CHAPTER VI

HANDLOOM IN MANIPUR
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6.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF MANIPUR:

Manipur is described as 'Switzerland of India' by Lord Irwin, a 'Jewel of India' by Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Manipur Maid of the Mountains' by Constantine R., Manipur literally means 'Land of Jewel'. It is commonly known as Little Paradise on the Earth and 'a Flower on Lofty Heights'.

The state has an area of 22,237 sq.km. which constitute about 0.07 percent of the total geographical area of the Indian union and having a population of 18,26,714 according to 1991 census report. It lies between latitude of 23.80 N and 25.68 N and longitude of 93.03 E and 94.78 E. Naturally, the state splits up into two regions the hills and the plains. It comprises of 8 districts of which 3 districts are in the valley and remaining 5 districts are in the hills. The districts which are in the plains are Imphal, Thoubal and Bishenpur. On the other hand Churachandpur, Chandel, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Senapati districts are in the hills. Imphal is the capital of Manipur.

By its physical feature, Manipur is a hilly state with a small valley of 1,843 sq.km. encircled by hill ranges accounting for more than 90 percent of the total geographical area of the state. It is situated at an elevation of 792 metres above the mean sea level (MSL). About two third of the total population is concentrated in the valley and these are mainly Manipuris.
(commonly known as Meitei) while one third is scattered in the hills consisting of as many as 29 recognised schedule tribes. The valley constitutes only about 8 percent of the total area, but about 63 percent of the states population is concentrated in it. The density of population in the valley is 415 persons per sq.km. and that of the hills is 24 persons per sq.km. The average density of population in Manipur is 64 persons against the all India average of 216 persons per sq.km. according to the population census report of 1981.

Manipur is the easternmost state of India very much secluded from the country till recently. It is bounded by the state of Nagaland on the north, Assam in the west, Mizoram in the south and on the east lies Myanmar (Burma). In fact it is the Gateway of India in the East.

6.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN MANIPUR:

Handloom weaving is an innate art of every Manipuri women. Manipur is known outside the state for her fascinating dances and excellent artistic handloom products. It is needless to say that every Manipuri women irrespective of caste, creed and rank is born a dancer and weaver. They have a sound knowledge of such arts of weaving and dancing from their tender age. No mother in Manipur would think of giving her daughter in marriage unless she becomes an expert in handloom weaving under her strict tutelage. Giving loom as dowry at the time of marriage is still in vogue in

Manipur. Hence, weaving is treated as a respectable profession by each and every home of Manipur.

The most ancient industry in Manipur is the Handloom Industry. From time immemorial this industry has been known for its beauty, distinctive feature of colour combination, excellence in design, texture, artistic skills and durability. Palace records said to have revealed that Loin loom weaving was practised in Manipur before the birth of Christ and throw shuttle loom was used in the valley of Manipur as far back as 87 AD. Each region of Manipur is specialised in the production of different traditional designs. The specialists in design and products started under the patronage of the Manipur Kings since the 11th century. The handloom industry in the state enjoys a pride of place in the whole country particularly in respect of design and durability. There are many original designs which are still famous, such as - Ningthouphee, Namthang Khuthut, Khamenchatpa, Shammilanmi, Moirnagphee, Lashingphee, Leirum, Tindongbi, Akoibi Hijamyek etc. Each design has its own history as to how, whom and when it was invented.

Before the introduction of mill made cloth in the state, weavers used to produce all the cloth necessary for domestic needs of a family. Cotton was grown abundantly in the hills and yarn was made and spinning and weaving was done by women. Women could spin the fine yarn which was as fine as the present Bombay yarn. Dyeing was done with indigenous things. Almost all the colours were produced from the earth, from the flower, from the
herb, from the bark and from the seed of fruits. But with the introduction of mill made cloth in the state, such indigenous industry has declined. Handloom was once a pure indigenous industry in Manipur but now it has become totally dependent on rawmaterial in the form of yarn imported from outside the state. This has lead to increase in the speed of production. Most of the weavers attempt to produce more cloth for sale in addition to their domestic needs as it has become one of the most important household industry in Manipur.

Since the arrival of the Britishers, new methods of weaving, knitting and sewing cloths were being remitted to Manipur. In 1910 Mr. Pillary a weaving master from Bengal was engaged by the Manipur State Darbar for giving training to the Manipuri weavers and demonstrating as to how the Swadeshi Automatic Handlooms be handled. While doing this he brought with him the different parts of a Swadeshi Automatic Handloom which he assembled soon after his arrival in the state and demonstrated how to repair it. Thus, it created an impression that the Automatic Handloom was superior to the native loin loom as the former saved a great deal of labour time. But due to some mechanical and operational difficulties, it failed to make any impact on popularising the new looms among the Manipuris. However,


it was again in 1920 that a new fly shuttle loom was procured by importing from Serampore by a Manipuri on his own account. It was reported that after this, another 30 looms were also made within the state by copying the model of the imported one which were found working well.

