963 (13.0)	7456 (100)
1998-99	5861 (86.3)	111 (1.6)	820 (12.1)	6792 (100)
1999-00	6376 (86.7)	119 (1.6)	857 (11.7)	7352 (100)

Note: Cloth production figures in 1980-81 is in linear metre and subsequent figures in square metre

Figures in parentheses show percentage share in total

Source: Compendium of Textile Statistics (2000), Textile Commissioner, Mumbai

Export Scenario

Table 5 shows the export of textile goods from the country in the last decade. The share of textile exports in the total exports of India has shown an increasing trend and now stands at 35.5%. Thus, textiles have grown over decades as the single largest foreign exchange earner. This is of great significance taking into account the fact that textile industry has low import intensity at 2-3%. The share of textile exports in total exports has

increased from 32.41% in 1991-92 to 38% in 1997-98 but has decreased to 35.5% in 1999-00. In volume terms it has increased from Rs.52814.8 crores in 1998-99 to Rs.57736.9 crores in 1999-00, an increase of 9%.

**Table 5: EXPORT OF TEXTILES VIS-À-VIS TOTAL EXPORTS
(INCLUDING JUTE, COIR & HANDICRATS)**

Year	Textile Exports		Overall Exports		Textile Exports as % of Total Exports
	Rs. (crore)	US \$ (million)	Rs. (crore)	US \$ (million)	
1991-92	14409.5	5796.8	44042	17885	32.41
1992-93	19114.2	6566.6	53668.0	18537.0	35.6
1993-94	25010.7	7973.9	69751.0	22237.0	35.86
1994-95	31336.3	9980.2	82674.0	26330.0	37.9
1995-96	35526.1	10685.1	106353.0	31797.0	33.6
1996-97	41828.2	11839.1	117525.0	33105.7	35.76
1997-98	46092.5	12342.1	120614.3	32440.8	38.04
1998-99	52814.8	12558.8	141603.5	33641.5	37.33
1999-00	57736.9	13324.8	162738.2	37537.5	35.5

Source: Compendium of Textile Statistics (2000), Textile Commissioner, Mumbai

Sector wise break up of export of textiles is given in Table 6.

Table 6: EXPORT OF TEXTILES

(Value in Rs. crores)

Item	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Textiles (excluding RMG) of which;	11963.4	14500.1	17266.1	19163.5	18855.0	21771.8
Carpet handmade	1386.2	1406.3	1548.9	1526.0	1721.7	2204.7
Carpet mill made	331.7	421.5	478.7	392.2	430.9	380.1
Coir & Coir manufacture	172.8	210.3	216.5	254.9	316.6	190.3
Cotton Yarn, fab, madeups, etc	7013.7	8618.6	11082.1	12131.6	11661.5	13601.9
Manmade yarn fab., made ups	1927.7	2511.3	2494.5	2991.3	2945.0	3554.7
Natural silk yarn, fab, made ups	427.7	445.4	457.2	655.7	749.6	1000.3
Silk Carpets	40.3	56.7	68.8	109.5	134.1	42.9
Ready made Garments of which;	10304.8	12294.7	13324.1	14405.7	18363.5	20808.7
Cotton incl.accessories	7856.1	9454.3	10439.1	10683.2	13241.4	15254.4
Manmade	1435.7	1740.0	1881.0	2568.2	3885.4	3012.4
Other textile materials	363.5	478.0	420.8	470.1	629.5	713.5
Silk	364.4	347.8	275.2	350.7	249.8	677.6
Wool	285.2	274.6	308.1	333.4	357.4	1150.7
Grand Total	22268.2	26794.8	30590.2	33569.2	37219.5	42580.5

Source: 1. DGCI & S, Government of India

2. EXIM Bank, Indian Handlooms: A Sector Study, Table 5.1, p. 73

Indian exports of textiles (excluding ready made garments) fell from Rs.19164 crores in 1997-98 to Rs.18855 crores in 1998-99, showing a fall of 1.6%. During 1999-00,

however, exports of textiles registered a growth of 15.5% to reach Rs.21772 crores. Exports of ready-made garments have on the other hand increased from Rs14406 cores to Rs.18364 cores showing a growth of nearly 30% during 1997-98 to 1998-99. Export during 1999-00, registered a growth of 13.3% to reach Rs.20809 crores. Exports of all textiles have shown an increase over the last five years from Rs.22268 crores in 1994-95 to Rs.37219 crores in 1998-99. During 1999-00, exports of all textiles amounted to Rs.42581 crores, reflecting a growth of 14.4%.

Exports of handloom products constitute a small percentage (around 10%) of the total textile exports (other than readymade garments) of the country. Variety wise exports of handloom products are given in Table 7.

Table 7 VARIETY WISE EXPORTS OF COTTON HANDLOOM PRODUCTS

(Figures in '000)

Variety	1995-6		1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-00	
	Qty (Sq.mt)	Value (Rs.)								
'A' Cotton Handloom Fabrics										
RMH	4538	241818	3592	205275	3732	218282	3800	207268	3823	189942
Lungies	16504	51238	14594	512649	10486	384792	8390	265901	8209	285610
Dhotis/Sarees	1374	46079	836	25872	503	30580	369	21220	338	23108
Shirting	801	33430	481	27710	370	22727	444	38757	193	9254
Other Fabrics	36415	1714422	28184	1552647	27812	1540454	26987	1701734	27507	1560076
Fabrics Sub Total	53632	2548187	47687	2324153	42903	2196835	39990	2234880	40070	2067990
'B' Cotton Handloom Madeups										
Floor coverings	37854	45084453	38154	4429354	37690	4492260	38572	4978926	35371	4335803
Bed linen	2893	583261	2630	515808	6226	2202509	8249	1676924	7253	1369121
Table linen	17424	3399698	20264	3692115	22404	5046655	20220	5190702	17745	4140952
Towels	3397	556155	4997	841008	3135	478261	3202	477740	4996	962601
Other made ups	14490	3312079	19469	44158602	18751	4128522	25622	5519908	27326	6042653
Made ups Sub Total	76058	12359666	85514	13893887	88206	16348207	95865	17844200	92691	16851130
Grand Total (A + B)		14907853		16218040		18545042		20079080		18919120

Source: 1. Handloom Export Promotion Council

2. EXIM Bank, Indian Handloom: A Sector Study, Table 5.4, p.77

The value of exports of cotton handloom fabrics during 1999-00 has declined by 7.2% over the last year. Though, the exports of Real Madras Handkerchief has increased slightly in volume terms, it has declined in value terms from Rs.21 crores in 1998-99 to Rs.19 crores in 1999-00. The exports of lungies, dhotis, sarees have shown a rise during 1999-00 in value terms while it has steadily fallen in volume terms. Exports of shirting

and other fabrics have also declined during the same period. The exports of cotton handloom madeups have registered an increase of 9.1% in terms of value in 1998-99 with respect to the previous year, thus revealing a shift in export patterns from fabrics to made-ups. Europe is the largest destination for handloom items accounting for nearly half of the total exports while Africa is the smallest market for handloom products from India in 1999-00. Our important markets are USA, EU, Japan and Australia (see EXIM, 2001).

The above statistics illustrate the current trends in textile production and marketing. An appropriate matching of the extensive production base and demand patterns will give a further fillip to the performance of the handloom sector.

I.2. Framework of the study: objectives and methodology

There is no such thing as 'the' weaver (this being a hypothetical construct) but rather, a diversity of conditions that characterize weavers and weaving. This point is often strongly made in the course of criticizing macro policy perspectives that, in effect, iron out this diversity. However, while it is imperative to keep this diversity in view, demonstrating such heterogeneity empirically is only a first step. It is also necessary to go further and suggest that appropriate institutional supports be devised in such a way as to match this diversity, which may often be region-specific.

A clear understanding of the specific features of the handloom industry, along with an identification of its most pressing needs is a preliminary necessity. Some of the essential characteristics of the handloom industry are as follows:

- 1) It is extremely diversified in nature, in terms of product and relations of production. From weaving coarse cloth for local needs to producing a range of medium and fine fabrics for a larger (usually urban) market, the varieties of cloth produced on handlooms are indeed vast. Each region is known for a specific product that is unique in design and style. What is woven (the product) is, however, inseparable from the question of where and how it is woven. The last is not a reference to technology, but to the very structure of production itself,

viz., to how production is organized. These modes and relations of production are again very diverse. There are independent weavers, weavers organized into co-operatives and those working under master weavers. While a few areas may be characterized by one clear-cut mode of production, a combination of types and a multiplicity of relations of production are usually found elsewhere.

- 2) It is capable of great flexibility in processes, products and geographical shifts. Alterations in the production process, and innovations in product are fairly easily achieved. Unlike land resources that root an individual to a given place, a weaver is limited only by his skill and, being mobile, could shift from one production base to another.
- 3) It is decentralized, located both in rural and urban centres. Handloom weaving as an economic activity predates modern industrialization. Within the village economy that obtained in the past, weavers catered primarily to local needs and were one of the service castes. Thus every village, or every cluster of villages, would have a number of weaving families. Running parallel to this was also market-oriented production, located largely in weaving centres near port towns, where master traders organized weaving for export. Sometimes, these were organized as karkhanas, or weaving 'factories', but by and large, unlike the highly centralized mill sector, handloom weaving today continues to be dispersed and decentralized in nature.
- 4) It is largely home-based, with labour inputs from the entire family. The second sense in which the handloom industry is decentralized is that it is largely household-based. While weaving sheds do exist occasionally, more widespread is the weaver weaving at home, drawing on the labour of all the family members. In each stage of the production process, whether it is pre-loom processing, weaving or finishing – every member of the household has a clear role to play. In many ways, it is similar to the subsistence agricultural household that engages in the self-exploitation of labour in order to remain at the subsistence level.

A proper understanding of these fundamental characteristics of the handloom industry is indispensable for policy formulations and creation of supportive institutional

infrastructures. This household-based industry, with its low capital and energy requirements and its ability to provide livelihoods to a large number of people, has immense economic potential. What is required is a systematic identification of the heterogeneous nature of its needs and problems and the designing of suitably flexible inputs that would tackle these issues. Most of the steps taken to tackle such needs as credit, raw material and marketing have had a centralized structure that has been unable to reach out to the inherently decentralized nature of the industry. The development of support systems that would match the characteristics of the industry is urgently needed today.

Needs of the industry:

1. *Raw materials:* the de-linking of yarn production from cloth production has been a major historical development that has affected the handloom industry in a number of ways. We have seen in the earlier section the factors that led to India becoming the supplier of raw cotton and importer of millspun yarn during British rule, and the consequent development of composite mills in the country. This change in source of yarn supply – from local to distant – altered the very organization of the industry, necessitating a role of increased importance to the middleman.

Today, a major difficulty of handloom weavers across the country is the non-availability of adequate quantities of good quality yarn at reasonable prices. The gap between the supply and demand for hank yarn – which is what is used by the handloom sector – is around 150 million kgs (SRUTI, 1995). The government took certain measures to deal with this problem: (a) the setting up of co-operative spinning mills to ensure supplies to the handloom sector (but the experience in Andhra Pradesh shows that several of these have closed down over the past 3 to 4 years). (b) the obligation on mills to pack 50% of their total marketable yarn as hank yarn (but this is rarely adhered to). Since the production and supply of yarn vests with the mill sector, the fortunes of the handloom sector get tied to this. The supply of yarn contracts or its price goes up whenever mills require it, forcing handloom weavers in the decentralized sector to turn to private traders for yarn.

Yarn shortages and steep prices are continuing problems in the handloom sector. The yarn availability scenario is also affected by the proliferation of the powerloom sector. Though powerlooms use cone yarn, they seek to avoid high yarn duty imposed on it by buying up hank yarn and converting it to cones (the cost of re-reeling being minimal). There is thus a considerable diversion of hank yarn meant for the handloom sector to other players, creating conditions of shortage, high rates, etc. Estimates of this linkage range from 15 to 25% (Chakraborty, et al., 1999) to 40% (Dastkar, 1988:11).

There are other problems as well. One, governmental intervention regarding yarn supply is confined to the co-operative sector. However, according to one estimate, only 20.3% of weavers come under this umbrella (EXIM, 2000:13). For the rest working outside the co-operative fold, yarn access remains difficult. Since it passes through various hands, and dealers at each level add their own commissions, the price is considerably higher than mill rates. Most of this cost burden is transferred onto the weaver, especially since weavers are unable to bargain with yarn merchants or master weavers. Second, weavers in different regions require different counts of yarn. This is not always available, leading to a mismatch in demand and supply. Third, the supply and process of yarn have fluctuated with the fortunes of the cotton crop as well as with policies pertaining to the export of yarn.

2. *Credit needs*: The credit facilities currently available to weavers are far from adequate. Even those made available through co-operatives rarely reach the sections for whom it is intended. This is because master weavers control a number of co-operatives and tend to corner a substantial proportion of institutional credit. As indicated earlier, the majority of weavers are to be found outside the co-operative fold, weaving usually for master weavers or on their own. The credit needs of this sector have remained unaddressed. The existing situation is one where the local master weaver provides consumption loans and/or advances, which, over time, render the weaver completely indebted to the master weaver.

3. *Marketing*: There is a significant mismatch between cloth production and marketing which has yet to be seriously tackled. The decline of local markets for handlooms is a reality today, which has to be addressed both in terms of cost factor as well as other strategies. The separation of producers from the market has given rise to middlemen. Trader entrepreneurs who may know the market well, and thus be able to meet new demands often dominate existing marketing channels. But as traders, they also block the trickledown of benefits even though the profit margin is quite high. The centralized marketing bodies of weaver co-operatives too have been malfunctioning. Not receiving payments in time for the products supplied by the apex marketing agency, has led to the collapse of a number of co-operatives, since they are unable to generate/rotate capital for subsequent rounds of production.

Objectives and methodology:

Against this background, the objectives of the study are two-fold.

- (i) to offer a realistic appraisal of the handloom industry particularly in A.P., and thereby to identify areas of potential growth. Such an appraisal is based primarily on field reports, which (a) document regional specificities and trends in weaving with reference to product, organization of production and markets, and (b) examine particular reasons for the expansion or contraction of weaving, as the case may be.
- (ii) to suggest possible strategies for intervention based on field experience.

The handloom industry has, unquestionably, been going through periodic crises, and the situation has been particularly acute in the last couple of decades. This has resulted in the erosion of rural livelihoods in weaving, and also a displacement of labour. This sense of crisis, it could be argued, is not new, and that this has been the case for nearly a century now. However, that would be to misperceive the basic fact that the nature and intensity of the crises has been changing. There have been several new developments in the Indian economy over the last two decades that need to be taken seriously, and new strategies to deal with the situation have to be worked out. It is such changing conditions that have to be emphasized, rather than simply repeat the dominant perception that the handloom

industry has always been on a path of decline, etc. This study will contend that a number of dominant perceptions that orient one's opinion of the handloom industry are based on certain 'myths' that have no basis in ground realities. We will draw on a few such myths and present evidence to the contrary, thereby arguing that perceptions of the handloom industry have to be rebuilt on contemporary terms.

Though there have been attempts to address some of the problems (such as credit, marketing, etc) faced by this sector, most of the solutions have been overwhelmingly centralized in nature. This discrepancy has led to low rates of success in the interventionist measures. The needs of the handloom sector as an industry have to be addressed keeping in mind the diversities obtaining at the ground level and the problems faced by primary producers, rather than developed in a top-down fashion. A number of policy recommendations are based on aggregate data, which do not reflect the radical diversity in forms of organization, production patterns and types of product in each region. The focus in this study is on the generation of detailed empirical data on weaving regions and on a range of socio-economic aspects of weavers' lives, which will provide the basis for support initiatives for the industry.

The study has drawn on both primary and secondary data. While the former has comprised of field visits to various weaving centres, the latter has included archival research, as well as the compiling of data from official and non-official published sources. Given the goals of the study, we have chosen two main modes of presenting data, i.e., statistical and qualitative. The former consists of data collated from earlier reports and records as well as data from sample surveys. A schedule was formulated with the intention of getting some base level data on products woven, marketing agencies, wages, and so on. Members of weaver organizations as well as other individuals located in the field collected the information for these schedules. In addition to these, we also prepared descriptive case studies of specific weaving regions, which sought to provide a realistic account of the field as well as analyse and contextualize the changes taking place. We have chosen important weaving centres in each of the three parts of Andhra Pradesh (that is, Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telengana) to represent the existing

scenario: Yemmiganur, in Kurnool district (Rayalaseema), Chirala, in Prakasam District, Tenali in Guntur District and Polavaram in East Godavari (Coastal Andhra) and Koyyalagudem and Warangal in Nalgonda District (Telengana). A comparative perspective on weaving from selected villages and towns in Kerala, Karnataka (Gulbarga District) and Tamilnadu (Kanyakumari District) is also provided. A field report from West Bengal, prepared in the context of this study, is included in the volume of papers prepared for the seminar on the 'growth and prospects of the handloom industry'.

Part II. The Study: Field Accounts

II.1. Scale and organization of weaving in Andhra Pradesh (past and present)

Handloom weaving has been an industry of prime importance for centuries in India. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period of unquestioned prosperity, whereas the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen certain significant changes in the structure and organization of this industry. A number of historians have documented the production and trading systems pertaining to handloom cloth in earlier centuries (see, for instance, Arasaratnam, 1990; Brenning, 1990; Ramaswamy, 1985; Sudhir and Swarnalatha, 1992). The Coromandel Coast as a whole and Masulipatnam fabrics in particular had achieved world-renown. It is well established that production was not only for an insular rural market, but also catered to a sizeable export demand. For example, the chintz or checked rumalls of Masulipatnam were in great demand not only within India, but also in Persia and later Europe. Muslins and calicos too were important items of production and formed a significant component of trade. It was this textile trade that the British sought to control in South India. It has been observed that while local merchants used to link weavers with the export market earlier, “as deliberate colonial policy the English sought to use their power to alter the conditions of production of handloom textiles and to transform existing relations between producers and middlemen” (Arasaratnam, 1990:190). This gave rise to major alterations in the organization of production itself. Rather than deal directly with weavers themselves or use the existing marketing intermediaries, the East India Company appointed Gumasthas as mediators in the process of accessing cloth. The system worked through advances and contracts, where money was advanced to the intermediary rather than to weavers directly. A well-established trading system thus took shape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, formalizing the dealings between the Company and the intermediaries (Chaudhuri, 1974).

Records and studies of maritime trade reveal to us the importance of the handloom industry in that period. However, there are not many direct studies of the industry per se,

that is, of its structure and organization, of how production was actually carried out and what the social relations of production were. There are clear indications, however, of trends in the industry when we consider the labour angle. As the export demand increased, it is said that traditional weavers scaled up export-oriented production, and cut down on weaving coarser fabric for the domestic market. This lacuna was filled by the entry of individuals from non-weaving castes, who were from the lower-castes. “Such entrance of low-caste labour into the weaving caste is evident in surveys conducted in the nineteenth century when Malas and Madigas, important untouchable castes of the Andhra region, are prominent as participants in the textile industry” (Brennig, 1990:80). A more precise dating of this process needs to be done, especially since the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee opines (1942:64) that such large-scale entry of lower castes into weaving in a nineteenth century phenomenon. What is incontestable, however, is the great degree of mobility and flux that characterized workers in this industry, into the twentieth century as well.

As briefly mentioned earlier, the ‘deindustrialization’ thesis has argued that like other artisanal forms of production, the handloom textile industry too was disrupted in the nineteenth century due to colonial rule. However, as Mukund and Syamasundari (2001:43) point out, the picture was different in the South, where one can even see an increase in the number of looms in this period. Two arguments are made in this connection: one is that of a shift in what weavers produced. In order to survive, they did not produce what the English mills produced, but concentrated on weaving coarser cloth for local consumption, that is, for a market that was not yet absorbed into a larger national market (see also Specker, 1989). The second is that there was also a diversification in product – such as weaving finer varieties - to meet demand from other segments (see also Yanagisawa, 1996), which allowed the industry to survive. In addition to these possible factors, we should also consider the other internal changes that were taking place in the organization of cloth production. Writing of the Deccan area, Tirthankar Roy (1993:73) notes that a certain amount of internal differentiation seemed to have emerged among the weavers by the 1930s, that is, when the system of ‘contracts’ was the most widespread mode. The number of independent weavers declined, and their

dependence on traders increased ('tied sale'). The 'putting-out' system, where weavers wove at home on their own looms for a trader, or a master weaver, or his agent, continued. Factories or karkhanas also emerged side by side with these systems.

These larger descriptions of the structure and organization of the handloom industry can be juxtaposed with reports that provide more detail of how these systems actually work on the ground. Two important reports from the Andhra region in the late 1920s and early 1930s provide us with considerable information on these aspects. N.G.Ranga's survey into the economic and social conditions of the handloom weaving industry (conducted during 1925-26 and 1928 and published in 1930) describes the conditions prevailing in substantial parts of AP and Madras Presidency. Such an account, he argues, is indispensable "before any constructive scheme of industrializing the country can be developed" (1930:1). While there could exist governmental records of number of looms, kinds of cloth produced, kinds of machines used, etc., there is hardly anything on "economic organization, the relations between the employers and the employees, the wages or earnings of the weavers, or their standard of living" (1930:6). Measures to improve work conditions and end exploitation of weavers, provision of credit and encouraging co-operative methods of organization are some of his suggestions. Similar problems of labour and finance are mentioned in Raghuraj Sahai's enquiry into the industry (1933). "The crux of the problem is indebtedness to local sowcars and yarn dealers"(1933:70), and one way of freeing them will be to take up co-operative forms of associations, it is argued.

While the formation of co-operatives is seen as a panacea for such ills, the situation today, where the co-operative mode of functioning is more or less disintegrating (at least in AP), needs close and careful analysis. A detailed history of this movement in the textile sector is also necessary in order to learn from mistakes and devise implementable strategies for future action. Much has happened in the intervening decades, with the situation deteriorating in the post-1980s. Unlike in other states, in AP, weaving continues to be a household-based activity, located largely in rural and semi-urban areas. Weaving is often the sole occupation pursued by weavers whose earnings are quite low. Mukund

and Syamasundari (2001) have analysed the crisis in handloom weaving in AP today in terms of loomage and output. They find that while Adilabad, Karimnagar and Nizamabad districts of Telengana and Chittoor and Cuddapah districts in Rayalaseema have seen a decline, all the districts of Coastal Andhra have done well (*ibid.*: 54-55). Changes in macro-economic policies since the 1990s have also pushed up yarn prices phenomenally. Rather than increase product prices (since they compete in a market dominated by cheaper powerloom products), master weavers responded by depressing wages paid to weavers. The starvation deaths among weavers in Andhra Pradesh in the 1990s were a result of such shifts.

A thumbnail sketch of the scale and spread of handloom weaving in Andhra Pradesh has been provided in the preceding section. Against this background, we will present reports from the field. The field data is divided into three main heads: (a) organizational structure and relations of production (b) the co-operative effort and (c) markets. The remaining part of this chapter will deal with organizational structure, whereas the subsequent chapters will take up the other issues.

Organizational structure

Understanding the way in which handloom weaving is organized is not just a matter of academic curiosity, but is indispensable in order to identify the varied needs and problems of weavers and can provide the basis for formulating appropriate policy measures. As a matter of convention, handloom weavers have been divided on the basis of how production is carried out. Accordingly, weavers are categorized either as independent (one who works on his own, buying yarn, weaving and selling the final product), or as working under the master weaver, or as coming under the co-operative fold. Usually the master weaver does not engage in weaving, but controls the production of weavers under him, either directly or indirectly, through agents. Using this broad classification as a point of entry, we find other unique features obtaining in the field, which suggest that a more complex system is actually in practice. Departing from the conventional modes of classifying weavers in terms of productive modes, the new textile policy recommends that they be categorized on the basis of the quality of weaving (into

producers of higher value, medium value and lower-value cloth). The assumption here is that producers of high value cloth will also receive high remunerations, unlike producers of lower-value cloth. Based on this assumption, policy recommendations suggest either a shift in the direction of producing finer cloth, or a shift away from handloom weaving altogether. The rationale for such an assumption is questionable, since field visits reveal that producers of 'luxury' fabrics are not necessarily well-paid, that is, the 'high value' of the cloth is rarely translated into wage terms. A weaver's earnings depend on a number of other variables such as whether he weaves independently, for a master weaver, or for a co-operative. These different organizational contexts also influence the flexibility with which weavers respond to changes in demand. Extremely complex and variable organizational structures of weaving obtain in the field, where there are no watertight compartments, but rather combinational modes at work. A field-based survey of types of weavers is invaluable in such contexts. An attempt is made below to capture and represent some of these complexities through a case study of Chirala in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. A small sample survey was also conducted in the area and information from the schedules are provided wherever relevant.

Case Study 1 - Chirala:

An important concentration of weaving in Prakasam district lies in the Chirala belt. Within an 8-10 kilometre belt, we have the following towns and villages noted for handloom weaving: Ipurupalem, Perala, Chirala, Ramakrishnapuram, Hastinapuram, Jandrapeta, Amodagiripatnam, Dantampeta, Vetapalem, Desaipeta, Ravoopeta and Pandilapalli. Spread across these locations are 16,000 working looms, reputed to be one of the largest concentrations in the state. Whenever there is a crisis of some sort, either a natural calamity or a yarn scarcity, weavers from East and West Godavari regions migrate into Chirala. This is because of the reputation for weaving that Chirala region has traditionally had. More often than not, the wages earned are not very different, but the fact that there is continuous work all round the year makes all the difference to weavers and they have often settled permanently here. While weavers often articulate their concerns in terms of wages and the availability of work, it is also necessary to place these perceptions within a larger economic context that dictates the fortunes of weaving

to a significant extent. Periodic crises in the availability of raw materials, especially yarn, are one such factor. Historically, yarn availability was affected during British rule (during the world wars) and has fluctuated subsequently, following government policies regarding cotton export. In more recent times (1988, 1991, 2000), the phenomenal increase in yarn prices has been a major blow to handloom weavers. It is said that in Prakasam region, the position of master weavers was strengthened during a severe drought during 1957-62, since only they had the resources to access yarn from private traders. The impact of all this on the organization of weaving in Chirala has to be kept in mind. It has been observed that: “more than 90% of the weavers work for master weavers, most in their own houses, but there are also several weaving sheds with appalling conditions. Both men and women weave. Taking the number of looms as 15,000 and the value of one loom’s daily output at Rs.100, the area’s annual production comes to almost Rs 50 crores” (Uzramma, 1996).

