<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMY</td>
<td>Indira Mahila Yojana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRDP</td>
<td>Integrated Rural Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NABARD</td>
<td>National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAER</td>
<td>National Council of Applied Economic Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCT</td>
<td>National Council of Co-operative Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCDC</td>
<td>National Co-operative Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCTD</td>
<td>National Center for Textile Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCUI</td>
<td>National Co-operative Union of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHDC</td>
<td>National Handloom Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIFT</td>
<td>National Institute of Fashion Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTC</td>
<td>National Textile Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHWCS</td>
<td>Primary Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self Help Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP</td>
<td>Socio Economic Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDBI</td>
<td>Small Industries Development Bank of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRYSEM</td>
<td>Training for Rural Youth for Self Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>University Grants Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFPR</td>
<td>Work Force Participation Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSC</td>
<td>Women Service Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Introduction

In ancient India, woman is portrayed as indefatigable gruhini. Her work is confined to home and take care of her husband and children. Her husband is the real God on the earth to her. She invests all her energies for the welfare of the family. For centuries, women have been subjected to exploitation by men in the male dominated society. The male domination continued either by economic necessity or traditional compulsion has taken a heavy toll on women folk. Sadly enough, woman has been neglected and her virtues glossed over by the predominantly male society. The old sanskrit proverb says that udyogam purusha lakshanam. It implies that out side work is done by men and women must do work within the four walls. But rural poor, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers where the earnings of their husbands are not sufficient to meet both the ends, they come out to share the responsibility along with their spouses. In the middle and high class societies women have been confined to their homes due to social inhibitions.

In recent years, there is a tremendous change in the status and position of women in Indian society. It has become essential even for middle class women to come out of their homes due to various factors like domestic needs, soaring prices, change in life style, desire to use acquired knowledge and skills and occupational mobility. The important factor which influences the status of women is their ability to earn an independent income through paid employment. The economic independence of women will enhance their status in the household and society.

The need for empowerment of women arises in India because of sex discrimination in the rights and obligations of women in every sphere of human functioning. The gender roles defined for women are subordinated to those defined for men. Usually men exercised greater power than women in all walks of human life. Besides, men have more cultural and legal power over women. Therefore, men have greater control of and access to resources. The domination
in the rights and roles of men over women calls for empowerment of women. In India, during freedom movement a large section of women participated in dharnas, picketing and protests side by side with men. But after independence, this spirit seemed to have disappeared and women participation in politics has been disappointing. But in recent times the importance of women's participation in politics arises from the fact that politics confers authority to exercise power to make policies and decisions.

**Handloom sector**

The handloom industry is an ancient, decentralized and skill oriented industry spread throughout India. It plays a pivotal role in the development of rural economy by providing gainful employment to a major section of the rural economically poor and dispossessed weavers. The handloom sector produces nearly 22 percent of the total cloth produced in the country and also contributes substantially to the export income of the nation. This industry occupies a place of importance in our country by virtue of its employment potentiality. Its role is quite significant in meeting the cloth requirements of the masses. The handloom sector occupies an important place with its wide ramifications in the socio-economic fabric of the society. The hand woven textiles have a glorious tradition. They are symbolic of Indian culture forming part of great heritage of art. The Indian cotton fabrics enjoyed world wide patronage, especially, in the Eastern and European markets. In history, there are evidences to show that the Indians had known the art of weaving for more than five thousand years. The handloom fabrics of India occupied a priceless place in the civilizations of Egypt, Rome and Babylon. The tradition of weaving in India has been long and glorious and the skill of hand spinner and handloom weaver is of very high order. This proved the high artistic skills of the weavers in an ancient India.

The handloom industry witnessed a significant progress in the post independence period. It is unique in the sense that no other country in the world hand weaving is being carried out vastly on such a nation wide basis. It valiantly withstands the onslaughts of, and stiff competition from mill made
products. Even in the wake of mobility, growing urbanization and technological revolution, it is remained unscathed preserving the ancient tradition of weaving and carrying out reasonable improvement in the tools and accessories. Handloom is a way of life for many people in India. Therefore, it contributes to the maximum extent to improve the living conditions of the women weavers.

The word ‘handloom’ derives its meaning from the process of a country wooden structure called ‘loom’ by hand and with the sole aid of man power. It is the oldest form of making cloth by hand. India is the foremost among the nations preserving the ancient art form of hand-weaving, hand-printing, hand-dyeing and hand-finishing. Apart from our love for tradition and artistic value, weaving provided livelihood to millions of people who depend on the handloom to earn their livelihood. One man or a woman out of every 20 persons in our country makes his living depending upon his hoary craft of hand weaving.

Family industry

Handloom weaving is a family based industry. The inherent skills of the entire family are invested in the creation of cloth produced. Hand weaving is a hereditary occupation. Children followed their fathers and forefathers in weaving cloth and designs. Weaving activity takes place at under shade of a roof. It provides employment for all age groups. Weaving of a cloth involves in two stages, pre-weaving and weaving. Pre-weaving is an unskilled work in which children, women and aged people work for preparation of material for weaving. In preparatory work mainly women participation is more because it can be done leisurely along with the household works. Women and children do reeling and bobbin winding. The preparatory work can be done out of looms. A person who participates in weaving activity has to stand in pit continuously to weave the cloth. Most of the women are willing to participate in preparatory work but in case the women are the bread winner or widows or women who shoulders responsibility of heading family they participate in the weaving
activity on the looms. Women also assisted their husbands when they become tired or sick in the process of weaving.

Cottage industry

Weaving is a family involved activity. One loom can give direct and indirect employment for three persons. One person has to do weaving work, the second person has to do preparatory work and the third person has to do allied work. Since handloom industry is a cottage industry, women prepare to work in the closed houses rather than working out the house exposing to sun. Both men and women weavers are willing to work on looms only because they are accustomed to work in the closed houses only and they have adjusted to that type of environmental conditions. Though it is not a profitable work, still weavers prefer to live on the meager income than to switch over to another work. In this connection, it is quoted from the report of the government of India’s Fact finding committee of 1942 which says the mill will close down if it does not earn a profit but the handloom will go on even if it does not earn a profit because the weavers depend on it helplessly for their livelihood. The textile Industry, which include organized mill sector and unorganized decentralized sector consisting of handlooms, khadi and power looms, plays an important role in the Indian economy. It accounts about 20 percent to industrial production, 8 percent to the GDP and 35 percent to the country’s export earnings. It provides direct employment to 38 millions people. It is the second largest provider of employment after agriculture.

Performance of handloom sector

The handloom sector plays an important role in the country’s economy. As an economic activity, handloom sector occupies a place next to agriculture. This sector today, with about 39 lakhs looms, providing employment to 125 lakhs persons out of which about 60 percent are women. The traditional handloom weaving in India has been kept alive by those professionally skilled weavers household, which inextricably is linked with the
age-old tradition of weaving. However, the sector has been facing various problems like obsolete technology, unorganized production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing links, overall stagnation of production and sales and competition from power looms and mill sector. The rise in yarn prices has always been causing considerable hardship to the weavers all over the country as, yarn being a free market commodity. Its prices are governed by laws of demand and supply. The Government of India has been initiating effective measures to bring down yarn prices and to ensure steady supply. In order to ensure steady availability of yarn, a statutory obligation has been imposed on the spinning mills to pack not less than 40% of their total marketable yarn in the form of hanks. There are further stipulations that at least 80% of such yarn packed should be in the counts of 40s and below.

