CHAPTER - VIII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Handlooms are an important craft product and comprise the largest cottage industry of the country. Millions of looms across the country are engaged in weaving cotton, silk and other natural fibers. There is hardly a village where weavers do not exist, each weaving out the traditional beauty of India's own precious heritage. Poets of the Mughal durbar likened our muslins to baft hawa (woven air), abe rawan (running water) and shabnam (morning dew). A tale runs that Emperor Aurangzeb had a fit of rage when he one day saw his daughter princess Zeb-un-Nissa clad in almost nothing. On being severely rebuked, the princess explained that she had not one but seven jamahs (dresses) on her body. Such was the fineness of the hand woven fabrics. Handloom industry is perhaps the most important one among the hundreds of small scale and cottage arts and crafts that have survived in present day India. Indian handloom literally refers to a traditional weaving method; symbolically it stands for much more. It represents a philosophical way of life. The philosophy is the simple faith of folk artisan - the handloom weaver - the man behind the loom.

Weaving is a specialized activity, which involves in different processes before the raw material is turned into a finished product. Weaving is quite simply the interlacing of two sets of threads, usually at right angles to one another, to form a fabric. To a casual observer weaving on the handlooms may appear a simple process but in reality it involves a number of laborious preliminary processes before the yarn is put on the loom. They are dying, loosening, unwinding, pirn winding, warping, sizing, starching, twisting, beaming, reeding and weaving. Handloom industry occupies an important position in nation’s economy, contributes about 14 per cent to the industrial production and about 5 per cent to the GDP. The contribution of this industry to the gross export earnings of the country is 1/3 of the total exports, while adding only 6 to 7 per cent to the gross import bill of the country. This is the second largest provider of employment to about 35 million people including substantial segments of SC/ST and women.
India occupies first position (84.7 per cent), with 3.90 million, out of world's total capacity of 4.60 million handlooms. The handloom industry in the country has shown reasonable growth in the past. In terms of employment potential, it is only next to agriculture and it is estimated that it provides employment to 124 lakh persons working on 38 lakh looms, of whom 60 per cent are women. In Andhra Pradesh alone, there are over 3 lakh handlooms and it affords livelihood to around 8 lakhs families. For the welfare of handloom industry and weavers, Government is spending annually around 55 to 60 crores. For the overall development of Handloom industry and to overcome the present crisis, state Government has taken several steps. Few important policies for development of handlooms, photo identity cards to handloom weavers for providing development schemes/services directly to weavers, 'ADARANA' Scheme for equipment and skill development, special enforcement machinery to look after handloom reservation, establishment of houses, work sheds to weavers, 'Free Lance designer project’ to develop new designs, pension for aged weavers etc.

In the present study, the Handloom weaver households are classified into five broad categories namely, Independent Weavers, Master Weavers, Co-operative Weavers, Weavers under Middlemen and Labour weavers. The Independent weaver has his own looms and works in his own or rented house and sells product in his own way of market. The Master Weaver is similar to the independent weaver in many respects except for the fact that he employs outside labour for weaving. The Co-operative weavers are members of a co-operative society and also they weave for the society. These weavers take yarn from the society and after finishing the product must sell to the society. Weavers under Middlemen or Dealers or Traders, have own or rented houses and looms also, but they work under Master Weavers or Middlemen. The Middleman supply yarn and after finishing the product the weaver return it to middleman, and he pays wages at piece rate to the weaver who works under him. The labour weavers do not have own looms and weaving sheds. The Master Weaver provides the loom sheds and other required materials with advance of money, and then the labour weaver works on piece wage rate.
In the year 1955, The All India Handlooms Fabric Marketing Co-operative Society was registered in Bombay. The object of the Society was to support, protect, maintain, increase and promote sales of handloom cloth. The Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation of India (HHEC) was set up in 1962 as an undertaking of the Government of India for Trade development by catalyzing exports of handicrafts and handloom products. The Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC) was constituted in 1966 by Government of India as the Nodal Agency for export promotion efforts related to the handloom textile sectors. The Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers’ Cooperative Society Limited (APCO) Hyderabad was formed in the year 1976 by meeting three Regional Weavers’ Cooperatives by a State Government ordinance. The APCO established export division, export godowns, and developing production for export varieties. In the year 1983, the National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC) was established to render every possible service to the handloom sector with the objectives of higher productivity, better quality and increase earnings for the poor weavers. After that the Association of Corporations and Apex Societies for Handloom (ACASH) was registered in 1984 in New Delhi. It serves as the Nodal Agency for supply of handloom products to be purchased by Central Government Department / Agencies / Public Sector undertakings etc.

