

WELFARE SCHEMES OF THE HAND-LOOM WEAVERS IN TAMILNADU

Dr.A.Logu,
Assistant Professor in Economics,
Sethupathi Govt Arts College,
Ramanathapuram.
Tamil Nadu

Introduction

The Handloom Industry of India is essentially a traditional one. It is also a cottage industry in the best sense of the term, as the work is done largely in the home of the weaver himself. The loom just like the plough symbolizes the ethos of India. In fact, the handloom industry along with agriculture is the mainstay of our rural economy. The handloom textile is unique to mill made textiles and it has a very good glorious heritage, over the years. Handloom goods are no longer the choice of the poor alone, but a favorite of the elite in India and abroad. Next to agriculture the handloom industry accounts most of rural employment and income. It meets about a quarter of the clothing needs of the country. It is essentially a very big labour intensive and low capital industry. India is an agricultural country.

But, the age old handloom industry gets the second big occupation in the decentralized sector of the country with 3.8 million handlooms, with an average annual production of 2900 million metres of handloom cloth and this constitutes one third (1/3) of the country's total cloth production. Handloom assumes importance because it not only meets clothing needs of the people, but also gives expression to Indian art and culture, craftsmanship and heritage. The Handloom industry, the largest segment in the unorganized sector, plays a very important role in the country's economy. The traditional industry, known for excellence in workmanship and value addition the world over employs over seven million weavers and about four million looms. About 27 per cent of the total textile production in the country comes from the handloom sector. It is agro-based and highly labour-intensive. From very early period, this huge cottage industry was supported by the rulers and petty kings of the country and here lies the birth of co-operative movement of state support in its crude form. This is evident from the fact that even in the early centuries A.D. Indian navigators who sailed to various countries had been exporting locally produced fine variety handloom cloths only with the strong support of their petty kings and local rulers. The organization, production and the extensive use of handloom

products were supported by the local government for several centuries and these facts are referred to many a time by the old writers of the early centuries. Hand-loom cloth is obtained from cotton. Cotton fibres (yarn) are produced by cotton hand spinning wheels. Afterwards, these cotton fibres are dyed and woven by a handloom and thus handloom cloths are produced.

Origin and Development of Handloom Industry

Handloom industry is the most important and the largest one in India. Handloom weaving is in vogue from the ancient days and there is a large number of people who are still earning their living by it. The Indian handloom textile industry has an ancient lineage and was renowned since the Indus valley civilization of 3,000 years B.C. During the mogul period, among cottons the muslin of Ducca was the most famous. In silks, the choppahs, bandanas and corahs of murshidabad were particularly fine, and the woolen shawls of Kashmir and Amritsar were very popular in Europe, especially France during the mid-nineteenth century. As the handloom industry is an employment oriented industry today, it provides direct employment to about 100 lakh persons for their livelihood in the country in weaving and other connected activities of handloom. To provide effective support and protection to this sector, a coordinated national policy has been evolved by the Government of India through which it is hoped to restructure the living standard of the weaver. As the handloom weaver is at present poorly served in most of these respects, a massive national Handloom Development programme had been launched to ensure adequate and timely supply of yarn, dyes and chemicals at reasonable prices to the weavers and to rid of the feat that his product may not be sold. In India, handloom societies are concentrated in the small segment and are mainly concentrated in different parts of the country. On attaining independence, Government of India rightly recognized the important role that the industry can play well and a number of policy measures were formulated and executed to bring the industry on sound footing.

Major Hand-Loom Industries:

The handloom industry in India has a long tradition of excellence. The significance of handloom industries is undoubtedly recognized in view of the growing problems of unemployment and underemployment in our country. States like Andhrapradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharastra and Tamilnadu come in the list of major handloom cloth producing in India. But, it is found that among these states, Tamilnadu comes first in terms of its huge size, production, total exports and proportion of population depending on this industry and the vitality of the handloom industry to survive and grow. Tamil Nadu has weavers who have migrated from other states.