But the native weavers are still continuing extensively with the loin loom, while the fly shuttle looms are found only in limited urban areas. In 1951 out of 39,579 handlooms only 3,149 were accounted by fly shuttle looms. According to Techno-Economic Survey report 1985-86, there are 3,14,058 looms consisting of 1,91,214 loin looms, 42,981 throw shuttle and 79,863 fly shuttle looms respectively in Manipur.  

6.3. ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF HANDLOOM:

Manipur is situated in the North Eastern corner of the Indian union and encircled by hill ranges accounting for more than 90 percent of the total geographical area of the state. The entire state of Manipur has been declared as industrially backward. The living standard of the people of Manipur in both rural and urban areas is quite low. Due to nonavailability of infrastructural facilities, vast mineral and forest resources of the state are unutilised. The economy of the state of Manipur is largely based on production in the agriculture and forest

5. Statistical Outline of Manipur, Government of Manipur, DES.p.41
sectors. Next to agriculture, weaving as one of the household industries occupies the most prominent place in the economy of Manipur in terms of employment generation. At present about 5,00,000 people or 28 percent of the total population of the state are employed full time and part time on about 3,50,000 looms. It provides the largest scope for earning to womenfolk. About 80 percent of the women in the state are engaged in producing handloom cloth. Weaving is a part of their culture, a way of life with them and the absence of this skill in a Manipuri woman is considered unbecoming.

6.4. TYPES OF LOOMS AND WEAVERS:

Three types of looms are generally used in handloom industry in Manipur:

i) Loin Loom.

ii) Throw Shuttle Loom.

iii) Fly Shuttle Loom.

A brief description of the above classification are as follows:

6.4.1. Loin Loom: Loin loom or Khwang Iyong or Backstrap loom is a traditional method of weaving in Manipur and other hill tribes of India. The Meiteis (People of Manipur) as well as tribes of Manipur practise this method of weaving. The advantage of this method of weaving is that an unlimited range of varieties of


designs can be produced. A common loin loom consists of the following parts: i) Front bar, ii) Breast bar, iii) Swordhalt bar, iv) Circular bamboo bar, v) Lease rod and vi) Back strap.

9. 6.4.2. Throw Shuttle Loom: A throw shuttle loom is made of wood or metal and must be heavy and smooth, so that it may easily run from the edge to edge of a loom. Skill of the weaver along with smoothness of a shuttle, the manner of driving it and the human touch given to warp threads during weaving, go to produce the finest fabric like muslin or silk with the help of this very simple loom.

In Manipur next to loin loom, this loom is used widely because of its low price. Every household can set up this type of loom without any difficulty.

10. 6.4.3. Fly Shuttle Loom: In 1733 AD, John Kay of Bury, England, invented the fly shuttle loom. This invention was an extremely important event in the history and development of weaving. The fly shuttle has both sides curved exactly alike and metal tips are set at the centre of the two ends. The fly shuttle is longer, broader and deeper than a throw shuttle. Looms in which fly shuttle are used are known as Fly Shuttle Loom. The ingenuity of the fly shuttle invention does not, however, lie in the shuttle itself, but for the contrivances for throwing and receiving it. The slay which consists of a reed, two shuttle boxes, two pickers

10. Ibid.
or propellers and a picking stick or handle was invented by Mr. Kay.

In general, weavers can be classified into three viz.

i) Individual Weaver.

ii) Master Weaver. And

iii) Weavers under cooperative societies.

6.5. VARIETY OF HANDLOOM PRODUCTS OF MANIPUR:

The handloom products in Manipur consists of various types of new and attractive designs based on traditional motifs, artistic and attractive in colour combination. Meitei and other twenty-nine tribal inhabitants with their own caste, customs and dresses are in Manipur. Generally the prominent handloom products in Manipur can be classified into five broad categories i.e., Meitei, Kabui Nagas, Hmar, Tangkhul Nagas and: Paite. A brief description of the various types of products are explained below:

6.5.1. Meitei:

i) Khamenchata: A design derived from the belly of Pakhangba (Dragon God of Meitei Ancestors). It is a white silk wearing cloth with purple patterns of scrolls stamped on it by means of wooden blocks. It has been introduced by the Chinese merchant who visited the state during the reign of King Khagamba in 1630 AD.

ii) Namthang Khuthut: A design derived out of the head of

Pakhangba on the wrapper and is used by the ladies of the Royal family.

iii) Ningthouphee: A waist coat presented to the warriors by the King.