The Andhra Pradesh Co-operative Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative Society Ltd. (APCO) was formed to help the members of the Society. It assists by supplying the raw yarn, dyes, chemicals, etc. and arranging the marketing facilities. Andhra Pradesh is famous for its shirting fabrics, block-printed fabrics and made ups, tie-dye materials known as I-Kat and Saries, Lungees, Batik Prints, Kalamkari Prints etc. The year 1991 witnessed starvation deaths of handloom weavers in Andhra Pradesh, Several measures were taken at that time to ameliorate the condition of the weavers. After that a number of schemes like Project Package Scheme (1991-92), WorkShed cum Housing Scheme (1992), Group Insurance Scheme (1992-93) Handloom Development Centres (1993). Looms with equipment to loom less weavers under R.D.P. (1993-94), Training for Weavers under TRYSEM (1994-95), Common Facilities Centeres with JRY assistance (1994-95). Hank Yarn Price Subsidy
Scheme (1994-95), Yarn at Gate Price (1956-96), New Insurance Scheme (1997-98) and Deen Dayal Harhkargha Yojana (2000-01) were launched. During 2005-06 new schemes such as Health Insurance Schemes, Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana and Integrated Cluster Development Scheme were introduced for the benefit of weavers.

In Prakasam District the weavers’ population account for 60,000 members and weaver households are 11,982, as per District census 2001. The weavers’ population consists of Devanga, Padmasali, Karnasali, Thogata and Kaikala castes. There are 16,000 looms in the district. There are 56 Co-operative Societies, which are registered, out of which about 40 per cent of societies in dormant state and the rest of the societies are also not functioning well. Geographically, Prakasam District is divided into three divisions, namely Kandukur, Markapur and Ongole. The district comprises of 56 mandals and of them weavers spread in 52 mandals. Prakasam District is famous for handloom fabrics. Weavers in this District achieved National Awards for Saree weaving in different years. It is famous for Cotton Saris, Zari Saris, Silk Saris and Pattimarpu Cloth etc. It has National and International recognition and fame in terms of quality Zari, apart from Silk Saris, Cotton Saris and other items of handloom fabrics.

The majority of respondent weavers in the district belong to the age groups of 15 to 65 years and even two couple of weavers are aged about 75 to 85 years. The handloom industry in the district is in the hands of mostly, adults and the aged. Out of sample respondent weavers male weavers constitute 93.11 per cent and female weavers are 06.89 per cent. Thus men constitute greater proportion than women. Women and children mainly involve in activities like, pre-weaving. The weavers are confined to a limited number of castes namely, Devanga, Padmasali, Karnasali, Thogata and Kaikala. Among these castes Devanga is prominent in the district. Their educational status has positive effects on weaving activity. Educated weaver can understand better the market conditions and can adapt or adjust his production activity to suit the changing needs of the customer. Among the sample weavers, illiterates constitute 31.48 per cent and those with Primary education are 41.64 per cent, 25.57 per cent have Secondary education and 1.31 per cent only are graduates. Thus the
weavers are with low educational standards. The average family size of master weavers and weavers under middlemen are greater than that of others. A large number of households have 3 to 4 (54.10 per cent) persons and next 5 to 6 (22.95 per cent) persons as family members. 

All the sample weavers originally come from weaving community background and so have taken up weaving as their occupation. But 61.64 per cent have opted this profession as an inheritance, 14.43 per cent have opted this due to unemployment and remaining weavers that is less percentage have chosen only to earn money, for self employment, due to lack of education and lack of investment capacity. The overall sample survey reveals that the highest percentage of all categories of weavers get annual income of Rs. 8,000/- to Rs. 10,000/- and least percentage of them earn the highest annual income of Rs.32,000/- and above. In case of master weavers the range of annual income is between Rs.12,000/- and above Rs 32,000/-. Weavers get more surplus amount during busy season and suffer with deficit during normal and slack seasons.

Housing is one of the basic needs of the family and most of the weavers carry on their weaving activities at their residence. Prakasam District is a coastal area and so rainy season occurs during the months of June and December. So it is an obstacle to the weavers to work on looms. Weavers in the study area, constituting 43.28 per cent live in Terra houses, 32.13 per cent live in own and rented thatched houses and 24.59 per cent only have their own or rented Pucca houses. Most of the independent and master weavers are living in their own pucca houses. Some of the weavers under middlemen, and labour weavers are living in their own as well rented terra houses. As regards to looms, of the total 48.52 per cent comprising of independent weavers, weavers under middlemen and cooperative weavers have only one loom each, 14.42 per cent of weavers have 2 looms except labour weavers. The labour weavers (31.14 per cent) do not have own looms. In case of master weavers, they are the only category of weavers who are highly distributed respondents by number of looms with the highest number of looms from 2 to 13 looms, though they are less in number of all in the study. Regarding possession of assets, as it is observed, of the total sample respondents,
62.10 per cent have houses of their own and 11.82 per cent possess lands, while 17.93 per cent only possess own looms and equipment. Among all the categories of weavers, very least percentage have live stock and others. The average value of assets of a weaver is Rs. 15,029/- but the amount could not reach all categories of weavers except master weavers. The average value of assets of master weavers only amounts to Rs. 46,000/- where as other weavers are not able to reach even to the range of to Rs. 12,000/- on average.

