

## A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS

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### ABSTRACT

*Handloom industry occupies an eminent place in preserving country's heritage and culture, and hence plays a vital role in the economy of the country. Production in the handloom sector recorded a figure of 6900 million sq. meters in the year 2011-12, which is about 25 per cent over the production figure of 5493 million sq. meters recorded in the year 2003-04. As an economic activity, handloom sector occupies a place second only to agriculture in terms of employment. The sector with about 23.77 lakh handlooms provides employment to 43.31 lakh persons of whom, 77.9 per cent are women, and 28 per cent belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Handloom sector contributes nearly 15 per cent of the cloth production in the country and also contributes to the export earnings as 95 per cent of the world's handwoven fabric comes from India. However, this sector is faced with various problems, such as, obsolete technology, unorganised production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, and weak marketing links. Further, handloom sector has always been a weak competitor against powerloom and mill sectors. Against this backdrop, the present work attempts to make an indepth study into the life and misery of handloom households. It covers households located in select prominent areas of this sector.*

### Introduction

The objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers working in the sample area of Guntur district. The study emphasises the issues covering gender, age composition, social grouping and educational levels, annual income and per capita income of the respondents, expenditure pattern of the weavers, category of assets owned by the weavers, indebtedness, organisational support for financial assistance and possession of ration cards of the selected weavers. The need for yet another study is felt only to highlight the fact that there has been no much change in the social and economic well-being of the handloom workers in spite of several initiatives and measures.

### Study Area and Sample Selection

Guntur district is one of the districts having significant number of weaving population in Andhra Pradesh. The district occupies fifth place in terms of number of weaving population and fourth place in terms of number of cooperative societies. It is also a fact that many of the prominent weaving centres like Addepalli, Bhattiprolu, Mangalagiri, Ilavaram, Repalle, Nidubrolu, Sattenapalli, Tenali, Phirangipuram and Chebrolu are located in this district. Against this backdrop, Guntur district was chosen purposefully for the present study and it intends to focus on the socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers, drawing a sample from the major production centres in the district.

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As per the official records of Assistant Director of Handlooms (2012), in Guntur district handloom weavers are found in 34 Mandals only. A two-stage stratified random sampling technique has been employed for the selection of sample weavers. At the first stage, 13 Mandals out of 34 Mandals were excluded from purview of the present study, since they have weaver households below 100. Thus, 21 Mandals were shortlisted for the present study. At the second stage, 5 per cent of the weaver households were selected for the survey from each of the 21 Mandals. Details of the sample selection are given in Table 1.

Out of 629 sample weavers, 68 (11 per cent) weavers are independent weavers, 454

(72 per cent) weavers are working for master weavers and 107 (17 per cent) weavers are working as members of the cooperative societies. In pursuance of the objectives set for the study, primary and secondary methods were used for data collection. Primary data were collected from the selected sample of weaver households in the selected Mandals, with the help of a schedule. Data collected from various sources were analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Simple statistical techniques like tabulation, averages, percentages and Chi-square test were employed to analyse the collected data.

**Table 1: Particulars of Sample Selection**

S. No.	Name of the Mandal	No. of Weaver Households	Sample Size( i. e. 5 per cent)
1.	Mangalagiri	5,914	296
2.	Bhattiprolu	1,426	71
3.	Repalle	994	50
4.	Cherukupalli	844	42
5.	Ponnuru	436	22
6.	Tenali Urban	434	21
7.	Sattenapalli	379	19
8.	Chebrolu	314	16
9.	Chilakaluripet	305	15
10.	Phirangipuram	212	10
11.	Nekarikallu	200	10
12.	Guntur Urban	179	9
13.	Durgi	128	6
14.	Tsundur	125	6
15.	Ipur	125	6
16.	Tadikonda	114	5
17.	Pedakurapadu	113	5
18.	Nadendla	106	5
19.	Prattipadu	103	5
20.	Machavaram	100	5
21.	Piduguralla	100	5
	Total	12,651	629

**Age-wise Distribution of Sample Weavers:** Age is one of the important social factors which influences social, economic and demographic situation of any country. Age is an achieved characteristic in the life cycle of a human being. The position in a family or society or group and

performance of certain activities and also achieving some other aspects of life in the human life cycle are determined by age. The young age distribution of a population reveals higher rate of growth of population in the country.

**Table 2: Distribution of Handloom Weaver Households by Age Groups**

Age Group		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
18 - 35 years	Count	7	49	10	66
	Row %	10.6%	74.2%	15.2%	
	Column %	10.3%	10.8%	9.3%	
36 - 45 years	Count	28	112	36	176
	Row %	15.9%	63.6%	20.5%	
	Column %	41.2%	24.7%	33.6%	
46 - 60 years	Count	22	185	52	259
	Row %	8.5%	71.4%	20.1%	
	Column %	32.4%	40.7%	48.6%	
Above 60 years	Count	11	108	9	128
	Row %	8.6%	84.4%	7.0%	
	Column %	16.2%	23.8%	8.4%	
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 20.865, df: 6, Level of Significance: 0.002\*\*

It is clearly evident that weaving does not appear to be a preferred choice for the youth below the age group of 18 years (see Table 2). Similarly, the percentage of respondents in the age group of 18-35 years is only 10.5 as against the national average of 49.1. Similar trend could also be observed in respect of persons in the age group of 36-45 years. Perhaps, this could be an indication for the migration of people from weaving to other activities. The number of

people entering weaving profession after they cross 18 years is also very low. Another startling revelation is that the number of people engaged in weaving after the age of 60 years is significant. Around 20 per cent of the sample weavers above the age of 60 years are still forced to continue in the occupation for making a living without retirement. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between age group and weavers.