iv) Likli Mayekphee: A design evolved out of a part of a loom called Thengu (a tool used for processing and beating the handloom cloth). This also being a portion of the dowry of a bride in Manipur, i.e., Bed cover and Shoulder bag etc.

v) Shamilanmi Phee: A shawl embroidered with shamilanmi and animal motifs. Originally it was worn by the Angami Nagas and popularly known as Hauphee (Naga Shawl).

vi) Leirum: A ceremonial cloth. It is also an essential item of presentation during marriage.

vii) Tindongbi: This design is copied from the insect eating away leaves thus creating a peculiar design and is traditional.

viii) Leirong design: A traditional floral design. The motif has been copied from the flower—Chingthiao, e.g., Bed cover and Table cloths etc.

ix) Moirang Phee: It is derived from the name of the historical place Moirang. Which is 47 km. from Imphal. It has one inch solid border and one and a half inch of pyramidal figures to which geometrical and floral designs have been added.

x) Phanek: It is the most important ladies wears of this state. It is a typical traditional design for ladies, phanek Mayeknaibi is one of the famous handloom products which is woven on loin and fly shuttle loom.
xi) Khudei: This type of cloth is used by men and women in their day to day life in Manipuri homes.

xii) Innaphee (Saree): It is a typical handloom product with beautiful and artistic design.

xiii) Scarves: There are different types of scarves of traditional design which are produced in the state.

xiv) Lashing Phee: This is a quilt, rather a fancy quilt woven with cotton or staple yarned as warp and cotton sliver as weft.

xv) Monpak Pheedak: This is a bed cover. Different varieties of bed covers are found with different designs.

xvi) Table covers, Pillow covers, Screens, Door curtains, Window curtains, Towels, Handkerchiefs, Side bags etc. These are woven on fly shuttle loom. Generally yarns used in these cloths are cotton and wool in different colours and designs.

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6.5.2. Kabui Nagas:

i) Pheisoi: A type of phanek but without any border, a ceremonial dress and is also used as a daily dress.

ii) Song Nai: A dancing dress with the adolescent boys and is used as a lower garment.

iii) Phang Phai: A dancing dress for females, also used at other ceremonial function.

iv) Leijing Pheljoi, Langhu Phelsoi, Marei Pun, Senei


Pheiphang, Ranglen, Phaingao and Thiam Phai.

These are woven on loin loom, used in ceremonial occasions.

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6.5.3. Hmar:

i) Thangsuo puon: It is presented to those persons who had killed the maximum number of enemies.

ii) Puonri: A blanket for winter, woven by unmarried girls before marriage and is taken to their in-laws house.

iii) Puon Laisen: This cloth has several designs. It is divided into a) Sakat b) Disul.

iv) Ngoutekhar, Hmarm and Zakuolaisen. These are woven on loin loom and used in ceremonial occasion.

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6.5.4. Tangkhul Nagas:

i) Pangvai Kashan: A type of weaving cloth for the females.

ii) Changkham: A shawl used by both sexes as wrapper.

iii) Thang gang: A special type of cloth used by those persons proving their gallantry in war by killing enemies.

iv) Seiyang Kashan, Shankhan, Kangla Kashan, Kashang Kashan, Khoram Phi etc, are also cloths produced in loin loom.

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6.5.5. Paite:

i) Thanguo Puon: Unless a man kills his enemies in intertribal feud or war, it is restricted to wear it. Those persons


15. Ibid.

who even kill ferocious animals are also entitled to wear it.

ii) Puon düm: It is a national cloth for the Paites. It is ___
worn during condolences, official meetings etc.

iii) Puon Pie: A quilt type and is compulsory for any girl ___
to bring over to her husband's house after her marriage.

iv) Nikkia and Jawl Puon are also produced by this community.

6.6. COOPERATIVISATION OF HANDLOOM IN MANIPUR:

In Manipur, the weavers cooperative societies and the
industrial cooperative societies are still under the dual control
of:-

i) the cooperative department in respect of organisation,
registration, audit, inspection and liquidation etc, and

ii) the industries department in respect of formulation and
implementation of their development plans / programmes / schemes,
rendering of the financial and technical assistance, technical
supervision etc.

Sensing the importance of bringing the handloom industry
into the organised sector, since 1948, the Manipur State Handloom
Weavers Cooperative Society Ltd, an Apex body, was organised
during the year 1954-55. The structure of the handloom
cooperatives in the state are two tier comprising of Apex at the
state level and primary weavers cooperative societies at the
village level. The Apex weavers society is a federation of
primary weavers cooperative societies. Its main functions are
to supply yarn to the primary weavers cooperative societies who
are their members and to assist the member societies in marketing the cloth produced by them. The primary weavers cooperative societies on the other hand are organisation of individual weavers formed on a cooperative basis.