Most of the independent and master weavers have introduced the Jacquards and Dobbies with fly shuttle pit looms, which can be used for weaving multi coloured designed cloth. Co-operative weavers are also using jacquards and dobbies in large number, whereas the weavers under middlemen and labour weavers are still using fly shuttle pit looms, who constitute 62.12 per cent and 56.84 per cent respectively. The association between type of weaver and type of loom is significant. Even the weavers under middlemen and labour weavers have skills for weaving on jacquards or on dobbies with multi coloured fabrics. Prakasam District is a place of fame for the handloom industry and it is famous for Cotton Saris, Zari Saris and silk saris. It has achieved National and International recognition and fame apart from Silk and Cotton Saris for other items of handloom cloth like pattimarpu (export cloth), lungees, bed sheets and shirting. Besides traditional items, there is also remarkable advancement in weaving of mixed blend of silk and polyester saris.

The weaving hours for a weaver in Prakasam district, as observed from an in-depth field survey, per 22 sq - meters of production by different types of weavers for different types of products, range from 45 hours to 81 hours. In the case of Cotton, Silk, Zari, Polyester Saries and Dress or CECO materials the weaving hours range from 69 hours to 81 hours, whereas for other material like shirting, lungees and pattimarpu cloth, it ranges from 45 to 55 hours. The high range of profitable product is found to be the product of the Master weaver, Independent weaver and Co-operative weaver. But in case of weavers under middlemen and labour weavers, it is observed that they are not able to weave good profitable product due to lack of working capital and own equipment. In this case the analysis of variance among types of weavers is large and significantly different. There is high dependency between caste and
product group. The Padmasali caste dominates the other castes. Almost all types of weavers usually weave from 6 am to 9 pm with a break of 2 to 4 hours. Thus, the weaver weaves 10 to 12 hours per day. The number of man-days for a weaver is 190 to 240 days in a year. The number of working days and hours for different types of weavers are slightly few in case of independent weavers and master weavers and slightly higher than that of co-operative weavers, weavers under middlemen and labour weavers. Generally hired labours are paid wages on piece rate system. In case of pre-weaving process work, they may fix labour rate according to the nature of work.

The operational costs of various products for different types of weavers are almost all, the same. The operational cost per 22 Sq. meter cloth, in case of Silk Saris, Zari Saris, Polyester Saris, Dress Materials and CECO materials ranges from Rs. 1360/- to Rs. 1635/-, but in case of Cotton Saris, Shirtings, Lungees and Pattimarpu cloth, the range is from Rs. 250 to Rs. 840/-. The operational costs are same to all types of weavers. Weaving is a traditional activity in the study area. As regards to training programmes, it is observed that of the total 305 respondent weavers, only 25.25 per cent have undergone training programmes. Of them 7.21 per cent have taken technical training, 8.52 per cent have had design development training, 9.52 per cent have had dyeing techniques training, but it is to be noted that 74.75 per cent of weavers have not been provided training in any one of the programmes. So the study evidently reveals that all the sample weavers belong to weaving community and by birth they imbibe the art of weaving. Master weavers are also providing training if any weaver needs it.

Once a product is finished, or a sari is ready, it must find a buyer, as the weaver is economically weak and needs the return immediately. The weaver can not wait for the sale of products for a long time. A weaver spends 7 to 10 days to produce a fabric and wait for another 30 days to sell it and thus his precious labour time and his working capital is held up. This is the problem of an Independent weaver and a Master Weaver. Some times Co-operative weavers face this problem. But the Weavers under Middlemen and Labour weavers are getting wages or advance payment from his master weaver.
The master weavers control the producers by giving loans and supplying yarn on one hand and on the other hand, maintain close contacts with wholesalers and also maintain their own retail outlets through which they directly contact the consumer. In case of co-operative weavers they sell to APCO through Primary Weavers Co-operative Societies. Some times the master weavers and independent weavers also sell their product to these societies in the name of Cooperative Society. The main purpose of APCO and other Co-Operative Societies is to work as marketing outlets to the members as well as to the members of societies. They also maintain retail shops and sell the handloom fabrics to consumers.