**Gender-wise Distribution of Sample Weavers:** Gender is another important social dimension among handloom weavers. Distribution pattern of population between males and females affects their relative and economic relations. Weaving is one of the activities which has scope for women participation. Distribution of handloom workers by gender in the present study is dominated by the presence of males. The ratio between males and females stood at 82:18.

**Social Grouping:** Indian society is broadly divided into different communities such as OCs, BCs, SCs and STs. Traditions and customs depend upon the community which in turn influence the social fabric. Caste is an important social variable, especially in the present day Indian context. Communities are broadly sub-divided into various sub-castes and people are grouped as per the caste criteria.

**Table 3: Distribution of Handloom Weaver Households by Social Groups**

Social Class		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
Scheduled Caste (SCs)	Count	4	7	8	19
	Row %	21.1%	36.8%	42.1%	100.0%
	Column %	5.9%	1.5%	7.5%	3.0%
Backward Caste (BC)	Count	64	447	99	610
	Row %	10.5%	73.3%	16.2%	100.0%
	Column %	94.1%	98.5%	92.5%	97.0%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 12.543, df: 2, Level of Significance: 0.002\*\*

Distribution of workers by caste in the present study reveals that 97 per cent of the weavers belong to backward caste, followed by scheduled caste (3 per cent) (see Table 3). The study area is dominated by the backward caste weavers, viz. Padmasali, Devanga, Puttusali, etc. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between social class and weavers.

**Religion:** In India, religion plays an important role in the social structure and people are influenced by religion to a great extent. Every religion has

its own norms and customs, which in turn influence the social fabric of the society. It is evident from the present study that the weavers who belong to the Hindu religion constituted 98.3 per cent, followed by Christians to the extent of 1.7 per cent. There are no persons belonging to other religions in the study area.

**Educational Background of Weavers:** Literacy is one of the important social variables that influences both social and economic development of a country. Education is considered the inner capability of man that

guides him continuously at various levels. Education is the process which leaves an impact upon the mind, character and moral strength and plays a vital role in the human development.

The survey conducted for the present study indicates that 18.3 per cent of the sample weavers are illiterates (see Table 4). Most of the sample weavers i.e., 70.7 per cent have education up to primary level and only 11 per cent of them have education up to secondary level. Weavers under cooperative set up are educationally in a better position compared to independent weavers and weavers under master weavers. The study clearly shows that none of

the weavers had college education in the entire sample. The growth of the handloom industry depends on the education of weavers to a certain extent. The poor education background of sample weavers does not help them to understand about the modernisation plans and Government policies. There is a general feeling that the benefits of different schemes introduced for the development of handloom industry and welfare of weavers are grabbed by middlemen because of their better education. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between level of education and weavers.

**Table 4: Distribution of Handloom Weaver Households by Level of Education**

Level of Education		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
Primary Education	Count	53	300	92	445
	Row %	11.9%	67.4%	20.7%	100.0%
	Column %	77.9%	66.1%	86.0%	70.7%
Secondary Education	Count	5	54	10	69
	Row %	7.2%	78.3%	14.5%	100.0%
	Column %	7.4%	11.9%	9.3%	11.0%
Illiterate	Count	10	100	5	115
	Row %	8.7%	87.0%	4.3%	100.0%
	Column %	14.7%	22.0%	4.7%	18.3%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 21.624, df: 4, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

**Education Levels of Children of Sample Weavers:** Social status of individuals can also be understood from the opportunity available to provide good education to their children. An attempt has been made to find out the education levels of children of the respondents. It is

unfortunate to note that of the 629 respondents, 70 per cent of respondents' children are not going to any school. The percentage of children that completed at least school final stood at only 8.9 and those that entered the portals of University are about 5.7 per cent. However, the

study area is educationally prominent in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless, the schemes introduced by both the Central and State Governments like Education for All, Education Guarantee Scheme, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, etc., are not touching the lives of the people involved in the handloom sector. It is also important to note that the provisions of Right to Education are also not able to improve the level of education of the sample weavers. This is mainly due to the innocence and poor educational background of the selected weavers.

**Type and Size of Weavers' Family :** In Indian society, families are broadly grouped into nuclear, joint and extended joint families. By tradition, joint family and extended joint families are more popular in the society. Whereas nuclear family system is widely prevalent in the present society and are mainly found in the urban areas. Slowly, this trend is also extending to the rural areas.

Type and size of the family are important issues in the study of social conditions of any group of respondents. Nuclear families have turned out to be the general social norm. The same situation is also found among the respondents. Of the total, 85.9 per cent of the respondents are organised as nuclear families, thus devoid of the elderly care and advice. The respondents in the study area felt that the joint families get more earnings than the nuclear families, since weaving is a group activity.

Size of the family is also an important factor in terms of economic status and extent of help available for carrying out handloom operations. Though the respondents are maintaining nuclear families, the size of the family is larger, up to six members. However, majority of the respondents have only up to three members as their family size.

**Number of Dependents :** A family in general consists of head, wife, children, other kith and

kin some of whom may be earning. Attempt has been made to study the number of dependents of the respondents. For the purpose of this study, 'dependent' is considered as one who completely depends on the earnings of the head of the family.

The survey on this aspect revealed that the number of dependents for each respondent varied. Out of the sample, majority of respondents (representing 29.9 per cent) have three dependents, followed by 28.1 per cent who have two dependents. Only 4.9 per cent of the respondents did not have any dependent. There are, in total, 598 dependents and average number of dependents is 2.49. It can be concluded that majority of the weavers have a considerable number of dependents, less than the national average of 4.59.

