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A PROFILE OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Handlooms are an important craft product and comprise the largest cottage industry of the country. Millions of looms across the country are engaged in weaving cotton, silk and other natural fibers. There is hardly a village where weavers don't exist each weaving out the traditional beauty of India's own precious heritage. The last 100 years have seen the growth of mechanized textiles production internationally. In part due to competition, handlooms has lost much of its market and is almost non-existence in most countries. However, handlooms are still a force to reckon within India and some other Asian countries such as Srilanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Cambodia. Though it employs the largest number of people the handloom sector is considered a sunset industry and there is an air of inevitability given the relentless march of mechanization modernization and sophistication, still there are many advocates of handlooms for reasons including ideology, philosophy, sheer love for handloom products and economic arguments.
KEYWORDS: *Brocades, Caluchar, Dacaai, Ikats, Jacquards, Phulakri, Surat Tanchoi.*

INTRODUCTION:

Handloom industry in India is an ancient cottage industry with a decentralized setup. The industry is an age old source of livelihood for millions of people in the country. About 10 million people directly depend on the industry to take out their livelihood, while many more millions of people depend upon subsidiary occupations connected with the handloom industry. The share of employment provided by the handloom industry in the total decentralized sector is about 5.5 percent. Thus, the industry constitutes one of the major sectors employing the largest number of persons next only to agriculture. With regard to production, this industry is meeting one-third of the total cloth requirements of the masses in the country.

In the world of handlooms there are Madras checks form Tamil Nadu, Ikats form Andhra and Orissa, Tie and Dye form Gujarat and Rajasthan; Brocades form Banaras, Jacquards from Uttar Pradesh. Dacaai form West Bengal and Phulakri from Punjab. Yet despite this regional distinction there has been a great deal of technical and stylistic exchange. The Surat Tanchoi based on a technique of satin weaving with the extra weft floats that are absorbed in the fabric itself has been reproduced in Varanasi.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HANDLOOM INDUSTRY:

Essential characteristics of the handloom industry are described below:

A. EXTREMELY DIVERSIFIED:

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. These are independent weavers, weavers organized into co-operatives and those working under master weavers. While a few areas may be characterized by pen clear-cut mode of production, a combination of types and a multiplicity of relations of production are usually found elsewhere. 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 skills and, being mobile, could shift from one production base to another.

B. DECENTRALIZED:

It is decentralized, located both in rural and urban centers. 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 was 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 karkhanaws or weaving 'factories', but by and large, unlike the highly centralized mill sector, handloom weaving today continues to be dispersed and decentralized in nature.

C. LARGELY HOME BASED:

It is 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 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.

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 a centralized structure that has been unable to reach out to the inherently decentralized nature of the industry.

D. WORKING PEOPLE IN THE HANDLOOMS:

Handloom weaving is a hereditary occupation, and the weaving cannot be done by a single man, it requires collective work. The entire work from pre-weaving process to weaving of the cloth is shared by different members of the family, including women and children. The involvement of men, women and children varied from process to process, but the final act of weaving is carried out mostly by the men bulk. Generally the pre-weaving processes are mostly done by the women and children. The children help their parents during the work and learn various techniques of the profession. There is no formal training for the weavers. Because of this, the skill of the weaver is mostly traditional in nature, and they use only primitive technology.

E. LOCATION OF INDUSTRIES:

Handloom weaving is generally carried on inside the house of weavers. Very often, there are inadequate facilities to carry all the activities related to weaving. In addition, all the handloom establishments are concentrated mostly in rural and semi-urban areas. The physical capacity of the weaver to work is sometimes influenced by the location. As the weaving takes place in the house, family disturbances disturb their work and productivity.

SECTOR-WISE PROFILE OF THE COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY:

Indian Cotton Textiles Industry can be broadly divided into two sectors namely Mill sector and Decentralized sector. The Decentralized sector can further be classified into two sectors, Handloom and Power loom. The Handloom industry is spread to all the regions in the country.