In order to increase production of fabrics on handloom, which have unique characteristics with sophisticated designs, innovations and improvisation is necessary. Unless the base is sustained and strengthened, its quintessential products cannot be augmented. In view of the needs of training and extension, research and development, Government of India has set up 25 Weavers' Service Centers and 5 Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology. These centers are involved in the areas of product design development, modernization of looms and accessories, improvement in techniques of weaving and associated activities, training and upgradation of skills. Apart from the above measures, a large number of other developmental and welfare measures have also been initiated by the Government of India resultant to which the declining trend in production in the handloom sector had been arrested. Production in the handloom sector recorded a figure of 6947 million sq. meters in the year 2007-08, which is about 26.47% over the production figure of 5493 million sq. meters recorded in the year 2003-04. During 2008-09, production in the handloom sector is reported to be 6,677 million sq. meters.
State wise distribution of handloom weavers

The major handloom states in India are West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Manipur. These six states account for 75% of handloom weaving in the country. The following table 1.1 shows the state wise particulars of handloom weavers.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of the state</th>
<th>Number of weavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>228007 (6.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>30134 (0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1259878 (36.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>45424 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>10130 (0.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>2977 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>14 (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>21350 (0.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>5076 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>47901 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>20773 (0.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>26718 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>71238 (2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>32093 (0.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>12882 (0.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>38985 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>425580 (12.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>81827 (2.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>104676 (3.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>3155 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>5956 (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>37348 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>319600 (9.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>137669 (3.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>221127 (6.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>9077 (0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>270911 (7.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3470506 (100.00)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parliament Note 06.03.2009
Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage to total
Handloom weaving in India is still largely a household enterprise, as well as being predominantly a rural activity (with the exception of Maharashtra). Outside the North eastern states of India, it is men mainly that do full-time weaving. However women are involved in post loom operations such as bleaching, dyeing, finishing and embroidery. Once the Indian cotton handloom fabrics occupied a place of eminence in the markets of US, UK, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Japan and Australia, the main items exported belonged to the segment of home finishing which constituted about 90% of total handloom exports.

**Constraints of the handloom sector**

Major constraints of the handloom sector have been the unorganized nature of weavers, vulnerability to market fluctuations, lack of market information, lack of accessibility and control over financial resources and increasing distance between the consumer and producer. The traditional handloom weavers are wage earners and are not artisans in anyway as they were completely depend on the master weavers. Loans for maintenance, tied sales and buy back arrangements along with input supply from master weavers has ensured that the weavers remain as wage earners. Many weavers due to their natural flair have always innovated on designs however they do not get compensated for the design innovation. All this along with growth in competition from the mill made clothes offering wider designs, low cost and durable substitute have only compounded the problems of weavers. This resulted in low wages high level of indebtedness, under employment and even starvation among weavers.
Categories of weavers

The weavers engaged in handloom weaving, as observed in the field study, belong to the following categories.

1. Independent weaver
2. Dependent weaver
3. Master weaver

Independent weaver

The independent weaver has his own looms and works in his own or rented house. He purchases yarn from the local yarn merchants or from the mobile yarn dealers or from master weavers. He is assisted by his family members. Depending upon the designs and nature of weaving, he employs weavers on wage basis who have talent and skills in weaving certain latest and attracted designs. Even in the marketing of the cloth produced by him, he is independent and sells his cloth to the local or traveling cloth dealers or directly to the purchasers either at his house, work shed or in local merchants who extend financial assistance.

Dependent weaver

For the production of cloth or to meet the social needs, dependent weavers are also found engaged in weaving cloth for the master weavers and weavers registered themselves with the cooperative societies. The weavers working for the master-weavers work either under the putting-out system or work with materials put out to him by the middle men for a pre-determined piece-wage at his home itself. The master weaver supplies yarn either in processed or unprocessed form and specifies the pattern, design and standard of cloth to be woven. This system of weaving insulates the independence of weavers with respect to the technique of weaving and convenience. However, he has to deliver the final cloth produced within the prescribed time schedule to the master-weaver. He is dependent in this respect and the weavers lose the opportunity of employment if he fails to complete the within time. Even at the
cost of his health, the weaver with the assistance of his family members tries to deliver the finished cloth within the specified time prescribed by the master weaver.

Master weaver

Weavers are also weaving cloth under the finance and order system. Under this system, the master weaver provides necessary financial assistance to weavers and orders to weave particular varieties and for the required quantity. In this case, the weaver is free enough to purchase yarn and other materials from the sources well known to him and as per the agreement he has to sell all the cloth to the master weaver. Under this system, in some cases, both raw materials and cash are also provided to the weavers simultaneously. Sometimes the master weavers lend advance at free of interest to the known weavers who work for him only. In general master-weavers act as a multiagency system, which provides employment and income to the weavers, honouring his skills and some cases, exploits the social, financial and marketing weaknesses of the weaver. No doubt, the master-weavers are dynamic exploring both domestic and foreign markets to the extent possible, in turn he stands, in some cases, a barrier to reap the benefits of the Government policies.

Plight of handloom sector

Handloom weavers have been facing severe livelihood crisis because of adverse government policies of globalization and changing socio-economic conditions. The central and state governments have several schemes pertaining to production, inputs, market support and development to safeguard the interests of the weaving community. Ineffective implementation of the schemes and the changed context of the textile industry, increasing competition from the power loom and mill sectors have been largely responsible for the present crisis in the handlooms. Lack of information to weavers regarding various policies and schemes is a significant cause for the dwindling fortunes of the weaver community. In the recent decades, due to lack of information and fast faced changes, practices in hand sector became static.
Presently, Government policies are increasingly influenced by the globalization process and are related to W.T.O included trade regimes. As the controls on exports get liberalized and domestic markets open up, the textile scenario in the country is likely to undergo drastic changes in terms of skills, inputs like designs, market trends and changing demands. Under the economic reforms initiated in 1991 the liberalization on the export of yarn and dyes had its own impact on handlooms and its practitioners. This liberalization led to a sudden increase in the export of yarn and the weavers who were using hank yarn counts of 20's and 40's suffered a lot.

The crisis in handloom sector in India in general and in Andhra Pradesh in particular is due to the emphasis given to the power looms and textile industry. It resulted in negative impact on the handloom industry and the people employed in it in terms of decrease in number of handlooms and the self employed weavers lose their mainly livelihood source. The pathetic situation affected the weaving activity which resulted in loss of empowerment of many women weavers in rural areas. This situation led to starvation, indebtedness, ultimately in some families to suicides of the bread winner of the family.