**Migratory Character:** Migration is an important feature of human civilization. It reflects human endeavour to survive in the most testing conditions, both natural and man-made. Migration in India is mostly influenced by social structures and pattern of development. Uneven development is the main cause of migration. The landless poor who mostly belong to lower castes, indigenous communities and economically backward regions constitute the major portion of migrants.

The weaving community in Guntur district cannot escape from the phenomenon of migration. It is evident from the particulars of migration among the respondents that out of 629 sample handloom households, 386 respondents (61 per cent) migrated from the other mandals and districts. It is to be noted that out of 386 migrated families, 47 weavers are independent weavers, 306 weavers are working under master weavers and remaining 33 are weavers under societies.

About 28 per cent of the migrants came to the present place of work, around 20 years ago. About 28 per cent of the respondents migrated between 20 and 40 years. Majority of

the migrants i.e. 35 per cent came to Guntur district long ago, beyond 40 – 60 years. Another 9 per cent of the weavers migrated to the present place around 60 years back. It is concluded that the weavers under master weavers mainly migrated from one handloom centre to another handloom centre, where they expect to get adequate work throughout the year and payment of higher rates of wage.

**Occupational Diseases of the Handloom Weavers :** The best wealth of a man is health. Good health can be defined as the state of well-being where a person is free from all kinds of physical or mental illness. It is the most precious possession of a man. Better health is one of the prerequisites for improved productivity and production. The better the health of the individual, the better will be his productive capacity. It is too common for handloom weavers to suffer from a variety of occupational health hazards and these problems become severe and acute, as they become aged. Occupational diseases are induced by prolonged work, excessive physical exertion, association of psychological stress in work, harmful factors inherent in materials used by the weavers, and working in poor ventilated and illuminated conditions. Some of the health hazards associated with handloom workers include : eye sight, early cataract, loss of vision for the work, high or low blood pressure, heart problem, damage of lungs, filaria, arthritis and musculo-skeletal disorder,

The other important serious health hazards akin to handloom weavers are those related to malnourishment. This is largely evident by their disproportionate body structure, under-weight, loss of hair and anemia. The aging process among the handloom weavers appears to be very rapid. A majority of them appear much older than their age due to continuous movement of the body in their weaving activity.

It is true that the sample weavers are suffering from more than one type of disease.

But to highlight the incidence of particular disease all of them are put together. Details given in Table 5 reveal that majority of the respondents (31.3 per cent) are suffering from anemia and a significant percentage of workers also have been suffering from occupational diseases. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between type of disease and weavers.

**Health Conditions of Children of Handloom Weavers :** A startling fact is that majority of the children of handloom weavers are found to be malnourished, leading to under-weight and serious stunting – meaning their height is much lower for their age. An attempt has been made to find out the health conditions of children of the respondents. It is unfortunate to note that of the 629 respondents, children of 68 per cent respondents are suffering from the problem of malnourishment and stunting. The low income level of the weavers is considered as the main reason and that they are unable to spend enough amount for providing nutritional food to their children.

**Exposure of Health Insurance :** Health insurance is a mechanism by which a person protects himself from financial loss caused due to accident and/or disability. The Government of India is providing a Health Insurance Scheme for weavers for providing access to healthcare facilities for all diseases through ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited. In the study area, out of the 629 sample weavers, only 31 per cent of the weavers have joined the health insurance schemes. The remaining respondents are unable to undergo any health insurance scheme due to lack of awareness and savings.

**Exposure of Life Insurance :** The study reveals that out of 629 sample weavers, 175 weavers have joined in Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bheema Yojana (MGBBY) scheme being implemented for providing life insurance coverage to the handloom weavers which worked out to only 27.8 per cent and the remaining (72.2 per cent)

**Table 5: Details of Health Conditions of the Sample Weavers**

Type of Disease	Category of Weavers				Total
	Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies		
Anemia	Count	17	166	14	197
	Row %	8.6%	84.3%	7.1%	100.0%
	Column %	25.0%	36.6%	13.1%	31.3%
Damage of Lungs	Count	12	87	22	121
	Row %	9.9%	71.9%	18.2%	100.0%
	Column %	17.6%	19.2%	20.6%	19.2%
Filaria	Count	23	125	28	176
	Row %	13.1%	71.0%	15.9%	100.0%
	Column %	33.8%	27.5%	26.2%	28.0%
Blood Pressure / Heart Problem	Count	7	38	4	49
	Row %	14.3%	77.6%	8.2%	100.0%
	Column %	10.3%	8.4%	3.7%	7.8%
Eye Problem	Count	0	14	13	27
	Row %	.0%	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	3.1%	12.1%	4.3%
Arthritis	Count	9	24	26	59
	Row %	15.3%	40.7%	44.1%	100.0%
	Column %	13.2%	5.3%	24.3%	9.4%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 74.820, df: 10, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

are not covered under this scheme. Among the three selected categories of the weavers, majority of the weavers working for societies have awareness about life insurance scheme and due to that 54 per cent of the society weavers joined in MGBBY scheme.

**Level of Poverty among the Weavers:** It is often believed that handloom work is mostly undertaken by economically weaker households, and they lack adequate financial resources. According to the Third National Handloom Census,\* 9.7 per cent of the handloom workers

\* The Third National Handloom Census was carried out by NCAER during 2010-11 and with a primary objective to assess the total number of units, looms and employment structure of both handlooms and non-handloom households engaged in handloom activities. The NCAER has been entrusted with the work of issuing of photo identity cards to all the eligible weavers and allied workers.