As per report submitted by the high power study team under the chairmanship of Shri B. Shivaraman, the then member of planning commission in 1974, the reorganisation of handloom cooperatives in the state has been taken up from 1977. The reorganised handloom cooperatives are to have:

i) 100 members with paid up share capital of Rs 5,000 from the individual weavers.

ii) 100 working looms. And

iii) the population of a primary weavers cooperative between 3000 to 5000.

At the fag end of 1990 there were 900 handloom cooperative societies in the state with a total membership of 1,20,000. The paid up share capital was Rs 1,30,000 with a working capital of Rs 3,00,000. The total annual production of cloth was estimated at Rs 8,00,000. About 35 percent of looms in the state are now under the cooperative fold.

Further, in order to strengthen the cooperative movement in the handloom sector, schemes for revitalisation of dormant societies have been initiated since 1977. The main elements for the programme of revitalising existing dormant / defunct 

societies are as follows:

a) identifying the defunct societies and drawing of scheme for liquidation / revival / amalgamation to form new and viable societies.

b) provision of share capital loan / participation in the form of share capital of the societies.

c) ensuring availability of working capital advantage of NABARD scheme for handloom finance to the societies. And

d) measure for strengthening the marketing arrangement for which share capital will have to be provided for the Apex 17 society.

6.7. HANDLOOM FINANCE - THE GOVERNMENTS ROLE:

Prior to financial year 1985-86, the development of the handloom industry in Manipur was largely the responsibility of the Directorate of Industry. But from 1985-86 onwards the cooperative department has taken up number of schemes for the development of handloom cooperatives in the state under the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) scheme. The cooperative department has certain schemes formulated for the development of Handloom Industry. They are as follows:

1. Short term credit limit/ refinance scheme to the primary weavers cooperative societies under the scheme of NABARD handloom finance scheme.

2. Strengthening of share capital base of the primary 17. Data collected from Deputy Registrar (Handloom) Government of Manipur through personal interview.

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weavers cooperative societies and Apex society under the NCDC scheme.

3. Scheme for establishment of cooperative polyester weaving centre under the NCDC, Petrofils scheme.

4. Construction of handloom workshed scheme under the NCDC scheme. And

5. Market development assistance scheme.

Besides the above schemes, the National Cooperative Development Corporation has taken an important step for the development of handlooms. For integrated development of cooperative societies in selected districts, the NCDC has started a scheme "Integrated Cooperative Development Project" for the first time in Manipur in Bishenpur District since 1987-88. In this project, the emphasis has been given to agriculture, fisheries, handloom & handicrafts, sericulture and poultry farming. Next to Bishenpur a similar project has been taken up in Thoubal District and very recently Churachandpur District has also started the said project from 1991-92.

On the other hand the Directorate of Industries has also played a significant role in the development of Handlooms. It has initiated steps for the development of this industry. The important ones are as follows:

1. State participation in the share capital structure of Apex cooperative society ltd and primary weaver societies.

18. Annual plan 1987-88, Department of Industries, Government of Manipur.
2. Expansion of Handloom Design Centre.
3. Publicity and propaganda, exhibition and fairs for popularising the artistic Manipuri handlooms and handicrafts.
4. Intensive Handloom Development Project for hill areas.
5. Managerial assistance to primary weavers cooperative societies.
6. Modernisation of Handloom by providing improved looms and appliances to the primary weavers cooperative societies.
7. Assistance to primary weavers cooperative societies for construction of common / combined workshed.
8. Training and study tour.
9. Incentive for production and marketing of handloom cloths: a) Transport subsidy on the rawmaterial and finished goods.
   b) Rebate on sales of handloom cloth.
   c) Subsidy for sales depot. And
d) Interest subsidy.
10. Housing cum workshed for the individual weavers.
11. Contributing to thrift fund scheme for handloom weavers. And
12. Some project package schemes:
   a) Target group approach.
   b) Product development approach.
   c) Sample, Survey, Publicity and Exhibition scheme. And
d) Welfare package scheme.
The present system of dual control does not work
effectively and create a number of difficulties. Organisation of genuine weavers cooperative societies, effective control by either department over the weavers cooperative societies and proper utilisation of various assistance rendered have all been achieved only partially because of the dual control. It is desirable that this dual control is removed to promote efficiency.

6.8. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HANDBOOM:

Giving importance to handloom industry, the state government and central government have been active in the development of handloom industry in the state. Various projects, schemes and organisations have been started for rapid development of this industry. Some of the important steps taken up for the development of handloom industry in the state are:

6.8.1. Manipur Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation:

The corporation was established in October 1976 in order to assist handloom and handicraft artisans by supplying raw materials, improving methods of production by introduction of modernised looms and equipments and by marketing the products of individual artisans. The handloom and handicraft artisans under the cooperative fold are assisted through the PWCS and Apex cooperative society. The hill are handloom development project is also implemented by this corporation. It has also set up the

19. The Systematic Development of Industries in Manipur, Department of Industries, 1988, p.5.
Mechanised Dye House at Iroisemba for dyeing of cotton yarn.