The number of looms and the extent of their productivity are indicators to reckon with and reveal a great deal about the scale of handloom weaving in this region. For instance, Mohan Rao, the president of the weavers’ organization, puts the average output of a weaver at 5 metres per day. Since pre-loom processes take between 5-10 days, the average number of working days per month is 22; this puts the monthly output per weaver per month at 110 metres. The entire region, with approximately 16000 working looms, will then be producing 1760000 metres of cloth! In addition to the productivity aspect, a number of other issues will also have to be addressed. How is production organized in this area, and how is it changing? What is the nature of the larger economy? How widespread is migration of weavers? What is the kind of product being woven, and where is it being marketed? What are the roles played by different actors in this process? What is the division of labour in weaving itself? What is the quantum of earnings? And so on. By presenting a field account, this report will engage with these and other issues.

The extent to which the local economy in Chirala and its surrounding areas revolve around cloth production is easily apparent. Cloth traders, big and small, yarn traders, shops selling dyes, spinning mills and of course, thousands of looms lend a distinctive air

to this town. In addition, since communities and/or families who have specialized in this task do a lot of the pre-loom work here, there are also supportive activities such as dyeing (there are 15 dye-houses in this area), sizing, warping, etc, going on continuously. Locals underscore this interdependence by saying that if one handloom is active, it keeps alive 16 related occupations, ranging from the growing of cotton to the marketing of the final product woven.

Changing markets and adaptability of the industry:

Despite certain fluctuations in fortunes, it is clear that the Chirala region continues to exhibit vitality especially as far as handloom weaving is concerned. As we look into the possible reasons for this, we find that weavers here have been responding and adapting production to changes in market demand, a situation that does not obtain in many other places. This is clear when we consider the changes in the kind of products that are woven here. The nature of markets they have had access to is also a significant point to note. These have not been confined to an immediately local or rural market alone, but have been predominantly domestic urban markets as well as specific export ones.

Telia rumals (used as head-cloths by the labouring classes) were the most famous product of this region in the 19th century. This technique of tying and dyeing the warp and weft threads before weaving was introduced here at the beginning of the 19th century. In the late 19th century, some rumal weavers from Chirala migrated to Pochampally in Nalgonda district to take advantage of the vicinity of the Hyderabad market. These rumals are no longer produced in Chirala today. In addition to other centres like Kalahasti and Venkatagiri, kiles (a term used to refer to the lungis and susis worn by Muslims) were also reportedly produced in Chirala and Vetapalem as well. The demand for this came from an export market, which was handled by merchants in Madras; exports were to “Singapore, Penang, Saigon, Aden, East Africa for the Muhammadan emigrants of India” (Ranga, 1930:32). By 1926, the trade in kiles had already declined, and the production of Real Madras Hand Kerchiefs (RMHK) took the place of the earlier products. These (also called pattimarpu locally) were produced primarily for an export market (Nigeria, Africa), especially in villages in and around Vetapalem and Jandrapeta

near Chirala town. These 45” squares were made in bright colours and were of 40s count, on which extra weft designs were made using jacquard. According to an old weaver, jacquard was brought to Chirala in 1974. Till very recently, that is, four to five years ago, a majority of the looms in this region wove RMHK for export. Now there has been a drastic drop in production and only 1% are said to be weaving this. The reasons given for this is that powerlooms from Madras have copied the product, and exporters are exporting these in the name of handlooms. The Chinese too are said to have begun meeting this export demand. Production immediately shifted to the weaving of jacquard sarees, and various blends were tried, like polycot, sico, etc. Currently, production of dress materials and dupattas has taken over. This ability to keep pace with changing market trends could be a major strength of the handloom industry in this region. Some of the products being woven are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Product description

Product	Type (counts)
Real madras Handkerchiefs (RMKH)	40s – jacquard
Sarees, dress materials	80s count
Polycot zari	80s
Cotton dress materials	80s x 60s
Plain yardage, dupattas	60s
Shirting	60s x 40s
Sarees	60s

Closely related to the changes in markets and products is the overall organization of production in the area. This refers to the ways in which yarn and capital are sourced by the weavers, where they weave, how their products reach the market, and so on. It appears that while there have been minor changes in the organizational structures, no new actors have emerged to replace or reorder the existing system. Though weavers working for the master weaver are in majority here, there are variations as well. This will be brought out through the descriptive accounts of weaving in (a) Hastinapuram (b) Ipurupalem (c) a new and adjacent weavers’ colony and (d) Vetapalem, all of which fall within the Chirala weaving belt.

silk borders are the main products. The women in the family said there is a lot of physical strain in manipulating the two pedals of the jacquard. So the mother operates one pedal and the daughter the other. Accessory operations (like pirn-winding) are also done by the girls and their mother. The division of labour within the family is shown in the table below:

Table 3: Family size and labour

Family size	5-7	Labour Husband W	PLP	Wife W	PLP	Offspring W	PLP	NW	
1-4	25	10	35	02	27	08	06	03	01

Note: W – Weaving; PLP – pre-loom processes; NW: Non-weaving, in this case, a teacher].

Most of those who work thus for the master-weaver have their own looms and work at home, but rely on the master weaver for yarn supply and marketing. Details of loom ownership as revealed by our sample survey are as follows:

Table 4: Loom Ownership

Details of loom ownership	Number
Own	22
Own loom, accessory belongs to master weaver (jacquard)	02
Co-operative	-
Installed by master weaver	11
Total	35

(ii) *Castes taking up weaving:* While a majority of the weavers here are Devangulas, there are also a few weavers here who belong to other castes. Dalit Christians are one such group. For example, Srinivas is now primarily a weaver. His family was originally from Molapalem near Bapatla, where they were employed as farm labour. They moved to Hastinapuram about 25 years ago, when cyclone struck Bapatla area. Young Srinivas, who was born here, learnt the rudiments of weaving over the years. As a boy, he assisted weaving activities in the surrounding areas and was also paid for doing tasks like pulling the jacquard chord, etc. He also used to go to school at this time. Later he stopped studying and learnt how to weave. Now, his wife works on the loom as well. The pitloom, with two jacquards of 120 hooks each is his own, set up about 10 years ago, with

a borrowed capital of Rs. 10,000. He still has not repaid that debt and wages are cut regularly by about Rs. 50 per warp. He and his wife weave 80s count 'kanyadan' sarees (polycot with zari, but no butas) for the master weaver, who supplies the yarn, specifies the colour, design, etc. The design cards are changed every 3-4 months. He had no idea of the market, where the sahukar sells, or how much he sells the sarees for. Due to their repeated borrowings, he is forced to remain with the master-weaver and take whatever wages are given. Though aware of this situation, he continues working since he feels that he is paid something at least. On the other hand, if he were an independent weaver, he is afraid that stocks may accumulate, and he may not earn even that little. The caste/religious affiliations of weavers in our sample are as follows:

Table 5: Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste/ Religion	Number
Padmasali	06
Devangula	26
Dalit Christian	02
Muslim	01
Total	35

(iii) *mini master-weavers*:

In-migration into the Chirala belt happens fairly regularly. Weavers from East and West Godavari districts have migrated to this area over the last three decades. While many of them are comparatively unskilled and work in sheds, (an arrangement that will be described in the next section), there are a few who have used their skill and entrepreneurial resources to rise from the ranks of ordinary weavers, so to speak. This latter group, while continuing to weave at home, also gives out work to a small number of weavers who work from their own homes.

N. Rao is one such typical min master-weaver, who weaves himself and also hands out work to other weavers. Originally from Peddapuram in East Godavari District, the family moved to Hastinapuram in 1976-77. His father used to weave cotton sarees of 100s and 120s count for co-operative societies there. He says that over the years, many of these closed down, so they were forced to migrate, and Chirala region, where continuous work was more likely, was an obvious choice. When they settled here, he

first wove pattimarpu (RMKH) for several years, but the demand for this declined when similar cloth began to be produced by the powerlooms. Since the last five years, there has been a further change, and saree and dress material weaving has been taken on. They have two pit looms now, worked by himself, his son and daughter-in-law. One is fitted with a jacquard, the other has a doobby, both of which work continuously throughout the year. They weave both polycot sarees, and 80s count cotton sarees with zari.

N. Rao supplies yarn to six other weavers, who work in their own homes. Designs are chosen by him locally from designers and incorporated or given to the weavers. Undyed yarn (of 80s count) is bought from Chirala itself, and then dyed by the local dyer. Zari, which is produced in Bangalore, is also bought in Chirala. Both the warp-making and sizing are done by different local communities [the rates of processing of one hank of yarn are: sizing – Rs. 2; dyeing – Rs. 3, warping – Rs.1.75]. Once the cloth is ready, N. Rao collects it from the weavers, and sells it to shop dealers in Chirala. The dealers also give him information about which designs are in demand and moving well, what he could weave and what not to. Sales are quite good during the wedding season, broadly from September to March. The transition from a struggling weaver to a hard-working mini master-weaver can perhaps be attributed largely to individual enterprise.

(iv) shed-weavers:

Weaving under ‘sheds’ is the other mode under which production is organized. There are 3-4 such sheds in Hastinapuram, owned by local master-weavers, where migrant job workers weave. As Mukund and Syamasundari (2001:105) observe: “In Chirala, migrant weavers from several parts of the state are working in worksheds under ‘mini’ master weavers. These mini master weavers are under contract with master weavers who supply yarn and designs. The mini master weavers themselves continue to weave and also employ migrant weavers in their worksheds...The working conditions and wages are both extremely poor, but there does not seem to be any shortage of work”. All the sheds in Hastinapuram have between 8-10 looms, placed extremely close to one another. Several are jacquard pitlooms. The weavers produce cotton dress materials that are 80 x 60 (which resemble Mangalagiri fabric, which is 80 x 80s), elaborately zari-ed dress

material and dupatta sets, polycot and jacquard sarees with butas. All the workers in these sheds are migrants. One of them came from Ongole about 2-3 years ago because wages were very low there. Here he weaves jacquard sarees (for which he earns Rs. 700 per warp) and zari dress material and dupatta fabric (Rs. 1100 per warp). Those weaving plain fabric earn much less, Rs.400 per warp. Another shed weaver migrated to this part of the district along with his family from Mangalagiri about 5 years ago. He first worked in a shed at nearby Ramakrishnapuram, and then at Chirala town, before coming to Hastinapuram three years ago. He says: “the sahuakar owns the shed, the looms, the product that comes off it, as well as the rooms adjoining the shed (where the weavers and their families live). Everything is the sahuakar’s except for us human beings, whom he doesn’t own. ... if a weaver does not own a loom he is looked down upon, and has no standing in the village. All the weavers working here are migrants from East Godavari, Nellore, etc. There are also women weaving. Sometimes, a husband and wife weave on different looms. It’s difficult...but in Ipurupalem, the conditions of shedweavers are much worse than this”.

A wide range of weavers and weaving situations are prevalent here. ‘Outside’ entrants, usually working in sheds and living in rented rooms, to local inhabitants working from home; among the latter, those who work on rented looms (installed in their own homes) for the master weaver; those who own looms and weave at home for the master-weaver; and those who produce independently and try to market on their own to middlemen or local traders. Of these, those working at home for a master weaver seem to be the dominant trend. Any attempt to categorize weavers must be flexible enough to take this heterogeneity into account, for monolithic schemes will do little to mitigate problems in particular areas.

(b) Ipurupalem

Juxtaposing a description of the organization of weaving in Hastinapuram with that of Ipurupalem is important for a number of reasons. Despite their proximity to one another, there are certain crucial differences. At the same time, the two villages share a few general features that appear to be characteristic of the region today, namely, barely

functional co-operatives and the dominance of the master weaver. What are different in Ipurupalem, however, are the sheds and the large number of migrants who work there. Weaver indebtedness is also a major problem.

This weaving village has mainly weavers who are Devangulas, with a handful of Muslim and Mala families, and about 15 from the Reddy caste. Most of the people are settlers. Weaving sheds, in which migrant weavers work, are greater in number here than in Hastinapuram. Master weavers control over 95% of weaving in Ipurupalem area. Another 5% work for the co-operative from their own homes. A few decades ago, there were more independent weavers, that is, who would weave at home and sell to master-weavers. But these are being edged out, and the scale of activity of master weavers themselves is increasing. Local weavers observe that there could be as many as 110 master-weavers in this area, with the size of their operations ranging from 10 – 500 looms. (We learn that there is a master-weavers' association, which decides on the wages to be paid. According to the statistics put out by this Association, there are 32 master weavers in Chirala-Perala and 110 in Ipurupalem). In Ipurupalem and surrounding villages, there are estimated to be about 8000 active looms, of which a thousand would have jacquards. The actual figure (of working looms) fluctuates, due to constant migratory movements. Only a small section of the weavers (about 10%) are originally from Ipurupalem itself; another 40-50% have become permanent settlers here over the last twenty years or more. The rest are still fairly mobile, and work mainly in sheds. Migrants come from East and West Godavari districts, Chittoor, Nellore, Proddatur (Cuddappah), Ongole, and so on. They work in sheds for the master weaver and move out when there is no work. (There were 12 co-operative spinning mills in the area, all of which have shut down now, due largely to malpractice in cotton purchase, bad administration and so on).

Many of the sheds have between 8 - 18 pitlooms, all belonging to the master weaver. A number of families have come from Proddatur, some in recent times, but mostly over a decade ago. The general pattern is where the master weaver advances loans, of Rs.2000 or more, to weavers. Once the weavers begin to work on the sahuakar's looms, they get

more and more deeply caught in a vicious circle of debt and dependence. For example, the wages are Rs. 270/- per warp of six sarees (each saree is of six yards). Weavers say they can weave one saree in a day, so a warp would take about a week to complete. Their monthly earnings would be to the tune of Rs. 1080, after deductions. Loom rent is deducted from the wage, as is room rent. If the loan taken is bigger, a greater amount is cut from the wage. Most of the weavers have not been weaving very fine fabric. A weaver from Prodattur, who came 18 years ago to Ipurupalem, used to weave sada shirting for the sahukar there, and weaves plain cotton sarees here. Another from Tadpatri, who migrated 20 years ago, used to weave Janata sarees there, and weaves 60s count sarees with butas here, and sometimes polycot sarees. He says the actual wage is Rs. 325, but after various deductions, such as rent and labour to be paid for warp winding, Rs. 270 is what they get in hand. The problems of shed workers are distinctive and need to be addressed immediately. Low wages, bad working and living conditions, heavy indebtedness and non-ownership of looms are ground realities that remain untouched despite the various government schemes for weavers.

The table below tells us about the migrational status of weavers in our sample survey.

Table 6: Residential/ Migrational Status of Weavers

Native place	Number	Reasons for migration
Hastinapuram, Chirala	24	-
Peddapuram, East Godavari	01	Closure of co-operative there in late 1970s
Molapalem, near Bapatla	01	Cyclone
Mangalagiri	01	Domestic problems
Narasipatnam, Vizag	01	Stocks destroyed in riot, started afresh
Salem, then, Ongole	01	Low income as peon, domestic troubles
Annavaram, Rajamundhry	01	Cyclone
West Godavari	01	Politics in co-operative – not getting work
Proddatur, Ongole, Tadpatri	01	Low wages there
Nalgonda	01	-not indicated
Palapura, Pandilapalli	01	- “
Vetapalem	01	- “
Total	35	

These shed weavers work for master weavers who are usually from Ipurupalem itself. According to one master weaver, close familiarity with production aspects is necessary to succeed and therefore non-weavers cannot manage the trade side. Though he claimed to have 100 looms under him, dispersed across 15 sheds and several homes, others pointed out that is closer to 500. Sarees (cotton with zari and polycot) are his main products, and production is 2000 sarees a month. His markets are both local – through wholesalers in Vijayawada, Guntur, Chirala, Hyderabad, etc – and national, in Madras, primarily. He earlier had access to an export market in Sri Lanka which has stopped now due to political unrest there.

In addition to the weavers and sahuikars, there are also other groups that facilitate and are indispensable to the production process. Families who specialize in pre-loom processes such as dyeing, warping and sizing form one such cluster. There are Devangula families, which do only sizing, and a separate community of dyers. There are about 30 families of dyers in the entire region, of which 15 are in Ipurupalem itself, and 4 in Chirala town. None of these families weave. The sizers provide sized yarn to the rest of the weaving community, selling usually to master weavers and the Society when it pays. Four people work on the sizing of warps, between 7-12 in the morning, and 2-6 in the evening. Mostly this is family labour, but at times, hired labour is used. They earn Rs. 60 per warp of 36 yards. Of this, Rs.5 goes towards ganji costs and Rs 15 towards wages. They make four warps in a day. There are also professional warpers, who do upto four big warps in a day. Each warp has 25 ladi, the earnings are Rs 25 for one bundle.

Trade merchants are the other conduits in the production chain. Lining the main road are nearly fifteen small yarn shops, which the locals patronize. Weavers explain that often, out of the yarn that is given to them for weaving, they are able to save some amount. If this quantity is large enough, they are able to weave it into cloth and sell it themselves. But more often, they sell this dyed yarn to these local traders, and earn a bit on the side. This yarn, usually cheaper than that bought from other town-based private traders, is bought by those weaving independently, or sometimes by smaller master-weavers, and

re-enters the weaving cycle. Table 7 below gives details of yarn sourcing in our sample survey.

Table 7: Yarn: type and access

Yarn count	40s, 60s and 80s
Source	In most cases, the master weaver, who buys it from Chirala itself, gives it. The independent weavers buy it from shops in Chirala, as well as small yarn vendors (in Ipurupalem).
Procurement problems	High prices

Given the pre-dominance of master weavers, the local co-operatives are not very strong. After the Duggirala Society was closed down, the Venkateshwara Co-op Society was set up in 1988. It worked well upto 1993, fell into a crisis in 1994, revived again, and worked upto 1999, and plunged again in 2000. They produce sarees, lungis and dress materials. Like other co-ops they get their yarn from NHDC and supply finished products to APCO, the apex marketing body. Unfortunately, though the society has 400 looms, only 50 are working. They say that because they are unable to provide work to weavers continuously, several have shifted to working for master weavers. The last procurement by APCO was in December 1999, which they paid for in 2001.

(c) a new weavers' colony:

Advancing of loans, as is apparent in Ipurupalem, appear to be the most frequent way in which migrant weavers begin working for master weavers in their sheds. Over time, these debts accumulate, and with the meagre wage they earn, it is hardly possible to think of alternatives. Emerging out of the vicious cycle of debts is in itself a major step. But what alternative avenues for production are available to such weavers is still an unresolved issue.

The new weavers' colony that has come up is unique in this respect. The two phases of the weavers' colony are a little over a year old. There are about 80 weaving families in the first phase. A new co-operative has been set up, though production and sales have yet to start off in a big way. Most of the weavers here were earlier shed workers at different

places, or working for master weavers. Here they have got individual houses built under a government scheme and a loom has been sanctioned for each weaving family. Many of the weavers who have moved here were earlier at Jandrapeta and other centres. Though the loom is their own, they weave for a master weaver, and invariably the jacquard accessory fitted to the loom belongs to the master weavers. Some of them, however, weave only plain cloth and yardage. For example, C. Raja Rao and his son can weave on both jacquard and doobby, but now their loom has neither. They were earlier working in a shed for a master weaver in Hastinapuram for eight years. When they decided to leave the shed and move to the new house, the master weaver refused to provide capital to set up the jacquard on their loom. Not wanting to give up the house allotted to them in the colony, they decided to move in spite of this. In order to do so, they first had to pay off their debts, which they did by selling off a patta of land they had in their native place, Annavaram, in Rajamundhry. Rather than borrow money again to attach accessories and fall into a debt trap, they have confined themselves to weaving plain cloth for the time being. Access to capital is therefore a major problem. The sources tapped by weavers in our sample survey are given below:

Table 8: Capital source

Source of Capital	Number
Own	01
Money lenders (sahukar)	14
Banks	-
Co-operatives	03
Combination, i.e., from co-operative and consumption loans from sahuakar	15
Total*	33

* Two of them (who had their own looms) reported that they would not seek further capital, as it would bind them further to the sahuakar.

Most of the weavers here are wary of accumulating debts again. Narrating his story, M. Sathyanarayana says, “no self-respecting man would be in debt”. His family comes originally from West Godavari. He used to weave sarees of 100-120 counts there, for local co-operatives. But these societies were ridden with politics; favouritism was rampant in payment of wages, which was anyway quite low. He then sold the little land he had, moved to Hastinapuram and set up a loom with that money, and worked on his own, buying yarn on his own, selling sarees locally (with plain cotton border, priced Rs

140) etc. They stayed in a rented house, paying a rent of Rs.300. He moved to the new colony since they could now live in their own house. At present, a master weaver from Ipurupalem gives him the necessary yarn to weave, and also buys the product directly from him. He says with conviction: “Wherever co-operatives work well, no master weaver would flourish, but unfortunately most co-operatives are very corrupt. Even then, if a co-operative starts functioning in the colony, I will definitely weave for it...Not having access to markets is our main problem. The master weaver deducts the wage to be paid by claiming that the market is dull, and there is no way of knowing if this is the truth”. While on the one hand, he despairs of the fact that even if all the family members work, they can earn only about Rs.70 a day, on the other, he still considers weaving a respectable occupation; “the work is in our own hand, and we don’t have to go others for everything”.

His observations beg the question of what alternative structures of production and marketing could emerge.

(d) Vetapalem:

In contrast to the production patterns described earlier – that is, weavers weaving under a master weaver, and shed weavers – we will focus here on the issue of co-operative structures for weavers. Vetapalem is a comparatively prosperous-looking weaving town. Between Vetapalem, Desaipeta and Ravorapeta panchayats, there are estimated to be approximately 2000 looms. The Vetapalem Co-op Society was started in 1936, with a mere 15 looms. Though their formal membership is around 1000, there are at present only 50 running looms, with an annual production of Rs. 14 lakhs. In the late 1940s, weavers in Vetapalem region were weaving pattimarpu (RMHK) for export. Export channels were fairly well established, and from Madras, the products would go on to Iran, Iraq and Nigeria. A few Devanga families from Vetapalem have entered into this trade, moving to Madras and even Nigeria, as parts of the trade link. In later decades, this product came to be called ‘Avayyar’, and its production continued upto 1992. The President of the society says that a conflict over wage and mode of export stopped the whole thing. Parallel to the export market, there was always separate production for a

local market as well, mainly MLA dhotis, Angavastrams and shirting. A fairly well functioning co-operative such as this one, however, declined by the mid-1980s. In order to curtail the mushrooming of co-operatives over the years, the government effected a merger in 1984, when several functioning societies were merged with those running huge losses. Vetapalem Society did not recover from this development.

The issue is not one of co-operative structures alone. Master weavers dominate the entire area, and Vetapalem is no exception. Old weavers here say, “forty years ago, we could count the number of master weavers on our fingers. Now, there is one on every street”. Feeding this development have been the migratory waves of weavers from the entire Prakasam belt and Cuddapah. Often there are strong caste links between the master weavers and the migrant weavers, and many of the migrants have now settled here. Weaving for the master weaver is the predominant mode in which production is organized. In fact, whenever the society is not able to provide full finance to weavers for the installation of jacquard looms, master weavers are stepping in. Thus, not only do master weavers gain some control over the co-operative structure, but also, over time, weavers switch to working for the master weaver. There are very few independent weavers, since yarn access and marketing would be major problems. The major modes of marketing adopted by weavers in our sample in Chirala area as a whole is shown in the table below:

Table 9: Marketing Modes

Marketing Agency	Number
Co-operative	02
Independently (to dealers in Chirala)	01
Master-weaver	17
Combination, i.e., co-operative and master weaver	15
Others (independent groups)	-
Total	35

According to the President of the Vetapalem Co-operative Society, co-operatives need to explore and expand markets to cope with the scale of weaving, which is not being done. Worksheds are easily sanctioned and set up, but no attention is paid to other facilities and

infrastructure. For example, cycles have been given to weavers to sell in local markets, but this has proved to be unrealistic. Many have begun using the cycles to sell powerloom products as well. While under a co-operative wages are fixed and some schemes made available to weavers, they do not get personal loans, which is what they need most. The master weaver meets this need. In Vetapalem, weavers are advanced sums upto Rs 10,000 for personal consumption by master weavers, though in the last few years, ever since weaver organizations have begun agitating for higher wages, the size of this advance has been cut. Yet, the advantages with a master weaver are that of easy availability of yarn; also, if one works longer and harder, can earn that much more. The wages have remained unchanged since 1994. Earlier, the master weaver used to bear the costs of setting up the design, but this has changed over the last five years. Many master weavers are asking weavers to bear the cost themselves since the loom is their own, but weavers hesitate to invest frequently in this.

The President of the Society emphasizes that the 1984 merger and the collapse of APCO were two major factors for the decline of co-operative structures in this region. In some ways, the recent problems in procurement and payment have to do with the centralized nature of the apex body. He points out that if the prices of the master weaver and that of APCO are compared, the former's is lesser. But inspite of the mark-up by APCO, no margin reaches the weaver, but goes toward meeting overhead costs. The reasons for the losses incurred by the co-operative structure have to be carefully gone into. According to him, direct channels both to markets and to financial institutions like NABARD are needed. A clear budgetary provision for handlooms is also necessary; this is often being vitiated locally because several politicians have links with powerloom sector.

The above example highlights that the strengths and limitations of the co-operative structure too need attention, since they were effective earlier, but have begun to disintegrate over the last two decades. The larger developments that have precipitated this process also need to be examined. Some of these will be taken up for discussion in the next chapter on the 'co-operative effort'.

Conclusions:

The case study of Chirala region illustrates several of the key problem areas that have not been adequately addressed in general accounts of handloom weaving. The following aspects may be highlighted in particular.