**Table 6: Distribution of Handloom Households by Type of Ration Cards**

Type of Ration Card		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWS	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
White card	Count	61	345	102	508
	Row %	12.0%	67.9%	20.1%	100.0%
	Column %	89.7%	76.0%	95.3%	80.8%
Pink card	Count	7	19	5	31
	Row %	22.6%	61.3%	16.1%	100.0%
	Column %	10.3%	4.2%	4.7%	4.9%
No Ration Card	Count	0	90	0	90
	Row %	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	19.8%	.0%	14.3%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 43.951, df: 4, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

belong to the poorest of the poor category due to holding of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) card and 36.9 per cent belong to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. About 34.5 per cent of the workers hold Above Poverty Line (APL) cards. It is likely that many households (18.9 per cent) belong to the 'no ration card' category. It is also noted that the majority of the BPL card holders are to be found in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Different colours are used for categorisation of the type of ration card. However, in the State of Andhra Pradesh, the colour of APL card is pink, for BPL card it is white and for AAY card it is blue. The study also revealed that about 80.8 per cent (see Table 6) of the respondents have white ration cards as they belong to the poor category and only 4.9 per cent of the weavers have pink ration cards.

About 14.3 per cent of the respondents do not have any card, since they are migrant weavers. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between type of ration cards and weavers.

**Services/Amenities Enjoyed by the Weavers:** It is gratifying to note that a majority of the respondents (91 per cent) have electricity connections. It is unfortunate to note that 9 per cent of the households still do not enjoy the minimum facility, even in the Independent India. Though majority of the respondents have electricity connection, their consumption levels are very low at less than 100 units a month including the household and occupational consumption.

Another measure of indication of better living enjoyed by the respondents is provision towards sanitation. It was noticed that about 83

per cent of the respondents have closets with adequate sanitation. The other respondents are forced to utilise the services of group facility or use open defecation.

According to the Census of India (2011), two-thirds of households continue to use firewood, crop residue, and cow dung cakes for cooking – putting women to significant health hazards and hardship. At present, the proportion of handloom households using cleaner fuels such as LPG and electricity have significantly decreased indicating worsening of financial status of the surveyed weaver households. Eighty three per cent of the weaver households have been using firewood, crop residue and cow dung as the cooking fuel. The rest of the households (17 per cent) are using LPG as the cooking fuel.

The study examined changing living conditions of the weaver community with regard to their food security and quality of food intake. The survey results pertaining to the intake of food present disturbing picture prevalent among the handloom weavers. It is unfortunate that majority (67 per cent) of them are able to take only two meals a day. The quality of food is also a matter of concern, because majority of them are eating rice provided by the Government under ₹1 per kg. scheme. This reveals the pathetic condition of the handloom weaver households. The physical feature of the weavers is weak, that majority of them are very lean and appear to be 'live-skeletons'.

Safe drinking water is paramount for healthy living. Article 47 of Constitution of India confers on the State for providing clean drinking water and improving public health standards. Since Independence, the Governments have been undertaking various programmes to provide safe drinking water to the masses.

Availability of safe drinking water and its use by the weaver households have been analysed. Among the 629 households surveyed, nearly 11 per cent reported having their own

dug-well/handpump supplying them water for drinking and other domestic purposes. Majority of respondents (72 per cent) belonging to the areas of Mangalagiri, Repalle, Bhattiprolu, Tenali, Guntur and Ponnuru are collecting drinking water from public handpumps/dug-wells installed in their areas by local authorities like Panchayats/ Municipalities. The scarcity of drinking water is felt relatively more particularly in summer season. About 11 per cent of the respondents reported that there is scarcity of drinking water in the areas of Sattenapalli, Chilakaluripet, Phirangipuram, Tsundur, Nekarikallu, Piduguralla and Machavaram and they are getting drinking water from a source located more than 400 metres away.

**Occupational Preferences of Weavers' Children** : Occupational preference of children of weavers is measured in terms of following aspects, viz., whether the sample weavers prefer their children to follow weaving, business, gold work, painting, carpentry and Government service.

The present study reveals that 38 per cent (see Table 7) of the respondents prefer gold work as an occupation for their children, 25.9 per cent of the weavers prefer Government service for their children and 19.2 per cent of the respondents would opt for business activity as an occupation for their children. Only 16.7 per cent of the respondents prefer to involve their children in the hereditary occupation of weaving. The weavers under cooperative societies are more conscious about higher education and they intend to put their children into Government service. But it is interesting to note that the independent weavers and the weavers under master weavers have less interest to put their children in their hereditary occupation and they have a strong feeling that the goldsmithy work will provide better livelihood to their children. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between occupational preference of children and weavers.

**Table 7: Details of Occupational Preferences of Children of Handloom Weaver Households**

Occupational Preference of Children		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
Weaving	Count	7	79	19	105
	Row%	6.7%	75.2%	18.1%	100.0%
	Column %	10.3%	17.4%	17.8%	16.7%
Business	Count	32	62	27	121
	Row%	26.4%	51.2%	22.3%	100.0%
	Column %	47.1%	13.7%	25.2%	19.2%
Govt. Service	Count	6	118	39	163
	Row%	3.7%	72.4%	23.9%	100.0%
	Column %	8.8%	26.0%	36.4%	25.9%
Gold work	Count	23	195	22	240
	Row%	9.6%	81.3%	9.2%	100.0%
	Column %	33.8%	43.0%	20.6%	38.2%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row%	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 62.589, df: 6, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

**Annual Income** : The income of the weaver families determines the standard of living and financial status. In the study area, all the weavers are dependent on weaving as their prime activity for their livelihood. According to the Third National Handloom Census, some of the States that reported higher than average annual handloom weaver household income are Arunachal Pradesh (₹ 58,761), Manipur (₹ 56,188) Nagaland (₹ 56,055), and Mizoram (₹ 44,079). Their handloom products are for domestic consumption for more than half of the households.