Table I.1 exhibits the sector-wise profile of the cotton Textile Industry of India during 2009-10. It is evident from the table that about Rs. 2,500 crores has been invested in the cotton textile industry in India by the end of 2009-10. The Handloom sector with Rs. 400 crores investment and twenty million workers produced 4,040 million metres of cloth. The Power loom sector with the amount of capital 200 crores of rupees and employment of five million workers produced 2,638 million meters of cloth, while the mill sector with a huge amount of capital investment or Rs. 1,900 crores could create employment to only ten million people and produced 6,223 million meters of cloth. On the basis of the above figures, if we work out the average capital investment per worker and the average capital per unit or output, in the case of handloom sector they come to Rs. 200 millions and Rs. 0.99 respectively.

Table I.1
Sector-wise Profile of Cotton Textile Industry of India

Name of the Sector	Investment (Rs. In millions)	Employmen t (in millions)	Output (in million metres)	Average capital per worker Rs.	Average Capital per unit of output Rs.
Handloom	400	20	4,040	200	0.99
Power loom	200	5	2,638	400	0.75
Mill	1,900	10	6,223	1900	3.05
Total	**2,500**	**30**	**12,901**	**2500**	**4.79**

Source: Centre for Handloom Information and Policy Advocacy- 2010.

STATE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOMS:

Table I.2 shows the State-wise distribution of handlooms in India during. As it can be seen from the table, that Tamil Nadu ranks first followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam in the order on having the maximum number of looms. These five states account for 60 percent of the total handlooms, at present in the country.

Though the Handloom Industry has witnessed technological breakthrough of late, it is still much less compared to the progress made by the power looms. It is needless to say that the mill sector of the textile industry was well developed in all respects and sophisticated technology is being used in the production process.

Table I.2
State-wise Distribution of Handlooms

State Union Territory	No. of looms	Percentage to the Total
Andhra Pradesh	529,000	17.52
Assam	200,000	6.62
Bihar	100,000	3.31
Gujarat	20,000	0.66
Haryana	41,000	1.36
Himachal Pradesh	1,000	Neg.
Jammu & Kashmir	37,000	1.23
Karnataka	103,000	3.41
Kerala	95,000	3.15
Madya Pradesh	33,000	1.09
Maharastra	80,000	2.65
Manipur	100,000	3.31
Meghalaya	5,000	0.17
Nagaland	20,000	0.66
Orissa	105,000	3.48
Punjab	21,000	0.7
Rajastan	144,000	4.77
Sikkim	NA	-
Tamilnadu	556,000	18.41
Tripura	100,000	3.31
Uttar Pradesh	509,000	16.85
West Bengal	212,000	7.02
Andaman-Nicobar Islands	NA	-
Arunachal Pradesh	NA	-
Chandigarh	NA	-
Dadar&Nagar Haveli	NA	-
Delhi	5,000	0.17
Goa, Daman & Diu	NA	-
Mizoram	NA	-
Lakshdweep	NA	-
Pondichery	4,000	0.13
Total	**3,020,000**	**100**

Source: Report of Directorate of Handlooms and Textiles Andhra Pradesh, 2008.

SECTOR-WISE PRODUCTION OF COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY:

Table I.3 clearly shows the sector-wise cloth production in the country during 1998-99 to 2009-2010. The total cloth production has increased from 5,105 million meters to 39,202 million meters representing an increase of around 13 percent during the above period. It is interesting to note that the contribution of decentralized sector to the total production was extremely noteworthy. As it is evident, in 1998-99 the decentralized sector contributed only 27 percent to the total cloth production, whereas the contribution of mill sector has gone up to 73 percent. But in the year of 2009-10 the contribution of decentralized sector was increased up to 95 percent whereas the contribution of mill sector was 5 percent. A further insight the table clearly reveals that the share of the handlooms in the decentralized sector is overwhelming and its share in the total cloth production is almost 95 percent. From this, it can be inferred that this is depending to a large extent on handloom industry for its cloth requirements.