A process house for dyeing of acrylic yarn as well as processing of handloom fabric is proposed to be set up shortly with the assistance of the Development Commissioner, Handlooms, New Delhi.

6.8.2. Hill Area Handloom Development Project: This project is for the development of skills of individual weavers in the Hill areas and was introduced in 1986-87. The Government of India sanctioned the project for Manipur in January 1987 and it is the second project so far sanctioned in the country next to Uttar Pradesh.

Out of the total estimated cost of Rs 2.12 crores approved by the Development Commissioner for Handloom, the central government and the state government have sanctioned Rs 10.00 lakhs and Rs 2.00 lakhs respectively during the year 1986-87 for the implementation of the said project.

The project was started through the Manipur Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd. by opening five training -cum-production centres at five hill districts' head quarters during the year 1987-88.

6.8.3. Mechanised Dye House: The Mechanised Dye House which is a project under the central sector scheme of Ministry of Textiles,

21. Ibid.
with a project cost of Rs 74.00 lakhs. It was set up and commissioned on the 29th of June 1987 by the Manipur Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd. The installed capacity is 220 MT of dyed / bleached / mercerised yarn per annum (733 kg of yarn i.e., 163 bundles per day) in single shift.

The Mechanised Dye House at Iroisemba is the second of its kind in the whole of North Eastern Region and the work was entrusted to North Eastern Industrial and Technical Consultant Organisation (NEITCO) on turnkey basis.

6.8.4. Manipur Spinning Mill Corporation Ltd: The 25,488 spindles capacity Manipur Spinning Mills Corporation Ltd. was established with an objective of producing quality cotton yarn for meeting the demand from the handloom weavers in the state. It started the commercial production with 13,392 spindles capacity from 1st April 1985. It has now 16,416 spindles. The production, sales and gross profits / loss in the last three years ending 1990-91 are as follows:

Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Production (Kgs)</th>
<th>Sales turnover</th>
<th>Gross Profit/Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>99.485</td>
<td>36.95</td>
<td>(-) 117.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>144.717</td>
<td>150.84</td>
<td>(-) 89.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>229.306</td>
<td>117.00</td>
<td>(-) 86.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview with Managing Director, Manipur Spinning Mills Corporation Ltd, Government of Manipur.

22. Systematic Development of Industries in Manipur, op.cit., p.5.
The planning commission is being requested to provide additional funds for completing the installation of 25,488 spindles i.e., its licensed capacity. The corporation is also in the process of obtaining term loan and working capital loan from the financial institutions. The yarn produced by the corporation partially meets the requirement of the handloom weavers in the state. Some how the corporation has not succeeded in generating profit so far. This is a problem which has to be studied thoroughly and is beyond the purview of the present study.

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6.8.5. Manipur Development Society: Manipur Development Society was established in December 1982. However, the handloom development programme of the society was started only in the month of February 1984, in order to meet the marketing requirement of the handloom fabrics produced by the 2450 weavers of 49 production centres of the society. The first sales depot of the society was opened on 28th August 1984 in the present building of the society. Subsequently sales depots were also opened at Bishenpur, Thoubal, Moirang and Kakching. Besides, sales of handloom fabrics in different parts of the North Eastern Region are undertaken through two(2) mobile sales vans of the society. During the year 1990-91 the sales was about Rs 60.00 lakhs.

The society has immediate plans to open a sales outlet at New Delhi. Further, in order to meet the demands of the changing market, efforts are being made by this society to develop new designs as well as to revive traditional designs.

6.9. BACKGROUND OF THE FIELD STUDY:

The present research work is basically of a national character. But it was felt that an in-depth study at the field level will help in drawing conclusions for the entire country. Manipur was found ideal because of the wide practice of weaving on handlooms in the state and because the researcher also belongs to the state. This effort is hoped, will not only portray the handloom industry in Manipur as a representative sample of the country but will also highlight and bring to the national mainstream this farflung, underdeveloped and insurgency prone state. Needless to say that the observations and suggestions made based on the field study, will receive due attention of concerned authorities at the state level and also by the national level organisations and agencies involved in the development of the handloom industry especially in the state.