As per the Handloom Census, the average annual income of households in Andhra Pradesh is ₹ 30,054. It would be interesting to compare these averages with the position obtained from the sample weavers.

It is evident from the study that majority (76.3 per cent) of the weavers are earning below

₹ 50,000 per annum. In no case, the annual income has gone beyond ₹ 75,000. Category-wise, weavers working with cooperative societies appear to be having a slight edge over their counterparts.

The income has varied between the lowest of ₹ 25,000 and the highest of ₹ 1,00,000. Majority of the independent weavers (60.3 per cent), weavers working for master weavers (48.9 per cent) and weavers working for societies (66.4 per cent) are covered in the income group of ₹ 25,000 to ₹ 50,000. About 24.7 per cent (see Table 8) of respondents working under master weavers are in the income range between ₹ 50,000 and ₹ 75,000 and the same trend could also be noticed among the weavers under cooperative societies. A close look at the sample households shows that 53.7 per cent of the respondents fall under the income group of ₹ 25,000 to ₹ 50,000 per

**Table 8: Distribution of Handloom Weaver Households by Annual Income**

Range of Income		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
Below ₹ 25,000	Count	22	107	13	142
	Row %	15.5%	75.4%	9.2%	100.0%
	Column %	32.4%	23.6%	12.1%	22.6%
₹ 25,001 to 50,000	Count	41	226	71	338
	Row %	12.1%	66.9%	21.0%	100.0%
	Column %	60.3%	49.8%	66.4%	53.7%
₹ 50,001 to 75,000	Count	1	112	23	136
	Row %	.7%	82.4%	16.9%	100.0%
	Column %	1.5%	24.7%	21.5%	21.6%
₹ 75,001 to 1,00,000	Count	4	6	0	10
	Row %	40.0%	60.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Column %	5.9%	1.3%	.0%	1.6%
Above ₹ 1,00,000	Count	0	3	0	3
	Row %	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	.7%	.0%	.5%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 38.934, df: 8, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

annum. No weaver under cooperative societies is getting income above ₹ 75,000 per annum. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between annual income and weavers.

**Number of Working Days :** The number of working days available to the weavers in a month has been examined in terms of their income. It is found that majority of the weavers (90 per cent) got work for 21-30 days in a month. The annual income of the respondents who are working for more than 20 days in a month ranged from ₹ 25,000 to ₹ 75,000. The independent weavers and weavers working for master weavers have more number of working days, since they are provided with raw materials

regularly and their income is also considerably high. It can be also stated that the wage rates under master weavers are higher than in cooperative societies. This indicates that the weavers under cooperatives have to work for more days/hours than weavers working for master weavers for getting the same level of income.

**Number of Looms Owned by the Weavers:** The economic status of the weavers is also measured with the help of number of looms possessed. According to the Third National Handloom Census (2010), nearly 33 per cent of the handloom weaver households do not possess any loom. Hence, these households are engaged as hired workers in weaving activities

and their members have to go to other locations in search of weaving activity. The finding of the Third Handloom Census is that comparatively a high proportion of the loom-less households live in urban areas of India. In the present study also, 32.8 per cent of the respondents do not own any loom. Those who own single loom constituted 57.4 per cent.

Most of the weavers (17.6 per cent) with two looms are the independent weavers. Among the 68 independent weavers, 82.4 per cent of the weavers have only one loom and 17.6 per cent of weavers possess two looms. Of the 454 respondents working for master weavers, 60.8 per cent of them possess only one loom, 9.3 per cent possess two looms and 30 per cent do not possess any loom; hence, they are usually provided with looms by the master weavers in their sheds. Of the 107 respondents who come under cooperative weaving, 27.1 per cent of the respondents possess only one loom and 7.5 per cent of the respondents have two looms and even among

them 65.4 per cent of the respondents do not own any loom. They are conducting weaving activity on the looms provided by their respective cooperative societies.

**Type of Looms Employed :** Loom is the basic equipment employed for carrying out weaving activity. The economic implication of the loom is that the earning capacity varies depending on the type of loom employed. Also that not all types of looms are suitable for specific varieties of cloth production. Various types of looms employed are : Pit looms, Frame looms, Pedal looms, Loin looms and Semi-automatic looms.

According to the Third National Handloom Census (2010), of the total number (23.77 lakh) of looms, 58 per cent are the frame looms, 26 per cent are the pit looms, 13 per cent are the loin looms and the pedal looms and other kinds of looms constituted 1 and 2 per cent, respectively. Further, the pit looms are classified as throw-shuttle pit looms and fly-shuttle pit looms. The semi-automatic pedal looms are mainly found in Tamil Nadu, while loin looms are

**Table 9 : Distribution of Handloom Weaver Households by Type of Looms**

Type of loom		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWS	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
Throw-shuttle pit looms	Count	68	451	74	593
	Row %	11.5%	76.1%	12.5%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	99.3%	69.2%	94.3%
Frame looms	Count	0	0	33	33
	Row %	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	.0%	30.8%	5.2%
Semi-automatic looms	Count	0	3	0	3
	Row %	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	.7%	.0%	.5%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 170.778, df: 4, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

found only in the North-Eastern States. The handloom industry in Andhra Pradesh exhibits all the traditional characteristics. In terms of technology, 94 per cent of the looms in the State are pit looms and frame looms account for about 4 per cent. Pedal and other looms represent only 2 per cent.