Many of these migrants are from Saurashtra and Andhrapradesh. Some of the Saurashtrians migrated more than 700 years ago. The Tamil Nadu weavers belong to the Mudaliar community. The Tamil Nadu Handloom weaver's Co-operative society limited popularly known as "Co-optex" was established in 1935 under co-operative societies act with the main objective of organizing and promoting the Handloom industry in Tamil Nadu on a commercial basis. In Tamilnadu, Erode district handloom societies occupy a prime position particularly handloom bed sheets are most popular in the southern parts of the country. Against this background, it will be worth understanding the performance of leading handloom societies. Tamil Nadu occupies the third position in the country with regard to the production of handloom cloth. During the year 2017-18, the approximate production of handloom cloth by the co-operative sector is about 136 million metres with regard to the productivity per loom, the average daily production works out to 4.8 metres per day per loom, as against the national average of 5.1 metres per day. There is a need to improve the productivity of the handlooms substantially. Tamil Nadu handloom industry produces a wide range of products meant for export man cent. Madras check lungies, Real Madras hand kerchieves, Kancheepuram silk sarees, terry towels, furnishing materials produced at Karur, Chennimalai areas are the product ranges being exported from Tamilnadu.

To increase the earning of the handloom weavers and to alleviate their poverty, the government has set up four co-operative intensive handloom development projects at Kancheepuram, Erode, Salem and Madurai and two export production projects at Karur and Kurinjipadi with all essential infrastructural facilities for production of handloom cloth. Tamilnadu ranks first in the country in the achievement of the co-operative coverage of handlooms. There are still poor loom less weavers working under the master weavers in the private sector. Government intends providing a package of assistance to these weavers in terms of share capital assistance and state participation in the weaver's co-operative societies.

Development of the Handloom Industry

Development of the Handloom industry on co-operative lines was the cardinal element in all the plans. Co-operation has the advantage of bringing freedom and opportunity of people with benefits of large scale management and organization. Co-operative societies are expected to perform functions of bulk purchase of raw material, raise capital by the issue of shares, procure finished goods from members and minced them on favourable terms. The first Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society was formed in 1905 after the co-operative societies Act had come into existence. From that time onwards, the number of weavers' co

operative societies have been increased. Co-operativisation of Handloom has been one of the major strategies of the government for bringing handloom weavers to an organized forum for production. It has been the policy of the state Government to Channelise all the government assistance to the handloom weavers through the weavers co-operatives. Organization of industrial weavers" co-operative societies has been one of the important schemes implemented by the state government for the welfare of the loomless weavers

Welfare Schemes:

Handloom Industry plays an important role in providing non-farm sector employment opportunities in the rural areas especially for the handloom weaver and the weaker sections of the society. The Central and state government have introduced various essential welfare schemes to give financial support, technical guidance, training, marketing assistance and Handloom basic facilities through co-operative societies. Some of the schemes of this nature are savings and security schemes, weavers family pension schemes, weavers old age pension scheme, Rebate scheme, Free distribution of cloth scheme, weavers house Cum work-shed scheme, Weavers Health Package Scheme, Handloom Development Centre and Quality Dyeing unit scheme, modernization of showroom, Namakku Namae Thittam, Swarna Jeyanthi Self-Employment Scheme, and Integrated Handloom Training Project. Such Handloom weaver's co-operative societies and their salient weaver's welfare schemes certainly need and promote the real socio-economic conditions of the weavers.

Savings and Security Scheme:

This is the first and foremost handloom weaver's welfare scheme which is launched by Government of Tamil Nadu for the benefit of poor and down trodden handloom weavers. The members who are admitted in this welfare scheme come in the age group of 18 to 60. The minimum share capital of each member should be Rs.100/- per year and also they should have completed more than one year in weaving services. Besides each weaver should also be expected to contribute 8 paise per rupee of his or her wages and the State and Central Governments would be also contributing each handloom weaver. Further, the above total amount is deposited in the Government Treasury by the handloom weavers co-operative societies, which earns 7% of interest on behalf of the weavers. Later in the event of death of this welfare scheme member, before he/she attains the age of 60, his/her nominee will be eligible to receive the member's contribution and Central and State Governments subsidy with interest and, if the weaver member is alive till the maturity age of 60, he will get emolument amount with all benefits.

