Cuddapah is one of the four districts of the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The rainfall in the district is scanty and irregular. The non-accuracy of rains at appropriate times to take up agricultural operations is not a strange phenomena that was experienced by the farmers here in the district. The average annual rainfall in the district is 685.5 mm. while it is 672 mm. and 896 mm. for the Rayalaseema and Andhra Pradesh respectively.

The district has no perennial rivers flowing within itself for the development of agriculture on sound lines. However, Kurnool - Cuddapah canal (K.C.Canal) passes through the district. Another sources of water are wells and tanks. The supply of water from these sources depend on rains. A major portion of arable land is cultivated under rainfed conditions. Thus, the district suffers from lack irrigational facilities for further development of agriculture.

Added to this, it is only 28 per cent of the total geographical area of the land in the district suitable for cultivation while the remaining is occupied by forests and mines. The district has vast deposits of minerals, viz., Barytes, asbestos, calcium, black and coloured slabs, granite etc.

Since less than 30 per cent of the geographical area of
the land in the district comes under the cultivable land, agricultural sector can not provide gainfully employment to all people, especially, in the rural areas of the district. As such people are compelled by necessity to find jobs outside the farm sector.

The history of the district reveals the fact that the handlooms happened to be the oldest small scale cottage based industry spread over a few centres viz., Madhavaram, Pullampet, Proddatur, Jammalamaadugu and Sidhout. In the district the handloom industry provided jobs to many a rural people in the district. The importance of handloom industry lies in the fact that it was next only to agriculture with regard to the provision of employment needs of the people. The above mentioned handloom centres were known for the handloom products in the past. Sarees, dhoties, towels, kerchiefs, shirtings, mosquito nets and lungies were manufactured in Cuddapah district. As one of the ceeded districts, The East India Company treated this district as one of the centres for the supply of cloth to its army. During those days master weavers dominated the scene of sector. However, there were also independent-weavers, but their economic position was so weak that they were not in a position to have an inventory lasting for at least a month. They were just leading hand to mouth life and the position of the weaver-workers was too
pathetic to describe. They were exploited by the Master-weavers. They were paid far too meagre wages for working 10 to 12 hours a day.

The spirit of Co-operative movement began to spread in the country in the first decade of the present century. The Co-operative Societies came into existence with the sole aim of saving the weaver-workers from the exploitation of Master weavers and to develop the socio-economic conditions of the weavers by way of supplying of the required raw materials at reasonable prices for the manufacture of cotton fabrics through an organisation called Co-operative Societies.

The first Co-operative Society in the district was established in Jammalamadugu in the year 1937. The Societies gradually developed. As per the information available at the Office of Assistant Director Handlooms and Textiles, Cuddapah, there were 80 handloom Co-operative Societies in the district by the end of 1987-88 with 17,591 members, who owned 17,995 looms, which produced 99.82 sq. lakh metres of cloth, worth of Rs.697 lakhs.

The progress achieved under the Co-operative Societies during the period 1981-82 to 1990-91 is briefly explained the following lines. The total number of handlooms in the district decreased from 27,941 in 1981-82 to 26,521 in 1990-91.
i.e., decreased by about 5 per cent over 1981-82. The number of handlooms under Co-operative Sector in the district decreased from 15,861 in 1981-82 to 14,902 in 1990-91 i.e., decreased by nearly 7 per cent over 1981-82. The percentage of handlooms under the Co-operative in the district is fluctuating between 50 per cent to 68.5 per cent during the period of study.