Suicides in handloom sector

The result of shutdown of handloom units led to unemployment, drastic decrease in daily wages, starvation and increase in indebtedness. This in turn resulted in suicides particularly by bread winner in weavers' families. According to government of Andhra Pradesh between April 1997 to October 2008, 539 cases of suicides were reported but the government recognized only 265 cases of suicides as genuine. According to the knowledgeable sources the number of suicides occurred both in handlooms and power looms are much more than reported by the government sources. For instance P. Suresh an expert observes on the conditions of handlooms and he has a Training Centre in Chirala (AP). Writing in a Telugu daily news paper of Nov. 28th, 2008 says that in Siricilla town in one month 30 power loom weavers committed suicide. Within the last four years according to this expert 300 handloom weavers and
500 power loom weavers resorted to suicide. There may be many more suicides which have not been reported. The government of Andhra Pradesh helps the families of the suicides if they are recorded as genuine by providing ex-gratia amount of 1.50 lakhs besides funeral expenses.

Table 1.2
Statement Showing the district-wise information on suicidal deaths in A. P.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reported</td>
<td>Ex-gratia Sanctioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hand loom</td>
<td>Power loom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>East Godavari</td>
<td>6 0 6 5 0 5 0 0 0 1 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prakasam</td>
<td>24 0 24 15 0 15 8 0 8 1 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>8 0 8 3 0 3 1 0 1 4 0 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chittoor</td>
<td>3 0 3 2 0 2 1 0 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ananthapur</td>
<td>54 0 54 31 0 31 13 0 13 10 0 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kurnool</td>
<td>4 0 4 1 0 1 1 0 1 2 0 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mahabub Nagar</td>
<td>12 1 13 6 0 6 5 1 6 1 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Medak</td>
<td>3 2 5 1 0 1 2 1 3 0 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Karim Nagar</td>
<td>12 306 318 8 148 156 4 157 161 0 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Warangal</td>
<td>48 3 51 19 1 20 28 2 30 1 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nalgonda</td>
<td>46 0 46 23 0 23 11 0 11 12 0 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>2 0 2 0 0 0 2 0 2 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kadapa</td>
<td>3 0 3 2 0 2 1 0 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 0 0 1 0 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>227 312 539 116 149 265 78 161 239 33 2 35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report 2009, Commissioner of Handlooms, Hyderabad
Review of literature:

The present research is an attempt to study in depth, empowerment of women in co-operative handloom sector in Nellore district. It aims to study the socio-economic status of women weavers and their involvement in the weaving activity. The empowerment of women is not up to the mark in handloom sector. The reasons for it are chiefly low literacy rate, gender inequalities and lack of initiation among women. It is necessary to examine and analyze the ways and means to better the situation in view of the socio-economic empowerment of women weavers. Both general and particular studies such as the present one are necessary. Later on in this chapter, a more detailed and precise statement of the theme of the present research will be presented. Meanwhile a brief review of existing literature on the subject in the form of empirical and evaluative studies, articles and reports of various committees and commissions carried out hither to in the area of women empowerment in handloom sector in general and women weavers in particular is presented here to serve as a background for the present study to get greater insight into it, to identify the gaps of any to be filled in, and indicate the point of departure from similar studies. As far as possible, the review of works follow a chronological order.

Ranga, N.G. (1930) conducted survey during 1925-1926 over a period of six months in different parts of south India included present Andhra Pradesh. The unique contribution of the study was that it gave a fair account of the important handloom centers of production and analyzed the nature of economic organization structure of the markets. Pattern of production, the study was the first authentic account of the structure of the handloom industry in Andhra Pradesh.

Rao, C.S. (1973) studied the employment potentiality in handloom industry and suggested the strengthening of handloom co-operatives for generating more employment. In recent years the weavers are trying to change their profession and go to alternative works. Because of inadequate financial
support from government the weavers are facing the problem of hike in the raw material cost, lack of proper production, marketing and financial facilities.

Angadi, V.B. (1975) expresses that the handloom cloth is facing the problem of marketing. The power loom cloth is cheaper than the handloom cloth. The ordinary consumer prefers power loom cloth because it is cheap. It is, therefore, necessary that the government should allot certain exclusive items for handloom sector and implement the reservations of handloom items.

Venkatappa, K.N. (1977) conducted a study in Karnataka state on problems of handloom co-operative societies and argued for provision of more facilities relating to marketing, Production and finance for the societies.

Deshmukh, M.A. (1978) suggested co-operatisation of handloom units for giving strength to the small weavers and that the weavers should be provided all required facilities. Protection should be given to the weavers from the middle men.

Kulkarni, R.S. (1978) in his study recommended some improved technology and skills for the development of the handloom sector in terms of maximization of employment opportunities, production and marketing facilities and working condition of the weavers.

Rao, S. B. (1978) has suggested that training should be given to the weavers as it would give more knowledge and awareness of the latest designs and models.

Srikantaiah, G. A. (1978) studied the various aspects of increasing productivity, quality and reducing cost. He suggested that the cost control and diversification of cloth with various latest designs are essential to improve the productivity of the handloom sector.
Subramanyam, A. (1978) conducted a survey on the socio-economic conditions of the weavers in East Godavari district and suggested the development of economic conditions of the weavers\textsuperscript{10}.

Agarwal R.C. (1979) observed that in India women have played dominant roles in national construction. They are closely associated and integrated with the social and economic development of the country, and under actively participating in the planning and implementation of various rural developmental programmes\textsuperscript{11}.

Hajela, T. N. (1980) identified in his study that the weavers are not benefited by the handloom co-operative society and suggested improving their efficiency for the development of the handloom industry\textsuperscript{12}.

Rao, K. K. A. (1980) conducted a study on the utilization pattern of weavers, and suggested that the weavers should work for the development of co-operative society\textsuperscript{13}.

Krishnaswamy, O. R. (1981) discussed various positions and suggested the measures to improve the performance of the handloom co-operatives\textsuperscript{14}.

Dakshina Murty (1982) made a study of the financing pattern of NABARD to the handloom co-operatives and emphasized the need for liberal financial assistance for handloom co-operatives\textsuperscript{15}.

Kotaiah Pragada (1982) discussed at length the handlooms and he gave a comprehensive package of measure in supply of raw material for the development of handlooms\textsuperscript{16}.

Rao, S. B. (1983) conducted a study on the performance of the co-operative societies and identified some factors affecting the viability of the co-operatives. He pleaded for improving the performance of the handloom co-operatives with involvement of the handloom weavers\textsuperscript{17}.
Venkateswar Rao, Akurathi. (1983) reviewed the working of the handloom sector, covering various issues of handloom co-operatives. He gave a brief accounting of various institutions involved in promoting the handloom sector and identified that the working capital finance to handloom weavers in the weavers' co-operatives is rather low and pleaded for liberal financial assistance to the handloom co-operatives through various financial institutions.

Ghosal (1984) in his study on the role of state weaver's co-operatives identified some issues which are obstacles for the development of the handloom sector in West Bengal. He opined that the existing problems cannot be solved by the measures which exists to the weavers would not be able to tackle the deep rooted problems in the sector. Therefore, there is a need to reconsidering the problems at the gross root level and to formulate a strategy which is more pragmatic in nature.