In the area of study, 157 (51.48 per cent) weavers have subscribed membership in Co-operative societies. Out of them only 18 (11.46 per cent) weavers sell their product to co-operative societies. The remaining are non co-operative members, so they do not have relation with the society. As regards to mode of purchase of yarn, 46.15 per cent of respondents comprising of Master Weavers, Independent weavers and Cooperative weavers purchase on credit, while 24.36 per cent on cash and 24.36 per cent both cash and credit. Least percentage of (5.13 per cent) co-operative weavers purchase yarn from agencies. In the opinion of the all categories of weavers except weavers under middlemen and labour weavers, to purchase Yarn directly from market is the best source. To fix the price of a product, cost should be taken in to consideration. The dependency on price fixation and type of weavers is significant.

Independent weavers, Master weavers and Co-operative weavers opine that they are not getting reasonable profit due to lack of government involvement (24.36 per cent), and competition from powerloom products (24.36 per cent), middlemen involvement (19.23 per cent), lack of marketing facilities (15.38 per cent) and very low percentage consider that the cost of production is high and the wages of labour also at higher level. All the weavers opine that the best channel of selling product is direct market. Secondly they prefer to sell through societies and thirdly through market agencies. In case of basis of selling, 43.59 per cent prefer to sell on cash basis, 34.61 per cent on credit basis and 14.10 per cent on advance basis and a least percentage i.e. 7.70 per cent on middlemen account basis. The Profit / Loss of a
product depend on sufficiency of working capital. If the working capital is more, the profit will be at higher level. The profit range per 22 sq-metre of a cloth of different products is Rs. 140/- to Rs. 645/-. The highest profit is acquired from Zari Saris at Rs. 645/-. The least profit is gained from Silk Saris at Rs. 140/-. In this case the relationship between total costs and sale price is calculated. The relation shows positive. When the cost of a product increases, then the sale price also increases.

Handloom industry is facing many problems related to technology, raw materials, working capital, production, pre-loom process, marketing, competition, fascinating factors and other problems that compel them to commit suicides. Hike in price of yarn increases from 12 per cent to 29 per cent during 1997-2005. The same change has not been in wages as well as price of the product. In price of the product, variation is 14 to 21 per cent only. Most of the weavers need fixed capital investment which ranges from Rs. 10,000/- to Rs 20,000/- and working capital range is less than Rs.10,000/- (46.88 per cent) and Rs. 10,000/- to Rs 20,000/- (31.15 per cent). It is observed that the size of weaving activity in Prakasam District is very limited. In production, the major problem that is being faced by all categories of weavers is mainly climatic conditions and power shortages.

In pre loom process the requirement of help in all categories of weavers has no significant difference. The pre loom process of any weaver needs help from family members, neighbors, colleagues and hired labour. Marketing is also an important problem; the weavers are facing competition from mill and power-loom products. Majority of the weavers are not getting reasonable price and profit for their product, including the middlemen. There are no proper promotional methods in the handloom sector in Prakasam district and no weavers’ group can give advertisements. Very low percentage of weavers attends the fairs and exhibitions to expose their products. The weavers face the problem of competition from mill and powerloom products on one side and lack of promotional techniques on the other. This creates critical situation to weavers.
Most of the societies are not in a position to supply raw yarn and to provide marketing facilities for its members’ product. These co-operative societies have failed to provide continuous work to the members. So, the members of society are compelled to yield to the temptations of middlemen or master weavers. Because of this the weavers have not been in co-operative fold. Of the fascinating factors for weaver under middlemen and labour weavers were firstly, lack of own equipment, secondly, advance payment by middlemen. In this way the middlemen are attracting weavers by giving advance payments and providing equipments. Consequently, the labour weaver or weaver under middleman is under the shackles of his master. In recent years, many of weavers ended their lives due to various problems. Some of them starved to death and some committed suicides. According to the ranking given by the respondents to the above disaster, lack of Government assistance, competition from powerloom products, creditor’s force, middlemen involvement etc., is the major causes for these miseries and crisis. The weaving activity is profitable for some weavers, whereas for others it is not affording adequate profits due to many reasons. Most of the weavers are unable to maintain a good standard of living. Poverty is a common prevalent among weaver households.

Most of the Handloom weavers in all areas are living below poverty line means that there is no proper pucca house, no healthy food, and no clothes. There is no working or fixed capital investment, not even some piece-meal of projects such as, a workshed-cum-housing and project package schemes are not being provided. They merely perpetuate the existing conditions. There have not been any needed plans on basic requirements of the produce. Facilities such as house, land, food, water and electricity need to be provided in many places. On the other hand, powerlooms are getting more usable support from the Government in procuring house, land, food, water and electricity. Natural calamities like, heavy rains or floods or cyclones frequently occur in places like Prakasam district. So the weavers need at least pucca house with continuous electricity. The Government should understand and provide pucca houses under the schemes mentioned above or State Government programmes like "INDIRAMMA" schemes to establish pucca houses and
facilitating with continuous electricity and drinking water facility. This is very essential need for a weaver. Moreover most of the weavers have looms of their own while some others do not have. So the Government should provide moderate working capital and looms to loom less weavers. This may help weaver to weave independently.