The number of active looms under Co-operative Sector increased from 6,550 in 1981-82 to 8,190 in 1990-91 i.e., increased by about 25 per cent over 1981-82. The number of dormant looms under Co-operative Sector decreased from 9,311 in 1981-82 to 6,619 in 1990-91 i.e., decreased by nearly 29 per cent over the 1981-82. That means the percentage of dormant looms decreased while percentage of active looms increased during the period of study. The percentage of active looms in the total looms under the Co-operative Sector in the district is fluctuating between 33.32 per cent and 55.30 per cent during the period of study. And the percentage of dormant looms in the total looms under Co-operative Sector in the district is fluctuating between 44.70 per cent and 66.68 per cent during the same period. From the factual information presented in the table 4.2 it is clear that the percentage of dormant looms outweighed the percentage of active looms during the period of study, except during 1985-86, 1989-90 and 1990-91. The main reason for increase
in the percentage of active looms in the total loom under the Co-operative in the district during the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 is due to supply of yarn to handloom weavers by the Government of Andhra Pradesh at appropriate time. The total number of members in the Co-operative Sector in the district increased from 16,690 in 1983-82 to 18,090 in 1990-91 i.e. increased by about 8 per cent. This increase in the number of the Co-operative Sector is coincided with the increased in the number of active looms in Co-operative Sector. The production of handloom cloth fabrics increased by nearly three folds at the end of 1990-91. Thus during the period understanding the production of cotton fabrics increased by three folds in addition increase in the number of active looms under Co-operative Sector in the district.

The cost of production per metre of handloom cloth in fluctuated between Rs.5.68 and Rs.11.62 and the annual average cost of production per metre of handloom cloth during the period of under reference is Rs.8.13. The income from the sale of cloth per metre is fluctuated between Rs.5.08 and Rs.12.00 and the annual average income from the sale of handloom cloth per metre is Rs.8.20 during the period of study.

A weaver-worker used to produce 1.6 metres of cloth per day during 1981-82. The productivity of a weaver rose to 4 metres per day during 1985-86 while it declined by 0.5
metres during 1990-91. The decline in productivity of a worker was largely due to non-supply of yarn and dyes by the co-operative during 1990-91. The productivity of a worker under Co-operative Society is no less insignificant compared to his counterpart who works under Master Weavers.

The handlooms under Co-operative Sector in Cuddapah district got profits during the first half of 1980s except during 1982-83. While during second half of 1980s got losses except during 1986-87 and 1988-89. The annual average profit per metre of handloom cloth during 1981-82 to 1990-91 is Rs.0.07. That means the handlooms under Co-operative Sector in Cuddapah district have minimum profits.

The average daily earnings of weaver-worker under Co-operatives was Rs.6.50 during 1981-82 and same rose to Rs.20 and Rs.22.75 during 1985-86 and 1990-91 respectively. This indicates the wages of a worker have been on the increasing note during the period of study.

Based on the increase in number of active looms, members in Co-operative Societies increase productivity, earnings and with minimum profits, handloom Co-operatives in the Cuddapah district is largely a story of success. But this success is not being accomplished in respect of bringing 75 per cent of total number of looms in the district under Co-operative fold as per the targets fixed for the 6th and 7th Five Year Plans
of Andhra Pradesh. The percentage of handlooms under Co-operative Sector in the total handlooms in the district is fluctuating between 50 per cent and 68.5 per cent during the period of study in the district.

It is understood from the socio-economic survey conducted by the author in Pullampet Mandalam of Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh that the industry is dominated by the Padmasali, a sub-caste of weavers' community. Most of them have acquired skills over generations. Nearly, 60 per cent of the members of the Co-operative Societies have belonged to age group of 31 to 50 years. It is a matter of satisfaction to note that 65 per cent of the members of the Co-operatives are literates. Some of them have been educated up to Intermediate level. And it is depressing to note that none of the members in the Co-operatives in Pullampet own a permanent house to live in. It is rather difficult to say, strictly, a particular member, irrespective of age, is falling under category of unemployment. Each member in the family has a role to play in the production process of handloom fabrics. A significant percentage of households have a family size of 5 and below 5. A weaver who works on loom per day gets an income of ₹35/- while the one who attends preloom work gets a maximum of ₹10/-. The loomage capacity of a household is constrained by the size of a house which he lives in. In the survey it is learnt that 60 per cent of the
households have maintained two looms each while the remaining households have one each. It is observed that 65 per cent of the households spent their total income on food items followed by 15 per cent on liquors, 7 per cent on medicines and 3 per cent on miscellaneous. The expenditure of the households on clothing and education is not significant.