6.9.1. Growth of Handloom Societies in Manipur: With the organisation of the weaving cooperatives in the state in the year 1951-52, a new era for handloom industry had begun. The weaving cooperatives were organised and established with a view to help the weavers particularly in the supply of raw material, yarn and finished products. The Manipur State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society which was established in the year 1955 as an Apex institution has been playing a pivotal role in procuring and supplying the required raw materials and equipment to the weavers and in marketing finished products of the societies affiliated to
it. According to the Registrar, Cooperative societies, Manipur at the end of the year 1990-91 as many as 721 primary handloom weavers cooperative societies were on live register with a total membership of 73,773 weavers having 45,942 looms. The paid up capital of the societies was reported to be Rs 22.13 lakhs and working capital Rs 63.00 lakhs. Table No. 6.2 below shows the total number of society members and expenditure during the last seven years.

Table 6.2

Number of Registered Primary weavers cooperative societies with their membership and expenditure during the last seven years from 1984-85 to 1990-91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No. of societies</th>
<th>Total No. of members</th>
<th>Paid up capital</th>
<th>Working capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>21,513</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>2674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>21,678</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>2675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>22,178</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>65,453</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>65,573</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>67,273</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>6125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>73,773</td>
<td>2213</td>
<td>6300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


6.9.2. Size of the Samples: According to personal interview with different district cooperative officers and assistant registrar cooperative societies of all the eight districts in Manipur, there were 1176 (including 178 dormant) registered primary weavers cooperative societies at the end of 30th June 1991. Table No.6.3 shows the distribution of registered primary weavers cooperative societies, dormant societies, selected and studied societies spread in all 8 districts of Manipur. Among the 8 districts, 3 valley districts have occupied a prominent place in the number of weavers cooperative societies. Imphal district has 708 registered societies of which 113 societies are dormant. Besides, there are 134 and 121 registered societies in Thoubal and Bishenpur districts respectively. Hence, the present study is based on the 1176 societies instead of 721 societies which was shown by the annual administrative report. Out of 1176, 117 societies or 10 percent of the population were selected of which 100 societies could be studied as 17 societies were found to be defunct or dormant. The basis of selection of 117 cooperative societies were their geographical distribution in all the 8 districts. Further, a minimum of 10 percent of the total number of registered weavers cooperative societies in each district were covered so as to make the study representative of the whole state.

6.9.3. Physical Structure of Sample Societies: As per the report submitted by the high powered study team under the Chairmanship of Shri B. Shivaraman, the reorganised handloom cooperative should
have at least 100 members and 100 working looms with a paid up share capital of Rs 5,000 from the weavers.

From the study of 100 societies it was significant to note that only 24 societies had fulfilled the above criterion. Another 48 societies had more than 100 members but did not having 100 looms, and the remaining 28 societies had neither fulfilled the members nor looms criterion.

Table 6.3

Number of Registered PWCS of working, Dormant, Selected and studied societies spread in all 8 districts of Manipur as on 30th June 1991.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Working societies</th>
<th>Dormant societies</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Number selected</th>
<th>Studied societies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imphal</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishenpur</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total= 998 178 1176 117 100

Source: Personal interview with District Cooperative Officers and Assistant Registrar Cooperative Societies of Manipur.
Table 6.4 shows the total number of looms i.e., fly shuttle, throw shuttle and loin loom, held by the 100 societies studied. Out of 4,434 fly shuttle looms, 1,863 loin looms and 75 throw shuttle looms, 3,982, 1,836 and 72 looms were members looms. Whereas 452, 27 and 03 looms belonged to societies. From the below table it is clear that on an average 63 looms were held by each of societies taken up for study. Of this only 44 were improved fly shuttle looms and remaining 19 were outdated loin looms and throw shuttle looms. Since 1951-52 every year Directorate of Industries and other handloom organisations have sanctioned funds for modernisation of looms and grants for looms. But still many of the weavers do not have looms for weaving.

Table 6.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of loom</th>
<th>Society loom</th>
<th>Members loom</th>
<th>Total loom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fly shuttle loom</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>3,982</td>
<td>4,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loin loom</td>
<td>027</td>
<td>1,836</td>
<td>1,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw shuttle loom</td>
<td>003</td>
<td>0,072</td>
<td>0,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>482</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,890</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,372</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on primary data collected through interview schedule.

This has happened due to carelessness on the part of both the societies and the concerned agencies. It is also alleged that corrupt practices have led to decorated reports and clean chits from persons concerned with assessing the fulfilment of the
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOOMS OWNED BY SAMPLE SOCIETIES. (GRAPH 6.1)

![Bar Graph](image)

- **Fly Shuttle**: Society Loom
- **Loin Loom**: Members Loom
- **Throw Shuttle**: Society Loom

**Number of Looms**

- **5000**
- **4000**
- **3000**
- **2000**
- **1000**
- **0**

**Types of Loom**
required norms. The ultimate suffer has been the poor weaver.

6.9.4. Financial Condition of Sample Societies: Finance is the backbone of industry. Handloom industry too requires financial support for the smooth running of the industry. Table 6.5 shows the working capital structure of 100 sample societies. From the interviews conducted it was found that almost all the weavers cooperative societies do not have sufficient amount of working capital.