The fixed capital on handloom industry in this district is higher than the working capital. This peculiar situation of fixed capital to be greater than the working capital in the handloom industry arises due to the fact that the working capital has been scarce. This is due to the non-availability of institutional sources for the weavers to secure finance towards working capital. The weavers depend more on their own sources for the fixed capital. This infers that the weavers with own capital alone are able to setup own looms. For the working capital, the weavers depend on their own sources or moneylenders and or friends and relatives. Very few institutional sources are there to provide working capital to the weavers. There are more advantages from fly shuttle frame looms than the fly shuttle pit looms. The installation of frame looms with jacquards should be encouraged by the support of Government by giving cash credits, wherever the weavers have adequate accommodation in their houses. In addition to that, periodical adequate technical guidance has to be provided by the Government through the office of Assistant Director for Handlooms and Textiles to cope with latest designs and tastes of the consumers. Cotton is the primary material to produce the fabric. Weaving is a rural and semi-urban production activity and weavers have to go far to get their yarn. Moreover yarn prices are steadily increasing. The availability of hank yarn is necessary in which the basic material from which weaving is done. It is a serious issue because it is controlled by spinning mills, which see more profit in large volume cone yarn. Secondly, since hank yarn is tax free and has subsidies, enormous amounts are diverted to power-loom and to mill sectors. There is a big shortage of yarn to weave.

In this case the Government should take a forward step, first to decentralize spinning units in villages where handloom clusters are set up. The units should be enabled to have direct linkage between farmers and weavers, which essentially decrease the cost of yarn and thus the cost of handloom products. Since, the cost of setting up the units is of high
investment for a producer, the Government should provide financial assistance or subsidy and support. The Co-operative system is a bridge between the weavers and market. Since they themselves supply yarn, they have to take the finished products from the weavers and sell them to various marketing agencies. Since Co-operative Societies help in maximizing the benefits for weavers in the entire chain of production and marketing, their present condition is a cause of concern. The Co-operative system has utterly failed in selling finished products as the handloom Cooperative system is riddled with corruption and political interference. Many handloom weavers in Prakasam District, though they are not members of these Cooperatives, still make better profits as they all join together forming private limited companies.

The advantages of private limited companies over the Cooperative Societies are: firstly, there is no political interference, secondly, the members of the company are themselves in the responsible position and are partners in the board of company. So they can guide the company in better ways obviously resulting in fine profits, which they share among themselves. Thirdly unlike a cooperative society, the private limited company is not restricted to a particular area and a product marketing company has no limitations or finally, as they maintain clear trading and profit / loss accounts as well as balance sheet, there is good source of getting loans from commercial banks and other financial institutions. So the weavers though not belong to any co-operative society can make a better living with higher gains than the weavers in co-operative society. So the Government should give a thought to this and not only stop utilizing co-operative societies as primary sources for routing Government funds and schemes but should also seek a better-way for making all the weavers to avail all their schemes, funds and also motivate them to form Independent Private Limited Companies, joining weavers of adjacent mandals.

The weavers in the district also face many problems in marketing of the handloom cloth. These problems are due to the seasonal demand for the handloom cloth, the existence of intermediaries, lack of storage facilities and lack of finance to wait for the reasonable price. All these aspects with regard to marketing need considerable attention by the Government. It has to maintain stocks by purchasing the finished cloth immediately after the
production, enabling the weavers to continue the activity. Necessary marketing finance should be provided so that the weavers can wait for the reasonable price. APCO helps the cooperative weavers in marketing their products. Other weavers sell their products either directly or to the dealers. However, the weavers do not have their own marketing outlets which can improve their bargaining power.

Handloom products require more visibility. This means better and wider market network, one of the exhibitions organized with the support of Government do not suffice. Presently, handloom products are available only in a few places. It is necessary to expand and to develop the market beyond the upper reaches. The view that is domestic demand for Handlooms has no prospects of growth. So the Government should announce to schools and all Government employees to wear weekly at least one day handloom products, at least one day in a week to provide and support good growth to the market. In case of export to the W.T.O agreement, on textile clothing there is going to be more free export and import of handlooms and textiles. The handloom sector, as a traditional area, can claim some special packages or discriminatory measures. To protect this kind of production, options and policy measures need to be worked out either by independent institutions or by the Government.

The Handloom product designs and varieties are not today's piece but very ancient. So they need to be protected. Protection options include development of handloom fabrics markets and registration under Geographical Indications Act. However, more discussion is required on this, if handloom has to come up with design that suit the market preferences and are still to be protected against theft. During the last 10 years, the budget allocation of Government of India for handloom industry has been decreasing gradually and continuously. The revision is always downward varying between 10 to 20 per cent.