Among the sample units, only one type of loom is found, i.e. fly-shuttle pit-loom. The number of fly-shuttle looms was found to be predominant. The independent weavers and weavers under master weavers are using fly-shuttle pit looms to weave polyester cloth, sarees and dress materials, whereas 30.8 per cent of the weavers working for cooperative societies are using frame looms to weave bed-sheets and towels (see Table 9). From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between type of looms and weavers.

It can be concluded that the independent weavers and weavers working under the control of either master weaver or the society were using only these fly-shuttle pit looms, though some weavers working under society were using frame looms; because weaving can be done more rapidly and convenient for producing wide variety of designed fabric and increase the rate of productivity.

**Type of Cloth Production:** According to the Third National Handloom Census (2010), the major fabrics produced on household looms are, the 'gamancha' (thin cotton towel) (40.4 per cent) and the 'mekhla - chadari' (38.5 per cent) which is a traditional Assamese dress. The State of Andhra Pradesh is also a saree producing State, where nearly 44.16 per cent of handloom households are engaged in saree production. Cotton is the yarn that is the basis of most handloom fabrics. Generally, a weaver can weave any item of cloth like sarees, dhotis, lungies, handkerchiefs and others. But most of the weavers have specialised and confined their activity to only one or two varieties depending upon consumer preferences and demand

existing in the market or due to instructions of master weavers and cooperative societies.

Of the 629 respondents, 63 per cent of them are engaged in the production of sarees followed by dress materials (26 per cent) and shirting (5 per cent). Sarees are mainly produced by the weavers working for master weavers followed by independent weavers. The weavers working for master weavers and cooperative societies are the main producers of fabrics of dress materials and shirting. Dhotis are mostly woven by the weavers working for cooperative societies.

The sample weavers produce different fabrics like sarees, dhotis, lungies, dress materials and shirting cloth by using different counts of cotton yarn, viz. 40s, 60s, 80s and 100s. The *sada* sarees with less zari and the *petu* sarees with zari borders and intricate designs are produced. In case of dress materials, there are two types of fabrics produced, with general boarder and Nizam boarder, using gold and silver coated zari. The handloom centres of Mangalagiri, Repalle, Peteru, Bhattiprolu and Ponnuru produce very distinctive fabrics like Nizam boarder dress materials and *petu* sarees, for which there has been a great demand at the all India level.

**Type of Dwelling Unit:** Housing is one of the basic needs of human beings, which constitutes the protective base for any individual and his family. The housing requirement will be more in case of weaving community. The weaving activity is usually carried out at their residence along with assistance of his/her family members. Further, tools needed for weaving also occupy a significant portion of the house. According to the Third National Handloom Census (2010), vast majority of the handloom households i.e. 85 per cent live in semi-pucca houses and only 15 per cent of the handloom households have pucca houses.

The present study presents a different picture altogether. As per the information collected through the survey, of the 629

respondents, 35.6 per cent are living in thatched houses, 21.6 per cent are living in tiled houses, 22.4 per cent are only living in pucca houses and the rest of 20.3 per cent of the respondents are living in RCC houses (see Table 10). In case of independent weavers, most of the respondents i.e. 55.9 per cent are living in pucca houses. 46.3 per cent of weavers under master

weavers live in thatched houses, whereas 44.5 per cent of the weavers under societies have RCC houses.

Independent weavers and weavers with cooperative societies are having better housing facilities than the weavers under master weavers. The Government of Andhra Pradesh is implementing various schemes for providing

**Table 10: Distribution of Handloom Weaver Households by Type of Dwelling Unit**

Type of Dwelling Unit		Category of Weavers			Total
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	
Thatched	Count	3	210	11	224
	Row %	1.3%	93.8%	4.9%	100.0%
	Column %	4.4%	46.3%	10.3%	35.6%
Tiled	Count	19	94	23	136
	Row %	14.0%	69.1%	16.9%	100.0%
	Column %	27.9%	20.7%	21.5%	21.6%
Pucca	Count	38	78	25	141
	Row %	27.0%	55.3%	17.7%	100.0%
	Column %	55.9%	17.2%	23.4%	22.4%
RCC	Count	8	72	48	128
	Row %	6.3%	56.3%	37.5%	100.0%
	Column %	11.8%	15.9%	44.9%	20.3%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 131.862, df: 6, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

housing facilities to the persons below poverty line. The Government with the assistance of the Government of India and also upon its own initiative is constructing small RCC houses with one/two rooms in a plinth area of about 60 to 80 yards and allotting them to the weavers. An attempt is also made to find out the ownership of the dwelling unit. From the chi-square results,

it is clear that there is significant relationship between type of dwelling unit and weavers.

As per the Third National Handloom Census, about 91 per cent of the dwelling units are owned by the handloom households and only 5 per cent of the units are rented. Of the 629 sample respondents, 56 per cent of them have their own houses and remaining 44 per

cent of do not have own houses, hence they are living in rented houses.