- **Market adaptability:** This case study has focused on providing a field picture of how weaving is organized in the region. This understanding is indispensable in order to assess the extent to which weavers are able to adapt their production to changing market demands. The access to export markets that Chirala has traditionally had gives it a unique position in AP's handloom industry. Today, with changes in the pattern of export demand, weavers have responded by changing their product to jacquard and dress materials, the primary target being the domestic, urban market. The organizational structure corresponding to this production has been one where a large chunk of weavers work under the master weaver, though there have been a noticeable number of independent weavers too. The term 'independent' needs to be carefully qualified, however. Complete independence would be practically impossible, because even if the 'independent' weaver has access to raw materials, he would have no access to markets. Any production outside the master weaver/ co-operative bases will encounter these questions (of the market) in a big way. *Rather than allow markets to dictate production entirely, we must examine what organizational structures of production obtain on the field, how adequately these are responding to the market and what re-organizations in the production process will ensure a better match between markets and production.* The preceding case study provides the input for this kind of exercise.
- **Categorization of weavers:** The case study also strongly contests the notion of a homogeneous category of 'the weaver' who is the focus of policy efforts. It draws detailed attention to various categories of weavers such as those owning looms and working for master weavers at home; those owning looms as well as buying yarn and weaving independently, but marketing their products through the

master weaver/trader; mini-master-weavers and weaving sheds that attract migrant weavers. It is clear that weavers' needs and difficulties are specific to each category. *Programmes targeting weavers should be region-specific and flexible. All such programme formulations should be preceded by a close examination of field realities and identification of the needs of different segments of the weaving industry.*

- ***Migration of weavers:*** Like other regions of handloom weaving that have exhibited vitality, the Chirala belt too has had an inflow of weavers from other areas. This phenomenon of weaver mobility needs further examination. Field visits indicate that migratory inflows became noticeable 18-20 years ago, by about the early 1980s. We find that the large scale migration of weavers, the emergence of shed weaving and heavy indebtedness among weavers have also contributed to a consolidation of the master-weaver's position in this area. The old 'putting out' system (working at home for the master weaver) now exists side by side with the 'karkhana' mode of shed-weaving, many of which are managed by smaller master weavers or agents of the bigger ones. *Migrant workers, with neither dwellings, looms nor capital of their own, work in these sheds. The requirements of this category of weavers would be different from the other groups, and would include aspects such as low wages, bad living and working conditions, etc.* A suitable policy for handloom weavers will have to seriously address the above circumstances.

II.2 The Co-operative Effort

Early surveys of the handloom industry in Andhra Pradesh (Ranga, 1930; Sahai, 1933), while identifying the urgency of problems such as indebtedness and low wages among handloom weavers, also urged for the formation of co-operative bodies that could handle at least some of these problems. Even the Report of the Fact-Finding Committee (GOI, 1942) had emphasized the strengthening of weavers' co-operatives as an important strategy in supporting this sector. The history of the co-operative movement with particular reference to weavers' co-operatives in A.P. has yet to be written. But by and large, once the nationalist movement took on the co-operative suggestion, the latter began to gain ground as a movement and was visualized as a significant tool of change. In A.P., by the 1930s itself, weaver co-operatives had emerged in different regions. Initially, providing yarn at subsidized rates was the primary concern, and only later did marketing and other concerns emerge.

Roughly from 1937 onwards, irregular yarn availability remained a major issue, aggravated by the World War. At one stage, the scarcity was so acute that the Nizam's government deployed textile inspectors to issue a limited number of coupons to each working loom. As the demand was considerably more than the supply, irregularities and corruption in the issuing of coupons was high. Also, the government allocated a certain amount to the existing dealers of yarn. Many of these dealers came together to establish local depots for selling yarn, but often resorted to underhand practices in the sale. It was against this background that a need for forming handloom co-operatives was felt. As in other parts of the country, the co-operative movement here too found its inspiration, and indeed owed its birth to the increasing momentum of the freedom movement. In 1949, around hundred co-operative societies were formed in the Telengana region. In 1950, Hyderabad Central Handloom Co-operative Society (HYCO) was formed to co-ordinate the working of these primary societies. (The Rayalaseema region had its own apex body, which, along with HYCO was integrated into APCO in 1975). The aim of HYCO was to procure yarn from the mills directly and disburse it to the primary co-operatives. In the beginning it dealt only with the purchase of yarn and its distribution, but later started

trade in dyes and also in the marketing of handloom fabrics. It was, to a large extent, instrumental in improving the lot of weavers at that time. Over time, however, with the proliferation of such organizations, the initiative degenerated, rendering futile any generalization on the effective functioning of weavers' co-operatives as a whole. Mukund (2001:2) provides details of the number of co-operatives working in A.P. and their role in sustaining handloom weaving as a whole. According to her:

“In A.P., there were 1024 registered societies in 1975-76. These had increased to 1690 by 1977-78, to 1932 in 1980-81 and 2115 by 1982-83. Thus, in half a decade, their number had more than doubled. Since this was done with no reference to their viability or sustainability, a corrective policy had to be introduced in 1983, by which about 1/3 of the co-operative societies (668) were liquidated as being beyond all hope, and another 1/3 (662) societies, considered potentially viable, were merged with 323 existing societies. Only 502, or less than ¼ were considered independently viable, and retained, making a total of 825. In 1996, according to the State Government sources, there were 812 societies in the State, of which 551 were working societies.”

A recent estimate (Dept. of H&T, 2000-1:1) puts the number of weavers within the co-operative fold in Andhra Pradesh at 1,01,264 and those outside the co-operative structures at 1,00,608.

Table 1: Cotton weavers' co-operative societies and members – 1995-96, 1996-97, 1997-98.

Name of district	1995-96 No. of societies	1995-96 No. of members	1997-97 No. of societies	1996-97 No. of members	1997-98 No. of societies	1997-98 No. of members
Srikakulam	50	14,223	50	14,336	50	12,426
Vizianagaram	17	4,501	16	3,729	16	3,729
Visakhapatnam	20	6,084	20	5,591	20	5,591
East Godavari	53	22,968	53	21,692	53	15,726
West Godavari	24	11,517	24	11,526	24	6,448
Krishna	44	7,370	44	6,821	44	6,794
Guntur	48	22,324	48	22,324	48	22,324
Prakasam	30	12,039	30	20,575	30	8,309

Nellore	52	13,734	52	12,586	52	10,609
Chittoor	34	13,116	34	1,463	34	1,463
Cuddapah	107	21,000	107	20,751	107	7,720
Kurnool	39	14,582	39	14,582	39	3,275
Anantapur	28	1,846	35	1,847	25	2,609
Hyderabad	4	2,577	4	2,559	4	251
Rangareddy	3	869	3	869	3	194
Mahbubnagar	34	17,921	34	17,921	34	17,921
Nalgonda	45	19,410	45	19,410	45	19,650
Warangal	72	24,075	72	23,865	72	33,859
Khammam	10	2,805	10	2,603	10	3,491
Karimnagar	56	15,780	36	4,867	35	4,650
Medak	16	6,500	14	7,000	18	13,500
Nizamabad	9	7,989	9	7,989	09	5,407
Adilabad	10	4,391	2	357	02	285
Total	805	2,67,621	781	2,43,263	774	2,06,231

Source: State Administrative Reports of various years.

However, we do not get a clear picture of the functioning of the co-operative societies and the factors influencing them through such statistics alone. Mukund and Syamasundari (2001) have examined the working of some societies in Andhra Pradesh, as well as the reasons for their failure. The arbitrary merger of co-operatives, control exerted by master weavers and local power groups, the politicization of co-operatives, misappropriation of funds and overall mismanagement are some of the factors mentioned by them (ibid: 115-6). Several of these were very much in evidence in places like Yemmiganur, Vetapalem and Warangal district, as our case studies will show. Other problems include the near-total control of flow of credit to co-operatives by the government as well as excessive bureaucratization of the co-operative structure. In 1995, Andhra Pradesh passed the Mutually Aided Co-operative Society (MAC) Act which was supposed to simplify procedures considerably and allow autonomy to weaver-members in the managing of their societies. But only an appraisal of their implications and

functioning in the coming years will give us an idea of what aspects alternative attempts at group formation should take into account and what it should beware of.

We provide below two case studies on the co-operative effort, from Yemmiganur in Kurnool District, Gangadevipalli and Koyyalagudem in Nalgonda District and Polavaram in Krishna District, where we see different sets of circumstances influencing the initiative.

Case study 2 - Yemmiganur:

This case study draws on a micro-context of handloom weaving in Yemmiganur town, A.P. this will be supplemented by information from a small sample survey done in that area. Once famous for the largest and most well-functioning weaver co-operative society, Yemmiganur today has been witness to a number of changes. In particular, the role of the local co-operative society and master weavers in initiating production of handloom cloth in the region has been distinctive. The multi-caste base of weavers in Yemmiganur is also noteworthy and highlights the internal differentiations that obtain among weavers as a group. While on the one hand, recurrent problems within the co-operative raise questions regarding that very structure, on the other, the seeming lack of conflict between master weavers and the co-operative is unsettling, forcing us to ask who dominates and controls trade in handloom cloth. In this case study, we will (a) examine the formation and working of the Yemmiganur Weavers' Co-operative Society (YWCS), (b) highlight changes in product and shifts in weaving, and (c) draw attention to the varied caste/community basis of weaving in the context of Yemmiganur.

Background: Kurnool district, in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, has a number of villages and towns noted for handloom weaving. Adoni, Gudur, Kodumuru, Kosagi, Nagaladonna, Nandavaram, Gonigandla, Gudekal, Pattikonda, Parla and Yemmiganur are some important centres. A Manual of the Kurnool District, published in 1886 (reprinted in 1992, A.P District Gazetteers) offers this description of economic activity in the area: "The chief trade is weaving. The number of weavers in the district, exclusive of women, is 15,122. They do work in their own houses, partly on their own

account, and partly on account of traders who advance money for cloth. Gudur and Kodumur are the chief weaving stations. Ravikas with silk borders are manufactured here for export. Cotton carpets are manufactures at Cumbum and Kurnool. Cotton turbans made by the Mussalman weavers of Kurnool town are much prized and are occasionally indented for by military officers. Woolen blankets are also made, chiefly by the Kurubas. ...Cotton tape for cots is generally made by Muhammadan women” (1992:231). The products woven across the district are much more extensive now, ranging from cotton and silk border sarees to mosquito nets. In certain villages and towns (like Yemmiganur), the entire economy is based on weaving, while agriculture dominates in the district as a whole.

Historically, both cotton and silk weaving has been prevalent in Kurnool district. Though spinning was practiced earlier, it is said to have stopped with the establishment of local spinning mills and the Co-operative Society at Yemmiganur. The coarse white cloth produced by weavers of the Mala caste was sold locally as well as exported to Ceylon and some African countries. In the nineteenth century, mixed silk and cotton handkerchiefs produced fairly extensively in Adoni and Yemmiganur were sold to Lingayats in the then Mysore State (this was apparently used by the Lingayats to tie the ‘lingam’ – an insignia of divinity within the sect – around their necks) [Francis, 1904]. In addition to these, sarees in 20s and 30s count, usually dyed in dark blue, were popular among coffee plantation workers in Mysore State. Similarly, sarees in red, yellow and green were also sold in places like Hubli and Dharwad. Seven standard colours were used in the production of sarees - white, green, scarlet, yellow, black, dark-red and indigo, the last being particularly popular (Mahammad, 2000:108). A report on handloom weaving in Andhra Pradesh around the 1930s (Ranga, 1930:17) says: “Nayapattu sarees, ravikas, susis (for Muslim women), rough dhotis and ordinary dyed sarees are manufactured in this centre, apart from the very important silk weaving industry of Kodumur”. The fact that the Kurinis, the dominant weaver caste in this region, had extensive social and kinship contacts helped in tapping extended markets.

Prior to 1938, largely master weavers controlled the weaving industry. Several weavers worked under these masters. A certain degree of internal differentiation amongst the weavers themselves was noticed around this time. As Tirthankar Roy observes (1993:77): “ Broadly speaking, weaving in Bombay-Deccan, Hyderabad and the deep south was witness to much greater development of intra-producer differentiation. In these regions weavers were a powerful class, and many new systems of work were really results of rich weavers beginning to trade.” Independent weavers who had direct access to buyers declined. What emerged instead was a ‘putting out’ system, where a rich trader gave yarn or production loans and the final product had to be handed over to him alone. The weaver sometimes owned his own loom, or wove on the master’s loom. Consumption loans were also given in order to bind the worker to the loom-owner. According to Ranga (1930:18) “In Kurnool, Tadpatri, Proddatur and Nagari centres, the Mungani system of organization is generally prevalent. There are three parties under the system: the capitalist, the actual employer and the workers. The capitalist advances yarn at the market rate to the employer and sometimes lends him some money. The latter agrees in return to sell the cloth of equivalent weight to the same capitalist at the market rate prevalent on the day of delivery. This employer engages one to ten workers to work for him. Some workers are allowed to work in their own houses, while others are obliged to work in the employer’s workshop. (While there are some independent artisans)...90%...are Mungani workers...(who) are poor, heavily indebted and devoid of all credit”. The relations between a dhani/sahukar (master-weaver), dalari (middlemen weaver) and jithagadu (hired labour) manifested dependency to varied degrees. Today, in Yemmiganur, inspite of a fairly active co-operative society, a majority of weavers produce for the master-weaver.

(a) The co-operative:

The origins of the YWCS can be traced to a unique set of circumstances dating back to the famine that affected the area around 1936. The severity of the famine was such that mass migration of people became very common. This was apparently true of earlier famines as well (in 1854, 1866, 1976-78 and 1891-91). Despite the attempt by the British government to alleviate the crisis by providing livelihood through relief-work, migrations

seem to have continued (Francis, 1904:126). It is reported that in 1936, a relief centre for agricultural workers was set up at Yemmiganur, but the weavers did not find it suited to their skills and abilities. In 1937, a temporary weavers' relief centre was set up, and this succeeded in stemming migratory trends among weavers. Though this was closed down a year later, the weavers had found the centre so effective, that under the initiative of Machani Somappa, a Kurini master weaver, a co-operative was set up in 1938.

YWCS is even today reputed to be one of the largest co-operative societies in India. Beginning with 20 members in 1938, it reached a high point of 3590 in 1980-81, had 3330 in 1995 and now has 2587 members. It has six branches: Kosigi (100 members), Gudur (100), Gonegandla (119), Nagaladinne (232), Nandavaram (262), Gudekal (356) and Yemmiganur (1620) [YWCS Working Paper, 1995-96]. YWCS has 64 sales depots spread across Andhra Pradesh and a few in Karnataka. (Its products have had a strong local market traditionally, so export avenues have not been explored much). It also owns several acres of prime land in the town and possesses infrastructure of imposing size. Work-sheds and equipment for various pre-loom processes such as bleaching, mercerizing of yarn, dyeing and warping are to be found, though not much work seems to be going on at the time of our visit. Almost all the weavers we met during the field visit are thoroughly dissatisfied with the fact that they do not get regular work/yarn from the co-operative and hence have had to look elsewhere for more regular sources of income. Despite its fame, the society supposedly pays the lowest wage among all the co-operatives in AP (Mukund and Syamasundari, 2001:158). Several scams (regarding sale of land for a pittance), diversion of funds and non-implementation of schemes, manipulation of statistics, etc are alleged. At one point the society used to employ nearly 600 people, but this has been drastically cut down now. Very recently, 170 women who used to do bobbin-winding for the co-operative have been retrenched. Weavers complain that they get work from the society only for about 10 days in a month. They also allege that stocks are being brought in from villages around and sold under the name of YWCS, which is not only illegal, but also affecting their own production. YWCS stopped selling to APCO in 1991; today there is a considerable amount of stock pile-up, and rotation of capital is not happening rapidly enough. The management complains of a problem in

yarn supply. Local spinning mills nearby (the Yemmiganur one and the Rayalaseema mill) have recently closed down; even the co-operative spinning mills have ceased to function. As a result, the yarn has to be got from private traders (whose rates are higher) in A.P and Karnataka. Apart from this is the larger problem of the lack of funds for buying of yarn. As a result, there is not enough work for all the looms, or even for a few looms all the year round. This has resulted in members turning to master weavers in order to have a steady source of income. The main products produced by them under the master weavers are Gadwal sarees, for which there are well-established markets in Kakinada, Tenali and Guntur. The YWCS is also beset by political problems; it is said that the original office bearers of the Co-op had pro-Congress affiliations, but successive non-Congress governments (like the Telugu Desam Party) have tried to destabilize the YWCS and gain some control over its functioning.

If the YWCS has managed to stay afloat despite these odds, it could have something to do with product diversification over the years. While this is at times adopted to clear accumulated stocks, often, the introduction of a new product also meant certain technological variations being introduced into the weaving process (for example, dobby, jacquard, etc). According to one account (Mahammad, 2000:106), four phases can be noticed in this process of market adaptation. “In the first phase, its production was limited to the famous coarse variety of indigo saris with allizarine red stripes in 10 and 20 counts only. It started producing bandage cloth (gazu gadda) and mosquito net cloth (domtera batta) for the army during the Second World War in the second phase. It introduced bed sheets and crepe shirting; and started exporting crepe shirting to the United States and bed-sheets to Oman, Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka during the third phase. After the yarn crisis (in the 1980s) and other problems in the organization, there emerged the threat of Master weavers in silk weaving. To counter their threat, it has started producing silk products as well”.

(b) Changes in product and shifts in weaving:

While it is one thing to see the above (as a manifestation of entrepreneurial characteristics by the YWCS, recent developments (particularly the last phase mentioned above) have to

be seen in the larger context of changes in the organizational bases of weaving in Yemmiganur itself. Low wages seem to have been the order of the day in Yemmiganur. While the wages paid by the co-operative were always low, master weavers have not done much better. (It is also to be noted that the wages between the two are, strictly speaking, not comparable, since the products woven under each are different). Weavers reported during our field visit that wages have remained stationary for the last four years; in fact, they have successfully resisted a proposed wage decrease by master weavers during the last wedding season. The low wages paid by the co-operative had compelled weavers to shift to other occupations. It was around this time, in 1986-87, that the weaving of Gadwal sarees was begun, and many households took up this work. (Gadwal is in the neighbouring district of Mahbubnagar). Largely the younger age group weaves these sarees, we were told. An increasing number of women have taken to doing this. The men folk say: “The most distinctive aspect of the Gadwal saree (and the one most difficult to do) is where the silk pallu is joined to the cotton body – this is called ‘doing the kechchu’ - back-breaking work that involves long hours of work and is invariably done by women. If, for any reason, the women in the family cannot do this work, then outside labour will have to be called in. They have to be paid Rs.300 for this work, and we have to meet this expense out of the wages we get. We are paid Rs. 2000 for a warp of five sarees”.

Weaving of Gadwal sarees in Yemmiganur can be traced back to the yarn shortage in the 1980s. The economic situation of weavers was particularly bad at that time. The father-in-law of one of these weavers’ was a master weaver in Gadwal town, and he provided finance and technical training to Parushuram, his son-in-law, in starting a silk loom. Over time, he familiarized himself with business aspects as well, and introduced silk weaving in Yemmiganur. The initiative therefore came from master weavers in Gadwal, who sought to make the most of the high demand for their products. In order to increase production, they began to rope in weavers from other surrounding areas, such as Yemmiganur. “Labour is cheap here, and production is assured. That’s how it has spread so much here”, the weavers say. Local weavers estimate that at present, about 8000 looms are engaged in the production of Gadwal sarees.

©Weaving communities:

We find, in Yemmiganur, a range of systems and contracts of weaving at work, redefining relationships between the mass of ordinary weavers and the rich ‘master’ weaver. Unlike in other places, here, we come across traditional weaving castes as well as castes/groups who are not traditional weavers, but have taken up weaving as a means of livelihood. In Yemmiganur town proper, the dominant traditional weaving castes are the Kurini and Padmasali (in other nearby villages, we also find Devangula, Togata and Sukrasale castes dominating weaving). The other groups weaving are the Muslims and Malas (in other villages, these are Telagas and Boyas). The following table provides the details:

Table 2: Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste/ Religion	Number
Kurini	06
Muslim	01
Atkar	01
Total	08

This diversity in castes practicing weaving can perhaps be attributed to the fact that weaving was promoted as an income-generation activity when the co-operative was first set up. Records also suggest that not only did this stop the out-migration of weavers to other areas, but also attracted weavers from surrounding areas as well. Within Yemmiganur town itself, the M.S.Nagar locality is dominated by Padmasalis and Kurinis, Mugitipeta by Muslims, Laxmipeta and Therbazaar by Kurinis. Most of the master weavers are also from the Kurini caste group and thrive on extensive kin networks.

The kinds of systems under which weaving takes place are not uniform. While a number of weavers in Yemmiganur continue to retain their membership of the YWCS, many of them have also taken to weaving for the master-weaver. Some indications emerge from the following table:

Table 3: Categories of Weavers

Category of Weavers	Number
A) Independent	-
B) Weaves for Cooperative	02
C) Weaves for M.W. at Home	
i) Own loom	01
ii) Master weaver's loom	03
D) Combinations:	
i) Independent & M.W	-
ii) Independent & Coop	-
iii) Cooperative & M.W	02
iv) Group	-
E) Master Weaver	-
F) Wage Weavers :	
i) In shed	-
ii) In co-operative	-
Total	08

M.W : Master Weaver

Co-op: Cooperative

According to the weavers' estimate, there could be about 5000 looms in the town (of which about 1600 are under the co-operative), and in the remaining taluks put together it could be approximately 15,000. A few weavers retain the looms given by the YWCS, but in turn lease it out to non-members, while they themselves may weave for a master weaver since they earn more that way. (Such weavers hired under this system are invariably poor, often without family support, and usually work in the loom-owner's house. They do not have direct access to either master weavers or to the co-operative).

During the field-visit, most of the houses we went to had between 2 to 3 looms. Typically, if one was a frame loom belonging to the co-operative society, and the others were pit looms belonging to the master weaver. On the frame loom were woven bedsheets, lungis, towels, etc, but only when yarn is provided by the Co-operative. A person from the concerned department in the Society usually sets up the design frames for these products. But we found that invariably there is a break of two to three weeks in work. Even the little work/yarn there is was apparently rotated among all the members. Nagappa, wearing thick glasses and sitting on the frame loom said that he earns Rs.1200

per warp, but there's often a break in production. The only reason why he has not shifted to working for a master weaver was his poor eyesight. Mahmood Ali, in his 30s, said that he used to work for the co-operative, but switched to working for the master weaver early on. He and his wife weave one saree in a week and get a wage of Rs 430 for it. His father works on the co-op frame loom, and weaves lungis. He is paid Rs. 10 per metre of lungi cloth. Since one warp consists of 84 metres, he gets Rs. 840 per warp, which takes between 20-30 days to weave. Chennabasappa is an Atkar by caste. His house had two frame looms (since he and his wife were both members of the co-operative) on which bedsheets were being woven, and one pit loom, on which Gadwal sarees were woven for a master weaver from the town. There are several families like this, working for master weavers in Yemmigannur (who are said to be comparatively fewer) and in Kodmur (which is dominated by master weavers).

Usually, the yarn given by the master weaver is already dyed, sized and warped (this is prepared in Chirala and Venkatagiri). Sometimes, the silk dyeing – border and pallu of the Gadwal saree – has to be done by weavers themselves. More often, it is pre-prepared, and only the weaving has to be done by the weaver. Out of a sample of 8, the majority had large families of between 5-7 members. Entire families worked on weaving, with women involved not only in pre-loom processes, but also in weaving. One or two combined tailoring with weaving. In most families, the sons were working on looms. The products woven for the cooperative were shirting & lungis (for which weavers are paid Rs. 10 per metre, Rs. 840 for one warp) and bed sheets (Rs 1200 per warp). Mosquito nets and bandage cloth is also woven. Those weaving for the master weaver produced sarees. For a cotton 80s count saree, which takes 5 days to weave, they are paid Rs. 400 per piece. For a Gadwal saree (woven on a belu maggam) the weaver is paid Rs. 460 per piece (they say it is sold for Rs 1410); for intricate jacquard design sarees which takes 8 days to weave (Sico), they earn Rs. 750 per piece (again, it is sold for Rs.2600). Though the wages are slightly higher for Gadwal sarees under the master weaver, there are other problems; the master weaver will reject it outright if there is any flaw in weaving, and cut 30% from the wages due to the weaver. Almost none of them own the pit looms at their homes. Typically, they seem to have entered into a loan/debt

trap with the master weaver. The weaver then takes on looms on rent for the master weaver and weaves for him for a wage. Though no interest is charged on the loan, wages are cut regularly because of the pending loans.

While such weavers are the majority, there are also a few independent weavers, some of whom combine working for the co-operative with independent production. This is not very common because of the capital it would require, but there are a few who own pit looms and are producing and selling on their own. Here, the yarn is got independently and the sarees woven. Sales take place in one of two ways: whenever the demand is good, agents usually come around asking for sarees from time to time. If this does not happen then the weaver himself takes the sarees to the trader/master weaver and sells it off. The main marketing avenues as indicated through our sample are given in the table below:

Table 4: Marketing Modes

Marketing Agency	Number
Cooperative	02
Independently	-
Master weaver	04
Combinations (Co-op & M.W)	02
Others	-
Total	08

Co-op: Co-operative; MW: master weaver

As this case study shows, the role of the weavers' co-operative (even with all its malfunctioning) has been significant. However, since the co-operative has been unable to provide continuous work, weavers are pushed into a process of self-exploitation of labour in order to earn a living. They have now begun to work on looms belonging to the master weavers as well, producing specialized products with zari. As we noted earlier, master weavers have always dominated in this area, even when cotton sarees were being produced for the local market and for specific categories of consumers in Karnataka. The YWCS in its ascendant phase extended the markets considerably, besides diversifying its product range. (We could perhaps remind ourselves that the YWCS too was backed by Kurini master weavers at one point in time). Now, with the entry of Gadwal sarees into production, there is a further restructuring of weaving in this region. A specific segment

of the market is being catered to here – the local wealthy classes – and there continues to be a sustained demand for such products. So while on the one hand the weavers have to work much harder to earn a living, the control exercised by master weavers of a particular caste (Kurini) over trading networks does not seem to have changed much. Even independent weavers ultimately depend on master weavers and traders for marketing. We also find that despite weaving costlier products (the Gadwal saree), the weaver does not necessarily earn very much more. This contests the suggestion (of the Abid Hussain Committee) that weavers weaving fine products are better off.

Case study 3 - Gangadevipalli

While the Yemmiganur example is one where the co-operative had remained fairly strong (supplemented by the role of master weavers both within the co-operative and in the local weaving scene), this has not been true of a number of other co-operatives, especially small ones. The merger of co-operatives attempted in the mid-1980s sounded the death-knell for several of these. The co-operative venture in Gangadevipalli, near Warangal, is an example. It is also a reflection of the absolute decline of weaving in this area.

Gangadevipalli is a small village about 15 kms from Warangal. There were once about 20-25 Padmasali families weaving here. Now only about ten remain, and none of them weave anymore. They say that weaving stopped completely here around about the 1980s. Many padmasalis went away in search of work and better wages, since they could barely make ends meet. They used to weave mainly dhotis, sarees, drill cloth and dupattas. Earlier, sales were largely local, that is, within the village. People from surrounding villages too used to come here to buy cloth. The main weaving village nearby was Shyamapeta, which had more than 250 looms.