Family Pension Scheme:

This is the second important and big weaver welfare scheme which was introduced by the Government of Tamilnadu, through its handloom co-operative societies for the improvement of the welfare conditions of the poverty ridden handloom weavers. This weaver welfare scheme was introduced in 01.01.1992 under the auspices of the launching of latest handloom weavers family pension scheme. According to this handloom weaver, welfare scheme, in the event of death of the handloom weaver member before attaining the 60 years of age, his/her nominee will be eligible for the payment of family pension of Rs.350/- per month for a period of 10 years from the date of the members death. Generally, the better-half will be availing this welfare benefits for her future survival.

Old Age Pension Scheme:

Another important weaver's welfare scheme of Government of Tamilnadu is the weaver's old age pension scheme and it was introduced and implemented from 01.04.1997. The special feature of this weavers old age pension scheme is that a handloom weaver member who attains the age of 60 years would be eligible to receive a sum of Rs.200/- per month as old age pension till his life time apart from the amount he receives from the previous pension scheme under the new welfare scheme 705 weaver members are receiving old age pension under this scheme up to 28.2.2007. This is clearly noted from the Annual reports of the office of the Assistant Director of Handlooms and Textiles.

Subsidy Welfare Scheme

In order to promote sales and marketing condition of handloom cloth at competitive rates, The Government of Tamilnadu Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies every year offer a highly attractive Rebate subsidy to customers, throughout the year. Accordingly 20% Rebate was sanctioned for the last 3 years. This shows that the handloom industry has revived in terms of total production and sale of handloom cloth, in real term. The related analysis, outcome and explanations are given below.

Health Package Welfare Scheme:

The next important handloom weaver welfare scheme is the Health Package welfare scheme and it is introduced by the Government of Tamilnadu in the year 1996 under this welfare scheme, lot of financial assistance in the form of medical reimbursement is provided to handloom weavers for medical treatment of diseases like T.B, Asthma, Eye checkup and supply of spectacles, compensation for sterilization and maternity benefit for women for the first two issues. Further, an amount of Rs.35, 000/- is sanctioned for Bore well for

drinking water for the benefit of weavers in a place where a minimum of 50 handloom weavers families are residing.

Hand-Loom Development Centre:

With a view to provide complete package to all the member handloom weavers in the various handloom co-operative societies, the Government of India has introduced a new welfare scheme called the Handloom Development Centre and Quality Dyeing unit welfare scheme. This scheme was introduced in the year 1994 with an initial capital of Rs.39 lakhs and till date more than Rs.1crore has been spent on this highly significant and useful welfare scheme. This is also not worthy to see that more than 12 Handloom development centres and 3 quality Dyeing units were established in various leading weaving centres.

Show-Room Welfare Scheme:

Another very important and attractive handloom weaver welfare scheme which was launched by the Government of Tamilnadu to boost up the real welfare condition of poor and helpless handloom weaves of Tamilnadu is the modernization of showroom welfare scheme. The technical term which is commonly used about the handloom showroom is called by the Government of Tamilnadu is Co-optex the Co stands for co-operative handloom societies and 'Optex' denotes the sale units. The main objective of this new welfare scheme is to attract the exciting customers and new customers to capture a wider market for the handloom clothes to set more financial assistance and also to remove renovate, decreasing and providing Air-conditions to old and new Co-op tex marketing show rooms.

Namakku Namae Welfare Scheme

Another important and very recent handloom weaver's welfare scheme, introduced by Government of Tamilnadu by 2000-01 is 'Namakku Namae Thittam'. This means that Government is expecting the handloom weavers to help themselves and their neighbours handloom weavers. The main motto behind this paramount important welfare scheme is that the Government of Tamilnadu expect the day, in which every handloom weavers stands by his own leg and without the support of anybody else. In this period his/her standard of living could be kept par with the standard of living of any other Indian who belong to middle income group or high income group. This scheme clearly envisages that each and every primary handloom co-operative weaver society should have its own Godown, dying units, and sale units and the needed financial assistances by themselves. But, all basic external assistances will be met by Government of Tamil Nadu and Central Co-operative bank.

Swarna Jayanthi Self-Employment Scheme:

This is an Ultra modern handloom weaver welfare scheme which was introduced by Government of India. The Swarna Jayanthi Rural Self employment scheme is mainly contracted on the production and sale of low cost sarees, dhothies to be made in market friendly in order to woo more customers to buy handloom products in the open market. This new welfare scheme is formulated with a lofty intention of providing better chances to all the poor handloom weavers of the nation in the huge textile industry. Therefore, suitable training, new productive work sheds, design development, department new production technology of upgradation of handloom cloth, construction of better infrastructure development and similar other handloom welfare measures are included in this welfare scheme. Under this new welfare scheme by 2006, 1963 handloom weavers were given modern weaving training and 1222 handlooms have been provided to the newly trained weavers. Because of this scheme the handloom weavers are producing high quality cloth and they are earning high rate of income.