Jain, L.C. (1985) made an attempt to review the impact of the 1985 textile policy on the handloom industry in our country. He pointed out that the policy has given a back seat to employment and reservation of handloom products is not an incentive for the handloom sector. A lot should be done to the co-operative sector to make them viable, to solve the chronic problems of unemployment, under employment and low living standard of the weaver community.

Rama Krishna Rao, B. (1985) conducted a survey on handloom industry in coastal Andhra Pradesh to study the socio-economic back ground, organizational structure, production and marketing activities of primary weaver's co-operatives and their members. He pleaded for strict enforcement of the minimum age for handloom weavers and the government should protect the weavers from the clutches of master weavers. He advocated the merger system for the handlooms and said that mismanagement should be curbed.
Gopalan, M. (1986) conducted an empirical study on the production and marketing of handloom products and observed that the handloom co-operatives are lacking appropriate strategy for marketing their product.  

Krishnaswamy, O. R. (1987) has analyzed the existing performance of handloom co-operatives in his research publications. He has specified that the Apex society should adopt “Management by objective” and it should undertake some functions for the benefit of the primary societies. He felt that the primary weavers’ co-operatives should have 150-200 active looms per society and should be organized on economic and professional lines. He suggested various measures to promote the welfare of the member weavers.

Jyoshna, K. (1988) in her article on “Female rural working force, needs a better deal” attempts to put some aspects at female employment to empirical verification. The profile of rural working women in India is rather discouraging one owing to gross discrimination both in employment and wage lack of dignified work. This pathetic situation calls for immediate corrective measures so that the potential at the female work force is properly tapped and utilized for rural upliftment.

Rayudu, C.S. (1988) discussed the economics of handloom co-operatives and stated that the neglecting of market function on the modern lines is one of the major factors contributing to the failure in the weaving business.

Panigrah, N.P. (1989) in his paper gender inequality in India suggested some measures to improve women status in the society. To overcome the gender inequality in India, legal equality was granted to women who enabled them to improve their status in the society. The real women symbolize the state of oppression and discrimination.

Sarojini, T.K. (1989) in her article “Equity for women what we need doing” elaborates the activities of this machineries and further pleads for the setting up of proper data bank on women. She feels proper research on the
social problems affecting women and evaluation of ongoing programmes could help to assess the strength or weakness of these programmes and hastens the attainment of the goal faster.

Sundari, S. (1989) studied the problems of women workers in handloom industry and observed that the participation of women workers in the handloom sectors is very high. Women weavers are found to be predominating rural areas and employment to women in the weaving activity does not help them to cross the poverty line. She suggested that the government and voluntary organization should play an important in pushing-up the level of wages and living conditions of these women.

Pani, B.S. (1990) has made an attempt to appraise the policy measures for handloom development of India. The handloom sector is now facing a deeper crisis and it may have to face the danger of its liquidation in the coming decade if the present trend continues. This crisis may lead to sickness in handloom industry. Modernizing the looms in the handloom sector, shifting the product line to meet the consumer interests, scrapping the controlled cloth scheme, regulating the prices of yarn and chemical dyes are some of the measures imperative to improve the performance of the handloom sector.

Sudhakar Rao, B. (1990) made an attempt to study the living conditions, employment and poverty among handloom weavers in Andhra Pradesh and observed that the living conditions of handloom weavers are totally bad in some areas which led to starvation.

Wignaraja, P. (1990) concluded that the programmes should involve clearly identifiable homogeneous groups of poor women. The design should start with awareness creation building the poor women’s group, concretization and then initiating a poverty alleviation strategy and process based on their needs, resources, knowledge system and capability. Investment and credit should proceeded by social mobilization and building organizations of the down-trodden.
Kusuma (1991) in her paper on “Atrocities against women” explained the multifarious forms of exploitation of females like unfavourable trend in the sex ratio and female infanticide. Practice of child marriages, dowry, sexual abuse and harassment, the obscene and vulgar way in which a women’s body is depicted to boost the sale of products by advertisers is heinous and atrocious. The author hopes that there will be a meaningful application and enforcement of laws for the welfare of women and also new laws where needed.

Pragada Kotaiah ((1991) examines the problems faced by the handloom sector and observed that due attention has not been paid to the productive capacity of handlooms over the years and he suggested some measures to strengthen the handloom industry. He advised that certain items of cloth should be reserved for production on handlooms for getting protected in market for their products. This will go a long way to improve the living conditions of the weavers, who are struggling for survival.

Andhra Bank Economic Review (1992) in the study published on the development of handloom industry in Andhra Pradesh was discussed at length the various development schemes implemented by the government of Andhra Pradesh for the growth of the handloom sector pertaining to the institutional support schemes both at the primary and Apex weavers co-operatives level over a period of time and concluded that the performance of all these development programmes is considerable and should work more efficiently to promote the handloom sector in Andhra Pradesh.

Chetana Kalbagh (1992) in his book “women and development” recognized the need for a specific component for women in all plan exercises, and in a way, was only formalizing and affirming the role and potential of women in the economic development of the country where women have always worked hard and relentlessly along with and alongside the men folk to fulfill the several roles assigned to them by tradition as well as economic necessity.
Kamat, G.S. (1993) reviewed the working of the handloom sector, focusing on assistance, availability of the raw material, involvement of master weavers, and the marketing problems. He concluded that there is a clear cut need for evolving a strong integrated structure to take care of the various requirements of the handloom sector to help it to sustain in the changing socio-economic environment which is a vital need at this juncture. In a review about the handloom sector (1993) this was published covering various development aspects of handlooms in the changing scenario of handlooms.

Srinivasulu, K. (1994) made an attempt to study the problems of the handloom weavers and their struggle for survival, he critically analyzed the various policy measures of the government which had a bearing on the living conditions of a small village in Chirala of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. He noted that the handloom sector has been seriously threatened by the severe competition from the power looms. The survival of the handloom sector and the handloom weavers has been imperiled by the sharply rising prices of yarn and dyes, the result of the economic reform programmes, all out emphasis on pushing up exports unmindful of the domestic, economic and social crisis.

Pawan Sikka, S. (1995) in her article “Women in science and technology” necessitated the women to improve their skills by the use of science and technology. They should march ahead in the so called male dominated world in understanding and mastering the intricacies involved in exploring the frontiers of science. Inclusion of the scheme ‘science and technology for women’ in sixth five year plan of our country is a recognition of women has an integral part of national development.

Abdul, N. (1996) in this study entitled ‘Handlooms in Distress’ found that primarily due to steep rise in the price of yarn, the handloom industry suffered in the years 1984, 1986, 1988 and 1991. Between 1986 and 1990, yarn prices increased by 50%-130%. There was an immediate increase following 1991 budget, and than another increase of almost 50% between December 1993
and March 1994. Over the past three years i.e. 1993-1996 the prices of dyes, yarn and chemicals have increased by 300% 39.

Srinivasulu, K. (1996) analyzed the impact of 1985 textile policy on handloom industry covering various aspects of the sector. He pointed out that ineffective policy has created disinterestedness in implementing existing policies are largely due to the disorganized nature of the handloom industry40.