In 1975, there was an attempt to set up a co-operative in the area. The main reason was to try and get back the weavers who had left the village in order to work outside. A small karkhana/shed was set up, and production took place with the yarn provided by the government (through the co-operative). Sales were to APCO, but there were several problems, ranging from the quality of yarn to pending payments, the latter especially

compelled the weavers to seek other alternatives. The merger of co-operatives in the 1980s was not a good thing, since well-functioning groups were clubbed together with slack ones, leading to a general decline in weaving.

Case study 4 – Koyyalagudem and Polavaram

There have been other co-operatives, which have managed to work successfully over the decades. Again, the factors contributing to this could be location-specific. Yet, it will give us some idea of what aspects go into the making and functioning of such societies. Polavaram Society in Krishna District is an important example of such a co-operative. Similarly, despite a number of problems, Koyyalagudem Co-operative Society in Nalgonda District has managed to reap the benefits of an expanding market segment to provide work to its members. A reference to these Societies follows.

Koyyalagudem is popular for its ikkat products. There are several other villages in the vicinity where weaving is equally prominent, such as Choutuppal, Puttapaka, Pochampalli, and so on. In 1950, a handloom weavers' co-op society was set up in Koyyalagudem, with a membership of around 1100, drawn from surrounding villages such as Choutuppal, Pochampalli and Lingotam. Over the next decade and a half, some of these other villages also formed their own co-operatives (for instance, the Pochampalli Co-operative in 1955 and the Choutuppal Co-operative in 1966). At present, the Koyyalagudem Co-op has 640 members; it covers four other villages in the immediate vicinity, Bata Singaram, Malkapuram, Dharmajiguda and Peepalpahad, though a majority of the members are from Koyyalagudem itself. However, of these 640 members, there are only about 400 active weavers. In fact, this is one of the more successful working co-operatives in the area, but report a significant decrease in orders in recent years. (Ikkat products have had an export demand; the case of Koyyalagudem will be discussed in the next section on the nature of markets). To compensate for the lack of work in recent years, members have begun working for the master weaver as well. A balance between the two is maintained in several ways. For instance, those with two or more looms devote looms exclusively to weaving products for the co-operative or for the master weaver. Others find that since the work from the co-operative is not continuous, they are

able to weave a warp or two for the master weaver in between. But overall, the Koyyalagudem Society has been a well-functioning one.

Polavaram is a weaving village in Krishna District, with approximately 1200 weavers. There are a number of other weaving villages in the vicinity, such as Aidugullapalli, Mallavolu and Rayavaram. Polavaram itself has three weaver co-operatives – the Polavaram Co-operative Society with 236 members (this is broadly affiliated to the CPI); the Mahatmaji Society with 200 members (Congress affiliations) and the Shyamaprasad Society with 180 members (BJP affiliations). The latter two are offshoots of the first group, and their formation seems to have been guided by political considerations. In addition to these, there are an equal number of weavers working under master weavers.

Polavaram Society was started in 1944 with 50 members. It now has 236 members, with one loom each, of which 205 are working looms. This Society has an annual turnover of Rs 75 lacs, and is one of the few that gives a regular bonus to its members. The Society gives out dyed yarn to weavers, which they buy from Super Spinning Mills in Hindupur. Dyes, chemicals and zari are sourced from private traders in Mumbai, Gujarat and Surat. Over 95% of its production consists of cotton sarees (using combed yarn). They weave about 25 varieties of these. Also woven are bedsheets and towels, which occupy only about 10 looms. Sales to the apex body APCO is nil now. The Society sells locally, and do not export. They have a sales depot in Polavaram itself, and two depots in Vijayawada and Guntur.

Conclusions:

The formation of weaver co-operatives has been seen as the most important strategy in reviving and supporting the handloom sector. Their functioning, however, has not been uniformly successful. This has been influenced by a number of factors such as local elites lobbying for power, political parties seeking to consolidate their strengths, or sheer mismanagement of the co-operative. On the contrary, there have also been positive experiences, such as that of Polavaram Society. Given these differences, evaluating the performance of existing weavers' co-operatives is not an easy task.

- While in certain cases, individual initiative resulted in the setting up of mammoth institutional infrastructure (Machani Somappa in Yemmiganur, for instance) these have disintegrated somewhat in recent times, due largely to political interference and internal malfunctioning. In some cases, master weavers hold all the key posts in the co-operatives and control its functioning. However, in other places, master weavers have no access to, and do not control the local co-operatives. In Polavaram, for example, weavers run the entire society and most of the important positions are also held by practicing weavers. The success this co-operative had had in providing continuous work to its members and in marketing demands that we take into account such factors as who actually controls the co-operative while evaluating their functioning. The issue of political control is a factor that looms large in this context, since the competition between political parties and local elite groups has often led to the break up of co-operatives.
- In addition to issues of control and political interference, changes in state policy towards co-operatives have also to be borne in mind. The phenomenon of mergers is significant in this connection. In both Vetapalem (Prakasam district) and Gangadevipalli (Warangal district), we found that smaller, well-functioning societies had suffered after the merger of co-operatives in the mid-1980s. The merger of non-functioning societies with the good ones seems to have precipitated the downfall of even the latter.
- The role of the apex organization APCO should also be mentioned in this connection. This apex body of Andhra Pradesh weavers' co-operative societies has failed especially where effective marketing is concerned. The recent crisis of APCO (see Mukund and Syamasundari, 2001:122-3) raises the question of its relevance in protecting weavers' interests today. Indeed, a primary reason for the disintegration of co-operatives of handloom weavers in AP could be APCO's way of functioning itself. It not only owed large sums of money to co-operatives across the state but has also not been lifting stocks. The extent of the problem

becomes clear when we consider the reduction in APCO's procurement, from Rs. 112.45 crores in 1992-93 to Rs. 6.36 crores in 2000-01 (Dept. of H & T, 2000-01:16). Ironically, after a spate of weaver deaths in AP, the government ordered APCO to release money to the co-operatives. The crisis was aggravated due to the fact that for nearly three years (1998-2001), regular payments were not made by APCO to societies; it also refused to lift fresh stocks, leading to a huge pile-up. Thus, there were neither fresh work orders, nor were wages paid by co-operatives, putting severe pressure on weavers. In spite of not receiving payments from APCO, the societies had to continue to pay the interest toward bank loans, resulting in the drying up of working capital (Sekhsaria, 2000). The link between this and the near collapse of a number of co-operatives are not difficult to see. And the repercussions do not end here, since one of the most widespread modes of handloom production (the other being working for the master weaver) has itself been disrupted in the process.

- Ideally, the formation of weaver co-operatives was meant to tackle problems such as yarn, market access and of course, employment. In reality, we find that its working has been vitiated by the aspects indicated above. However, this does not mean doing away with co-operative forms of organization. The question is, what structure should new weaver collectives adopt, and how could this structure sidestep some of the problems of functioning encountered in the earlier co-operative system? Indications obtained from the field suggest that the promotion of thrift groups among weavers could be an answer to the multi-faceted credit needs of weavers. Similarly, it is necessary to pay attention to new group strategies in marketing and social entrepreneurship as well.

II.3. Markets

A common-sensical way of considering the relative importance of the different sectors that make up the textile industry – that is, the mill, handloom and powerloom sectors – is to look at their total production or the percentage of the market that they command. A comparison over time will tell us that there have been some variations in these figures; that the share of mill cloth has been coming down steadily, while the powerloom sector has been expanding. The share of handlooms has, contrary to common belief, not fallen drastically, but seems to have stabilized at around 20% of the total cloth production in the country. Yet, the dominant opinion is that handlooms will not be able to compete with the much cheaper powerloom cloth, and that the former should concentrate on the export and niche market, from where there is supposedly a good demand for handloom cloth. This viewpoint colours most market interventions as well.

The pre-requisites for a healthy handloom industry are a broad and vibrant production base and appropriate marketing mechanisms that suit it. At present, the middleman-entrepreneur, who concentrates more on the niche market and seeks high profit margins with low volume sales, dominates the market. Production too gets restricted to these high-value products. Primary producers have no direct access to either markets or market information. As a result, there is a mismatch between production and market demand, which neither traders nor weaver co-operatives are willing or able to absorb. A thorough understanding of the existing marketing channels, including their flaws and strengths is, therefore, indispensable. Market interventions must build on these understandings, rather than be guided by reconceived notions regarding markets. For instance, a commonly encountered suggestion is that the support base for handloom production must come from either the elite niche market or the export market. Our field survey indicates that these suggestions are unsustainable in the long run, for they create instabilities in demand, and consequently, in livelihoods.

A recent study of the handloom sector (EXIM, 2000), while highlighting the strengths of the industry such as high labour intensity and low capital output ratio, goes on to underline the export potential of the sector. Its exclusive and non-replicable nature, it is

argued, can allow it to carve a niche in international markets. This is to be supported “with modernization and appropriate modifications” (ibid.:90), such as design and technological innovations. As it stands today, export of handloom products constitutes only 10% of the total textile exports of the country. Statistics indicate a downward trend:

“Exports in Indian cotton handloom products (fabrics and made-ups) had witnessed a continuous rise from Rs.1491 crores in 1995-96 to Rs.2008 crores in 1998-99. During the year 1999-2000, however, these exports contracted to Rs 1892 crores, showing a fall of 5.8%”(ibid.:8).

What can this mean for the livelihood of weavers dependent on such an external demand? What are the reasons for these swings in demand? To what extent is it a matter of change in taste, to what extent is it due to competition from other countries, and to what extent is it due to inappropriate trading mechanisms? In the absence of a proper analysis of these and other facets, it appears unrealistic to turn to the export market alone as a solution to the marketing problems faced by the handloom sector.

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We will examine the feasibility of existing modes of marketing such as a reliance on an export or niche market by drawing on the example of the well-known weaving village Koyyalagudem in Nalgonda district and the lesser-known Tenali, in Guntur district.

Case study 5 – Koyyalagudem:

Background - Nalgonda district, comprising of the seven taluks of Nalgonda, Bhongir, Deverakonda, Huzurnagar, Miryalguda, Ramanapet and Suryapet, has for long been an important center of handloom weaving. Unlike certain districts of Telengana, like Adilabad and Warangal, where there has been a steady decrease in handloom weaving right from the 1920s, Nalgonda district has registered a considerable increase over the decades. For instance, while the district as a whole had 5,667 looms in 1921, by 1931 this had increased to 11,715, an increase of 107% (Census, 1931:165). They wove fine cotton sarees, both plain and checked/striped, chutki sarees, telia rumals, khadi, susi cloth and tie-dye designed fabric.

Over the years, there have been fluctuations in the scale of this weaving activity. For instance, 27,661 persons were reportedly weaving in 1961 (GOAP, 1978:84). There were 28 co-operative societies by then, with 18,798 working looms (ibid.). In 1987, 30,377 handlooms were reported in Nalgonda district, whereas by 1995 (which is when a loom verification was done for the latest All-India Census of Handlooms), this dropped to 18,719 looms, of which about 50% were in the co-operative sector. (Mukund and Shyamasundari, 2001: 54). Yet, compared to other districts, Nalgonda shows the least decline, surely attributable to the distinctive product produced in this region, namely ikkat. The last two decades have also been witness to considerable shifts in products being woven, the most visible being the shift from clothing to furnishings. Tie and dye sarees (both silk and cotton) of different counts are woven; at times, mercerized cotton is used. Tolia rumals are no longer woven, and to meet the (largely urban) demand for ever-new varieties, innovations in dress material fabric and furnishings have gone on. Bedspreads, tablecloths, cushion covers, napkins of various sizes, towels and so on are produced in addition to the earlier range of products.

Handloom weaving in Nalgonda is clearly marked by some specificity, which has allowed it to survive and even adapt to changes in demand. Though this region is not without its share of problems, it offers a contrast to the general picture of the decline in handlooms that we encounter especially in the Telengana region of AP. The ikkat technique of weaving has been in Nalgonda district for the last 35-40 years. The origin of this technique is not very clear, but it appears to have been learnt, and was not indigenous to the region. According to one version, weavers from Chirala who migrated to Nalgonda brought this technique of tie-dyeing with them. Another view holds that the Nizam settled a few weavers of Mashroo (brocaded cloth, with cotton inside and silk outside) here and that the ikkat technique developed out of that. Old weavers in Koyyalagudem remember that experts from HYCO, Weavers' Service Centre and Pochampalli had come to train them in ikkat weaving decades ago. Ikkats received a fillip in the 1960s, when the government began encouraging the export of such fabric. The Festivals of India in the 1980s are also said to have fuelled export interest in ikkats.

While this gave ikkats a clear-cut niche in markets, export-driven production had several other serious problems that will be referred to shortly.

Koyyalagudem is one of the weaving villages that dot Nalgonda district, popular mainly for its ikkat products. The weavers are almost all Padmashalis with no access to agricultural land; there are a few scheduled caste (Gauda) weavers too. There are a number of other weaving villages in the vicinity, within a radius of 5-15 kms. Some of them are: Bogaram and Siripuram (cotton centres), Choutuppall (mainly mercerized cotton), Puttapaka, Pochampalli, Ghattupal and Vellanki (which do both cotton and silk weaving). Typically, these areas produce silk sarees, cotton sarees, shirting materials, furnishings, bedsheets and so on. Most of these also have co-operative societies, with numbers of active weavers ranging from 200 to 450. An equal number are outside this structure, weaving mainly for the master weaver. Prior to 1947, telia rumals and khaki cloth were being produced at Koyyalagudem. Telia rumals were red-coloured headcloths that were used by some sections of the people, but there is no longer a demand for this. For many years after that, cotton sarees were the main items being woven. At least for the last 25 years, they have been weaving mercerized cotton sarees, dress materials and silk as well. Since the mid 1980s, there has been a demand for bedsheets, which needs a much wider double loom (with two persons weaving side by side). The demand for ikkats peaked during 1994-95, but has fallen now, and the export market has also become sluggish lately, the weavers complain. While it was clear that there has been considerable diversification in the product over the last few decades, the organizational infrastructure that supports such production also appears to be definitely non-homogeneous and complex.

All pre-loom and weaving processes are entirely household-based in Koyyalagudem. Unlike in places like Chirala or even Mangalagiri, where there is a certain amount of task specialization among the weavers themselves – for instance, sizing and dyeing is done by the few families for the rest of the weavers – this is not the case at Koyyalagudem. The warp is often prepared individually by members of the household, as is the weft-winding, sizing and tie-dyeing. Weaving too takes place in individual houses, and there are no

arrangements like shed-weaving. The explanation given is that the nature of tie-dye work is such that larger units of production will not work – yarn cannot be dyed in bulk and given to weavers to weave. Rather, each will have to do the tie-dyeing himself. There are also other kinds of variations in the weaving process. For instance, a weaver might do the tie-dyeing himself and may then give it out to others to weave. These may be migrants or other weavers. “Migrant weavers are not members of the co-operative society but are employed as wage labourers by the co-operative members...These migrant weavers either lease a room for living purposes or stay in the house of the employer who provides free accommodation. According to the migrant workers, the number of co-operative members working on looms is only about 100 to 120. The remaining looms are operated by migrant workers” (IHRG Report, 1997: 3). In many cases, families own two looms; these could be easily worked in a joint family, but with the fragmentation of such units, everything cannot be done within the family itself. So if a person does the tie-dyeing, he may employ another person to come to his home and weave on his loom. These kinds of flexible arrangements abound in Koyyalagudem.

In-migration of weavers:

Though there are instances of malfunctioning co-operatives in this district as well, Nalgonda does have more working societies, compared to other regions in A.P. like Warangal and Medak districts. Besides, compared to the low wages elsewhere, ikkat weaving commands a relatively higher wage. Indeed, it is the boom in ikkat a decade ago and the links established with export markets that consolidated the position of Koyyalagudem. It also attracted migrant weavers from places like Medak, Khammam and Karimnagar. At the peak of the ikkat boom in the 1990s, around 300 families had come to Koyyalagudem (Yadagiri, 1998:14), many of whom were originally independent weavers, no longer able to cope with decreases in demand. A report prepared by the IHRG (op.cit.:2) has this to say about the migrants and the places they migrated from:

“In 1980, there were around 300 looms in Kakaravai village of Khammam district. Today there are hardly 20 looms which are run by aged weavers...some weavers have migrated to Koyyalagudem, the remaining families migrated to powerloom centres like Surat, Bhiwandi and Sholapur. ...According to

U.Satyanarayana of Matthumemeda village in Nizamabad district, who migrated to Koyyalagudem in 1986, with the decline of purchase of sarees of local merchants, a number of weavers had to migrate to centers like Koyyalagudem in search of work, while others shifted to agricultural labour. While there were 100 looms in 1985, today there are hardly any functioning looms in that village”.

Others report that it was the relatively higher wages that attracted them to this district. As these instances show, the reasons for migration are not uniform, nor are the migrants themselves a homogeneous group. For instance, relatively unskilled weavers who were weaving dhotis, towels and sarees primarily for a local market faced a drastic decline in demand for their goods and were forced to move out in search of a living, either to nearby powerloom centres, or to handloom weaving centres that paid better. Nalgonda was an obvious destination. Migrant weavers often moved with their families, learnt the technicalities of tie-dyeing, and over the years, became part of the local weaving scenario. But there were also ‘job weavers’ (Mukund and Shyamasundari, 2001:105) who migrated alone and worked either for master weavers, or were employed as wage labour at the co-operative society. They earn about Rs.400 per warp (this could take a week to weave), but are relatively insecure in that any cessation of orders for cloth from outside could render them jobless.

Koyyalagudem, as a destination of abundant work availability, has changed in the recent past, mainly due to a fall in exports. Since 1995, export orders have not been as forthcoming as in the past. Several reasons have been cited for this trend (Yadagiri, 1998), some of which are:

- The ban on chemical dyes by European markets. Azo-free dyes are used instead, but this renders the product expensive.
- The drastic increase in prices of yarn and dyes. To cut costs, inferior materials are used, and weavers lose out in the world market.
- The cancellations of export incentives by the central govt.
- The lack of any market survey about tastes and fashions.

The fall in orders has not only resulted in a fall in wages, but has also rendered a number of looms idle. Of the migrant families, about 150 have either returned home over the last 2-3 years, or have shifted to other jobs.

The experience of Koyyalagudem shows how problematic the proposition is that recommends that for the handloom weavers to survive, they need to produce for the export market. Though orienting production in such a way may be beneficial in the short run, a long term reliance on exports of cloth alone creates instabilities in demand, production and livelihoods that cannot be absorbed by the handloom sector. To say this is not to ignore the possibilities offered by the export market, but to underline the fact that an exploration of such markets can come only after the demand from local and national markets have been stabilized.

Case study 6 - Tenali

The kinds of markets that exist for handloom cloth need extensive research. A fairly widespread impression is that the demand for these products comes from the middle and upper segments of the market. While this is no doubt true for certain kinds of exclusive products, there is a much wider market for handlooms at the lower levels as well. This is not easily apparent in large production centres, especially ones that also produce for an export market (say Koyyalagudem), or for a more urban or national market (say Chirala). But in towns like Tenali, in Guntur District, the existence of a local market for handloom products comes across much more strongly.

Guntur district has been part of the traditional weaving belt of Andhra Pradesh. Addepalli, Bhattiprolu, Ilavaram, Kanagala, K.R.Palem, Konetipuram, Mangalagiri, Nidubrolu, Peteru, Rajavolu, Repalle, Sattenapalli and Tenali are some of the main weaving centres. Weaving under the co-operative structure in this district does not seem to have fared well, and statistics show a decline in production under co-operatives since 1980-81 (Mukund and Syamasundari, 2001:76). However, in Guntur district itself, weaving outside the co-operative fold, for example, under the master weaver, is widespread. Large quantities of cloth are transacted through master weavers in places

like Mangalagiri. The distinctive fabric and sarees produced in Mangalagiri are in great demand outside the region as well. In the case study, we will describe the organization of production under master weavers in Tenali, as well as emphasize the significance of local markets in this area.

Tenali is close to weaving centres like Bhattiprolu, Ilavaram, Mangalagiri, Guntur, etc. Paddy is the main crop in Tenali, but cotton is grown on the black soil obtaining in and around Guntur. Tenali town is fairly diversified as far as economic activities are concerned. Agriculture is considered to be the most important; there are also people employed in the steel industry, goldsmithy, and the sewing thread industry. Weaving is thus one among other economic options. The number of looms here are not as extensive as in Mangalagiri, for example. According to the local weavers, there are about 300 looms working in Tenali town. This does not include looms in Sultanabad, which is about three kilometres away (we were informed that there, weavers weave for the master weaver from their own homes). Though there is a local co-operative, it does not have a significant presence here. It has about a hundred members, of which 25 are from Tenali, the rest from surrounding villages. The co-operative has placed its 20-odd frame looms in a shed. The rest weave at homes in pit looms. Towels, bedspreads and dhotis are their main products, but work is not available continuously, the weavers complain. At times, wages are not paid regularly; because of this some of the weavers take the yarn that is given and sell it off, instead of weaving the product. In the course of our field visits, we hardly came across any independent weavers in the real sense of the term. Instead, about 4-5 master weavers dominate the region, and have hired weavers to work in sheds on their looms.

The weaving community:

The weavers here are predominantly Padmasalis, who have a very strong group identity and do not let other groups take to weaving. Yet, the rate at which Padmasalis are shifting to other occupations is also quite significant in this region, and could, over time, lead to other groups entering weaving. Shed weaving is very common. There are a few in the middle of Tenali town, in Murthykondaiah Bazaar, and the rest at Pragada Kotaiah

Nagar. The latter is an exclusively Padmasali colony, set up about 25 years ago. At that time, not many were willing to shift there, but now it has gradually filled up. There are 170 plots, with sheds being more common than independent looms in individual houses. The rule here is that if at all land is sold, it must be sold only to a Padmashali. The weaving sheds are typically structures with low thatches, crammed with pit looms, with fairly bad lighting. Though tube lights are fitted, fluctuations in voltage are common. The scene is similar in the town as well: with asbestos sheets replacing the thatches. Each shed had approximately 13-15 looms, very closely placed. They are all pit looms, weaving cotton sarees, some of which are of 7 yds. No jacquard is used (it could only add to the cost of the final product, and go beyond the reach of locals), but a chain dobbie is very frequent. Only in one of the five sheds we went to was fabric being woven. A small master weaver, under whom are 15 looms, managed this; he has the fabric produced for a 'seth' in Mangalagiri (fabric sets – 5mts and dupatta, some with lavish zari, were being produced here). The weavers in other sheds work for local master weavers.

These weavers are not required to do any of the pre-loom processes. They are given pre-dyed yarn that is also warped and sized. Only the weaving is done by them. [Yarn is bought by the master weaver from Chilkalurupeta, Hindupur and Tamilnadu – the quality in private spinning mills is good they say, unlike in co-operative mills, which often use waste cotton]. There is some amount of specialization of tasks: sizing is done exclusively by a few padmashali families in P.K.nagar (they do not weave). Similarly with warp preparation. (Padmasali families carry out all the specialized work, including dyeing; only reedmakers are different – they are Muslims from Chirala, we are told). While on the one hand, weavers are not involved in pre-loom processes, on the other hand, they do not own the loom either. One of the master weavers said – 'the space, the loom, the yarn, the shuttle...these are all ours; they (the weaver) only have to sit and weave'. Designs too are prepared and set onto the loom by the master himself, so there are no expenses incurred on this by the master weaver on this.

The following account of a master weaver is indicative of how his strength is consolidated by taking up related activities such as yarn dyeing as well. D.P. is a master weaver based in Tenali, and has been in this profession since 1968. Though a Padmasali, he did not know weaving initially. His father used to work in a press. At home, their tenant was a weaver, and D.P. used to watch him at work. After the tenant left (defaulting on rent), he thought of putting the idle loom to good use and entered production. In the beginning, they had only 2 looms. Gradually, with the help of the rest of the family members, it went up to 200. Now the family has grown and with it has come fragmentation. The number of looms they had came down to 100, (labour problems are cited as the main reason) and is now managed by two of the four brothers. The fact that the family had bought up quite a bit of land many years ago (which is now worth a lot) has helped consolidate the strong economic standing of the family. The entrepreneurial skills of the brothers are evident in their choice of professions. One has entered cloth production, the other deals in yarn and runs a busy dyeing unit, yet another has a business in gold and watches, the fourth runs a sewing thread winding industry. D.P. himself says he had planned to set up a power loom unit, and even had premises built. But since the capital required was too large, he went in for handlooms instead. They have recently set up another shed, spending Rs. 1.25 lakhs (this includes the land value). His son personally supervises the work, and, a manager has been appointed for the shed that is a little further away.

The family has 2-3 units for dyeing yarn. Close to 300 kgs per day are dyed in the dye house (about 6 tons per month). Dyed yarn is much in demand, bought by locals, people from surrounding areas, Rajamundhry and Khammam. They do not use naphthol dyes, but vat dyes from a Bombay company; the quality is good, but rates have been increasing due to hike in taxes. They themselves buy yarn of lower counts on credit, but if it is of higher counts, then an advance has to be paid. In order to ensure that there is no break in production, they order a month or more in advance. These multiple functions (that is, as suppliers of dyed yarn) only augment their position in the weaving community.

Labour:

Even at P.K.Nagar, not all weave. Locals estimate that, roughly, 1 out of 4 (i.e., 25%) would be a weaver. About 50% have taken to goldsmith work, and the rest are engaged in processing work. The drift of Padmasalis into goldsmithy has been happening for the last five years. Initially it does not pay well, since they have to apprentice themselves for some years. Only later will the master pass on production orders to them. During apprenticeship, the master provides board and lodge, and the trainee is paid only Rs 30 per week. Guntur has always had a good reputation for gold, and now Tenali has acquired it too. Prior to goldsmithy, weavers used to work in the local steel industry. Now, some of them are in the sewing thread winding industry. Not many have gone into agricultural labour.