Thus, it is clear from the above analysis that the handloom industry is the most labour intensive and capital saving in the cotton textile industry in India. Hence, one can say that in Indian economy which is characterized by the abundance of labour and paucity of funds, there is an imperative need to protect and develop the handloom industry.

Table I.3
Sector-wise Production of Cotton Textile Industry

Year	**Mill**	**Handloom**	**Power -loom**	**Hosiery**	**Khadi, Wool & Skill**	**Total**
1998-99	3727(73.0)	742(14.5)	636*(12.5)		-	5105(100)
1999-00	5127(69.3)	1900(25.7)	375(5.0)		-	7402(100)
2000-01	4699(55.0)	2201(25.7)	1646(19.3)		-	8546(100)
2001-02	4533(36.4)	3109(25.0)	4802(38.6)		-	12444(100)
2002-03	3178(17.7)	4370(24.3)	10429(58.0)		-	17977(100)
2003-04	2902(14.2)	3993(19.6)	13123(64.4)		367(2.8)	20385(100)
2004-05	2589(11.0)	4295(18.4)	13348(57.2)	2696(11.6)	402(1.8)	23330(100)
2005-06	2000(7.9)	5219(20.5)	14644(57.5)	3182(12.5)	430(1.6)	25475(100)
2006-07	2271(7.9)	6180(21.6)	15976(56.0)	3748(13.0)	431(1.5)	28606(100)
2007-08	1957(5.6)	7456(21.4)	19532(55.5)	5533(16.0)	540(1.5)	34838(100)
2008-09	1785(4.9)	6792(18.8)	20689(57.3)	6277(17.4)	559(1.6)	36102(100)

2009-10	1714(4.4)	7352(18.75)	23187(59.1)	6374(16.25)	575(1.5)	39202(100)

Source: The cotton Handlooms of Andhra Pradesh, Sage Publications New Delhi.

GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS HANDLOOM INDUSTRY:

Like financial and fiscal policies which are decided every year by the Government of India, the textile policy is also being decided by the Government of India from time to time though not every year. The textile mills, power looms and handlooms carry on the manufacture of cloth for domestic consumption and export purpose, in pursuance of the policy. "This textile of the Government undergoes changes, not so frequently though, in order that the nation is properly clothed and also with a view to meet export objectives".

The new textile policy was announced by the Government of India in March 2001. An increasingly important role was given to the handloom sector in the policy. The main aim of the policy is to promote harmonious and balanced growth of all sectors of the textile industry. The textile policy 2001 has sought to achieve this most difficult task of laming the unauthorized power looms and thereby to enforce a number of disciplinary measures for the protection of handloom sector. The Government first time has taken a positive step of enforcing its Reservation policy by an Act of legislation to stop the power looms to make any encroachments on the territories of handloom sector. The policy handed over the responsibility to producing controlled cloth during seventh plan period to provide gainful employment to handloom weavers. The policy also made clear the firm commitment of the Government in the development of cooperative organization. The policy states that all developmental schemes will be through development of cooperatives of handloom weavers. For the first time emphasis has been made on modernization of handlooms, housing facilities and working sheds for the weavers, provision of Marketing infrastructure, etc.

CONCLUSION:

In recent years, handloom weavers have been facing crisis. While many analysts blame the government policies for this situation, there is no denial that there are other factors even. Fundamental among them is the improper response of the handloom sector to the modern and dynamic markets and the competition grew from mills and power looms. As a result, there are no policies or schemes which address such issues. Within the sector, no organization or platform has addressed such issues. The existence of Handloom sector must recognized by integrated textile policy. The Government of India has encouraged to the handloom sector by freezing the growth of looms in the mill sector. While dealing with the matters of expansion of weaving capacity in the mill sector, the need for harmonious and balanced growth of the different sectors has been kept in mind in formulating the textile policy. A policy of 'loom to loom' replacement in the interest of modernization and exports has followed by the Government.

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