Kusumalatha Tiwari, S. (1997) in her article “Structural change and status of women”, explained how the changes in occupational structure influence the status of women in the migration of rural women to urban areas invariably results in a decline in women’s participation and the emergence of social theories relating to women to child care and house work as their sole occupations41.

Seethalakshmi, K. and Shanti, K. (1998) observed that self-employment had benefited the women in acquiring necessary skills to produce (market) a product, manage funds, and organize the work schedule and the take decisions. Self-employment had improved their economic status in the home and in the society. Women also discovered and adopted new attitudes and skills42.

Veenakumari, T. (1998) in her article “Socio-economic status of women in India” has stated that the orientation of society as a whole regarding the desirability that women should play an equal part in the country’s development was taken as very important precondition for the advancement not only of women but the country as a whole43.

Sivakumar, P. (2001) reported the real villains of the piece are the successive governments since 1985, which seek to liberalize, modernize and private the industry have systematically marginalized over 40 lakh handloom weavers. Unfortunately, the traditional weavers of Andhra Pradesh had neither the means to invest in modern technology nor market-savvy master weavers to
help them adapt to changing consumer taste. With their products become uncompetitive in the market, stocks mounted, availability of work began to decline and weavers faced unemployment, mounting debt, starvation and consequently death44.

Ilaiah, Kancha. (2001) in his study entitled “Andhra weavers can got in a Time warp” found that the shift from the handlooms to power looms changed the very structure of the weaving operation itself. Power looms are huge iron machines, which require a whole range of repairs and other knowledge processes. Most of the illiterate Padmasali’s felt that they were like cut-off yarn in the loom. Power looms also displaced labour. One man could operate four power looms at a time. Padmasali (caste) women could no longer be employed around power looms, as they were in the pit-loom economy. Unemployment among Padmasali’s grew because of this transition. This had its psychological impact as well, causing depression and family problems. In a bid to help out the weavers, the state provided some reservation for production and assured market. Till the globalization process began to create a new crisis in the 1990’s. The Padmasali’s were surviving due to welfare state production both in the buying (yarn, colours etc.) and selling markets (assured purchase of power loom cloth by hospitals, road transport corporations and purchase of saris from handlooms for Janatha Sari scheme etc.). However, the heavy dose of globalization and withdrawal of welfare, protection and subsidies has acted as a final in the coffin, rendering even the power loom economy absolutely helpless45.

Lakshmipathi, T. Daya Shankar, K.M. and Ramesh Babu, K. (2001) reported that the government is concentrating on ad-hoc welfare measures for the distressed weavers in the state but they need long term measures which can offer permanent solution to the plight of the weavers. Further they said that the plight of the handloom weavers is attributed mainly to the non-receipt of payment for cloth they sold to Andhra Pradesh Weavers Co-operative Society (APCO) 46.
Jos Mooji (2002) reported ‘Welfare policies and Politics’. A study of three government interventions in Andhra Pradesh, there were approximately 1,71,660 handloom weaving families in Andhra Pradesh in 1986-87 and 2,13,404 working handlooms. This number more than halved in the next decade. In 1995, only 40% of the handlooms that existed in 1987 were still in operation47.

Sastri, V.D. (2002) viewed that the concept of women empowerment is very important for the success of family planning and reproductive health programme but there is no common consensus on the meaning of the term. Women empowerment is such a complex phenomenon that its measurements remain conundrum for academicians and policy makers. There is, certainly, a need to develop a standardized tool to measure the empowerment attained by women48.

Safia sircar (2003) in her study found that the weaver community or padmasali’s spending as much as Rs.50000-60000, some times even Rs.100000 on dowry. The daily earnings of a weaver vary between Rs.20 and Rs.150. Most households survive on around Rs.50 for a monthly income of Rs.1500, weavers work long hours, often as many as 14 hours a day49.

Meenakshi (2004) in her book examined how women entrepreneurs affect the global economy, why women start business, how women’s business associations promote entrepreneurs, and to what extent women contribute to international trade. It explores potential of micro-finance programmes for empowering and employing women and also discusses the opportunities and challenges of using micro finance to tackle the feminization of poverty50.

Narasaiah, M.L. (2004) in his study mentioned that the change in women’s contribution to society is one of the striking phenomena of the late twentieth century. According to him micro-credit place an increasingly an important role in empowering women. Giving women the opportunity to realize their potential in all spheres of society is also increasingly important51.
Mohan Rao, Macherla (2005) reported that cotton handloom weavers have also been adversely affected by changes in government import and export policies. These developments hit cotton handloom weavers hard, because the cost of yarn contributes 70% of their total input costs. As a result of the increase in the cost of cotton yarn, increased mechanization of production and the lack of will within the Indian government to enforce reservation and other protection policies affected the handloom sector. It is estimated that tens of thousands of weavers have become jobless in weaving centers such as in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. By 2000 the number of idle looms had risen to 66,835 from 19,256 in 1985. Many weavers have also seen their wages stagnate or decline. Hundreds of weavers have even committed suicide because of the crisis created by increase in yarn exports and prices\textsuperscript{52}.

Dayanand Memorial Charitable Trust of Sircilla (2006) in its study found that the weavers meet the heightened expenses by approaching money lenders for loans at high rate of interest. Due to power hikes, increase in excise duty, raise in the prices of colours and chemicals, major portion of small scale power loom owners have shut down their looms in Sircilla town in Karim Nagar district of Andhra Pradesh. Additionally, due to the shift from handloom to power looms thousands of women were thrown out of jobs. They advised that handloom and power loom sector weavers must realize that suicides are no solution to their problems\textsuperscript{53}.

Madhavi, Tata (2006) in her study entitled “Stark White Cloth: Andhra’s looms are again weaving a tale of suicides” found that power cuts and shortage of raw-material, piling debts are the major reasons for loosing jobs in the handloom sector. Most weavers suffer from T.B., Asthma, and eye sight by the time they are 40 years of age. Further the study revealed that majority workers were paid Rs.85-100 per day for 12 hours of work in power looms in Sircilla town\textsuperscript{54}. 

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Ramanujam, K. and Thenmozhi, N. (2006) in their paper “Empowerment of women” has envisaged that education is a major source of power. Women should be given proper education as it develops the personality of women by exposing them to the world of books, peers, teachers and the public at large. It is increasingly felt that empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self-confidence and capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male-dominated society.

Somasekar, K. (2006) in his article “empowerment strategies for women” has depicted that several policies, programmes, strategies have been introduced for empowerment of women after attainment of independence in India. This has resulted in improving their status in the family and community. But women have failed to share proportionately the fruits of progress and in addition, whatever betterment they obtain has not addressed the issue of their socio-cultural handicaps.

Dr. S. Sudailimuthu, S. Devi (2006) in their book handloom industry in India said that handloom weavers are facing severe livelihood crisis because of adverse government policies, globalization and changing socio-economic conditions. Ineffective implementation of the schemes and the changed context of textile industry, increasing competition from the power loom and mill sectors have been largely responsible for the crisis in the handlooms.