Table 6.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working capital</th>
<th>Number of societies</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000-2000</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-4000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4001-8000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8001-16000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16000-32000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above-32000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total = 100

Source: Based on primary data collected through interview schedule.

Out of the 100 societies covered it was found that at the lower end about 53 percent of the societies were having working capital of Rs 4,000 and below. At the upper end only 10 percent of the societies had a comfortable working capital margin of
over Rs 32,000. It was indeed very saddening to note that none of the societies covered were satisfied with the available working capital. This is despite the fact that 96 percent of them expressed that they were receiving some kind of assistance from the government in the form of grant, subsidy or loan. What was further revealed was that political pressures led to biased disbursement of funds, usually on unjustifiable grounds. Further, time taken for distribution of subsidies etc was unduely large. All these have led to frustration and a fatalistic attitude on the part of weavers and their societies. Lack of proper knowledge of even the fundamentals of financial management has brought these cooperatives to a pathetic condition. Overhauling the entire system seems to be the only way out and this is not going to be easy at all when the entire system is both out of gear and totally resistant to change.

6.9.5. Supply of Rawmaterials and Production of Cloth: The most common yarns used by handloom weavers in Manipur are cotton, wool, polyester and other yarn comprising silk, muga and eri. The maximum consumed yarn is cotton. Out of 78 percent of cooperatives which are using cotton, 40 societies were using from 1 to 50 bales of cotton per month per society and 20 societies were using 51 to 100 bales of cotton. Next to cotton, the important yarn is wool. About 63 percent of the societies are using wool yarn. Only 18 societies consume from 1 to 50 kgs of wool yarn and another 15 societies from 51 to 100 kgs of wool yarn. Utilisation of polyester yarn is also increasing day by day.
Table 6.6
Average Consumption of Yarn per month by weavers cooperative societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range Kg/Bale</th>
<th>cotton</th>
<th>wool</th>
<th>polyester</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 150</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151 - 200</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 - 250</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251 - 300</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 300</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on primary data collected through interview.

Table 6.7
Average fabrics produced per month in pieces by the weaver cooperative societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range in pieces</th>
<th>cotton</th>
<th>Fabrics producing societies</th>
<th>polyester</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 150</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151 - 200</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 - 500</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 - 1000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on data collected through interview schedule.
for suiting, shirting and other fabrics. But there is no effective distribution of domestic yarn to the cooperative societies. Table 6.6 shows the detailed information of the yarn consumption in Manipur.

Regarding production of fabrics table 6.7 gives a clear account of the production of fabrics according to the yarn consumed. Most of the societies are producing large amount of cotton fabrics and this must be so as the yarn consumed maximum is cotton. Manipur being a region experiencing cold climate wool fabrics also account for a good percentage of the handloom fabrics produced. As stated earlier polyester cloth is also being increasingly woven as its demand has been increasing.

From the discussion with the management of the societies interviewed it was apparent that steady supply of raw materials along with continued training of weavers in improved skills and designs seems to be the need of the hour. Insufficient raw material yarn of the required counts and at times the lack of funds to purchase the same, has led to under utilisation of loom capacity. This has affected both weaver productivity and earning. Government alone can not blamed for the malady. Professionalism has to be brought into this ancient industry.

Almost all the weavers cooperative societies depend on the private traders for raw material yarn and finished goods. Moreover, the yarn market is in the hands of middlemen who generally exploit the poor weavers. This is one reason, why the handloom cloth of Manipur finds it difficult to compete in the
outside markets. The marketing of finished handloom products is also more or less in the hand of these unscrupulous private traders, who generally compel the weavers to produce cheaper quality, sub standard cloths at low cost and sell at a high rate. This ultimately has brought bad name to the handloom products of Manipur.

6.9.6. Common or Combined Workshed for Production: From the survey, it is found that 51 societies out of 100 are generally working at the residence of the society members as they have no alternatives, 25 societies are having workshed financed by National Cooperative Development Corporation with a grant of Rs 3,50,000 to Rs 4,00,000. The remaining 24 societies are not having any workshed common for weaver members though the DIC has given finance for the construction of worksheds, the amount ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000. As mentioned earlier, almost all the primary cooperative societies are controlled, managed and administered by two or three persons. They use the sanctioned amount in other ways and on the other hand the sanctioned amount is not sufficient for purchasing land and other material for the construction of workshed. It is suggested that instead of granting sanctions to large number of societies for construction of workshed, it is better to select a few existing societies and give them grants for the construction of fullfledged workshed in a phased manner. Further, on the basis of their functioning other societies may also be assisted. The former societies if they are really successful can set example and act as models for the
remaining societies to follow and excel.