The low wages paid to the weavers could be the main reason for this shift. Their working conditions are quite dismal. A majority of those sitting on the looms wore spectacles (asthmatic disorders due to yarn dust was also reported). Master weavers in Tenali claim that the wages they provide is higher than what weavers are paid in Mangalagiri. In Mangalagiri, master weavers give large advances (in the range of Rs. 10-15,000) as loans, to get weavers to work for them. Master weavers in Tenali say that this has its own problems, and they themselves give much smaller loans, fearing large losses if the weavers left suddenly. This is indicative of a larger phenomenon of weaver mobility. How to get labour, and how to keep it with you seem to be questions that master weavers constantly face here. In Tenali, mater weavers said: 'labour has become very aware. People tell them that we are making profits at their expense, and they often ask for a raise'. The rule is that if the price of a product goes up, 16% of this should be passed on to the weaver. But traders often get round this by saying that the price of raw materials has also increased. Weavers here are paid Rs 350 for a warp of 3 sarees (7 yds), and Rs.400 if it has zari. The master weaver reasons that if weavers work for 8 hours a day, they can produce 3-4 warps in a month; then, logically, they would earn Rs.1400 per month. But in reality, such continuous work does not take place. Since the entire family is not involved in production here, the weavers do not work continuously. If the sons bring in a daily wage from elsewhere, then the weaver will not work on that day, local master weavers observe. Having to maintain continuity in production is another pressure

on the master weaver, for if not, the weaver will shift, probably to some other person. Most of the shed weavers working are from Tenali itself, we are told. For example, in D.P's shed, only three of 25 weavers were from outside Tenali. They had come from Managalagiri, Ilavaram and Chirala, about 5 years ago. The latest to join their shed came from Chirala about 3 months ago – his wife is from Tenali, and they decided to move here. Most of them do not have houses of their own, and they live in rented homes, paying at least Rs.250 a month. Since many house owners do not want a pit to be dug in their homes and a loom installed, the only option weavers have is shed-weaving.

Markets:

Tenali town is a cloth centre for surrounding villages and smaller towns. There are a total of 360 cloth shops in Tenali, though only 5 sell handlooms exclusively. There are also 5 master weavers, and they all have their own shops here. (In cases where the fabric is being woven for a Mangalagiri master, the product goes back to him and is not sold here). Production is done in Tenali itself, or Sultanabad and surrounding areas. Master weavers say that Tenali was not a weaving stronghold like Mangalagiri, and that they used to weave primarily dhotis. However, the demand for this completely ceased with the entry of dhotis produced on powerlooms, and nobody would buy handloom dhotis for 260. One of the handloom stores, which stocks mainly sarees, also keeps some dhotis which are clearly produced on power looms, though the seal bears the name of a handloom trader in Nalgonda. They also had a small stack of towels from Erode, and a handloom imitation saree, complete with ikkat border design and zari. (The government is turning a blind eye to these powerloom imitations of handloom products, they complained).

Their clientele are varied. For the ordinary cotton sarees (7 yds, 60s count, Rs.220), the customers are agricultural labourers. Earlier, there were only four designs, and everyone used to buy and wear only these. But now, shop owners say, they want other things, but complain of high rates. 'Fancy' sarees are sold to a different class – the local monied sections. Purchases have come down in the last year or two, they say. For instance, the monthly production under D.P. is 400 sarees a month. But sales are between 3-4 sarees a

day, with some ups and downs. “Since a lot of stock gets tied up like this, I cannot invest and expand further”, he said. They also have a sense of market and consumer demands. Dark colours are favoured locally, according to them, but the same product does not sell in cities like Hyderabad, where light colours are preferred. Similarly, designs will not be uniformly liked. The master weaver himself makes the graphs and sets it up on the loom. The frequency of changing the design depends on sales. If it is not selling well, then production is stopped immediately and a new design or a variation introduced. Otherwise, it continues for years.

Since the demand for the cheaper cotton sarees comes from the labour classes, it is crucially dependent on whether it was a good agricultural season. If the crop has done well, there will be surplus cash for clothes, otherwise not. This cash availability also translates into seasonality of demand. In August (sowing season), sales are about 10%, from December to February, it is 25%, wedding season it is 25%, and so on. Customers don’t buy blindly, but often compare and reject, the shop owners say. They observed that people today do not have purchasing power (*konukolu shakti ledu*), so they prefer what is cheaper. Today, there is no demand for dhotis, so they have turned to the production of sarees. Weaving of dress materials is also picking up, but is not prevalent here. Apart from agriculturalist families, people from the nearby coalmines also buy from here. They earn well, and because of the heat, there is a good demand for cotton sarees from both groups. The main outside person they sold to was a wholesale trader from Khammam, who in turn sold to various retailers. The wholesaler had earlier placed large orders with them (for 500 sarees), but is not paying up now. Rs. 3 lakhs is held up there, he says, and the rate of payment is very slow, only a few thousands at a time. So rotation of capital is not happening as much as it should.

This case shows how handloom weaving has sustained itself on local markets for several years. Similar to earlier centuries when demand for cloth ceased during periods of famine and other calamities, even now, the fortunes of the local economy dictates the sale of handloom cloth. In Tenali, handloom weaving has also catered to different segments of the market, ranging from farmers and coal miners to the more well-off sections. The

competition offered by mill-made cloth and powerloom imitations is a real one, especially in the production of lungis, towels, etc. While the co-operative societies clearly have not been flexible enough to diversify in terms of products (and still produce only dhotis, bedspreads), master-weavers seem to have done this by concentrating on the production of sarees alone. The fact that not many looms are occupied with producing dress materials also shows the more insular nature of the markets accessed by master weavers in Tenali. We also find that unlike the general impression that master weavers cater largely to the exclusive niche segment of the market, here we have master weavers having sarees of lower counts woven largely for local consumption by the labouring classes.

Conclusions:

Conventional official perception relegates handlooms to a small, niche market (either overseas or in India), and then goes on to suggest how this niche demand should be catered to through further design innovation and variation. Both the case studies elaborated above illustrated above contest this viewpoint.

- While the case of Koyyalagudem's reliance on exports shows that it creates instabilities in demand, production and work opportunities, the case of Tenali highlights the marketing possibilities in local contexts as well.
- Market development and market exploration is what is urgently needed today. Though the export segment does need some attention, what is required today is the expansion, or development of the regional and national markets. The demand for handlooms at the middle and lower levels of the market too has to be addressed, and appropriate marketing mechanisms devised.
- Market segmentation: It is also necessary to reach out to different segments of the market with variations in products. This is in fact, a major strength of the handloom industry, since its flexible nature enables it to alter production and cater to differentiated markets.

- A pre-requisite for all this will be the generation of suitable information about the handloom market, and a free flow of such information, which is currently closely guarded by traders.
- These would constitute first steps towards (a) the elimination of trader domination over the market and (b) the development of alternative marketing channels that would better suit the nature of the decentralized handloom industry in the state.

II.4 Comparative Data from Other Weaving Centres

In this chapter, we present a socio-economic profile of weavers and weaving in centres across the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The indications before us suggest that a comparative study of conditions of weaving in such centres will be useful in understanding the specific strategies adopted by weavers in different regions.

As indicated at the outset itself, this study has adopted two main modes of presenting data, that is, statistical and qualitative. While the latter information has been presented in the field accounts of the three preceding chapters, the statistical profile will be provided here. This is based on the data obtained from a sample survey and the schedule formulated for that purpose. Members of weaver organizations and others located in the field were responsible for collecting this primary data.

The primary purpose of such a survey was to profile weavers and weaving in specific areas, and to thereby offer a glimpse of the organization of this economic activity. The sample has not been exhaustive in the sense of covering each and every weaver in the region. Rather, our sample is an indicative one, and has sought to represent field details from diverse perspectives. In certain areas, they supplement the case studies presented earlier. The tables provide data on types of weavers, the organizational modes they weave under, the kind of product woven, the wages that they receive, and so on. These would be useful from a comparative perspective. In addition, the schedules also provide information about caste, occupations, categories of weavers, family size and labour, the extent of migration among weavers, the principal modes of marketing and sources of capital.

Details of data tabulated from the schedules administered in the following regions are given below: Chittoor and Chinnur in Andhra Pradesh; Balaramapuram and Kannur in Kerala, and four villages in the Belgaum district of Karnataka.

Andhra Pradesh has a long history of weaving and has renowned handloom centres such as Chirala, Gadwal, Narayanpet, Dharmavaram, Ponduru, Pochampalli, Uppada, Venkatagiri, Mangalagiri, Pedana, Yemmiganur, and so on. Handloom weaving supports lakhs of families in the state, with a majority of weavers working from their homes, weaving either for master weavers or co-operatives, or in rare cases, independently. Given the enormous diversity in these organizational modes, classifying weavers into different categories is not an easy task. We find that a combination of weaving conditions obtain at the field level. For example, if a weaver has two looms at home, he may weave products for the co-operative on one loom, while the other could be used for producing for a local master weaver. Or, even if he owns only one loom, he may weave one warp for the master weaver and the next for the co-operative. This flexibility makes categorizations of weavers tentative and subject to change. Another way of classifying weavers has been in terms of their ownership of the means of production, in this case, specifically the loom. This too, we find, is fraught with difficulty. To illustrate, a weaver might be weaving on his own loom for a master weaver, but the accessory fitted to the loom (say, the jacquard) will belong to the master weaver. In tabulating data on categories of weavers, we have therefore drawn on diverse formulations such as whom they weave for, where they weave, is the loom their own or not, and what combinations are being worked in the process.

Chinnur, Adilabad District

In Chinnur, of the sample of 15 weavers, 9 had a family consisting of upto 4 members, while 6 had a family of between 5-7 members. Invariably the husband wove, while the wife and children helped with the various pre-loom processes such as bobbin winding, etc. Many of the weavers in this sample also did the dyeing themselves. They source their yarn from Karimnagar and/or Secunderabad. Though designs are mainly traditional, they are open to introductive new designs, and a few of them are innovating on their own, as well as coordinating design schemes with field-based agencies. In this settlement of weavers, the government has provided houses and framelooms for the weavers. On an average, the earnings reported were in the range of Rs.1500 per warp (or approximately Rs.3000 per month). Some reported that they earn Rs 1800 for 150 yds and Rs 2400 for 200 yds. The main products woven are fabric (60s count), shirting (60s), bed sheets and towels (20s), lungis and sarees (60s).

Table 1 : Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste/ Religion	Number
Padmasali	15
Total	15

Table 2 : Primary & Secondary Occupations of Respondents

Occupations	Number
Only Weaving	13
Primarily weaving, Other secondary	02
Primarily Others, weaving secondary	-
Total	15

Table 3 : Categories of Weavers

Category of Weavers	Number
A) Independent	03
B) Weave for Co-operative	05
C) Weave for M.W. at Home	
i) Own loom	-
ii) Master weaver's loom	-
D) Combinations:	
i) Independent & M.W	-
ii) Independent & Coop	-
iii) Co-operative & M.W	-
iv) Group	07
E) Master Weaver	-
F) Wage Weavers :	
i) In shed	-
ii) In co-operative	-
Total	15

M.W: Master Weaver

*7-8 weavers in Chinnur have formed themselves into a group and work independently, that is outside the cooperative fold. They do their marketing through intermediary agencies such as Dastkar Andhra. The master weaver tradition is weak in this district.

Table 4 : Number of Looms per Respondent

Number of Looms	Number of respondents
None	05
One	09
Two	01
Three	-
Four	-
More than 5	-
Total	15

Table 5 : Loom Ownership

Details of Loom Ownership	Number
Own	10
Own loom, accessory belongs to master weaver	-
Co-operative	-
Installed by master weavers	-
Total	10

Table 6 : Family size and Labour

Family size		Labour					Offspring		
		Husband		Wife					
1-4	5-7	W	PLP	W	PLP	NW	W	PLP	NW
09	06	15	10	-	10	-	no details, but respondents state that entire family participates)		

W: Weaving ; PLP: Preloom process; NW: Non-weaving

Table 7: Occupational background of family

Occupation	Number
Hereditary (weaving)	15
Non-hereditary: i) agricultural labour ii) tailoring (in addition to weaving)	1 1
Total	17

Table 8 : Residential /Migrational Status of Weavers

Residential status	Number
Native residents of Chinnur	07
Migrants	08
Total	15

Table 9 : Marketing Modes

Marketing Agency	Number
Co-operative	05
Independently	-
Master Weaver	-
Combinations (co-op & M.W)	-
Others (independent groups)	10
Total	15

Table 10 : Capital Source

Source of Capital	Number
Own	-
Money Lender (Shaukar)	05
Banks	05
Co-operative	05
Combinations, i.e., from co-operative and loans from shaukars	-
Total	15

Table 11: Residential/Migrational Status of Respondents

Place	Number	Reasons
Subbarampalli	01	A weaver's colony was set up in Chinnur about 8 years ago. The government gave funds for settling up frame looms and houses. This brought a number of weavers from outlying villages to Chinnur. They have now settled in Chinnur .
Kolgura	01	
Kushnapalli	03	
Kolluru	03	
Total	08	

Chittoor District
(A sample of 19 weavers)

Table 1 : Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste/Religion	Number
Padmasali	04
Devangula	05
Idiga	02
B.C (Dasari)	03
Kaikala (Telugu)	05
Total	19

Table 2 : Primary and Secondary Occupations of Respondents

Occupation	Number
Only weaving	19
Primarily weaving, Others secondary	-
Total	19

Table 3 : Categories of Weavers

Category of Weavers	Number
A) Independent	-
B) Weaves for Cooperative	04
C) Weaves for M.W at home:	
(i) Own Loom	13
(ii)M.W's Loom	01
D) Combinations:	-
i) Independent & M.W	
ii) Independent & Co-operative	
iii) Co-operative &M.W	
iv) Group	
E) Master Weaver	01
F) Wage Weavers :	-
(i)Shed	
(ii)Cooperative	
Total	19

M.W.: Master weaver

Table 4 : Number of Looms per Respondent

Number of Looms	Number of Respondents
None	-
One	11
Two	07
Three	-
Four	-
More than five	01
Total	19

Table 5 : Loom Ownership

Details of Loom Ownership	Number
Own	18
Own loom, accessory belongs to M.W.	-
Co-operative	-
Installed by M.W	01
Total	19

M.W.: Master Weaver

Table 6 : Loom Accessories

Type	Number
Jacquard	03
Dobby	05
Plain/ Sada	12
Total *	20

One respondent with 2 looms has specified that one loom has jacquard, the other doobby.

Table 7 : Family Size and Labour

Family size		Labour							Offspring	
1-4	5-7	Husband		Wife						
		W	PLP	W	PLP	NW	W	PLP	NW	
19	-	19	-	03	14	-	03	01	02 (school teacher) 01 (powerloom worker) 02 (tailors)	

W:Weaving ; PLP: Preloom Processes; NW: non-weaving

Table 8 : Occupational Background of Family

Occupation	Number
Hereditary (Weaving)	19
Non-Hereditary	-
Total	19

Table 9 : Residential /Migrational Status of Weavers

Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
Nagalapura	02	--
Mallavaram	02	
Pudupatla	04	
Venkatakrishnapalem	05	
Marrimanda (Papinaidupeta)	04	
Kalivettu	01	
Palamangalam	01	
Total	19	

Table 10 : Marketing Modes

Marketing Agency	Number
Co-operative	01
Independently	-
Master Weaver	11
Combinations (Co-op & M.W)	-
Others *	
Arani ,T.N	01
Balaji Co.,	01
Co-optex,T.N	03
KIBS Co.	02
Total	19

* A wide variety of products are woven here, and the production and marketing channels differ accordingly. A range of organizational modes obtain here. Of the samples of 19, six weave sarees of 100s & 80s count for master weavers' from Srikalahasti, Gollapalli & Tumbur. One weaves a similar product for Arani, a master weaver in Tamilnadu. Pattimarpu (Real Madras Handkerchiefs) are woven by six in the sample, one for a Madras-based company, two for a master weaver from Cherlapalli and three for a master weaver from Pudupatla. Only one weaver in the sample weaves panchas for Narayanavaram society. Three weavers produce 'Janata' sarees for Co-optex, Tamilnadu. One weaver makes sarees (100 counts) and the other lungis for KIBS, another Madras company.

Table 11 : Capital Source

Source of Capital	Number
Own	01
Money Lender (Sahukar)	14
Banks	-
Cooperative	03
Combinations (Coop & M.W)	01
Total	19

Note on earnings:

In Chittoor, all of the sample of 19 had a family of less than 4 members. Largely men did only weaving, while women did both weaving and pre-loom processing. In 3 cases, the women were earning between Rs 250 to Rs 300 a month by doing pre-loom processing tasks for the larger weaver community. However, not all the sons were weavers. Only 3 of the sample reported that their sons wove on handlooms, earning about Rs 800 a month. 2 were schoolteachers, 1 was a powerloom worker, earning in the same range. One was a tailor, who earned marginally less, between 500 – 700 per month.

The earnings in relation to products are as below:

Pattimarpu: Rs 200 – 220 per warp

Venkatagiri sarees: Rs 375 – Rs 525 per warp

Janata sarees: Rs 20 per piece

Sada sarees: Rs 280 per warp

Lungis: Rs 250 per warp

Panchas: Rs 200 per warp

Polycot: Rs 480 to Rs 600 per warp.

HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN KERALA

Handloom industry in Kerala today provides employment directly to 3 lakh people and indirectly to another one lakh. The industry is more concentrated in the Northern and Southern districts of the state namely Thiruvananthapuram district in the South and Kannur in the North. The organizational and production structure of the handloom industry brings forth an array of different systems in vogue. It ranges from centralized production and marketing units to household weaving units. When classified into organized and unorganized sector, the former includes industrial co-operatives and private factories while the unorganized sector consists of primary societies, collective weaving units, individual household units and unregistered non-household units. Thus, the co-operative sector consists of the organized industrial co-operatives working along factory lines and with collective weaving units attached to the primary societies, while it also consists of decentralized units like the household sector namely, primary weaving societies. The private non-household sector comprises of the organized handloom factories and unregistered non-household units. The private household units are decentralized but not separate entities. In Kannur, they are usually linked with the organized sector.

As mentioned earlier, the industry is mainly concentrated in Thiruvananthapuram in South and Kannur in the North. The organization and nature of production in these areas however differ considerably. Though, Thiruvananthapuram has the largest number of co-operatives, 366 out of the 755 co-operative societies, weaver activists point out that more than 250 of them are bogus. Even though officially it might appear to have organized, field visits show that majority of the weavers are independent or are working for the master weavers as wage earners. In the organization of production in North Kerala, most

of the weavers have been accommodated into the co-operative fold which is organized along the lines of industrial co-operatives as well as primary weaving societies with collective weaving centres. Also the nature of products vary between the two regions. While South Kerala, not only Thiruvananthapuram district but also Vaikom in Kottayam district, Chennamangalam in Ernakulam district concentrate on the production of traditional items such as set-mundu, thorthus, kavani, set sarees, dhotis, and so on. While in Kannur the production takes place mainly for the purpose of export and therefore the products produced are mainly export quality furnishing materials such as rugs, bed sheets, turkey towels, curtain and flooring materials and so on with the proportion of production of traditional items being marginal. Field visits also threw light upon the fact that wages prevalent in North Kerala were piece rate while in South Kerala wages were given according to the yarn utilized. It could also be discerned that while in North Kerala, the production was more centralized with the well functioning of co-operatives, it was more decentralized in the Southern region.

These facts can be easily captured from the data tabulated from the questionnaires distributed in these areas.

BALARAMAPURAM THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT

Balaramapuram in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala, bordering Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu is the one of the oldest handloom centres in the State. The largest concentration of the handlooms in the district is in this area. Legend exist that about 350 years ago the then Raja of Travancore brought 6 families from Devagiri and settled them near Kottar near Nagercoil. Nevertheless, in the latter part of the 19th century, His Highness Visakhom Tirunal Maharajah of Travncore brought weaver families from Tirunelveli and settled them in Neyyantinkara and Balaramapuram. They consisted of 10 families belonging to 5 different castes – Padmasaliyas, Saliyas, Muthaliyars, Devangars and Saurashtras. Hence the street in Balaramapuram where they were settled is called Anchuvannatheruvu (Anchu – five, Varna – Caste, Theruvu – Street). During the field visit, a visit to this street revealed that the width and length of the well-laid path was so constructed to facilitate warping and sizing in the street itself. Today all communities live in these streets though now occupied mainly by Vaaniya, Mukkuva, Chetty, Muslim and Saliyas. Ezhava community has also now become an important part of weaving and other pre-loom activities though exclusively Muslims do sizing.

A total of 48 questionnaires were distributed. Field visits and data on questionnaire show that the organization of production is complex. Though Thiruvananthapuram district has 360 of the total 755 co-operative societies of the State, only very few are working. According to weaver activists, more than 250 of these are bogus. Field visits threw light upon the fact that though many weavers were technically members of the co-operative; they no longer got yarn from the societies nor any form of assistance. Hence, they have

either become independent or have become wage weavers for master weavers. Market for the products they produce is local for the prominent items produced are traditional ones – set- mundu [two piece sari with a dhoti and upper cloth worn by ladies], kavani [upper cloth for men], plain white sarees with jerry borders, thorthus [bath towels], dhotis, lungis, and so on. Only a small fraction working in co-operatives weave bed sheets, turkey towels along with traditional items. The prime time for sales is Onam followed by Christmas and Vishu. Yarn is procured from yarn merchants in the locality and also from merchants in Tamil Nadu. Very few reported the procurement from Hantex [apex society]. The counts used by majority of weavers are 100s, 80s, 60s, 40s, 2/80s, 2/60s, 2/17s. Most of them pointed out high price and insufficient availability of yarn as their major problems in procurement. Wages for weaving averaged between Rs.60 – 80 per day depending on the skill of the weaver. Here, weavers are a distressed lot with no regular supply of yarn, fluctuations in prices of raw materials the prime item being the yarn and erratic information about changes and shifts in market. Most of them, as mentioned earlier, were members of co-operatives have shifted to work for master weavers or work independently and squeeze their wages for survival at times of despair.

The following is the data tabulated from the questionnaires.

Table 1 Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste Region	Number of respondents
	Balaramapuram
Ezhava	21
Nadar Hindu	15
Nadar Christian	5
Saliya	2
Pulaya Hindu	2
Nair	1
Vathi Hindu	1
Thandar Hindu	1
Total	48

Table 2 Primary and Secondary Occupation of the respondents

Occupation Region	Number of respondents
	Balaramapuram
Only weaving	45

Mainly weaving, Partly Agriculture	-
Mainly weaving, Partly business	-
Partly weaving, mainly others	3
Total	48

Table 3 Category of Weavers

Category	Number of respondents
	Region Balaramapuram
A) Independent	20
B) Weavers under the co-operative	
C) Weavers under the Master Weaver	
Own loom	2
Loom owned by master weaver	13
D) Combinations	
Independent and Co-operative	2
E) Master Weavers	7
F) Wage Weavers	
In Industrial Co-operative	4
Total	48

Note: One of the weavers under combination of independent and co-operative is technically under the co-operative, but she is an independent weaver in reality. Likewise, one of the weavers under the master weaver is under the co-operative, but the loom in which she weaves is owned by a master weaver in the society. Master weavers are defined as one with five or more looms.

Table 4 Number of Looms per Respondent

No. of Looms	Number of Respondents
	Region Balaramapuram
None	17
One	13
Two	8
Three	2
Four	1
Five and more	7
Total	48

Note: Out of the 17 weavers without looms, 13 work under master weavers and 4 in the Industrial Co-operative Society with 40 frame looms

Table 5 Loom Ownership

Loom Ownership Region	Number of Respondents
	Balaramapuram
Own Loom	28
Owned by Co-operative society	4
Owned by Joint Family	1
Owned by Master weaver	13
Own loom, accessories by Master weaver	1
Own loom, marketing by master weaver	1
Total	48

Table 6 Type of Loom

Type of Loom Region	Number of Respondents
	Balaramapuram
Pit Loom	44
Frame Loom	4
Total	48

Table 7 Family Size

Family Size Region	Number of Respondents
	Balaramapuram
1 – 4	25
5 – 7	23
8 and more	
Total	48

Table 8 Occupational Background

Occupation Region	Number of Respondents
	Balaramapuram
Hereditary (Weaving)	35
Non-Hereditary	Farmer – 5 Construction Work – 1 Artist – 1 Coolie – 2 Wood cutter – 1
Total	45

Note: Three did not respond

Table 9 Type of House

Type Region	Number of Respondents
	Balaramapuram
Own	32
Rented	8
Total	40

Note: 8 did not respond

Table 10 Marketing Modes

Marketing Agency Region	Number of Respondents
	Balaramapuram
Direct Sale	25
Direct and Co-operative	1
Co-operative	5
HLWDS	1
Master weaver	15
Total	47

One did not respond is an independent weaver and hence almost likely to have direct sales

KANNUR

Kannur – the land of looms and lores is situated towards the northern part of Kerala. This part was selected for survey due to the largest concentration of the handloom industry in the state (In 1984, out of the total looms of 95038 in the State, 46063 (48.5%) were in Kannur). The evolution of the industry in Kannur can be traced from the records of the Basel Mission Activities. Legend also exists that the Chirakkal Rajas of Kannur brought weaver families from the traditional weaving communities of Saliya from other regions and settled them in colonies. Though Basel Mission commenced its activities in India in 1834 at Mangalore, weaving was taken up only in 1844. Weaving establishments in early days were attached to the Mission house itself. Later establishments were started at Kannur (1852) and Calicut (1859). By 1913, both these establishments had huge complexes with over 600 workers each. In 1911, for better management, these were merged under the name Basel Mission United Weaving Establishment. It was Basel Missionaries who introduced frame looms in Kannur (today almost all looms in Kannur are of this type, the co-operative societies which are covered in the survey had all framelooms, except Morazha which had 3 pitlooms for silk weaving) as early as 1847. Also the introduction of fly shuttle looms, jacquard looms (1872) by the missionaries helped the weavers of Kannur widen the range of their products. They were mainly tablecloths, napkins, handkerchiefs, cotton check shirts, superior damask linen and so on. Later, furnishing and upholstery fabrics for which the industry is now well-known came into being. It became more and more specialized in export-oriented production. The Basel

Missionaries also pioneered the introduction of the concept of integrated handloom factories, which is still predominantly in vogue in this region.

An interesting fact that emerged during the field visit to Kannur was that though Kannur had only 73 out of 755 co-operative societies in the state (9.66%) in 1999, it had well functioning societies providing regular employment to weavers and other workers on a regular basis than in Thiruvananthapuram where out of the 360 societies, 250 were bogus. Weaver activists contributed the success of the co-operative movement in Kannur to strong trade unionism at the behest of Communist Party of India. Almost 90% of the weavers have been brought under the co-operative fold. Regarding production system, under co-operatives there are both primary weaving societies which provide weavers with yarn and other accessories and market the products and also industrial co-operatives organized along the lines of factories providing unionized wages. In the private sector there are individual weavers [marginal] and weavers who work in the private handloom factories who enjoy unionized wages. In this part of Kerala, the piece rate wages are in vogue. 90% of the production takes place for exports. The production of traditional items for local market is very less. Another interesting factor about the weaving in Kannur was that it was no longer caste specific – the presence of traditional caste weaving has become marginal, with the dominant caste Thiyya taking over weaving followed by Nair, Nambiar, Warriar, and so on all non traditional weaving castes. The presence of Muslim, Christians and SC/ST are however marginal.