Hand-Loom Training Project Welfare Scheme:

The last but not the least handloom weaver welfare scheme was recently introduced by Government of Tamilnadu with a creative idea of providing an effective weaving training to the poor handloom weavers of Tamilnadu. This new welfare scheme was introduced in 1995 for upgrading the productive skills of Weavers in the Handloom Sector who were hardly hit by the keen competition given by Power-loom sector and Mill sector. Under this training scheme the handloom weavers are given training and new work model to become highly trained to operate the new, superior and highly sophisticated handloom equipment. This will enable the handloom weavers to produce handloom cloth at cheaper with diversities range of variety and high quality products. This modern Training scheme is made to keep in mind the current trends that are very fast happening in the domestic and inter-material market. This will naturally improve the working and sale condition of all the handloom co-operative societies on the one hand and make the handloom weavers confident and productive on the other hand. Government of Tamilnadu continues this training programme and is extending this new welfare scheme to the selected handloom weavers as

Conclusion:

The inherent weaknesses of the handloom industry like weak organization of handloom co-operatives, inadequate credit from financial institutions, inadequate and poor infrastructure have made it more vulnerable to competitions from the organized mills and the decentralized Power looms sector. The steep increase in

cotton yarn prices, heaps of unsold stock, delayed payments to primary societies by the Apex societies and the poor marketing conditions have further deteriorated weaver's conditions. Traditionally Hand-loom weavers are working under the Master weavers for daily wages. These dependent weavers do not have their own looms and are under the clutches of Master Weavers. The additional cloth requirements were to be met mainly by the handlooms. One of the major problems faced by the handlooms is the inadequate supply of yarn in hank form. Another major problem of the industry is marketing. There is no clear mechanism to transfer market intelligence to handloom weavers. Technological backwardness is another problem confronting the industry. Another major problem of handloom co-operatives is high cost of production. The competition from Power looms is another serious problem afflicting the handlooms of the different areas. Even though the handloom industry has a long heritage, traditional value and political power in deciding the ruling political party in the region, it is really a mystery to note that the real handloom weavers of the district have a very low living standard. Their social and economic conditions are at a very poor condition. The Central and State Governments should come forward to impart more and more money on a continuous basis to activate all the productive and welfare programmers of the handloom weaver societies.

REFERENCE

- Ahuja, H.L. *Advanced Economic Theory*, (Micro Economic Analysis) New Delhi-2006.
- Aier, M.R. *Economics of Textile Trade and Industry in India*, Bombay, 1977.
- Bhattacharya.S.N. *Role of Indian Rural Institutions in Economic Growth*, New Delhi, 1985.
- Dantwala, M.N., *Helping hand to Handlooms*, The Tamil Nadu Journal of Co-operation, Vol.82, No.3, June 1990.
- Elleanor, M.H, *The Co-operative Movement in India*, London, 1966.
- Francis Cherunilam, *Rural Industrialisation, Challenges and perspectives*, New Delhi, 1989.
- Jain, C.P *Industry and labour in India*, Allhabad, 1969.
- Mahapatro, P.C. *Economics of Cotton Handloom industry in India*, New Delhi 1986.
- Mukerjee, K.P. *India planning commission study of Handloom Development programme*, New Delhi, 1967.
- Nagen C. Das, *Development of Handloom Industry*, New Delhi, 1996.
- Nambiar, A.C.K. *Handloom Industry in India*, New Delhi, 1996.
- Shah, U.M. *Co-operative Development, Progress and Trends*, The Tamil Nadu Journal of Co-operation, Vol.87, No.8, November 1995.
- Shashibala, *Management of small scale industries*, New Delhi 1984.
- Shunmugan L.D. *Handloom weavers Co-operative societies in Tamil Nadu*, Madras, 1976.
- Sundaram and Dutt, *Indian Economy*, New Delhi 1980.