For the last five years the Handloom weavers have been facing crucial problems. Starvation deaths on one side and suicides on the other. Adding more to this misery, the Government of India reduced the budget which had already allotted. So the Government of India should open eyes to provide Budget Revision, enhancement of programmes at least in
the years to come and to implement new schemes with proper attention, in view of the weavers healthy benefit. The story of handloom sector should be included in the syllabus of the schools and colleges. Though the people of India know the fact that the self sufficiency and self employment is possible through handloom sector, the long studying problem in India and in the world that is poverty can be repelled.

The perception that handloom is an industry dependent on government subsidy needs to go, particularly given that over 80 per cent of the weavers in the State who are under master weavers and without any access to government welfare schemes. There is also a need to have an independent handloom policy; now it is part of the National Textile Policy. There is a huge demand for handloom products' and there also exists the capacity in terms of skill and resources, to meet this demand. But the problem is the gap between the two, primarily because the support structures such as marketing channels, research, credit and training facility have not evolved to keep pace with the rise in demand. Facilitating structures need to be evolved. For instance, most handloom clusters are outside main trading centres. Physical infrastructure such as access to roads, efficient public transportation system and so on needs to be provided. This will improve the weavers' market access dramatically. Similarly, there is no regulatory mechanism to control prices of raw material such as yarn, dyes and chemicals. Credit facility also needs to be strengthened. Only with such policies can the handlooms survive. Product or design development should emphasize each region's strengths -for example, tie-and-dye ikat designs of Pochampally or handloom silk saris of Dharmavaram. Projecting an identity for each region can play an important role in capturing larger markets and avoiding infra-industry competition. The more serious problem is that, very often, market information does not flow freely down to the primary producer. This is particularly true in informal marketing channels and private trade networks. This lack of transparency makes it impossible to replicate growth strategies and assess growth potential.

It is well known that the wage structure in the handloom industry is very disparate, and depends on factors such as the product and the production channel (cooperative or master weaver). A coherent labour and wage policy is essential if successful marketing practices are to translate into stable livelihoods for the primary producers. Not only is the handloom
industry disparate, but it also has to fight for market space with the mills and powerlooms. This creates imbalances, particularly when powerlooms imitate handloom products in total disregard of the Handloom Reservation Act. Thus, a regulatory framework consisting of civil society and producer groups and state representatives - is important particularly given the varied and often clashing interests of the different players. Given the diversity of the handloom industry, there cannot be one model that can be replicated throughout the State. Development models can be evolved for each weaving region only through engagement with the field. If handlooms and traditional powerlooms are to be revived, a change in the government's thinking is crucial.

The handloom industry has, unquestionably, been going through periodic crises, and the situation has been particularly acute in the last couple of decades. This has resulted in the erosion of rural livelihoods in weaving, and also a displacement of labour. This sense of crisis, it could be argued, is not new, and that this has been the case for nearly a century now. However, that would be to misperceive the basic fact that the nature and intensity of the crises has been changing. There have been several new developments in the Indian economy over the last two decades that need to be taken seriously, and new strategies to deal with the situation have to be worked out. It is such changing conditions that have to be emphasized, rather than simply repeat the dominant perception that the handloom industry has always been on a path of decline, etc.

The needs of the handloom sector as an industry have to be addressed keeping in mind the diversities obtaining at the ground level and the problems faced by primary producers, rather than developed in a top-down fashion. A number of policy recommendations are based on aggregate data, which do not reflect the radical diversity in forms of organization, production patterns and types of product in each region. The concept of handloom product reservation is to protect the handloom sector from powerlooms and mill sectors. Though it is seen in protectionist terms in this sector, in reality, the concept is different from market, which is the identification of market boundaries for different products.
and linking them up with best-suited production units, without entering into unnecessary competition across the whole production range.

As per the Handloom Reservation Act, 22 items were reserved for production in the handloom sector (these have been recently reduced to 11). So the implementation of Handloom Reservation Act has always been the bone of contention between officials and handloom weavers. Officials cite the technical specification of product reserved under the act as the main difficulty for effective implementation. A good suggestion is that to reserve, specific products with entire categories of items for production by Handloom sector, such as saries, lungees, dhotis, etc, the Local District Level Government Officers should be set up to closely monitor the proper implementation of the Reservation Act.