Action Aid, (NGO) (2007) conducted a survey on the looming crisis in India. The study found that millions of workers in the textile sector have suffered falling incomes, increasing debt and job losses because of increased competition from cheaper imports and scarcity of raw materials because of rising exports. Many families have faced malnutrition, starvation and even suicide as a result. Hundreds of weavers have committed suicide because of the crisis created by increasing yarn exports and prices. Many weavers have also seen their wages stagnate or decline.
Jakimov, T. (2007) opined that developmental agencies have increasingly regarded 'empowerment' as an essential objective to improve the well being of marginalized women in India. The perceived success of self help group programmes in this project has encouraged their wide spread application across India, becoming the primary mechanism to empower women.

Rahul, N. (2007) in his article mentioned about the statement by the commissioner, Handloom and Textile, Government of Andhra Pradesh that introduction of health insurance scheme separately for handloom and power loom workers has played a big role in bringing down the suicide rate in Andhra Pradesh. Further the commissioner also said that handloom workers require more care and assistance as they were not only self employed but competed against the mill sector which is capital intensive. Working capital assistance, supply of subsidized yarn and market intervention by government has failed to bail out the handloom workers.

Bharat Dogra (2008) in his study entitled "Depressive of weavers in Varanasi and the need for artisans" reported that the income of handloom weavers has declined to such an extent that they cannot meet their basic needs—on average a weaver is earning Rs.50 to 60 in a day, and this is not enough. Due to this livelihood crisis and related indebtedness, many weavers in recent times have committed suicide, or they have been selling their blood in order to meet the needs of their family. Such cases and even cases of the sale of small children depicted occasionally in local media have highlighted the serious crisis that pervades the life of most weavers.

FAIN International Human Rights Organization, Germany (2008) conducted a study of suicides among the weavers in Karim Nagar district of Andhra Pradesh. They reported that reason for committing suicide was that they were unable to feed themselves and their families and repay their debts due to lack of earnings and no means for survival. Further the study found that the situation faced by is very grave. When men commit suicide because of
unemployment and increasing debts the women in the family who have never performed wage labour before are forced due to difficult circumstances to go to work in the Beedi industry and the monthly income for rolling beedis is Rs.1000-1500. This income is not enough to feed the family and women face hunger and starvation in Sircilla in Karimnagar district around 5,000 widows work in Beedi industry.

Gurmeet Singh, (2008) in his article Problem of rural indebtedness as envisaged that the rural indebtedness has deep roots in the country. Indian agriculture is a vicious circle. To break this circle, role of rural credit, role of micro finance and self-help groups become very important.

Committees and Commissions

Royal Commission (1928) reviewed the history of handlooms in India and noted the transformation from hand-spun yarn to mill-spun yarn in the handloom sector. He observed various bottle necks in the handloom sector and he noticed that the income level of weavers is very low. The severe competition from the mill and power looms was a threat to the weavers and the middle men are enjoying the benefits at the cost of weavers. The committees gave some recommendations for the revival of the handloom industry. These include

1. Establishment of Indian handloom industry board and a network of cooperatives.

2. For the protection of handloom industry, cess should be imposed on mill made cloth.

3. To ensure regular supply of yarn to the weavers, the spinning mills should be established at the important handloom centers.

4. Coarse variety of cloth production should be reserved for handlooms

5. Designs should be available to the weavers to improve the latest designs.
Kanungo Committee (1954) observed the strength and weakness of the handloom industry and stressed its importance for the creation of employment opportunities in the rural areas, with low investment of capital. He noted that marketing problem is the most common problem to the handloom weavers. He recommended that:

1. Reservation of items to be produced by the handloom sector should be enlarged.

2. The ownership of the looms should be vested in the weavers.

3. Setting-up dye houses at the handloom centers and the regular supply of yarn to the weavers. Joshi committee identified certain problems of handlooms and suggested almost all the same measures as suggested by Thomas and Kanungo committees, except rebate and the sale of fabrics.

National Council of Applied Economic Research (1959) conducted a study on handloom industry in Karnataka at Sholapur and identified some problems confronting the handloom sector. The council identified some issues that:

1. Handloom units are scattered, small in size and totally unorganized to compete with mill-made goods.

2. The looms are under-utilising their production capacity.

3. Weavers depending on middle men and

4. Weavers are suffering from paucity of funds, lack of latest technology and marketing practices.

The International Labour Organization (1959) conducted a study in Madras on the handloom weavers in India, and observed that handloom industry is facing crippling problems of production, finance, marketing and management, and pleaded for liberal credit facility to the weavers. Working group on handloom industry (third five year plan) emphasized the importance
and need for promoting weavers co-operative movement. It offered some recommendations which include; 1) Reservation of some items for handloom production. 2) Reservation of dyes and chemicals. 3) Export promotion. 4) Adoption of mechanical warping sizing. 5) Introducing of thrift fund etc. Working group on handloom industry (fourth five year plan) noticed and opined that the handlooms should aim at increasing earnings of the weavers. And the committee suggested that 1) There should be a regulation of yarn price; 2) Appointment of qualified managers in weavers co-operatives; 3) Liberal working capital loans to the societies and 4) Continuation of reservation of items for the handloom sector.

The Ashok Mehta Committee (1964) has pleaded for the conversion of handlooms into the power looms and that the production of colour saris should be reserved for handloom sector. It emphasized that the ‘All India Handloom Board’ should be made responsible for the conversion of handlooms to power looms.

Sivaraman Committee (1974) has observed some deficiencies in the handloom sector and recommended for the development of handloom sector on these lines. 1) Improvement in quality of the products of export items. 2) Prompt reimbursement of subsidy against rebate. 3) Involvement of Apex marketing societies in marketing the products of handlooms. 4) All India Handloom Board to be made the Apex body to the handloom sector. 5) Production of the co-operative spinning mills and NTC mills should be linked with the handloom sector to get prompt supply of yarn. 6) Involvement of Apex marketing societies and weavers societies for the supply of yarn and other imports.

Hate Committee (1978) was appointed to study the working of RBI schemes for financing handloom sector in our country. The committee identified some important bottle necks in implementing the scheme and commented on uneven development of handlooms in the country. It was
attributed to the weak organizational structure of weaver co-operatives due to lack of proper understanding and co-operation among the co-operative department and the department of industries. In the majority of the states, the primary as well as Apex societies are dormant due to inevitability of the units and non-availability of required infra-structure facilities for their growth and development. The committee is of the opinion that it would be useful to have specialized designers to formulate new designs to attract the public towards the fabrics made by handloom weavers.