The following co-operatives – Irinav Industrial Co-operative Society, Morazha Weavers Industrial Co-operative, Chirakkal Primary Weaving Society and Collective Weaving Centre and Pappinisseri Industrial Society were surveyed. A total of 48 questionnaires were distributed. Except Chirakkal which had both household and non-household weavers, in all other societies weavers work in the co-operative's weaving shed itself. Co-operative provides the weavers with dyed yarn, design, looms and other accessories. All the looms were framelooms and were owned by the society.

The following is the tabulated data from the questionnaires collected.

Table 1 Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste Region	Number of Respondents			
	Irinav	Morazha	Chirakkal	Pappinisseri
Thiyya	9	9	7	5
Saliya	1	5	6	2
Nambiar		1		
Warrier			1	
Scheduled Caste				2
Total	10	15	14	9

Table 2 Primary and Secondary Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation Region	Number of Respondents			
	Irinav	Morazha	Chirakkal	Pappinisseri
Only Weaving	10	3	14	6
Mainly Weaving, partly agriculture		1		
Mainly Weaving, Partly business		11		
Mainly Others, partly others				
Total	10	15	14	6*

*Three of them did not respond

Table 3 Family size and Labour

Family Size Region	Number of Respondents			
	Irinav	Morazha	Chirakkal	Pappinisseri
1-4	2	1	3	9
5-7	8	14	8	
8 and more			3	
Total	10	15	14	9

Table 4 Occupational Background

Occupation Region	Number of Respondents			
	Irinav	Morazha	Chirakkal	Pappinisseri
Hereditary (Weaving)		4	7	5

Non-Hereditary		coolie – 4 business – 1 agriculture – 2 toddyworker - 2	Dye worker – 1 Ayurvedic physician – 1 Coolie –2 Coconut climber - 1	
Total		13*	12*	5*

*Irinav weavers did not respond at all. In Morazha, Chirakkal 2 each did not respond and in Pappinisseri 4 did not respond.

Table 5 Type of House

Type Region	Number of Respondents			
	Irinav	Morazha	Chirakkal	Pappinisseri
Own	10	13	9	6
Rented			2	
Total		13	11	6

* In Chirakkal and Pappinisseri, 3 did not respond while in Morazha 2 did not respond

Notes:

Irinav Weavers Industrial Co-operative Society was established in 1978. They have a well-built two storeyed building with the ground floor acting as the go down while the first floor was the office. In 1992, they procured license to export and in 1993, license for direct exports was procured. As mentioned earlier, 90% of production in Kannur takes place for Kannur and this society is no exception. As evident from Table 1, the majority of weavers belong to the dominant caste in the region, Thiyyas. Yarn is procured from National Handloom Development Corporation and at times of non-availability from the local merchants. The main products are furnishing materials, pillow covers, table covers, cushions and napkins. The counts of yarn used are 2s, 4s, 6s, 2/17s, 2/40s, 2/80s, 2/6s, 3/6s and 100s (for dhotis) (traditional items such as dhotis, thorthus (bath towels) are still produced in marginal quantities). Adjacent to the society building was the work shed in which both men and women were weaving on framelooms while women were also involved in the pre-loom work. There was a dye house within the society's compound. Weavers were supplied with dyed yarn on the looms. The workers in the society did warping, sizing and dyeing. The society also owned a double storied marble floored guesthouse which was presently used as go down. Soon it would be run as cash counter-

cum-guesthouse to accommodate potential and foreign customers. Wages, as noted earlier, are piece rate, but depend on the type and design of the material one weaves. During the field visit, Kannan (72), one of the oldest weavers, who has been weaving since 57 years and the last 22 years for the society, pointed out that today he gets on an average Rs.80/- per day inclusive of D.A. In 1940s, he used to get Rs.1.5 per day for weaving 8 metres of cloth. Nevertheless, it was sufficient to meet his basic needs. But today, though wages have increased more than 60 times, it is not enough to meet the cost of living. Data from the questionnaire suggests that men weaving furnishing materials such as rug, bath mat, and so on are able to get Rs.2300 – 2700 per month on an average while those who weave local items such as double dhoti, thorthus, command only around Rs.1700 per month (on an average). At the same time, women weaving the same fabrics of similar counts procured at least Rs.1000/- less than men. This cannot be attributed to any kind of discrimination but to lower level of productivity, pointed the society officials. [Women weave at least half to one metre less than men] All looms in the society were framelooms, majority of it with jacquard except those which wove traditional items.

Morazha Weavers Industrial Co-operative Society was set up in 1965 by converting Krishna Private Handloom Factory which was running under loss. They produce export items on order from exporter and the main items produced are export quality furnishing items, bed covers, pillow covers, tablecloth, napkins, and also traditional items like thorthus, dhotis, silk sarees, and so on. Till two years ago, the society used to export goods worth Rs.3 crore per year. But it has reduced to Rs.2.5 crores recently. This has been attributed to the sharp rise in the prices of chemical dyes by 50% due to the closure of India dye Stuff Industries under Maftalal owing to mismanagement. Earlier it used to Rs.3000 per kilo but now since it has to be exported, the cost is Rs.6,000 per kilo. This has necessitated the society to depend on local dyes of low quality resulted in double consumption thereby increasing cost of production. Though the society has 3 pitlooms to produce silk sarees it could not be marketed due to stiff competition from silk sarees of powerlooms from neighbouring state of Karnataka. In this context, during the field visit, secretary Rajagopal pointed out that to weave 35 metres of handloom cloth a skilled weaver needs 4-5 days, while 350 metres are produced by powerloom in a day i.e. the

production level of 10 weavers in a week is done by powerlooms in a day. This uneven competition has also affected the industry in a big way. While interviewing some old weavers, they pointed out during early days, 1971, the main products were 36” single shirting, 48” of lungis. Today high quality export materials upto 90” is woven. In 1971, they used to get 25 to 88 paise per metre, while today it is Rs.8.30 (it varies according to designs) plus D.A. of Rs.44. Yarn is procured from NHDC. Weaving is taken over by Thiyya, Nair and Nambiar caste. 76% of the weavers are women. They prefer weaving to agriculture and construction work and get around Rs.20/- more in weaving than agriculture. Though they produce higher quality cloth than men, observed Mr.Rajagopal, their productivity is lower than mean. Data from questionnaire reveals that weavers on an average earn Rs. 2400-2700 per month. The society has 403 workers of which 226 are weavers (124 women). The society has its own weaving factory, dye house, warehouse, facilities for purifying the dyed water, mini boiler, 25 K.V. generator and an additional factory near Ozhakrom. Since 1975, the society has implemented Provident Fund, ESI (1987), labour welfare fund, handloom weavers welfare fund and so on. Education fund, marriage fund, scholarships as well as cash awards for students standing first and second in the Government High School Morazha, etc are implemented. The society has been identified under the Handloom Development Scheme of Government of India.

Pappinisseri Weavers Industrial Society was established in 1972. There are 405 members of which only 230 are active. The main products are furnishing items for export. They weave on orders from private agencies like Dhanalakshmi Weavers, Hindustan Textiles and Sabari International in Kannur. All processes – pre-loom and weaving is done in the society itself. The counts of yarn used range are similar to the ones mentioned by other societies. It is procured from local market in Kannur or from Coimbatore Mills and also from NHDC. There are no household weavers. All castes are involved in weaving – Thiyya, Nambiar, Muslims, SC/St though the presence of last two are marginal. Wages again are piece rate. For every metre Rs.6 plus Rs.42 in the form of D.A. is given. For every additional metre woven no D.A. is given. One can weave upto 4 - 5 metres, sometimes 6 –8 metres, on an average per day. Thus daily wages are around Rs.70 – 80.

Chirakkal Weavers Primary Society and Collective Weaving Centre was established in 1947. There are around 400 inside [non-household] and outside [household] weavers. Outside weavers procure yarn and other accessories from the society and weave in their house on their own looms while inside weavers work in the factory building of the society. Though a primary society, it is also a collective weaving centre. It is also identified under the Handloom Development Scheme of Government of India. All the looms, household or non-household are framelooms. There are 20 jacquard/dobby looms of which only four are working. The society weaves against orders from private agencies. The main products are furnishing materials and are mainly for export. During the field visit, the Secretary, Smt. Nalini, pointed out that all the weavers, outside and inside is covered by the welfare schemes of Government. An average workers earns Rs.75/- per day while a skilled weaver can get as much as Rs.175/- per day based on the kind of fabric/material he weaves. There are some pirn winders who receive around Rs.3000/- per month while weavers get Rs.2000/- per month. This is because weavers are given piece rate wages while pirn winders get paid for the volume of yarn which is wound. Like other societies, here too dominant castes are involved in weaving. Under the HDC scheme, 50 students are being imparted training on weaving. Their absorption however, will depend on their performance. The Secretary, pointed out that in addition to the economic recession in Kerala [due to sharp decline in the prices of cash crops], China's entry into our market along with the surge of powerloom products from Tamil Nadu and other states have hit the industry hard. There is a flight of orders not only to other states but also to China and Pakistan. In Kerala, for 8 hours of work one is paid around Rs.100/- per day on an average while in Tamil Nadu it is Rs.60/- per day for 12 hours of work. Thus goods are cheaper in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, the private handloom factory owners provide weavers with single looms, supply dyed yarn and other accessories, pay them piece rate wages lower than co-operatives and thereby reduce cost of production and capture the market. Thus, a uniform wage policy is needed not only inside the state but in South India as well. The society procures yarn from NHDC, Kannur Co-operative Spinning Mills and Coimbatore Mills. Counts used are 2s, 4s,.6s, 10s,20s, 30s, 40s, 2/4s,2/6s, 2/10s, 2/17s, 2/30s, 2/40s and so on. Dyes are procured from Bombay or

through NHDC. The workers in the society do warping and dyeing. Malabar Dyeing and Sizing Mills nearby do the sizing. The society has procured a loan of Rs.1 crore under NABARD cash credit provision through the District Co-operative Bank.

Weaving in Belgaum district, Karnataka

This region has a number of weaving villages and towns, such as Deshanur, Sulebhavi, Marihala, Vantamuri, Betageri, Uppinabetageri, Bailahongala, Guledgudda and Ilkal. A significant number are into silk weaving and many looms run with the support of KHDC (Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation). We give below reports from four villages– Rajanakatte, Guledgudda, Sulebhavi and Ilkal town.

Across these villages, we find that though the activity of weaving is going on on a considerable scale, the earnings are low. As a consequence, in Rajanakatte and Sulebhavi, for instance, weaving is combined with a range of other activities, in order to earn a livelihood that covers the bare minimum. Those who weave may themselves do agricultural labour, or different members of the family engage themselves in different jobs outside both these arenas. For some of these families, weaving is a skill that was learnt recently, for others it is a traditional skill. Either way, it constitutes one among the several survival strategies adopted by these groups. In contrast, weaving is more firmly entrenched in old weaving centres like Guledgudda and Ilkal. A well-established division of labour has also emerged over the years, and all respondents reported that weaving was their only occupation. The controlling force here is not so much the KHDC, but the local sahuikars who direct both production and marketing. As reported by the weavers, the system of giving advances and thus enveloping the weavers in the sahuikar's debt trap seems widely prevalent here as well.

Rather than looking at the handloom sector in isolation, it would also be necessary to consider parallel developments in the wider economy over time and see what effect these

have had on handloom weaving. The opening up of the powerloom industry and the shifts it entailed require attention.

Rajanakatte village, Gokak Taluq:

This village settlement is dominated by the 'bedara' community (also called Nayaks) who were hill-dwellers earlier. This village has no facilities at all, and people walk two kilometers to fetch water. The Shramik Abhivrudhi Sangam has been working here for the last 15 years, and runs a night school and balavadi for children. Earlier, the local people used to work on land. In 1996, the Sangam started a training programme in weaving. They now have 20 framelooms set up in a shed, on which the weavers produce jute-cotton cloth (50% cotton, 50% jute). There are no traditional weavers in this area.

Jute and jute-cotton products are woven – such as thick cloth, jamkhanas, and bags. The raw materials are got from Belgaum and Hubli. Natural dyeing is also being taught in recent times to another group of women in the Sangam. Quite a few of the weavers are women, and they all combine other jobs with weaving. Agricultural work on fields, along with other members of the family, provides a significant source of supplementary income. One's husband is a farmer, another a carpenter, yet another a teacher. Depending on how much they are able to produce, the earnings are between Rs.500 to Rs.700 per month. Products are sold mainly at exhibitions, but the current problem is one of stocks piling up. The looms are not their own, but belong to the Sangam.

Guledgudda, Bagalkot taluq:

Guledgudda is a small village, 30 kms from Ilkal. It is estimated to have a total of 500 looms – 40% cotton, 40% silk, and 20% rayon (chamka). Most of these are pitlooms, and worked on by older people. Younger men work on powerlooms. Of the weavers, 60% are Devangas, 20% Muslims and the rest are from other groups, such as Lingayats. Most people bring warps and weave for a wage in their own homes. The main product woven is 'khana' blouse material, for which a traditional demand exists. This is considered as skilled work, and pit looms are used. A single individual cannot do all aspects of the work. Dyeing is done by one group (they use colour 'milked' from the indigo vat), the

'kachgaara' (the one who does the border design) is different, the cord (of the loom) is pulled by yet another: it is in such a n interdependent context that weaving takes place.

The demand for these products is quite high, and is marketed through the marwadis (local sahuks). These traders usually provide the yarn, pre-warped and pre-dyed. Of the pre-loom processes, the weavers, using ganji made from jowari atta, do the sizing at home. These marwadis have advanced each of these weavers upto Rs. 10,000, so they are forced to work for them. Though the weavers own between 1-3 looms, their debts with the sahuks are also quite high, in the range of Rs.5-6000.

All the weavers in our sample are Lingayats. Their occupation is weaving alone. They work for the sahuks. The previous generation too has been weaving. For example, Eerabhadrapa Abbigeri's father had also been a weaver; they came originally from Abbigeri, where they used to do coolie labour. Not having agricultural land, they migrated to Guledgudda and took up weaving. The family owns two pit looms now. They weave mercerized khana, 60s and 80s count. Once the product is ready, it is given to the sahuks, who does the marketing. In turn, they are paid wages, once a week. For one warp (bimba), consisting of 40 khans, they are paid Rs. 400. This takes about 8 days to weave. In a month they are able to weave about four warps, so they earn about Rs. 1600. But the extent of outstanding loans with the master weaver is also quite high, in this case Rs. 6000. A similar situation prevails for the other weavers as well. In all these cases, the yarn is provided by the marwadi/sahuks, so the end product has to go back to him. They cannot sell the products to anybody else, also because of the big debts they owe to the marwari. Some weavers have taken advances upto Rs. 5000/- and cannot leave until they pay up this amount).

Ilkal:

Weaving takes place largely under such sahuks or master weavers in this area. According to one informant, there were about 3000 looms weaving khands in Guledgudda in the 1970s. The high point in their own family business in Ilkal was in the 1950s, when they controlled about 100 looms, and produced and sold about 1000 sarees a

month. The markets were primarily in Maharashtra and Gujerat, and also locally. Today, this has come down to about 3 to 400 sarees a month. He says: “The main occupation in the villages around Ilkal – Ameengarh, Sillibari, Dotihara, Kamatgi – was indigo dyeing and weaving, with perhaps 4 to 500 looms in each, and 5000 in Ilkal town itself, making a total of 10,000”. Today, the number has not changed much in Ilkal, but there has been a sharp decline in the surrounding villages. A large number of powerlooms have been set up in Ilkal in the last 5 years, many of which weave the Ilkal saree. This has affected sales of the handwoven variety.

There are a number of castes engaged in weaving. Of our sample of 11, there was one Devanga, one Korava, one Kurivinasetti (Lingayat), four Padmasalis and four Togataveeras. All of them work for the sahuakar, and undertake only weaving. The other pre-loom processes, such as dyeing, warp preparation, sizing, and so on, are all done by others; that is, the sahuakar gives them a ready-made warp for weaving.

All of them reported having one loom, which was not their own, but rented from the sahuakar. The product woven by them are sarees of 60s count, with sada design, and dobby border. The marketing is done entirely by the sahuakar.

Sulebhavi, Kailasnagar:

The weavers interviewed here, work for the Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation (KHDC), but work is very scanty now. They report that many weavers have shifted from handlooms to powerlooms, mainly because they are unable to get continuous employment working only on handlooms.

Of the 10 weavers contacted here, 5 are Devangas, 2 Lingayats, and 3 Muslims. Of the first group, four families have migrated from other villages, like Vantamuri and Vakkunda, both of which were submerged by a local dam. Weaving is not new to them, since their parents too were weaving. These people weave shirting (80s and 100s count) with sada design, and sarees (gaadi ghadi) of 40s count. One of them used to weave silk sarees at Marikatte, but when this ‘stopped’ came to Belgaum in search of work. He has

now stopped weaving, and does 'kuchgara' work, which is working on the border designs, and earns Rs. 1600 per month.

Typically, they own one loom each, and all of them are core members of KHDC. The Corporation gives the yarn, and the warp too is given pre-prepared and dyed. The corporation also has a sizing machine. Marketing too is done by the KHDC.

Earnings range between Rs. 800 a month to Rs 1000 ("If we weave a warp of 20 mts, we should get Rs 250, but are often paid only Rs 180", they complain.) They are paid on a weekly basis, sometimes an amount of Rs 200 per week. They also say that the warps are not given to them continuously, and that often there is a gap of a week or 15 days between one task and the next; the delay obviously means that they cannot earn enough.

Of the two Lingayat weavers interviewed here, one is a widow with a young child. Her father too used to weave at Bellada Bagewadi, and she moved here after her husband's death. The other woman also weaves. Her father too used to weave on a pit loom at Deshanuru, but gave up when it became unremunerative. They now weave sarees, pant pieces (polyester) and dhotis.

The remaining three are Mussalman weavers. In one family of hereditary weavers, not much work was forthcoming. They have one loom, and the weaver's wife (about 40 years old) does the pre-loom work. His daughter Shamina weaves and earns about Rs 800 a month. KHDC provides yarn that is ready, that is, warped and dyed, and markets the final product as well. They too are paid weekly, (Rs 200), but complain that work is often irregular, due to non-supply of yarn, or work orders.

In another case, a Muslim woman and her son weave, while her husband works in a hotel and earns Rs 600 a month. She weaves polyester shirting, of 80s count. The one loom that they have is from a bank loan arranged by the KHDC. She earns Rs 180 for 20 mts of cloth woven.

Usmaan saab Patri also weaves for KHDC. His father Khajasaab too was weaving on a pitloom at Pachchapura, but moved to Belgaum due to lack of work. He now has one loom, and weaves dhotis of 40s count. Like the others, provision of raw materials and marketing is all done by the KHDC.

The information tabulated from the schedules is provided below.

Belgaum district, Karnataka

Table 1: Caste Composition of Weavers

Caste/Village	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Bedara(nayak)	6	-	-	-
Lingayat	-	4	1	2
Devanga	-	-	1	5
Muslim	-	-	-	3
Padmashali	-	-	4	-
Korava	-	-	1	-
Togataveera	-	-	4	-
Total	6	4	11	10

Table 2: Primary and Secondary Occupations of Respondents

Occupations/village	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Only weaving	-	4	11	8
Weaving & Agriculture	4	-	-	-
Mainly Other, weaving supplementary	2	-	-	2
Total	6	4	11	10

Table 3: Categories of Weavers

Category/village	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Independent	-	-	-	-
Under Master weaver	-	4	11	-
Under co-op	6	-	-	10
Combinations	-	-	-	-
Total	6	4	11	10

Table 4: Number of looms per Respondent

Number of Looms/Number in each centre	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
None	-	-	-	1*
One	6	1	11	9
Two	-	2	-	-
Three	-	1	-	-
Total	6	4	11	10

*Specializes in border design work. Does not weave on loom.

Table 5: Loom Ownership

Details of loom ownership/number of respondents in each centre	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Own	-	4	-	9
Own loom, master weavers' accessory	-	-	-	-
Co-operative	6	-	-	-
Installed by master weaver	-	-	11	-
Total	6	4	11	9

Table 6: Family size and labour

Family size		Labour							
		Husband		Wife			Offspring		
1-4	5-7	W	NW	W	PLP	NW	W	PLP	NW
19	12	27	4*	16	5	10#	4	-	8\$

W: weaving; PLP: pre-loom processes; NW: non-weaving

* The Other occupations are teacher, carpenter, agricultural labourer and employed in the Public Works Department.# Of these, 1 woman punches design cards, 1 runs a small shop, another a tea stall, 3 are engaged in agricultural labour, 4 do not work outside.\$ In this category, 3 work as teachers, 2 on the fields, 1 is a power loom operator, 2 undertake the work of grazing animals.

Table 7: Occupational Background of Family

Occupation/number of respondents in each centre	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Hereditary	2	4	9	10
Non-Hereditary	4	-	2	-
Total	6	4	11	10

Table 8: Marketing Modes

Type /village	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Cooperative	6	-	-	10
Independent	-	-	-	-
Master weaver	-	4	11	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total	6	4	11	10

Table 9: Source of Capital

Capital/village	Rajanakatte	Guledgudda	Ilkal	Sulebhavi
Own				1
Money lender		4	11	
Institutional	5 (co-op)			1(bank), 3 co-op
Combination				
Total	5	4	11	5

Table 10 Residential/Migrational Status of Respondents

	Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
Rajanakatte	Rajanakatte	4	-
	Gajamala	1	No lands there, moved in search of work
	Parkankatte	1	moved after marriage
Guledgudda	Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
	Guledgudda Abbigeri	3 1	- No lands there
Ilkal	Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
	Ilkal	11	-
Sulebhavi	Sulebhavi	1	-
	Marihala	1	Unemployment
	Bagewadi	1	After being widowed ,search for work
	Dashnuru	1	Unemployment
	Vantamuri	3	Displaced by dam construction
	Vakkakunda	1	Displaced by dam construction
	Marikkate	1	Stoppage of silk weaving there
	Pabbapura	1	Stoppage of silk weaving there

Descriptive details are provided in the case study. In this area, yarn is sourced mainly from Belgaum and Hubli. For those weavers working for the master weaver, yarn is given directly by him. The designs are traditional. In Rajanakatte , the main products woven are bags and jhamkhanas. In Guledgudda, it is silk khanas & chamka; in Ilkal, mainly sarees. In Sulebhavi, polyester shirting, sarees as well as dhotis are woven (under cooperative).

Kanyakumari District, Tamilnadu

Table 1: Caste Composition of the Weavers

Caste/Region	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Nadar	3	1	
Mudaliyar	4	7	
Sourashtra			8
Total	7	8	8

Table 2: Primary and Secondary Occupations of Respondents

Occupation/Village	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Only weaving	5	8	6
Mainly weaving, partly agriculture	1		
Mainly weaving, partly business	1		
Mainly others			2
Total	7	8	8

Table 3: Categories of Weavers

Category/Village	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Independent		4	
Under master weaver		2	5
Under co-operative	6		3
Combination of independent and M.W	1	2	
Total	7	8	8

M.W.: Master weaver

Table 4: Number of Looms per Respondent

Number of Looms/ number in each centre	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
None	-	-	-
One	5	8	5
Two	2	-	3
Three	-	-	-
Total	7	8	8

Table 5: Loom Ownership

Loon Ownership/number in each centre	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Own	6	6	5
Cooperative	1	-	1
Master Weaver	-	2	2
Total	7	8	8

Table 6: Type of Loom

Type/number in sample	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Pit loom	3	8	8
Frame loom	4	-	-
Total	7	8	8

Table 7: Loom Accessories

Type/number in sample	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Jacquard	-	-	3
Dobby	6	-	5
Total	6	-	8

Table 8: Family Size and Labour

Family size			Labour					
			Husband		Wife		Offspring	
1-4	5-7	>8	W	NW	W	NW	W	NW
13	8	2	10	5- coolie 1-tailor 1- painter	18	1- tailor	6	12-coolie 2-masons 2-cooks 1-teacher 1-sales boy 1-painter

W: weaving; PLP: pre-loom processes; NW: non-weaving

Table 9: Occupational Background of Family

Occupation/ number in each centre	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Hereditary	4	5	8
Non-Hereditary	3	3	
Total	7	8	8

Table 10: Residential/Migrational Status of the Family

Appicode	Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
	Appicode	3	-
	Kerala	2	Marriage
	Matha puram	1	Marriage
	Palliyadi	1	Marriage
Amsey	Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
	Amsey	6	-
	Colectial	1	Marriage
	Monday market	1	Marriage
Kottar	Place	Number	If migrants, reasons
	Kottar	8	-

Table 11: Marketing Modes

Agency/ village	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Co-operative	7		3
Independent			
Master weaver		6	5
Combinations of independent & co-operative		2	
Total	7	8	8

Table 12: Source of capital

Capital/village	Appicode	Amsey	Kottar
Own	3	4	4
Moneylender		4	1
Institutions			
Banks			
Co-operative	1		
Own, Moneylender	1		1
Own, Co-operative	2		2
Total	7	8	8

Note

Yarn, product, design:

Of the 3 villages sampled, mill yarn is got mainly through the cooperative in Amsey and Appicode. In the other village, a master weaver from Madurai supplies yarn. The weavers complain of high prices, poor quality and insufficient yarn supply. The majority in the sample weaves plain dhotis, while a few weave Sico sarees with a border design. Designs are traditional, and are given by the cooperative, or the master weaver (in the case of those weaving for the master weaver).

Wage structure and other costs

The data on earnings are varied. Instead of homogenizing it into tables, we give a descriptive note, detailing the modes in which wages are calculated and the categories of weavers:

- Pre loom processes are mostly done by family members. But a good number of households give it to coolie workers. On an average it takes 4-5 hours a day.
 - Weavers who weave *plain sarees* under master weavers get coolie for pre-loom processes: Rs.3.75 for one pound winding; Rs. 65 for warp joining.
 - For *design sarees* under master weavers Rs.6/- for one pound winding, Rs.75/- for warping
 - Plain dhotis under co-operatives: Rs 6 for one pound winding, Rs. 40 for warp joining One warp costs Rs 340 [out of which 120 dhotis can be woven in 2 months time] Net profit per warp Rs 200.
 - Some weavers have reported Rs.65 /55 for warp joining [for 60s and 40s count].
 - Among those working under the master weaver, the wages are paid weekly: between Rs. 150 to Rs 180 per week for dhotis; and Rs. 200 a week for sarees.
 - Among those working for the co-operative, the wages for weaving dhotis range between Rs.60 – Rs 100 per week. If calculated per warp, the amount paid is Rs. 720.
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Part III. Policy Perceptions and Prospects of Handloom Industry

III.1 Assessing the Policy Framework

True that post industrial revolution era saw the disruption of handloom weaving in India; it also showed the resilience of hand weaving against the onslaught of modern techniques in weaving. This section will deal with policy issues and its impact on handlooms with respect to the time period immediately preceding independence as well as in the decades after independence.