As per Hank Yarn obligation, spinning mills are required to process 50 per cent of their yarn production in hank form, required by the handloom sector, and the rest in cone form used by powerlooms and mills. But in reality, says the Hyderabad based Centre for Handloom Information and Communication (CHIC) set up in response to the crisis in the handloom industry, the mills never met the target, the actual deliveries of hank yarn generally averaging about 25 per cent of total yarn output. In addition to the shortage of hank yarn for handlooms, the situation was aggravated by large scale poaching of hank yarn by the powerloom sector which passed off powerloom products as handlooms. The powerloom sector violated the Reservation Act as well with impunity by producing items reserved for the handloom sector as there was none to check the offences though these were non-bailable, if detected. Jain, hence pleads that the preservation of lakhs and lakhs of existing jobs, as in the handloom sector, should come before creation of jobs. The government will never be able to provide alternative jobs to 12.5 million people dependent on handlooms. Jain argues, "Unemployment is curse enough for the millions afflicted by it, but the disgust and hopelessness, if not deception, heaped on their heads and hopes by the policy-makers should make Mother India weep". As Jean Dreze has said at the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad recently, "given their circumstances, it is a wonder how millions of poor find the courage to
live and struggle at all." Possibly, the handloom weavers are the first ones declaring with their suicides that there is a limit to their courage and struggle.

Though successive committees and other reports concede that handloom sector is extremely heterogeneous, this recognition is not reflected in textile policy formulations. A more realistic understanding of the problems of weavers and a suitably flexible categorization has therefore to be devised based on realities obtaining at the field level. The needs and entitlements of the industry such as credit and yarn support, need to be further examined and analysed. Detailed research into yarn production, yarn availability and the major agents and factors in this process is necessary. Similarly, an objective and detailed assessment of the structure of weaver cooperatives is necessary. Such evaluative exercises will indicate forms of cooperatives suited to responsible functioning among primary producer families, and what the functions of such entities would be. It is also necessary to realize that while specific issues such as product reservations and the hank yarn obligation are vital ingredients of the textile policy and must be systematically pursued, the impact of wider economic reforms (such as industrial and trade policies) on the handloom sector also require research. Only a holistic approach to these interlinked issues will provide an impetus to the growth prospects of the handloom industry.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- The weaving hours for a weaver in Prakasm district, as observed from an in-depth field survey, per 22 sq - meters of production by different types of weavers for different types of products, range from 45 hours to 81 hours.

- In the case of Cotton, Silk, Zari, Polyester Saries and Dress or CECO materials the weaving hours range from 69 hours to 81 hours, whereas for other material like shirting, lungees and pattimarpu cloth, it ranges from 45 to 55 hours.

- The high range of profitable product is found to be the product of the Master weaver, Independent weaver and Co-operative weaver. But in case of weavers under middlemen and labour weavers, it is observed that they are not able to weave good
profitable product due to lack of working capital and own equipment. In this case the analysis of variance among types of weavers is large and significantly different.

- The number of man-days for a weaver is 190 to 240 days in a year. The number of working days and hours for different types of weavers are slightly few in case of independent weavers and master weavers and slightly higher than that of co-operative weavers, weavers under middlemen and labour weavers.
- The operational costs of various products for different types of weavers are almost all, the same.
- The weaver cannot wait for the sale of products for a long time. A weaver spends 7 to 10 days to produce a fabric and wait for another 30 days to sell it and thus his precious labour time and his working capital is held up. This is the problem of an Independent weaver and a Master Weaver.
- In the area of study, 157 (51.48 per cent) weavers have subscribed membership in Co-operative societies. Out of them only 18 (11.46 per cent) weavers sell their product to co-operative societies. The remaining are non co-operative members, so they do not have relation with the society.
- In the opinion of all categories of weavers except weavers under middlemen and labour weavers, to purchase Yarn directly from the market is the best source. To fix the price of a product, cost should be taken in to consideration. The dependency on price fixation and type of weavers is significant.
- Independent weavers, Master weavers and Co-operative weavers opine that they are not getting reasonable profit due to lack of government involvement (24.36 per cent), and competition from powerloom products (24.36 per cent), middlemen involvement (19.23 per cent), lack of marketing facilities (15.38 per cent) and very low percentage consider that the cost of production is high and the wages of labour also at higher level.
- The profit range per 22 sq-metre of a cloth of different products is Rs. 140/- to Rs. 645/-. The highest profit is acquired from Zari Saris at Rs. 645/-. The least profit is gained from Silk Saris at Rs. 140/-. In this case the relationship between total costs
and sale price is calculated. The relation shows positive. When the cost of a product increases, then the sale price also increases.

- Most of the weavers need fixed capital investment which ranges from Rs. 10,000/- to Rs 20,000/- and working capital range is less than Rs.10,000/- (46.88 per cent) and Rs. 10,000/- to Rs 20,000/- (31.15 per cent). It is observed that the size of weaving activity in Prakasam District is very limited. In production, the major problem that is being faced by all categories of weavers is mainly climatic conditions and power shortages.

- Marketing is also an important problem; the weavers are facing competition from mill and power-loom products. Majority of the weavers are not getting reasonable price and profit for their products.