6.9.7. Earning Capacity of the Sample Societies: The wages given to the member weavers by the societies are usually on working basis. The amount of wage paid was made to vary according to the pieces of cloths produced. Out of 100 societies the average wage paid to member weavers by 74 societies were below Rs 15 and 24 societies were between Rs 15 and Rs 30. The present rate of inflation has made it almost impossible for weavers to maintain their families on this meagre income. Hence, it leads the weavers to think of better jobs. Table 6.8 shows the annual profit earning of 100 societies. The existing capacity of any society depends on its profit earnings. 26 percent of the societies have been earning below Rs 2,500 and another 22 percent were between

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range (Rs)</th>
<th>Number of societies</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Rs 2,500</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,501 - 5,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001 - 7,500</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,501 - 10,000</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001 - 15,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Rs 15,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on data collected through interview schedule.
Rs 2,500 to Rs 5,000. It shows that almost 48 percent of the societies have been earning below Rs 5,000 per annum, hence, these societies have not been able to take proper care of their member weavers. Only 19 percent of the societies have been earning Rs 15,000 per annum or more.

From the above table representing annual profit earning of 100 societies, it is significant to note that most of the societies do not maintain their accounts properly. Since the president, secretary and the treasurer control and manage the societies in a autocratic manner, for almost all the societies the actual figure of earning could not be properly assessed though it appeared that the amount of earning was better than that revealed. This has happened because handlooms is in the unorganised sector giving room for manipulation and the fear of management that higher profit revealed would make member weavers demand greater benefits for themselves. Further, the concerned government officials do not discharge their responsibility in detecting unfair practice as they themselves - it is alleged - enjoy a part of it.

6.9.8. Marketing of Handloom by Sample Societies: From the survey, it was found that most of the marketing of handloom products of primary weavers cooperative societies was being controlled by the private traders, who always exploit the poor weavers. Due to step motherly treatment by the Apex societies and the Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation, the private traders have taken a prominent role for controlling this market.
They are trying to get benefit both from the selling of yarn to and purchasing of finished goods from the societies. Manipur Apex Handloom Cooperative Society is a federation of all registered cooperative societies. The main objective of this society is to supply rawmaterial and collect finished goods. As insufficient quality and quantity of rawmaterials are supplied to weavers cooperative societies by the said agency, the latter have increase the volume of trade with the private traders who supply rawmaterial to them regularly catering to the different types of yarns demanded by them. Similarly, while purchasing of handloom cloth too, private traders are ready to pay the price of finished goods without any delay. While the Handloom House takes maximum time to processes the matter regarding the payment of cash. Hence, out of 100 sample societies 74 percent of societies have been selling their finished goods to private traders, whereas only 17 percent sell it to the Handloom House and the remaining 9 percent sell finished goods through their own sale depot and premises. It is found that, there is lack of cooperative character in the members of the societies and the executive members of the societies. Most of the members do not know the rights and duty of being a member of the society. They are working like hired workers but not as member weavers of the society. Further, it is also seen that the primary handloom weavers cooperative societies have not been very successful in meeting the basic objective for which they were formed. Rawmaterial yarn, improved looms and implements were not supplied to the member weavers sufficiently. They were also not provided with proper training and marketing
facilities. The weavers have failed to utilise the full capacity of their looms, most of which have remained idle due to shortage of raw materials and working capital.

6.10 CONCLUSION:

The study of handloom industry in Manipur has laid bare the ground realities facing the weavers primarily under the cooperative fold. The condition of weavers outside the cooperative structure can well be assessed. Manipur being well out of the national mainstream is faced with even more severe constraints. Out of a population of 18 lakhs, more than 5 lakhs are involved in the handloom industry and observing the state of affairs of the average weaver the magnitude of the problem can well be imagined. If a strategy has to be evolved to rope in all these weavers or many of them, it will not be short of a herculean task. The present condition of handloom in Manipur is a fall out of the system and its degenerate culture, which is prevailing in the state. To improve this industry well entrenched in every nook and corner of the state, without changing the overall situation, will probably be an exercise in futility.

The potential of handloom industry is indeed immense and it can be compared to a sleeping beauty. It has to be woken up from its slumber in a schematic fashion. Existing skills have to be further developed and perfected. Consumer tastes have to be made aware to the weaving community especially in case of export markets. Supply of raw material and marketing of finished goods along with proper quality control has to be streamlined.
Hinderances to the flow of finance have to be removed and the vicious grip of private traders has to be ended. A large number of suggestions forwarded in the last chapter, it is hoped, will help the industry to come out its present rut and get a fresh lease of life, become more competitive and achieve excellence. However, much will depend on the government on which this industry has since long depended. But without infusing professionalism into its functioning and management the hope that it will be able to break its present impasse seems hardly possible.