The government formed a committee under the chairmanship of Abid Hussain (1988-89) to study the textile policy of 1985 in order to reconciling the various issues among the mill sector, the power loom sector, and the handloom sector. The committee submitted its comprehensive report in Dec. 1989. The committee observed some problems in its discussions at various levels with different individuals involved in the weaving activity, relating to the quality and price of cotton yarn, price variation and other related problems of handloom weavers. The textile policy 1985 is not in favour of handloom weavers who had expected a lot from the textile policy statement 1985. The committee felt that the govt. should take the initiative in the establishment of appropriate institutions to provide technical, professional and financial inputs in order to meet the essential needs of the handloom weavers. Further the committee recommended that the focus must be shifted from the sectoral approach to the integration of manufacturing, processing with the flexibility in the use of different fibers and recommended an area based institutional approach. The reservation should be placed in the ninth schedule of the constitution of India to avoid any challenge about this in the courts of law. The committee made the greater emphasis on the interest and dignity of the handloom weavers rather than on the activity of handloom weavers in order to facilitate them to live in dignity.
The government of India appointed a High Powered Committee (1990) on handlooms under the chairmanship of Mira Seth, member of the planning commission. The terms of reference of High Powered Committee on handlooms include: 1) To assess the extent to which the objectives of the textile policy 1985 have been achieved by the handloom sector. 2) To assess the impact of various schemes which are being implemented in the handloom sector. 3) To assess the threats to and opportunities of the handloom sector, and to device ways and means to capitalize the opportunities, and to recommend comprehensive support to the quantum jumps in the exports. 4) To make a comprehensive assessment of the bottle necks for the handloom sector in the areas like various inputs, such as credit assistance, technology, design, organizational structure, market support, exports etc. and 5) To recommended measures to develop the handloom sector. He touched upon the need, importance, and the potentiality of the handloom sector and the various promotional measures for the development of weavers. The committee recommended that the handloom organization should formulate policy measures and that the primary activity of DCHL (Development Commission for Hand Looms) is improving the quality of the life of the handloom weavers and their earnings. All India Handloom Boards should comprise of an eminent handloom expert in the area of designs and exports etc., the weavers' service centers should adopt extensive work through decentralized training programmes in rural areas. IIHT'S should fully achieve AICTE norms at the earliest possible. NHDC may aim to about 10% each of yarn and dyes need by the handlooms. ACASH should substantially increase its supply under single tender system (STS). All the states which have major handloom concentrations may set up STS for the development of handlooms.

Parliamentary Standing Committee (2008) on labour under the chairmanship of S. Sudhakar Reddy, Hon'ble Member of Parliament (2008) visited Sircilla in Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh reported that the individual indebtedness of weavers ranged from Rs.60,000 to 3lakhs, large
sums spent by governments on welfare schemes were not reaching the weavers. Except giving ex-gratia government is doing nothing further. The committee recommended the setting up of a “handloom bank” on the pattern of NABARD and SIDBI, setting up a high level committee to evaluate performance of all existing schemes to benefit the interests of an estimated 1.20 crores weavers in both handloom and power loom sectors. Rest of the welfare schemes should be on problems faced by weavers relating to minimum wages, sickness, maternity, housing, and education of children, employment injury, and unemployment and subsistence allowance when they are without work due to temporary closure of units, and old age.

Most of the studies hither to discussed mainly focus on various issues of women weavers and handloom co-operatives. Only a few made an earnest attempt to probe into socio, cultural and economic aspects of women weavers and their operational bottlenecks. More so, no work has been made an attempt to study the women weaver’s issues in general and women empowerment in particular. As women empowerment an important aspect of women weavers which is gaining a lot of importance in recent times, it is essential to carry out an in depth study of it and it’s impact on improvement of living conditions of women weavers, particularly in Nellore district, where weaving activity is heavily concentrated. Such a study would fill the lacuna left unfilled in the past and it would also reveal some measures to be taken in handloom sector. It would be useful to identify the practical difficulties experienced by the handloom weavers in general and women weavers in particular. It will surely contribute to strengthen the existing system and to improve the empowerment of women further in handloom sector.

Statement of the Problem

The handloom sector has an important role to play in the economic development of the state, especially the rural poor. It contributes significantly by generating employment opportunities to the rural people and thus helps them to eke out their livelihood. The traditional handloom weaving in India has
been kept alive by those professionally skilled weavers household, which inextricably is linked with the age old tradition of weaving. The socio-economic empowerment of women weavers are in deplorable conditions. A majority of women weavers are not financially sound because of the inadequate earnings from their profession. The performance of the existing institutional infrastructure for financing the handloom industry is far from satisfactory. In some places, the co-operative societies, which are founded primarily for ameliorating socio-economic conditions of the women weavers, are found to be almost in dormant stage.

Realizing its importance, a number of measures are undertaken by the government to promote this sector. The government has been offering concession finance and contributing margin money to the handloom co-operatives, in order to make them strong and promote mutual co-operation among weavers. The handloom co-operatives are expected to safeguard the interests of weavers from the clutches of exploiting middlemen, to improve their standard of living by providing enough employment opportunities and facilities to create a congenial atmosphere to catch and market their products at competitive prices. But it would be possible to protect and promote the interests of weavers, if weaver's co-operatives are made viable and profit-making units.

Unfortunately the situation in Andhra Pradesh is not favourable to the handloom sector due to several reasons. Despite several measures taken by the government by way of institutional support and direct financial assistance to the handloom co-operative sector, this sector has not flourished due to multifarious problems like inadequate supply of raw material, hike in yarn prices, lack of marketing facilities, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, competition from mill made products, obsolete technology, lack of prompt and timely support from the government, inefficient management of co-operatives and globalization of policies.
1. The rise in yarn prices has always been causing considerable hardship to the weavers as yarn being a free market commodity. Its price is governed by laws of demand and supply. Therefore the government should initiate effective measures to bring down yarn prices and to ensure steady supply.

2. The weavers are following traditional method of production and design due to lack of latest knowledge over changing technology. So change has to be brought in the bent of thinking of women weavers towards upgradation of their skills, knowledge and technology to ensure the latest fashion designs. Separate handloom research centers should be set up at the national and regional level to undertake research on demand patterns, designs, weaving technology, raw materials, viability of the finance and so on.

3. Marketing is the crux of the problem. The handloom sector has been pursuing sales oriented philosophy. The efforts are directed to sell the products that are being produced by, one means or the other, purchase of handloom cloth by government departments, army personnel and welfare residential institutions.

4. Ineffective implementation of the schemes and the changed context of textile industry, increasing competition from power looms have been largely responsible for present crisis in handloom industry. The Government should initiate measures for proper implementation of schemes and programmes and to create favourable conditions for substantial growth of handloom industry.

5. Organization of weaver's co-operative societies for women members would help to a large extent to protect the interests of women weavers besides assuring them regular employment and pay wages.
There are several co-operative societies which operate in the study area, where in men are given preference to become members of the society by virtue of their being the head of the family. Women are members of the co-operatives only in limited number, in spite of their large scale involvement in weaving and allied activities. For several years and decades women's work in this industry was not considered worth while for many of the outside house dealings were done by the male members only. This over shadows the real status of the women weavers could not be brought to the fore. In fact such a situation as this prevails everywhere in the state and so on in Nellore District, which is chosen as the study area for detailed research. This miserable condition of women weavers and their co-operatives in Nellore District demands a thorough investigation into the problems of equal opportunity and economic empowerment faced by them and the possible ways and means to solve the problems and thus remedy the situation.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to assess the economic status and empowerment of women in co-operative handloom sector in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh and to furnish a detailed analysis of the socio-economic empowerment of the women weavers, the facilities and incentives available to them, the problems they faced in getting finance, production and marketing their products. To be more specific, the prime objectives of the study are:

1. To study the perspectives of empowerment of women in different areas like social, economic and political empowerment in general

2. To assess the socio-economic empowerment of women weavers in Nellore District, the study area,

3. To evaluate the performance of handloom co-operatives and its women weavers in Nellore district,
4. To review the problems of women weavers and handloom co-operatives in Nellore district

5. To suggest feasible measures for ameliorating present problems of handloom women weavers and co-operative societies in Nellore district.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested in the course of the study.