- There are no proper promotional methods in the handloom sector in Prakasam district and no weavers’ group can give advertisements. Very low percentage of weavers attends the fairs and exhibitions to expose their products. The weavers face the problem of competition from mill and powerloom products on one side and lack of promotional techniques on the other. This creates critical situation to weavers.

- Handloom industry is facing many problems related to technology, raw materials, working capital, production, pre-loom process, marketing, competition, fascinating factors and other problems that compel them to commit suicides.

**Perceptions of the handloom households in the study area**

Majority of the handloom weaver households in the study area have expressed the following feelings, while they are met and discussed during the period of field data collection, for the study of An Analysis on Production and Marketing of Handloom Fabrics in Andhra Pradesh, A case study of Prakasam District.

- The Handloom weavers of the Prakasam district have expressed that the Government should work more in favour of promoting Handloom sector and should strengthen the
Handloom Societies, particularly in marketing their products and availing the required yarn at reasonable rate.

- The Weavers' Co-operative Societies should be started in each handloom village.
- The weaver’s co-operative society should work honestly without indulging in unfair practices and channelise the benefits, facilities and incentives offered to the weavers.
- The Government should take initiation for the effective organisation of handloom co-operative societies at village level and 'APCO' at state level.
- Some of the weaver households have suggested to start more retail outlets by APCO to market the handloom cloth.
- The individual weavers of this district are in need of working capital and they need Government’s involvement to direct commercial banks and regional rural banks to supply adequate, cheap and timely credit to handloom weavers.
- The handloom weavers are expecting financial assistance especially during the rainy season and cyclone period to meet their needs and the same should be repayable in small installments to the providing financial agency.
- Because, Prakasam district is a coastal one. The weavers of this area are very frequently face disasters of severe cyclones. So they need pucca permanent houses in order to protect their looms and raw materials in all seasons.
- They also demand the District Handloom authorities to monitor and implement the Handloom Reservations Act in the district strictly.
- The weavers of this district have stated that all the government employees should wear handloom garments at least once in a week and the government should take a policy to distribute the handloom cloth only, to all the government hostels and offices to generate weavers’ income and prevent the starvation deaths.
SUGGESTIONS

- The Handloom sector is facing severe competition from the powerlooms and large scale textile units in promoting the products. To solve this problem the Government should provide more sales outlets and purchase their requirements from the weavers.
- The Handloom Boards should work more in favour of promoting Handloom sector and should strengthen the Handloom Societies, particularly in marketing their products.
- The Government should extend the reserved items for handlooms and strictly implement the same. Implementation mechanism should be monitored from time to time.
- The Government should provide proper work sheds and electrification to the work sheds to the weaver community to work more efficiently.
- The Government should provide pucca permanent houses for the Handloom weavers in order to protect their looms and raw materials in all seasons.
- The Government should provide financial assistance to the handloom weavers especially in the rainy season to meet their needs. The given financial assistance is repayable in small instalments to the government.
- The Government should provide working capital to individual weaver and also marketing provision in order to elevate the economical condition of individual weaver.
- The Government should educate the weaver in modern methods of dyeing, weaving and designing etc. and also provide the necessary raw materials (hank yarn) at the concessional rates.
- The ‘APCO’ should make prompt and 100 per cent payment to handloom cooperative societies.
- The co-operative society should work honestly without indulging in unfair practices and channelize the benefits, facilities and incentives offered to the weavers.
- The Government should take initiation to start the weavers’ co-operative societies in each handloom village.
Voluntary social service organizations can educate the poor weavers in spending their income in a rational manner in order to get maximum satisfaction and also to avoid over spending on unnecessary items. This reduces the size of their expenditure. Ultimately, the debt burden among handloom weavers is to be reduced by increasing their income, reducing expenditure and reducing the cost of debt.

Weavers should realize themselves that the co-operatives have come into existence for the welfare of the weavers.

The weavers should observe the latest market trends and produce the fast moving items.

The Government should induce and direct commercial bank and regional rural banks to supply adequate, cheap and timely credit to handloom weavers.

CONCLUSION:

It is hoped that everyone will agree that the handloom industry under the informal sector is one of the major industries that needs immediate care and attention. The handloom sector is next only to agriculture in respect of employment potential and with this declining trend in the handloom sector the problems of unemployment will aggravate.

While the country is depending equally on all the three sectors, i.e., handloom, powerloom and the mills to meet the clothing needs, the declining trend in handloom sector is certainly an unhealthy phenomenon. If this trend is allowed to continue then the country with the population increasing at 1.2 crore every year has to suffer for want of cloth.

So the planning people of Andhra Pradesh should realise the importance of handloom sector and allocate the required funds for the upliftment of rural handloom weavers to avoid starvation deaths and the decline in handloom industry.