The rent paid by the respondents ranged from ₹ 250 to ₹ 500 per month and it is mainly based on the type of dwelling unit. In terms of their earnings, almost 20 per cent of respondent's income is paid for accommodation and the remaining is being spent on food and other items. One thing to be noted here is that the Government of Andhra Pradesh in association with the Government of India has taken up in a big scale the provision of housing facility to weaker sections. Under these schemes, dwelling units are being provided to a majority. Depending upon their income level, the percentage of contribution which the beneficiary has to pay varies. Of the 629 respondents, 99 (15 per cent) have secured houses under House-cum-Workshed scheme.

Thus, owning a house cannot be considered an indicator of sound economic status of the weavers. An attempt has been made to review the housing and environmental

situation prevailing among the respondents in the study area.

About 48.8 per cent of the weaver households reported that they have only two rooms in their houses. Nearly 10.2 per cent of the households surveyed possess houses having three rooms. Single room house is owned by nearly 37.2 per cent of the families. Among the different categories of weavers, the weavers under cooperatives have better housing conditions in terms of number of rooms.

**Category of Assets Owned by the Sample Weavers:** Type of assets owned by the sample weavers is regarded as an indicator of the economic status. The respondents were requested to declare different categories of assets owned by them such as dwelling units, number of looms, consumer durables and other appliances. Responses pertaining to dwelling units and number of looms were discussed separately.

All the weavers possessed both radios and bicycles. Fifty six per cent of the respondents

**Table 11: Details of Average Expenditure Pattern of Selected Handloom Weaver Households**

Item of Expenditure	Category of Weavers				Total
	Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWS	Weavers under Cooperative Societies		
1. Food	983 (54)	854 (52)	996 (57)	944 (55)	
2. Clothing	182 (10)	148 (9)	163 (9)	164 (9)	
3. Children's Education	201 (11)	129 (8)	185 (10)	172 (10)	
4. Health	146 (8)	105 (7)	129 (7)	127 (7)	
5. Rent	55 (3)	135 (8)	68 (4)	86 (5)	
6. Interest	92 (5)	83 (5)	75 (5)	83 (5)	
7. Electricity and Telephone	73 (4)	66 (4)	54 (3)	64 (3)	
8. Other Expenses (incl. personal expenses)	87 (5)	111 (7)	77 (5)	92 (6)	
9. Total Monthly Expenditure	1819(100)	1631(100)	1747 (100)	1732(100)	
10. Average Monthly Income	2065	1752	1934	1917	
11. Surplus(+)/Deficit (-)	+ 246	+121	+187	+185	

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to total.

owned television sets and 20 per cent of the weavers have refrigerators, whereas the possession of other home appliances like air cooler or fan and mixi or grinder constituted 25 and 34 per cent, respectively. About 44 per cent of the respondents have motor cycle. It is evident from the data that the sample weavers possessed very few assets that are worth mentioning.

**Expenditure Pattern:** With a view to finding out the standard of living, information pertaining to the monthly household expenditure on important items was obtained. The expenditure pattern of the respondents on food, clothing, children's education, health, rent, interest paid on borrowings, electricity and telephone facilities and other expenses per month are presented in Table 11.

Of the total income, each household is spending about 55 per cent on food, 10 per cent on children's education, 9 per cent on clothing, 7 per cent on health care, 6 per cent on other expenses, and 5 per cent of expenditure on rent and as well as towards interest on borrowings. Regardless of the type of households, half of their income is spent on food. It is very interesting to note that the cloth producer (weaver) himself buys cloth from others for his domestic needs. This is mainly due to the fact that certain varieties required for self and family members are not produced by them.

A deeper look into the Table 11 reveals that the independent weavers have an aspiration to employ their children in public or private sector establishments. Therefore, the expenditure incurred on children's education by the independent weavers is more than that of other categories of weavers. Unlike the general public, the expenditure of weavers on health care is a regular phenomenon due to the strain caused by constant sitting into pit at the time of work and their poor economic conditions do not allow them to take proper health care facilities. As a result, about 90 per cent of the selected weavers are suffering from professional health problems like asthma, TB, poor eye sight, hernia and anemia.

The expenditure on rent and other expenses incurred by the weavers working for master weavers is more than that of other categories of weavers as most of the weaver households (44 per cent) are living in rented houses and the weavers generally are habituated to drinking liquor and smoking.

A comparison between income and expenditure of different types of weaver households shows that the independent weavers and weavers working for cooperatives are able to save some income than the weavers working for master weavers. Chit Funds and Post Office were the only institutions with which the respondents made their savings. All categories of weaver households are spending equal percentage of amounts on interest and electricity and telephone expenses.

**Indebtedness and Purpose for Taking Loans:** Indebtedness is one of the biggest and most serious problems of Indian economy. It means an obligation to pay money to another party. In India, poor farmers, agricultural labour, construction labour, weavers, allied workers, etc., are unable to repay a loan and it leads to the problem of indebtedness.

Turning our attention to the sample weavers, 84 per cent of them have some borrowings and it is only in case of 16 per cent that there are no borrowings. The amount of borrowings varied from ₹ 5,000 to ₹ 10,000. About 57.6 per cent of the respondents have borrowed very small amounts of less than ₹ 5,000. Still the repayment of even this small amount is becoming very difficult for the select weavers.

An attempt has been made to analyse the various sources of credit available to the weavers in the study. It is very interesting that the independent weavers, apart from their own funds, are mainly borrowing funds for productive purposes such as acquisition of loom, construction and maintenance of loom and sheds for weaving and other allied activities. The

weavers working for master weavers and cooperatives are taking loans for the purposes of household expenses, viz. children's education, children's marriage/ family expenses, repayment of old debts, acquiring of assets etc.