Conclusions

1. Due to wide fluctuations in yarn prices and consequent loss in stock of yarn, the societies are not in a position to provide continuous yarn supply. The Government shall assist in supplying yarn to the societies at constant and at reasonable prices all through the year.

2. The supply of annual requirement of yarn for all the looms enrolled under the Co-operative sector shall be made regular so as to ensure at least 300 working days in a year for the weavers.

3. Yarn may be made available directly from Mills to the Societies to avoid delays and stoppage of work frequently.

4. The inventory position of yarn and dyes may be given top priority in the smooth conduct of production process under Co-operatives. An inventory requirements for three months may be ensured so as to reduce the number of the looms
becoming dormant.

5. Sincere efforts may be made by the Government to progressively bring down the percentage of dormant looms and to achieve the targeted percentage of looms under Co-operative fold during the plans.

6. The weavers' Co-operative Societies in the district of Cuddapah suffers from financial weakness and consequently their incapacity to meet the financial needs of the members. Therefore, more financial assistance shall be provided to these Societies.

7. Introduction of modern technology and modern looms not only increase the productivity of a weaver worker but also enhances his/her economic position. Efforts in this direction are highly laudably.

8. The societies may be instructed to purchase handloom fabrics manufactured only by the weaver's working under Co-operatives. Procurement of cloth manufactured by the powerlooms shall be stopped so as to do justice for the weavers working under co-operative fold.

9. Reservation of a particular varieties of fabrics may be earmarked to be manufactured by handlooms and the same may be implemented both by the union and the State Government.
10. For the smooth and efficient functioning of the Co-operatives, the authorities of the APCO may be instructed to make payments in a week or ten days after procurement of the fabrics in the district. From the Co-operatives it goes a long way in the growth and development of handlooms in the backward district of Cuddapah.

11. The Government may advise all the departments to buy the items such as table clothes, window-curtains and uniforms to its employes from the weavers Co-operative Societies in the district.

12. Since handloom industry is cottage based one and the entire work is to be carried on in the home of a weaver. As such, house is basic requirement and a potential asset for a weaver. It is, therefore, felt that the Government may give a serious thought to provide a house to each weaver to install at least two looms. A houseless weaver-worker in the district needs a house with a size of 15 feet width and 25 feet length. It is a house-cum-workshop per a weaver.

13. The weaver-workers in the district may be educated to refrain from taking alcohal daily and increase the family budgetary expenditure on educational needs of their children.

14. All weavers must be encouraged to undertake the profit making activities of manufacturing like Zari sarees and cotton sarees with upto date designs.
15. A training institute on the lines of Varanasi and Selam may be set up at Cuddapah for the benefit of all weavers in the Rayalaseema to impart the skill and dexterity to manufacture a wide variety of fine quality of sarees and other fabrics in the district.

16. The provision of publicity for the goods manufactured by the handlooms under Co-operatives may be arranged by the State Government Agencies.

17. The close rapport of the weavers with the officials of Assistant Director of Handlooms and Textiles, at Cuddapah would enable the weavers to reap the benefits/subsidies sanctioned from time to time by the Government for the development of handloom industry in the district.

18. It may be concluded that the smooth and regular supply of yarn, zari and dyes at reasonable prices to the handloom Co-operatives; quick payment after procurement of cotton fabrics from the Co-operatives by the APCO; and clearance of debts to primary Co-operative Societies by the APCO and employment guarantee to all weaver workers at-least 300 days in a year would save the district from falling into the trap of hungry deaths and suicides observed during the recent past days in different parts of the State.