- Weaving activity in Nellore district is confined to only certain castes like Devangula, Padmasali, Karnasali, Kaikala and Thogata,
- There is a correlation between occupational experience and products produced by the women weavers,
- Women participation in handloom sector has increased in recent years,
- The performance of the handloom co-operatives in the district is poor due to inefficient management of resources.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in the present research is to study the empowerment of women in co-operative handloom sector and present status of women weavers. The present study is based on both primary and secondary data for analysis and to draw inferences. It uses two-way approach focusing on select handloom co-operatives and their women members in three divisions of Nellore District. The data pertaining to the chosen theme is collected from the official records of the handloom co-operatives. Additional information pertaining to their overall development of women weavers and their progress over a period of time is extracted from major sources of secondary data, such as published reports, documents, journals, statistical records of the handloom department and annual reports etc. The study has extensively utilized the
information regarding the latest developments through web sites of various institutions.

Sample Design

To collect data, a stratified random sampling technique has been used. There are 53 handloom co-operatives in Nellore District with a total women membership of 3124 as on 31st March, 2009. There are three divisions in the district in which 4 out of 8 handloom co-operatives selected with a women membership of 238 in Nellore division, 15 out of 29 co-operatives selected with a women membership of 929 in Gudur division and 8 out of 16 co-operatives selected with a women membership of 416 in Kavali division. Keeping in view of the time and operational constraints, 27 (50 per cent) handloom co-operatives are chosen as sample co-operatives for an in-depth study. Further 15 women members per each society are selected at random for collecting factual information. Therefore, the total sample frame for the study includes 27 handloom co-operatives (4 in Nellore, 15 in Gudur and 8 in Kavali division) and 405 women members (27x15 members) of the handloom co-operatives in the district as a whole. The details are presented in table 1.2.

### Table 1.3
Sample Handloom Co-operatives and Women Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Division</th>
<th>Division wise co-operatives</th>
<th>Sample Co-operatives 50% from each division</th>
<th>Total women members in select co-operatives</th>
<th>Select women members (15 members per Co-operative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudur</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kavali</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>1583</strong></td>
<td><strong>405</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Source: Researcher's compilation_
Data Collection

The primary data was collected by consulting the officials of the handloom co-operatives and women members of the sample co-operatives through personal interviews. The information regarding various problems of women members of the co-operatives was also collected and their authenticity and reliability was confirmed by getting clarification from the authorities/management of the sample co-operatives. In addition, structured and unstructured interviews were also conducted with experts in the field and persons who are involved directly and indirectly in the operations of the sample co-operatives and their women weavers. The secondary data was collected from various publications of the handloom departments of the state and central both audited and un-audited reports and other publications. The publications of the handloom department include statistical data relating to the handloom co-operatives in India, reports on the trends and progress of the handloom sector in India, reports on the working conditions of women weavers, Government of India, Planning Commission, Annual Reports of the Department of Handlooms, and relevant issues of the RBI monthly bulletins. Further relevant material for the study at the Government level was collected from various books relating to the handloom sector, different committee reports relating to weavers, different web-sites of handloom institutes, special bulletins, Journals of handloom co-operatives etc. The information pertaining to weaving activities, production, marketing, finance and empowerment is also collected from various reports and journals. The data is also collected from the published and unpublished records and various reports of research projects to supplement the other data.

Tools and Techniques for Analysis

For the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the data scientifically, both financial and statistical tools and techniques have been applied wherever necessary. The following financial and statistical tools and techniques are used in the study viz., 1) Financial Ratios, 2) Percentages, 3) Compound Growth Rate, 4) Variance Analysis, 5) Test of Significance etc.
Significance of the present study.

Since, the inception of planning in India, special attention has been paid to the development of the handloom industry. It is an important source of livelihood for a number of people especially in the rural areas. It is estimated that in the handloom sector in India has seen a phenomenal growth during the last six decades. Handloom sector occupies a place of importance in our country by virtue of its employment potentiality. The importance of the handloom sector can be gauged from the fact that it meets one-third of the total cloth requirements of the masses.

The economic conditions of women in the handloom sector are not favourable especially for women. In recent years the women weavers are trying to shift over their profession to choose alternative one because of unfavourable conditions prevailing in handloom sector. The income of women weavers is not increased as they are held in the grip of brokers and their private intermediaries. It is well-known fact that the weavers in some parts of the state are merely starving for the want of food due of lack of facilities for weaving as well as adequate returns for their activity, even though it is for them an essential bread earning activity. Their standard of living is significantly low and especially women weavers are either unemployed or underemployed. The women weavers of Andhra Pradesh in general and the weavers of Nellore district in particular are facing acute problems of poverty, unemployment and underemployment.

The present study of the empowerment of women in handloom co-operative sector in Nellore District is focused on the socio-economic empowerment of the weavers in Nellore district. The conditions of sample women weavers of the district studied here are fairly representatives of their counter parts in the other districts of the state and possible elsewhere too. Hence the conclusions drawn in the present enquiry are in all likelihood equally applicable to them also. Moreover the practical suggestions offered at the end of the present study to improve the socio-economic empowerment of women in
handloom sector would benefit the weavers and certainly find practicable ideas worth thinking over. All these would make the present study meaningful and useful.

Limitations of the Study

The study of empowerment of women in handloom co-operative sector is very vast even if one takes into consideration those found in Andhra Pradesh. It would be Herculean task to cover all the aspects of empowerment of women in the state. Therefore the area of the enquiry has had to be narrowed domain to three divisions of Nellore district with a view to make it manageable within the constraints of time at ones disposal. Further, the focus had to be chiefly on the economic empowerment of women weavers in the district, though the other relevant aspects are referred where ever necessary. Another apparent limitation is that the study covers only a period of 5 years i.e. from March 2005 to 2009.

Plan of the Thesis

The entire thesis is organized in seven chapters.

Chapter - I deals with Introduction and Research Methodology. It presents a brief account of economic status of women and handloom sector, review of literature, statement of the problem and methodology of research adopted.

Chapter-II deals with perspectives of women empowerment. It focuses on educational, economic, social, political empowerment and also women oriented schemes and policies.

Chapter - III presents a bird’s eye view of handloom sector. The origin, growth and development of the handloom sector over plan periods, development programmes and other schemes.
Chapter IV concerns with socio-economic empowerment of women weavers in the study area.

Chapter V assess the performance of handloom co-operatives and women weavers.

Chapter VI goes deep into the problems confronted by the women weavers and co-operatives.

Chapter VII presents the brief summary of observations hitherto made and conclusions drawn from the study and offers practicable suggestions for improving the economic empowerment of women weavers in Nellore district.
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