The twentieth century, as mentioned earlier, saw the emergence of mill industry as well as the decentralized powerloom sector which has now become the serious competitor to the handlooms. The policy discussion would address the following:

1. The role of policy in mitigating the problems of handlooms;
2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation of policy; and
3. Distortions in policy which has directly and indirectly aggravated the problems of handlooms

In the pre-Independence era, little efforts were taken to develop the handloom industry. No concrete steps were taken until 1935. On the other hand, the discriminatory colonial policy made every possible effort to encourage the use of mill made cloth and yarn from Lancashire. In 1935, the Government provided Rs.5 lakhs as a subsidy to each state for a period of five years under the subvention scheme. During the Second World, the shortage of yarn became acute and the handloom industry received major setbacks. The Committee set up to study the problems of the industry, the Fact Finding Committee on Mills and Handlooms 1942 concluded that the major reasons for the crisis in the industry were due to changes in tariff policy, shift in consumer taste, competition from mill sector and powerloom sector and the strong dependency relationship between weavers and middlemen. On the recommendation of this committee, All India Handloom Board was set up in 1945 with the object of supplying raw material and assisting the marketing of handloom products. Handlooms witnessed greater emphasis in the policy formulation in the post-Independent era.

In all Five Year Plans, emphasis was given for the development of handloom industry. The major thrust was on the co-operativization of handloom weavers. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 assigned a crucial role to the cottage industries. In 1948, the acquisition and installation of powerlooms were prohibited without the permission of the Textile Commissioner. In 1948, Government of India passed the Cotton Textile (Control) Order in which the mills were prohibited from producing certain varieties of cloth. Thus, in 1950, the government reserved a whole variety of items for the exclusive manufacture by handlooms - mills being legally prohibited from producing these items. However, the reservation was applicable to powerlooms as well and it was treated on par with handlooms. Except for three items of production - piece dyed dhotis; lungis and piece or yarn-dyed coloured cotton saris - which were exclusively for handlooms, the rest of the eight items were reserved for both handlooms and small powerloom units (with four or five looms) (Eapen, 1984: 583). In 1949, excise duty was imposed on mill cloth of medium and coarse to superfine varieties in order to collect revenue.

All India Handloom Board was reconstituted in 1952 to develop the handloom industry on co-operative lines; increase production; and help in the marketing of cotton. In the same year, the Government announced RBI scheme to assist handlooms by supply of yarn and in return purchase of cloth. Also, the mills were required to restrict the production of dhotis to 60% of the average monthly packing. Consequent on the passing of Khadi and Other Handloom Industries (Additional Excise Duty on Cloth) Act of 1953, additional excise duty was levied on mill made cloth and the amount was used for the growth of handlooms. In the same year, Handloom Rebate Scheme was introduced. The Kanungo Commission or the Textile Enquiry Commission set up in 1952 which submitted its report in 1954 (GOI, 1954: para 75 & 81) was of the view that there was no future for handlooms and recommended a progressive conversion of handlooms into powerlooms through organized effort over a period of fifteen to twenty years. It was of the opinion that for ordinary cloth 'the pure and simple handloom is and must be a relatively inefficient tool of production. With the exception of those textile items with an 'intricate body pattern', there seemed 'to be no variety of fabric which the handloom

industry could produce in a better quality or at a lower price (consistent with a reasonable wage being paid to the handloom weaver and his assistants) as compared to the mill or the powerloom industry'. On the other hand, the recommendations of Karve Committee 1955 (on Village and Small Scale Industries, Second Five Year Plan) (GOI, 1955: p.89) were in sharp contrast with that of the Kanungo Committee. Karve Committee not only recommended the freezing of both mill and powerloom output at existing levels but also recommended deferring of any proposal for additional spinning capacity in the mill sector, in order to promote the hand spinning sector. On the recommendations of the Karve Committee, the Government of India announced the Textile Policy of 1956. The RBI Scheme for Handloom Finance, 1952 was widened to extend working capital to handloom weavers' co-operative societies for production and marketing of cloth. The Ninety Percent Loss Guarantee Scheme was introduced in 1956 with a view to provide guarantee cover to co-operative banks in respect of losses arising out of the non-recovery of loans to handloom weavers' societies.

Nevertheless, the Asok Mehta Committee (1964) echoed the views of Kanungo Committee and recommended that powerloom be allowed to acquire a paramount position in the textile economy of India. It questioned the long-term viability of handlooms and argued for the removal of regulations on powerlooms. Though the Government did not accept the recommendations in total, the permission for planned expansion of powerlooms marked the official recognition of the role of powerlooms in India (GOI, 1964: 164-172)

In 1974, Sivaraman Committee on Handlooms was constituted to study exclusively the problems of the handloom industry. It pointed out the inadequacy of government support and the product reservation which actually benefited the powerlooms. The major observation of the Committee was that for every powerloom set up, six handlooms are rendered dormant i.e. for every job created 14 handloom weavers were displaced. It pointed out that between 1963 and 1974 the overall growth of powerloom sector was 9.67% per annum and that of cotton powerlooms was 21.94% (GOI: 1974, Srinivasulu, 1996: 3202). It urged the government to introduce fiscal arrangements to narrow the cost

handicap of handlooms over the powerlooms and also to abolish the distinction of excise duty between the mills and powerlooms [both use same technology of semi automatic looms with powerlooms having the added advantage of low fixed cost per unit of output and low wages].

In 1978, the Janata government announced its textile policy. To assist the growth of handlooms, the capacity of the powerloom and mills sectors were to be frozen at existing levels with expansion allowed only in handloom and khadi sectors. This strategy however was not implemented. It also recommended the production and sale of controlled cloth by both mill and handloom sector initially and only by the handloom sector eventually. The 1981 policy laid down that fresh expansion of capacity of powerlooms to be regulated such that by the end of 1984-85, the growth is restricted at 5% of the base year. It also 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 reasonable prices to the handloom sector. A new Indian Institute of Handloom Technology at Gauhati was also proposed to be established along with the strengthening of existing infrastructure in other IIHTs and Weavers Service Centres.

The most comprehensive textile policy of independent India was the New Textile Policy of 1985. It differed from other textile policies with the shift in emphasis from employment potential to that of enhancing productivity. It also viewed the textile sector in terms of processes involved – spinning, weaving and processing rather than the sectors involved – handlooms, mills, powerlooms and khadi (GOI, 1985: 4). The important policy initiatives for handlooms under the New Textile Policy were as follows:

1. Development of handlooms through co-operatives and corporations to be intensified;
2. Greater emphasis on modernization and provision of technological inputs for improving productivity, quality and finish;
3. Special efforts to ensure the availability of yarn and other raw materials through the operations of National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC).

4. Production of mixed and blended fabrics to be encouraged;
5. Protection to handloom sector under the Handloom Reservation Act;
6. Removal of cost handicap of handlooms vis-à-vis powerloom products through suitable fiscal measures;
7. To improve the marketing of handlooms products, strengthening the infrastructure of marketing complexes, organizing the training of marketing personnel and intensive publicity;
8. To strengthen the database and better planning in the handloom sector a census of handlooms was to be undertaken;
9. Welfare schemes for handloom weavers such as a Contributory Thrift Fund Scheme and Workshed-cum-Housing Scheme were to be introduced; and
10. The entire production of control cloth was to be transferred to the handloom sector by the end of the 8th Five Year Plan.

Under the Workshed-cum-Housing Scheme introduced during 1985-86, weavers were to be provided with financial assistance for the construction of workshed-cum-houses. In case, weavers own their homes, assistance will be made available for worksheds only. Government would provide subsidy and HUDCO loan component through State Housing Corporations. During 1989, Government of India introduced Market Development Scheme in lieu of Rebate and Share Capital Contribution Schemes. The State and central Governments would meet the expenditure on 50:50 basis. Government of India, in exercise of its power under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, issued Cotton Textile Control Order 1986 asking the spinning mills to pack 50% of yarn produced in the form of hanks to ensure the availability of hank yarn to handlooms (EXIM, 2000: 14).

In 1990, the Abid Hussain Committee reviewed the working of the Textile Policy of 1985. The committee categorized handloom weavers into three – high skilled, high earning; medium skilled, medium earning and low skilled and low earning. It suggested the strengthening of existing welfare schemes and the introduction of a General Welfare Fund and a Weavers Rehabilitation Fund. It suggested the need for setting up an

institutional mechanism, “ a decentralized form of production successfully linked with a highly centralized market” (GOI, 1990: 17). The recommendations of the committee were:

1. Focus on the weaver rather than looms;
2. Area based promotion to enhance weaver's earnings and productivity;
3. Result oriented institutional infrastructure;
4. Search for new organizational forms for target oriented handlooms; and
5. Stepped up plan provision for handloom promotion.

In view of the unprecedented crisis in handlooms following the suicide of handloom weavers in different parts of the country, Mira Seth Committee on Handlooms was set up. The focus of the committee was on increased earnings to weavers. It recommended the strengthening of existing provisions for timely and adequate credit, technological upgradation and so on. It emphasized on the training of weavers through Weavers' Service Centres (WSCs) in Computer Aided Designing (CAD) and Computer Colour Matching (CCM) to meet the challenges of globalization. In short, the Mira Seth Committee Report recommended an export-oriented strategy for the survival of handlooms. The committee recommended the reduction of items reserved for handlooms from 22 to 11 (Srinivasulu, 1997: 1382).

To formulate a new textile policy for the millennium, the Government of India appointed a Committee in 1999 under the chairmanship of S.Satyam (GOI: 1999). The Committee had the following recommendations for handlooms:

1. Cone yarn be converted to hank yarn by weavers to meet the requirements of handlooms i.e. removal of hank yarn obligation of mills to handlooms;
2. 50% of weavers to change over to weaving for exports;
3. Conversion of 3rd tier of handloom weavers producing plain and low cost items to 1st tier handloom units producing commercial items or into 3rd tier of powerloom weavers with semi-automatic looms;
4. Strengthening of the existing welfare schemes with no additional schemes;

5. Research and Development, design intelligence, testing, training and HRD support would be provided by WSCs and IIHTs;
6. Establishment of marketing complexes in the main commercial centres;
7. Removal of the Handloom Reservation Act;
8. Setting up of IT booth for weavers;
9. Excise duty exemptions available to handloom sector at the fabric stage to be phased out; and
10. Strengthening of the database with regard to the handloom sector.

These were the major policy announcements with regard to handloom sector in the pre- and post-Independent era. The ensuing section will deal with the impact of such policy on handloom sector.

Policy Performance: A Critique

Policy of Reservation

Since the days of independence, as mentioned in the above discussion, many regulations were imposed on both mills and powerlooms to protect the handlooms from their unequal competition. The most important among these was the reservation of products for the exclusive production of handlooms. However, the reservation introduced for 8 items in 1950 was not very effective. Out of these 8, 5 items were reserved for both handlooms and small powerloom units. And studies point out that by 1974, almost 90% of the powerloom units fell into the category of 'small' with less than 5 looms and the reservation actually benefited these powerloom units than handlooms (Chandrasekhar: 2001). To correct this, the Handloom Reservation Act of 1985, reserving 22 items for the exclusive production of handlooms was introduced. However, it could not be implemented till 1993 due to the legal dispute posed by the mill and powerloom lobby in the Supreme Court. To overcome this, Abid Hussain Committee recommended the inclusion of the Act under the Ninth Schedule of Constitution but this was never considered (GOI: 1990). The Mira Seth Committee recommended the reduction of the number of items reserved from 22 to 11 and recent annual report of ministry of textiles

indicates that this has been implemented (Ministry of Textiles: 2001). Even after the Act came into effect from 1993, the number of violations reported in the annual reports has been shocking low, to the tune of five to fifteen all over the country (Ministry of Textiles: 2001). Thus, despite the demands of weavers the Reservation Act has never been implemented efficiently. In addition to this, the approach paper to Tenth Plan [Approach Paper to Tenth Plan (2002-7): p19], suggests that reservation is uneconomical in the wake of liberalization and hence has to be phased out eventually.

As mentioned earlier, the serious threat to handlooms come from powerlooms rather than mills. It is argued that powerlooms are the result of expansion of successful handloom weavers. Recent studies, however, show that synthetic mills enable the setting up of powerloom units and sub-contract their weaving provided they procure yarn from these mills. Thus, powerlooms are in part the result of self-expansion of mills. It should also be noted in this context that 93 million metre weaving unit of Reliance (Srinivasulu, 1998: 897) come under the category of 'powerloom' by definition. They enjoy cost advantage vis-à-vis not only handlooms but also mills. Similar techniques of production followed by mills and powerlooms enable it to produce cloth of comparable quality. In addition to this, low overhead costs per unit of output, low wages due to lack of unionization, small size of the units enabling it to remain outside the ambit of any protective labour legislation give them a competitive edge over both mills and handlooms.

Competition from Powerlooms

Another cause of concern is the phenomenal growth of the number of powerlooms despite all regulation. The Sivaraman Committee observed that between 1963 and 1974 the overall growth rate of powerloom sector was 9.67% and between 1975 and 1982-83 was 11.7%. In numerical terms, the growth was phenomenal, an addition of 2.3 lakhs new cotton powerlooms to the 1.93 cotton powerlooms already existing in 1975, with the overall addition of around 2.9 lakhs powerlooms, the total tall going upto 6 lakhs with another 1,60,000 awaiting regularization (Srinivasulu, 1996: 3202). Today, authorized (registered) powerlooms stand at 16.55 lakhs (Ministry of Textiles: 2001) with the total being 34 lakhs inclusive of the unauthorized (EXIM, 2000: 14).

Availability of Yarn

Non-availability of sufficient yarn in the form of hanks has been the bane of handloom industry. The mills were supposed to deliver 50% of their total yarn production in the form of hanks to handlooms. Abid Hussain Committee observed that this was to the tune of only 40% (GOI, 1990: 11). However, data from 1988-89 onwards show that it has always been around 22 – 24% (Srinivasulu, 1996: 3204). Moreover, there has always been the diversion of hank yarn for handlooms to powerlooms which will be rewound into pirns and used for powerloom weaving. In addition, there is a gross mismatch between the figures of cloth produced and the hank yarn delivered, the former being many times more than the latter. This is due to the marketing of powerloom cloth as handloom cloth which is very widespread and takes place with official connivance. The rise in prices of yarn of 40s and 60s count used by majority of weavers by 86.95% and 128.57% in 1985-90 has been attributed by the Abid Hussain Committee itself to the non-fulfillment of hank yarn obligation by mills (Srinivasulu, 1996: 3203, GOI, 1990: 11). This can also be attributed to the export of yarn in the 20s and 40s count (64% of the total export of yarn) without taking into consideration the domestic requirement. Weavers complain that National Handloom Development Corporation set up to provide yarn requires the weavers to pay in advance 25% of the total amount which they are unable to meet.

Implementation of Welfare Schemes

With regard to welfare schemes, there is no dearth of schemes introduced at the State and Central Government level. A detailed compendium of handloom schemes is given in the appendix at the end of the report. Comprehensive note on schemes – developmental and welfare – are available with respective Directorates of Handlooms and Textiles in various states. The package of ‘loom to loomless’ weavers introduced in 1993 to provide looms to 3.27 lakhs (Census of Handlooms, 1987-88) over a period of three years failed to understand that these weavers have actually migrated to major handloom centres. Thus, the package would add only 3.27 lakh looms to the already existing 2.79 idle looms as on 1987-88 and many more that would have gone idle (Srinivasulu, 1996: 3205). The

scheme of setting up 3000 Handloom Development Centres and 500 Quality Dyeing Units was envisaged at a whopping cost of Rs.849.15 crores. At the end of 8th Five Year Plan, only 1588 HDCs and 313 QDUs were sanctioned to the tune of 80.92 crores which is well behind the target (Ministry of Textiles: 1999). Moreover, the various Committees had recommended the introduction of Computer Aided Designing and Computer Colour Matching under Weavers Service Centres; setting up of marketing complexes, IT booth for weavers and so on when the immediate concern of weaver is to procure sufficient yarn in the required counts. Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana 2000-01 is conceptually the same as the Project Package Scheme. Handloom Export Development was launched in 1996. Thus, multiplicity of schemes and duplication of efforts by a number of agencies has been the bane of the handloom industry. Abid Hussain and the Sub-Group on Handlooms for 8th Five Year Plan had proposed to institute a Handloom Weavers Rehabilitation Schemes. However, no serious move have been made in this regard except the mention in the Textile Policy, 2000 to enable handloom weavers find alternate employment in textile or allied sectors. Since the First Five Year Plan, there have been concerted efforts to co-operativize the weavers. Despite this, the level of co-operativization stands at 20.3% of the total weavers as on 1998-99 (EXIM, 2000: 13). A closer look at the compendium of handloom schemes and the implementation agency would reveal that majority of them are applicable only to weavers in the co-operative societies or to weavers who will be able to organize into societies or have access with the apex societies. Thus, there is no justification for the contending argument to discontinue all concessions to handlooms, as it has not led to the growth of the industry. Scheme for modernization of looms was transferred to State Governments in 1991. Presently the progress of this scheme is not known. Release of funds by the State Governments (including those received from Central Government) takes a long time, at least a gap of 8 to 18 months. This time lag has to be reduced. Further more, weavers did not have access to banks for getting credit and working capital loans from banks/financial institutions, as they do not have assets for mortgage. Establishment of weavers co-operative banks run by themselves could be a possible alternative (Raoot, nd: 2, 6,7)

Absence of Reliable Database

Paucity of reliable data with respect to number of looms or number of weavers or productivity is another major shortcoming of the handloom sector. Till 1964, the production of decentralized sector, except khadi, was computed on the assumption that 90% of the free yarn delivered by the mills is consumed by this sector and the share of handlooms was computed on the assumption that 76% of the yarn was consumed by the latter. On the basis of the quantum of yarn consumed, the output of each sector was arrived on the basis of some accepted conversion factor (1 pound of yarn= 4.5/5 yards of cloth or 1 kg of yarn=10 metres of cloth) (Chandrasekhar: 2001). The number of weavers is often arrived at by multiplying the number of looms by an employment co-efficient. Likewise, there is also difference of opinion in the calculation of dormant and idle looms especially while taking into account the domestic looms of North Eastern India. Besides, if 2.9 lakhs powerlooms were added between 1975 and 1983, it should have displaced 17.4 lakhs handlooms but the Census of Handlooms show only a decline of 4.85 lakhs handlooms (Srinivasulu, 1996: 3202). In addition to all these, it is very interesting to note that the Abid Hussain Committee's field visits for the purpose of review did not include any of the handloom centres in the country [GOI, 1990: ii].

Technological Issues

Hand weaving has been associated, especially in the post-Independent policy formulations, with notions of 'cultural heritage', 'ancient', 'traditional' industry in the country. In this rhetoric, its significance as an indigenous technology was often forgotten. On the basis of their structure, handlooms can be divided into a) primitive looms, b) pit looms – throw shuttle and fly shuttle - and c) frame looms*. In the name of technological upgradation, since early Five Year Plans, it was envisaged to convert pit looms into frame looms. Nevertheless, such conversion should take into account the increase in the amount of cloth woven, for frame looms are capable of weaving greater volumes than pit looms and the possibility of marketing this. The greatest disadvantage of frame loom is that it occupies more space and is not easy to operate due to increased vibrations while weaving. Moreover, it also costs much more than a pit loom. Pit loom has the advantage of saving space, less expensive and more health friendly. Besides, only pit looms are

capable of making sarees of finer counts with intricate extra weft patterns. Since 1985, technological upgradation of handlooms has been synonymous with the conversion of handlooms into powerlooms. Nonetheless, a detailed study of the impact of such a conversion on labour involved in handlooms, the infrastructure required, channels of marketing the increased volume of cloth produced, rehabilitation of the affected handloom weavers, has never been paid heed. Any conversion, in the name of modernization or technological upgradation, should have the welfare of the weavers as their paramount goal.

Specific Policy Issues

The Textile Policy of 1985 marked a vital shift in the policy towards handlooms in particular and textile industry in general. It characterized the onset of liberalization in the textile economy of India. Removal of regulations and control over mills and powerlooms was indeed a shift from hitherto policy emphasis on employment potential to that of productivity. Further, the division of the textile industry in terms of processes rather than sectors completely ignores the intersectoral linkages between these sectors and their inherent strengths and weaknesses. Policy recommendations succeeding 1985 policy are not different in their tone in hailing liberalization as the need of hour without taking into consideration the specificities of the textile economy of India. Policies recommend shifting of the production of controlled cloth to handlooms by the end of the 8th Five Year Plan with the objective of enabling weavers to earn reasonably well. Parallel to this, it also advocates the conversion of handloom weavers into the production of high value items to increase their earnings. Such inherent contradictions are frequent at the policy formulation level. The Satyam Committee recommendation of converting cone yarn to hank by weavers themselves does not take into account the level of infrastructure required, the supervising agency, controller of quality of such converted yarn, maintenance of adequate supply of yarn and so on. Furthermore, the committee does not take into account the impact of the conversion of low skilled handloom weavers into powerlooms on the labour involved and the level of structural changes that will be brought in with such conversion. In addition to this, the recommendation to switch 50% of handloom weavers for the production of exports appears absurd when only 28,300

looms out of 3.6 million working looms in the country i.e. less than 1.3% are producing export varieties (Mukund & Syamasundari, 2001: 36). Such shift will also leave the handloom sector more vulnerable at the hands of the volatile global market. Nevertheless, the National Textile Policy 2000 on the whole echoes the views of the Satyam Committee though its objective takes note to 'sustain and strengthen the traditional knowledge, skills and capabilities of our weavers and craftspeople'.

Thus, policy in the initial days has indirectly helped the growth of powerlooms by treating it on par with handlooms. Further more, the small size of powerloom units enabled it to remain outside the ambit of any Factory Act or imposition of special taxes. This facilitated their capture of the market with their cost advantage over handlooms arising out of low overhead costs, low wages, proximity and nexus with mills ensuring adequate supply of yarn. In the post 1985 scenario, the powerlooms are allowed to operate even without a license. Even in the past with licensing and other regulations such as freeze on capacity, the Government was unable to restrict the growth of powerlooms.

In fact, Government should realize the great potential of handlooms as a generator of employment in the non-farm sector. It should also realize the fact that any industry can reap benefits abroad only when there is a stable domestic market.

*

- Primitive Looms – where weft is threaded by hand for interlacing the warp ends. These include vertical looms like some of the woolen blanket looms, durree looms, newar looms and tape looms.
- Pit looms are of two kinds – throw-shuttle and fly-shuttle. Until the invention of fly-shuttle in England in the 18th century, the throw-shuttle was the most prevalent loom. Famous throw shuttle pit looms are – Gadwal looms, Jamadani looms, Balaramapuram looms, Banaras looms, Chanderi looms, Aurangabad Himru looms and Kanjeevaram looms.
- Fly-shuttle pit looms produces 3 to 4 times more cloth than throw-shuttle except that it cannot weave intricate extra weft patterns. It weaves colour bedsheets, towels, handkerchiefs, door curtains, bedcovers, quilt cloth, colour shirting, napkins, etc. Famous fly-shuttle pit looms are the Uppada loom, the Venkatagiri loom, the Salem loom, the Madras Handkerchief loom, the Mauloom, the Sandifa loom and the Nagpur loom.
- Frame looms can weave heavy furnishing material, bed sheet of greater warp (upto 100-110” width), towels, dress material, striped check material, gauze cloth, and so on. Ordinary saris with plain border, with extra warp and cross border designs. Popular frame looms are the Malabar loom, Rajasthan loom, the Shantipur loom and the Sholapur loom.

III.2 Prospects of the Industry: Conclusion and Recommendations:

The handloom industry and its entitlements:

Handloom weaving is a significant industry that employs lakhs of people in the country. The most urgent task today is one of devising appropriate institutional and structural supports that could help the industry realize its potential. In order to do this, a major shift in the existing perspectives on the industry will be necessary. Far from being a traditional activity that is on the verge of decline, handlooms must be approached as a productive industry and as a major generator of employment, especially in the rural, non-farm sectors. Having defined it as **a productive industry, the various entitlements of the industry and its practitioners have to be emphasized and attended to**. In other words, the handloom sector is entitled to support vis-à-vis its needs as a productive industry (for example, in areas of raw material access, credit and marketing), rather than receive support that is extended merely through welfarist schemes. The general thrust of a government policy on handlooms has to be based on a clear recognition of such needs. An identification of such needs and entitlements has been made in this Report. At the same time however, enough attention has to be paid to the macro-economic environment and how it affects the performance of the handloom industry. Even the most well-intentioned policy measures could fail if wider trade and fiscal policies go against the sector.

One of the inalienable features of the handloom industry is its equity participation. Unlike certain other industries where a handful of owners control and direct the entire production process, in the handloom sector, control over resources is not concentrated but more dispersed. This follows from the very nature of the industry, which uses only small amounts of capital while drawing on traditional skills and household-based labour in order to produce cloth. It is necessary to build on such strengths while articulating the prospects of the industry. Successive textile policies have been an exercise in balancing the interests of the various sectors of the textile industry, such as, mill, powerloom and handlooms. A growing tendency, which has become increasingly pronounced today, is to see the prospects for the handloom industry in niche (both national and international)

markets. Our study indicates that, to the contrary, the **prospects** of the industry can be developed along many other lines. To do this, it is necessary to shift from the above niche perspective and to focus on *local markets* as the most obvious targets of decentralized cloth production. Expanding local markets is a challenging task that will have to be supported by ancillary research on such questions as suitable cotton varieties, local spinning units, and so on. In the long run, the growth and prospects of the handloom industry depends on such a market expansion, and policy formulations should address the needs of the industry that follow from such an objective.

Identifying the specific requirements of the handloom industry and its heterogeneous organizational base has been an important part of this study. The handloom industry exhibits extreme diversity in terms of products, modes of production, as well as in relations within the production structure. This diversity is not reflected in aggregate data on the industry, but it is aggregate data that becomes the basis for forming impressions and policies pertaining to it. Aggregate data do not tell us what is happening to the industry at the grassroots level; nor do they reflect diversities in organization and products according to state, region, or even district. What is needed is a realistic appraisal of the industry, facilitated by direct inputs from the field. This should be the starting point for policy exercises, which should come to recognize regional specificities as the greatest strength of the handloom industry.