It is evident that among the weaver households, 322 of the respondents (51.2 per

cent) have availed of credit from master weavers, since they have been working under master weavers and the finance provided by the master weavers is both cheaper and easier (see Table 12). The borrowings from the moneylenders accounted for 24.3 per cent and 5.1 per cent of the respondents received credit from their friends or relatives.

**Table 12: Details of Sources of Credit of the Handloom Weaver Households**

Sources of Debt		Category of Weavers			
		Independent Weavers	Weavers under MWs	Weavers under Cooperative Societies	Total
Master Weavers	Count	0	322	0	322
	Row %	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	70.9%	.0%	51.2%
Moneylenders	Count	46	62	45	153
	Row %	30.1%	40.5%	29.4%	100.0%
	Column %	67.6%	13.7%	42.1%	24.3%
Friends / Relatives	Count	18	6	8	32
	Row %	56.3%	18.8%	25.0%	100.0%
	Column %	26.5%	1.3%	7.5%	5.1%
Institutions (Cooperative Society)	Count	0	0	11	11
	Row %	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	.0%	10.3%	1.7%
Banks, etc.	Count	4	0	20	24
	Row %	16.7%	.0%	83.3%	100.0%
	Column %	5.9%	.0%	18.7%	3.8%
Non-borrowing Members	Count	0	64	23	87
	Row %	.0%	73.6%	26.4%	100.0%
	Column %	.0%	14.1%	21.5%	13.8%
Total	Count	68	454	107	629
	Row %	10.8%	72.2%	17.0%	100.0%
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Pearson Chi-Square value: 434.409, df: 10, Level of Significance: 0.000\*\*

Institutional finance received by weavers constitutes only 5.9 per cent. Because of that, the independent weavers and weavers under cooperatives mainly depended on moneylenders for financial assistance. From the chi-square results, it is clear that there is significant relationship between sources of debt and weavers.

The commercial or cooperative banks and other institutions are mainly extending their financial support to the weavers who are working for cooperative societies under various Government schemes like Self-Help Groups, Development of Clusters, *Pavala Vaddi*, etc. Majority of the handloom weavers opined that the institutional finance is the best source of credit. Still some of the weavers are under the opinion that the master weavers' credit is the best. This shows that they are not in a position to recognise the exploitative character of credit given by master weavers and dynamic nature of institutional finance.

Rates of interest in the informal credit market tend to be very high compared to the formal market. It has been the experience that the moneylenders charge high interest rates ranging from 24 to 48 per cent, because they can take advantage of their monopoly position in the informal market segment. In respect of financial support offered by the formal institutions like commercial banks or cooperative banks, the interest rates only vary between 3 and 12 per cent.

### Conclusions

Weaving has proved to be a non-starter. The preference level for the profession has turned out to be zero among youth. The presence of women population in weaving is also significant. As a matter of fact, the nature of the profession is such that it engages every member of the family, right from the childhood. Like many other occupations, weaving appeared to be a legacy among Backward Classes, dominated by few communities, viz. Padmasali, Devanga, Puttasali, etc.

Literacy is one of the important social variables having influence on the socio-economic development of individuals. Among those having education, majority of them have reached up to primary level only. It is unfortunate to note that of the 629 respondents, the children of 444 respondents are not going to any school. The percentage of children who completed at least school final stood at only 8.9 and those that entered the portals of University are about 5.7 per cent.

Migration is a common phenomenon in handloom sector. A majority of sample respondents are also those who migrated from various other places. It is present across all the types of weavers. Handloom is also considered as one of the activities having potential danger leading to certain occupational diseases. There is widespread prevalence of many such diseases among respondents. It is also unfortunate to note that the children of 68 per cent respondents are suffering from the problems of malnourishment and stunting.

About 83 per cent of the respondents have closets with adequate sanitation. The other respondents are forced to utilise the services of group facility or use open defecation. Eighty three per cent of the surveyed weaver households have been using firewood, crop residue and cow dung as the cooking fuel. The rest of the households are using LPG for cooking. It is unfortunate that majority (67 per cent) of them are only able to take meal twice a day. The quality of food also is an issue of concern, because many of them are eating rice provided by the Government under kg. for ₹ 1 scheme.

The present study reveals the fact that majority of the respondents prefer gold work and Government service as an occupation for their children. The income of the weaver households determines the standard of living and financial status. In the study area, all the weavers are dependent on weaving as their lone activity for their livelihood. Majority (77 per cent)

of the respondents are earning wages below ₹ 50,000 per annum.

Housing is one of the basic needs of human beings and it constitutes the protective base for any individual and his family. As per the information collected through the survey, of the 629 respondents, 35.6 per cent of the respondents are living in thatched houses, 21.6 per cent are living in tiled houses, 22.4 per cent are living in pucca houses and the rest of 20.3 per cent are living in RCC houses. The category of assets owned by the sample weavers can be said to be an indicator of the economic status. The data regarding the assets, like T.V., radio, bicycle, moped, refrigerator, mixi, grinder and fan show that all the sample weavers possessed both radios and bicycles. Regardless of the type of

households, half of their income is spent on food. The independent weavers are mainly spending their income on children's education after food, because they have an aspiration to place their children in public/private sector for employment. Among the different types of weaver households, the independent weavers and weavers working for cooperatives are able to save some income than the weavers working for master weavers. Chit Funds and Post Office were the only institutions with which the respondents made their savings. It is found that 51.2 per cent of the respondents have availed of loan from master weavers, since they have been working for master weavers, and the moneylenders accounted for 24.3 per cent and 5.1 per cent of the respondents are borrowing from their friends or relatives.

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