The present study has sought to fill this lacuna in most appraisals of the handloom industry. It focuses on the field realities of handloom weaving primarily as they obtain in Andhra Pradesh, besides drawing on comparative data and accounts from a few other states such as Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Rather than take the so-called 'decline' in handloom weaving as given, we have preferred to go into specific reasons for expansion or contraction in particular areas of the state. Based on these field accounts, it has been possible to identify key problem areas as well as to indicate certain lines of intervention in dealing with these problems. The Report has comprised of three parts. Part I provided a brief overview of the context of the current study and elaborated its framework. Part II consisted of field reports, in the form of case studies. In the course of

presenting these, three main aspects were highlighted – organizational modes, the co-operative effort and markets for handlooms. Part III analysed policy perspectives on the handloom industry.

A point of departure for the study has been some of the dominant perceptions of the handloom industry today, especially those that depict it as traditional, unable to withstand the onslaught of modernization and hence as on the verge of decline. Most responses to the periodic crises that have gripped the industry have been coloured by this view. However, this is not borne out by field-based views of handloom weaving. On the contrary, one notices significant diversity as well as vitality as characteristic of this industry. A contraction in the scale of handloom weaving in one area is offset by a regeneration and even expansion in other areas. The reasons for these developments are also area-specific and not always comparable. For example, while in Chittoor District, handloom weaving may suffer because of the proliferation of powerlooms in the vicinity, the expanding demand for ikkat has supported weaving in Koyyalagudem. While links with local markets have sustained some co-operatives, local power lobbies have vitiated the co-operative ventures at other places. Over and above recording such area-specific differences, the study also affords certain lessons regarding the very structure of the industry, and the re-organizations in markets and production that are taking place today.

As part of this study, a seminar on ‘Growth and Prospects of the Handloom Industry’ was organized in Hyderabad. Participants in this seminar provided contemporary accounts of handloom weaving from different states, which were located in the context of perspectives on the economics of the industry as a whole. The seminar also provided a forum for the exchange of views and experiences between weavers, government officials and academicians. Officials from the top policy-making body (Planning Commission in Delhi) and the apex marketing co-operatives from states like Tamilnadu also participated in the sessions and discussions (see the collection of seminar papers appended to this Report). Weavers sought to highlight the impact of the textile policies on the handloom sector, and raised the issues of product reservations, marketing strategies and yarn availability for discussion.

A brief summary of the main points highlighted in the course of the study follows:

- A homogeneous category such as ‘the weaver’ is a misleading one, which can lead to policy distortions. In reality, there exist several different types of weavers and several organizational modes under which they weave. A rigid classification of weavers into one or the other category (such as co-operative weavers or those under the master weaver) is also unrealistic, since very often a combination of types obtain. It is also to be borne in mind that the problems and needs of weavers in each category are different. For successful programme formulation and implementation, therefore, a close examination of field realities and the identification of the needs of different segments of the weaving industry are indispensable.
- The issue of migrant weavers has to be taken up seriously. Our field visits showed that migrant weavers, who had neither looms, dwellings nor good working conditions, let alone access to capital or any kind of social security, dominated shed weaving.
- The functioning of weaver co-operatives is another issue that demands attention. Though, generally speaking, co-operatives seem to be crumbling, it was found that the precipitating factors were not always the same. Politicization, lobbying for power and mismanagement of funds were common stories, but the role of other related aspects such as the collapse of the apex marketing agency and its impact on weaver co-operatives has to be looked into in greater detail. The problems with the structural aspects of co-operatives need to be addressed and corrective measures worked out. Further, the fact that less than half the total number of weavers are covered by co-operative ventures, raises the equally pressing question of what happens to weavers outside this fold? Their credit needs remain especially unaddressed throughout.
- As a result of these developments and circumstances, the question of what alternative forms weaver collectives could take becomes extremely pertinent. Ideally, these will have to sidestep the pitfalls of the pre-existing systems of production, and organize production and marketing on a different footing.

- The market for handlooms also requires extensive consideration and well thought out strategies as will be elaborated shortly. At present, the emphasis is on export markets and niche national markets. In addition to such existing markets, developing the local market is essential.
- Field interventions will have to be preceded by research inputs on a range of factors affecting the handloom industry, such as technology, markets, socio-economic conditions of weavers in different areas and an accurate identification of their most urgent needs, such as access to raw materials and credit.

Strategies for intervention:

An objective appraisal of the handloom industry is only a first step that has allowed us to identify some of its most urgent needs and to indicate areas that require intervention. A larger question to be considered would be of the agents of intervention: what should be the role of the state towards these issues, and how would primary producers participate in the decision and policy-making process?

We will here go into certain major problem areas as well as indicate strategies for intervention/ action.

1. **Credit needs:** Credit, or rather the lack of it, is the single largest block in the growth of the handloom industry. Despite all the claims of subsidies to the handloom sector, the amount of institutional credit that is made available to weavers is abysmally low. While banks have an inbuilt bias against small producers, the credit facilities available to the co-operatives are far from adequate. Very often, master-weaver controlled co-operatives manage to siphon off a large chunk of the credit available. The credit needs of the majority of weavers outside the co-operative fold also remain unaddressed. Also neglected are the different *kinds of credit needs* of weavers. While adequate and timely credit for input procurement is the main need, at times, capital may be required for repairs or for domestic and social expenses. There is just no agency that can meet this wide spectrum of credit needs, and invariably weavers end up indebted to the local moneylender or master weaver. Credit institutions need to be designed which will

provide credit in the way that is needed, large number of small loans, to suit the dispersed nature of the handloom industry and to suit market seasonality. Mechanisms must also be developed to support well-functioning producer groups and to ensure productive use of credit. The growth of self-help groups and thrift groups among weavers must be encouraged with matching grants and other incentives for this purpose.

2. **Input support:** In spite of the reservation of the spindle capacity in the spinning mills in favour of hank yarn, there has been persistence of shortage of yarn when it comes to the actual weaver. This happens because of several practices that go against weavers, such as: a) the hank-yarn being siphoned off by powerlooms; b) the cornering of the yarn by master-weavers through their bogus co-operatives, and c) fluctuations in yarn prices to the levels which often go beyond the reach of the individual weaver. The management of production of the co-operative spinning mills is unprofessional, and the technology of production is cost-intensive, often leading to the mills turning to subsidized export of yarn in order to meet their running costs.

To capitalize on the strengths of the handloom industry, it is necessary to build ancillary support systems specifically suited to its dispersed nature. At present yarn is produced in spinning mills located in distant towns and cities. The pre-spinning process is also technologically intensive which affects the inherent strengths of the cotton fibre. Since the end users of yarn, that is, the handloom weavers in this case, are dispersed across different regions and villages, developing smaller units of yarn production to cater to their needs will be feasible. Small-scale, decentralized yarn production located near cotton fields and weaving clusters will provide crucial linkages between these sectors through which direct flows can be established between cotton cultivation and textile production. This direct relation would also eliminate many of the costly and unnecessary stages of the current pre-spinning process such as baling and reduce the need for carding. Research and development should be taken up in this direction. In addition,

continued attention needs to be paid to the right kind of yarn availability (for example, the counts woven and required in a particular region), price regulation and policies regarding the export of yarn, since all of these directly affect the viability of handloom weaving as an industry. While setting up of smaller retail yarn outlets would be beneficial, linkages between credit provision and yarn availability also need to be worked out.

- 3. Product Reservations:** The idea of Product Reservations was primarily to protect the handloom sector from powerlooms and mills taking over the production of items hitherto being produced exclusively by the handloom sector. Though it is seen in protectionist terms in this sector, in reality, the concept is not very different from market segmentation, which is the identification of market boundaries for different products and linking them up with best-suited production units, without entering into unnecessary competition across the whole production range.

The implementation of Handloom Reservation Act has always been the bone of contention between officials and handloom weavers. Officials cite the technical specifications of products reserved under the Act as the main difficulty for effective implementation. To illustrate, though ikkat (tie and dye) fabric is reserved for production by handlooms, such a type can be produced by others if the fabric contains more than 45% of blended fibres. This provides a loophole that mills exploit to the maximum. A feasible solution would be to reserve entire categories of items for production by the handloom sector, such as bordered sarees, dhotis, lungis, carpets, towels and so on. Local district level committees could be set up to closely monitor the proper implementation of the Reservations Act. Mechanisms for the local resolution of reservation violations should also be developed.

The situation today is one where market demand dictates production; as a result, what were regionally specific products are now being produced in a number of

distant centres across regions. The concept of fostering an ‘area-based industry’ (indicated by the Abid Hussain Committee Report) should be explored in order to promote handloom production. Also, as it has been suggested in the case of other small industries (Morris, et al., 2001), there is a need to protect ‘geographical indicators’ in products and to promote common brand names (that are regionally defined), such as, for example, Ikkats, Uppada sarees, Gadwal sarees, and other kinds of fabric. In the absence of this, handloom production will lose out on important market segments.

Handloom products are not just ‘luxury’ items, but also ‘wage-goods’ that are capable of catering to different kinds of national and local markets which need to be linked (Chandrasekhar, 2001). It is also capable of producing a much larger volume of output for any given level of investment when compared with other sectors of the textile industry. Handlooms also have a substantial input of intangibles such as skill and dexterity of handloom weavers, which are not properly priced in the present market system. Protection by way of reservation of items will at least enable the handloom weaver to be paid for their dexterity, which is otherwise eroded by the cost advantage of powerloom products.

Further, given the effects of WTO and liberalization and the reality of international competition in cloth production, it is imperative to expand *patent protection*. Just as patents protect individual products, we must press for protection on the basis of cultural heritage. Market pressures and the incessant demand for variety are pushing producers to constantly look out for something new. In India, we have a permanent demand for certain kinds of products such as sarees and dhotis, since culture defines dress codes. In order to protect this market demand, it is necessary to patent these categories of items, and reserve for ourselves the exclusive right to produce them. Such rights could vest in the hands of the weaving community as a whole, rather than specific individuals.

4. **Research needs:** Extensive research into technological and organizational aspects of the handloom industry is necessary. Rarely have the research needs of the handloom industry been pursued systematically. Research institutes undertaking technical research into each stage of the weaving process, including pre-loom processes are required, since it is in these early stages that the need for technical improvement is most keenly felt. Research and documentation of designs as well as of existing markets also need to be undertaken. The paucity of a reliable database regarding various productive and socio-economic aspects of handloom weavers has also been felt (see also Raoot, n.d:8). In fact, an unreliable database has been the bane of the handloom sector. A comprehensive collection of data on handlooms covering all aspects of the industry should be immediately initiated not only through official machinery, but also with the help of weaver organizations and responsible non-governmental organizations.

5. **Market needs:** As seen above, the reliance on an export market alone is fraught with difficulties such as – a) the highly differentiated nature of the export market, since each country will have its own requirements; b) the infrastructure supporting and regulations governing export trade necessitate that it is in the hands of large business houses, from which little benefit will trickle down to the primary producer; c) it creates instabilities in demand and livelihoods that impact negatively on weavers. In this context, there are several different aspects that merit attention: it is necessary to expand and develop the market beyond the upper reaches. The view that a domestic demand for handlooms has no prospects of growth and that there should be more of export-oriented production is far from the truth. There is a large and growing domestic demand for handlooms. Handloom production is well integrated into local demand and this sector cannot be ignored. The potential for growth of this sector in fact lies in the medium and heavier plainer fabrics, rather than the complex patterned or high-count ‘fine’ fabrics, which are more suited to a small niche market. This is because such production draws on simple and affordable technology and does not require expensive loom attachments. Also, there is a large-scale demand in the

burgeoning middle-class markets in cities and towns that can easily be tapped. The commissioning of market surveys will provide a more accurate picture of the customers' preferences. This market information is to be disseminated by the surveying agency to all the concerned agents, especially primary producers. The role of the state in market development (in addition to the responsibilities of state-appointed marketing agencies) should also be discussed. For instance, state marketing support should focus on areas neglected by private traders, such as the thicket fabrics that form the basis of domestic (and also export) demand. Since the margins are not very high here, it is often neglected. Similarly, joint ventures between competent and committed handpicked state agencies, NGO's and representatives of producer groups could provide models for successful market development.

6. **Correcting misperceptions:** Though successive committee and other reports concede that handloom sector is extremely heterogeneous, this recognition is not reflected in textile policy formulations. While the paucity of reliable data is part of the problem, we also need to understand the patterns of production, organization and changes in the industry better. A uniform approach cannot be adopted merely to suit administrative convenience. The question of how to categorize weavers is very important here. We have indicated in earlier chapters that from 1985 onwards, weavers have been seen as falling into three categories (high income skilled weavers, medium income weavers and low-income weavers). This division is artificial, and though weavers making 'fine' fabrics do earn marginally more than those weaving plain cloth, the market demand for these high value fabrics is restricted to a small niche market, so the number of weavers depending on this are relatively fewer. It has to be emphasized strongly that a categorization of weavers is also a categorization of organizational modes (in other words, weavers under master weaver, under co-operative, etc). These will clearly differ from region to region. To capture this variety, we need a *functional categorization* where factors of production combine in specific ways. These are not fixed, but undergo change in relation to changes in the wider economy. A

more realistic understanding of the problems of weavers and a suitably flexible categorization has therefore to be devised based on realities obtaining at the field level.

Another common misperception has to do with the phenomenon of weaver migrations. Migrations are often interpreted to mean a decline in weaving, which is not necessarily the case. This is because the migrant weavers do not give up weaving, but continue to weave, though under a different set of circumstances and conditions. Such migrations will also have to be understood in the context of larger changes and shifts in employment, especially in rural areas.

Yet another problem area pertains to the prevalent suggestion that the large number of handloom weavers of the third tier be converted into powerloom weavers. There are several pitfalls if this policy shift is indeed put into practice. The internal organization of the handloom and powerloom sectors – for instance, their units of production, financial requirements and social relations of production – are not the same. There can be no easy transition from one mode to another without major structural changes and expenditure. The recent downward swings in the powerloom segment make such suggestions even more questionable. In case such a conversion does indeed take place, it will entail enormous social costs, the loss of skills and existing livelihoods which will have a decelerating effect on the economy as a whole.

Future action

This study has provided detailed field level data regarding cotton handloom weaving, in order to assess the strengths and problem areas in this sector. From the findings, it is clear that contrary to the general perception, the industry exhibits vitality in a number of places. If, due to a combination of circumstances, there is a decline of weaving in some areas, this is offset by a reorganization and rejuvenation of the industry in other regions. Our report suggests that by addressing the urgent needs of the handloom industry, substantial growth in both employment and output can be achieved. Each of the needs

and entitlements of the industry discussed above - such as **credit and yarn support**, - needs to be further examined and analysed. Detailed research into **yarn production, yarn availability and the major agents and factors in this process is necessary**. Similarly, **an objective and detailed assessment of the structure of weaver co-operatives is necessary**. Such evaluative exercises will indicate forms of co-operatives suited to responsible functioning among primary producer families, and what the functions of such entities would be. It is also necessary to realize that while specific issues such as product reservations and the hank yarn obligation are vital ingredients of the textile policy and must be systematically pursued, **the impact of wider economic reforms (such as industrial and trade policies) on the handloom sector also require research**. Only a holistic approach to these interlinked issues will provide an impetus to the growth prospects of the handloom industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix No.1 COMPENDIUM OF HANDLOOM SCHEMES

Schemes	Implementing Agency
Handloom Development Centres 1993	Preferably by existing PHWCSs. New society will be considered if backed by a good and viable NGO which should fulfill the criteria for assistance from CAPART
Looms with equipment to Loomless weaver under IRDP 1993-94	DRDA at the District level and the BDO or Panchayat Samiti at the Block level.
SC/ST House less weavers under IAY 1993-94	Jointly by the DRDA and the Assistant Director of Handlooms
Training of Weavers under TRYSEM 1994-95	Assistant Director of Handlooms and the DRDA. Training to be conducted by the concerned Weaver Training Centres
Common Facilities Centres with JRY assistance 1994-95	Common Facility Centre will work under PHWCSs. Identification by State and Distric level Monitoring Committee
Janata Cloth Scheme 1990	State apex HWCSs, Regional HWCS and State HDCs. Exceptional context PHWCS
Hank Yarn Price Subsidy Scheme 1994-95	Apex/Regional HWCS, State HDCs, Regional HDCs, Directors in charge of Handlooms and Registered societies fulfilling CAPART guidelines and catering to not less than 50 weavers
Yarn at Gate Price 1995-96	National HDC, the nodal agency will procure yarn from state sector co-operative mills and supply it through their branches/regional office and yarn depots to state HC, State apex/regional HWCS, PHWCS having a turn over of Rs.20 lakhs per annum, HDCs and societies fulfilling the norms of CAPART catering to the needs of not less than 50 weavers
Market Development Assistance 1988 - 89	HANDLOOM Apex Co-operative Societies, HDCs and PHWCSs
Project Package Scheme 1991-92	Apex bodies, primary societies, voluntary agencies and weavers associations recommended through state governments
Integrated Handloom Villages Development	Beneficiaries of the village will be encouraged to form a CS failing which they

1991-92	may form a registered society, if an NGO is working in the area
Workshed-cum-Housing Scheme 1992	Apex HCS, State HDCs, PHWCSs or any other agency specially set up by the Government for the purpose
Thrift Fund Scheme 1985-86	Primary co-operative societies
Group Insurance Scheme 1992-93	Annual premium of Rs.100 per person shared between Central and State Governments and beneficiary at the rate of 1/3 rd each.
Health Package Scheme 1992-93	Besides covering weavers affiliated to corporations and co-operatives, weavers outside their affiliation should be covered through the field agencies of Directorate of Handlooms
National Design Collection Programme 1985-86	Any Handloom apex society, handloom development centres and registered production based WCS, craft councils/foundations are eligible for the benefit
Margin Money for Destitute Weavers 1991-92	Primary Weavers Co-operative Societies
National Silk Yarn Scheme 1992-93	National Handloom Development Centres and apex co-operative societies
Marekting of Handloom Goods under Single Tender System 1988	ACASH acts as the nodal agency. Only handloom units notified by the Development Commissioner for Handlooms can avail this facility
New Insurance Scheme 1997-98	Through United India Insurance Company with an annual premium of Rs.120/- per annum. The share of Central Government is Rs.60/- per annum and the weaver is Rs.20/- per annum.
Deen Dayal Hathkargha Yojana 2000-01	National level Handloom Organizations, State HDC, apex societies, PHWCSs, NGOs and WSCs.
Source: Compendium of Handloom Schemes (Revised Edition upto May 1995), Ministry of Textiles, New Delhi and Annual Report of Ministry of Textiles (2000-2001), New Delhi	

Note: PHWCS – Primary Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies
HDC - Handloom Development Corporations
IAY - Indira Awaz Yojana
JRY - Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
DRDA - District Rural Development Agency
BDO - Block Development Officer
WCS - Weavers Co-operative Society

CS - Co-operative Society

Appendix No.2 District Reports (Collected by Rastra Chenetha Karmika Samakhya):

Kurnool, A.P.

In Kurnool District there are 41 handloom cooperative societies. Of the 41 societies, only 3 are working whereas the rest societies are there only for namesake. These societies are malfunctioning.

Yemmiganur Sangam is the most well-known society in Kurnool District. This was formed in the year 1938. Since then, it progressed at a regular pace, and its turnover during its peak years was Rs.6 crores (approximately); but now its turnover has been reduced to Rs.3 crores only. From 1978-1985 it created work for about 3500 workers. At present it is unable to provide work for even 300 workers. Neither are employees of the Society, such as accountants, being paid salaries regularly. NABARD is issuing Rs.2.5 crores cash credit to this society. In the present state of affairs the society is unable to give daily wages to the weavers working for the society. This society has 60 sales depots across Andhra Pradesh and a few in Karnataka. But due to slump in sales, running of this society is also becoming a problem. The Government has given a share of Rs.60 lakhs to this society. The society can run only if cotton, dyes and other necessary requirements are given on subsidy otherwise it will be very difficult to continue the society. Rampant corruption in the working of the Society has resulted in the denial of benefits to weavers.

Yemmiganur Handloom Cooperative Society has 6 production centres. Bedsheets, towels, lungis, dhothis, door curtains, sarees, zari sarees, etc are produced at these centers. Gauze, bandage cloth was also prepared in Kurnool District, which were supplied to the hospitals in this district; but as hospitals rejected these materials, some cooperative societies were shut down. Due to such changes, some weavers have given up weaving and have become rickshaw pullers while others have turned to weaving gadwal zari sarees.

'Venkatachalapathi Co-operative Society' in Adoni has approximately 300 weavers. They used to weave jhamakhana and towels. Today this society also has not been able to provide any work for these weavers and due to financial problems weavers have become jobless. Under master weavers there are approximately 2000 looms working. They do not have the shed system. Instead, the yarn is given to weavers, who weave sarees at their own homes. For the sarees that are so woven, Rs.270/- for small-bordered sarees, Rs.320/- for big-bordered sarees and Rs. 750/- for jacquard sarees were the wages given to the weavers. Less wages are paid to the weavers on the reason that the prices/demand for the sarees have been reduced. The master weavers are paying even lesser to the weavers working under them.

Yemmigannur Society's branch is situated in Kosagi village. There are 30 looms here. The remaining 200 looms are under master weavers, who have gadwal silk sarees, ilkal (Karnataka) sarees woven. They have been paying less wages to the weavers giving the reason of drastic increase in zari rates and silk.

In Nandanavaram, under a cooperative society there were about 500 looms working. At present 50 looms are idle; under master weavers in the same area there are 1000 looms working. But even those are not able to work properly due to lack of funds. As there is no proper marketing mechanism many weavers are facing problems. Even here master weavers have reduced wages paid to their weavers. The same is the condition in nearby areas like Nagaladinne, Gonnegaridla, Gududru, Gudikal and Adoni villages.

In Kodumuru there are no cooperative societies all weavers work under master weavers only. There are no work-sheds either. They supply the raw material (yarn) to the weavers who weave the sarees at home and return it to the master weavers who pay them accordingly. In areas like Sannagandla, Gorantla, Krishtapuram, Moodumalagutti, Varuru, Angadinne approximately 6000 looms are working. All these are under the control of master weavers. As they have no proper marketing method or market place there are left with a lot of unsold stock. Weavers say that Government should set up a silk

Kendra, which could supply raw materials to these weavers and market the sarees so produced. Here no weaver has been given an identity card.

Remaining areas like Baganapalli, Koyilakuntla, Sanjanula, Allagadda, Velugodu, Srivella, Avuku, Uyyalavada, Juparu Bungalow, B.Atmakur, Pattikonda, Don, Alurur mandal are working in the similar manner. Though the district has a department of A.D, (H & T) they are there only for namesake. There is no help for the weavers working in these areas from this department. Though there are lakhs of weavers in and around this area, the department is showing only 5000 workers (weavers)

The weavers say that opening NHDC centres at two places - one at Yemmiganur and the other at Kodumuru at Krishna district - might help in the marketing of sarees in these areas. Weavers also wish that the Government gives the handloom industry a proper place of importance, and provide loans as they do for agriculture. It should also pass a special budget, earmarking clear funds for handloom sector.

District report: Chittoor, A.P.

There are approximately 15000 families who depend on weaving for livelihood in Chittoor district. The number of looms are approximately 18000. There are 30 mandals in 100 villages in Chittoor district, in which weavers are working.

In Nagari, Putturu, Narayanavaram areas there are 34 cooperative societies, but these have many bogus members. R.C.K.S had investigated and started a protest. As a result of the protest, the Government had appointed a commission and through an enquiry they found only 11 societies which were truly registered societies and which were providing work to weavers. The Government organization APCO is not of much assistance to weavers, those who were dependent on it are resorting to suicides, or deaths are occurring due to hunger.

In Eastern part of Krishna district, many people depend on weaving for livelihood. As there are no cooperative societies, weavers are depending on master weavers, who pay meagre wages. Here weavers weave sarees of 80s counts. Not having enough capital to work on their own, weavers are becoming puppets in the hands of master weavers. In addition, a number of power looms have come up in the area, creating a marketing problem for handloom workers.

In Sri Kalahasti area, Venkatagiri sarees are woven. There are over 1000 looms weaving this product. However, the use of impure silver zari by master weavers has had a negative impact on the demand for these sarees. Weavers find themselves out of work as a result. Though there are two cooperative societies they are unable to provide continuous work for all the weavers. Investing on looms would require thousands of rupees and no proper funding is forthcoming from Government or cooperative societies.

In Narayanavaram, Puttur and surrounding areas, Tamilnadu Balaji sarees and dhothis are woven, with weavers working under master weavers. In Madanapalli area, about 6000 looms are weaving Apoorva silk sarees.

Appendix No.3

Growth and Prospects of the Handloom Industry

Seminar Papers

I. Organizational Aspects of Handloom Industry

1. Juxtapositions: Micro Accounts of Weaving in Andhra Pradesh
Seemanthini Niranjana and Soumya Vinayan
2. Handloom Industry in Balaramapuram, Trivandrum district - K. Rajan
3. Problems and Prospects of Handloom Industry in Kerala – A.C.K.Nambiar
4. A Note on the Handloom Industry of West Bengal –
Nivedita Ray and Sanjukta Malakar
5. Problems of Handloom Weavers in Chittoor District of A.P. – V. Gopal Chetty
6. Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weavers in Cuddapah District of A.P.
K. Venkata Subbaiah
7. The Role of Co-operatives in Handloom Weaving: Some Lessons from A.P.
Kanakalatha Mukund

II. Technological Linkages

8. Quality Aspects of Indian Cotton: Historical Neglect and Research Possibilities
C. Shambu Prasad
9. Micro-Spinning: Engineering the Future – L. Kannan

III. Economics and Structure of the Industry

10. Handlooms: In Survival Mode – C.P.Chandrasekhar
11. Looming Crises: Towards an Approach to Comprehend the Handloom Sector
Using the 'Industrial Cluster' Model – Padmini Swaminathan
12. Contract Labour in Ahmedabad Textile Industry – Sujata Patel
13. Powerlooms: The Turning Point – Tirthankar Roy
14. Negotiating the Market: Dastkar Andhra's Research in the Marketing of Cotton
Handlooms – Uzramma

IV. Policy Questions

15. Handloom Policy: A Myth or Reality? – V.K.Agnihotri
16. Textile Industry, Textile Policy and Crisis in Handlooms in India –
Soumya Vinayan and D. Narasimha Reddy