CHAPTER II

STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENT TILL WORLD WAR II

India's inclusion in the world market had dire consequence for its handicrafts. World prices for industrial goods were based on the market prices for factory products in the developed countries. Even with the manufacturer's super profits and the cost of delivery and brokerage, Britain's factory goods were gainfully sold at prices well below the market price for native handicraft products. The invention of the "spinning jenny" by Hargreave in 1767, for the preparation of 'weft' and two years later "spinning frame" by Arkwright which supplied the warp brought about a revolution in the cost of spinning and weaving. To withstand the competition from factory imports, local handicrafts were forced to offer their wares at prices below their cost of production. Consequently dealers and merchants of traditional handicraft products shifted the burden of loss on to the shoulders of the artisans, depressing their incomes or share of profits to a level at which the artisans could hardly make both ends
meet. Henceforth if the artisans were to ensure raw materials for the whole year, they had not only to make greater outlays but also to spend the whole amount at once, which helped the merchant to tighten his grip on the producers and block their way of accumulation.¹

With respect to the rest of the world the capitalist powers, Britain in the first place, acted as a monopoly power of modern implements of production and means of transport, thereby being able to exert direct and vigorous influence on the economic development of colonies and dependant countries. Thus by the second half of the 19th century the conditions were ripe for the export of capital in its productive form. India's conversion from a supplier of cloths for the whole of Europe into a consumer of British fabrics was due, above all, to the technical superiority of the British mill over the Indian handweaver. In addition to this technical superiority, their political power enabled them to establish prohibitive 75 per cent duty on the Indian goods imported to Britain.² The East India Company went even further in its tariff and tax discrimination

¹ Pavlov. V.I : "Historical Premises for India's Transition to Capitalism, Mosco 1978; p.227.
² ibid., p.279.
against Indian handicrafts. In the 1830s, it imposed the following taxes on native weaving.\(^3\) Five per cent on the raw materials consumed; 7.5 per cent on yarns; 2.5 per cent on cloths; and 2.5 per cent on dyeing outside the workshop. Thus the tax levies increased the cost of handwoven Indian goods by 15 to 17.5 per cent. This tax policy created additional advantages for the export of the cheaper British factory-made fabrics and for the competitive struggle of Lancashire mills against Indian handweaving. Besides, this policy ensured British mill-owners more super profits at the expense of the Indian consumer. Finally, the growth of mill industry in Britain also inflicted indirect harm on Indian handicrafts. The export of cotton from India for working up in Britain led to a rise in the price of cotton, thereby increasing the production costs of artisans in India.

In the second and the third decades of the 19th century, there was a crucial change in the balance of prices of English and Indian yarn, especially for the most popular grades. While the price of English yarn was halved, the price of Indian yarn remained unchanged. This is evident from Table - 2.1, because the price of raw materials remained stable, the stability in the price of English yarn

\(^3\) ibid., p.278.
was due only to the new conditions in which it was manufactured. Indeed the use of machines led to a vast saving of living labour.

Table 2.1  Statement Showing Yarn Prices (Pence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade No.</th>
<th>Prices of English yarn</th>
<th>Prices of Indian yarn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1812</td>
<td>1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>1 1/4</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>1 3/8</td>
<td>1/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>1 5/6</td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 1/2</td>
<td>1 3/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>1 3/16</td>
<td>1 3/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>1 1/4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>2 3/8</td>
<td>1 1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>3 3/8</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report from the Select Committee on East India Produce, 1938, p.606.

Table 2.1 reveals that while the price of English yarn was decreasing, that of Indian yarn was showing an upward tendency. Even with the low price of imported raw material, prices did not cover the vast losses involved.
in the traditional techniques followed by Indian artisans. By the end of 1830s good shirting made in Britain was sold in India at 10* annas a yard and coarse bed-sheet fabric from the USA at 3 to 5 annas, whereas the corresponding Indian pieces even when made of imported yarn were offered at double the price of the British fabric. Characterising its effect on the economy of India, Marx wrote: "England began with driving the Indian cotton from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cotton goods. From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5200. In 1824 the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards while in 1831 it surpassed 64,000,000 yards."

Increased dependance of Indian cotton textile industry on imported cheap mill made yarn has a positive aspect. Mr. Morris. D. Morris argues that import of cheap yarn from Lancashire had improved the competitive

* One anna is equal to 6 ps.
4. ibid., p.281.
5. Marx, Karl & Engels Frederick "On Colonialism"; p.27.
position of the handloom weavers. He argues that there was an increasing tendency for women to wear bodies in addition to the traditional sarees. Besides, this Lancashire cloth could not be a substitute for the types of cloth demanded to meet the general preferences of Indians. The positive side of the dependant development of handloom industry in India is that it scrapped traditional methods of production which involved too much labour and skill.

The technology used in weaving process was highly primitive and it was linked with the unbroken village economy which engaged only limited market. In this economic structure, merchant capital penetrated in so many ways. It gave a mortal blow to the primitive methods of production and penetrated into the hitherto unaltered rural economy. Its sole aim was to obtain commodities from the interior parts of India using indigenous cheap labour to meet the increased foreign demand. In order to accumulate as much profit as they could, they were ready to make technological changes and even to alter the production relations which existed during that period.

Industry Under the East India Company

It has two phases - the one upto 1780, when the industry was at its best and the other after 1780 when
the industry began to decline as a result of the development of the powerloom. During the first period the company was more interested in securing commercial and trading rights than political power. It therefore, developed a lucrative trade in cotton manufactures and other East Indian specialities in spite of the growing opposition of certain interests in England. In 1820, even after the development of the powerspinning and weaving in England the export of Indian piecegoods to England by East India Company and the private merchants amounted to £1,839,258.7

Since 1660 there had been considerable opposition in England to the increasing importation of Indian calicos and chintzes. The woollen manufacturers of England complained that their goods were beaten out by the cheaper and more attractive goods from India and their complaints gained strong support from mercantilists who feared that England was being drained of its precious metals. Such opposition came to a head in 1700 when the importation of printed and painted calicos was prevented by an act of the British Parliament.

The industrial revolution enabled the English spinners to make yarn strong enough for warp and thus grew

the great cotton textile industry of Lancashire and Manchester. The use of steam power made production incredibly cheap and soon the course of foreign trade underwent a revolutionary change. Indian exports died out and English exports to India began to increase. And this was considerably helped by the high tariffs imposed in England on textile exports and the fiscal policy of the East India Company. Table 2.2 explains the change.

Between 1814 and 1828 Indian exports to England had been decreasing by one third from 1266608 pieces to 422504 pieces. During the same period British exports to India increased by 52 times. The year 1935 registered an increase of 261 times the British exports of 1814. Between 1921 and 1928 the number of looms in England increased threefold from 14150 looms to 55500 looms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exports to England</th>
<th>Number of Powerlooms in England</th>
<th>Imports to India from England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>1266608 pieces</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8,18,208 yards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>534495 &quot;</td>
<td>14150</td>
<td>19,138,726 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>422504 &quot;</td>
<td>55500</td>
<td>42,822,077 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>213,840,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The cheapening of spinning and weaving by power meant a great handicap to the Indian spinner and weaver. The cost of producing a pound of yarn fell from 13.4 pence in 1814 to 5.4 pence in 1830 and cost of producing a piece of cloth fell from 7s. 8½d to 2s.8d during the same period. Hence the shrinking market for the handspun yarn and handwoven cloth was the greater handicap caused to spinners and weavers in India. In the second half of the 19th century the increasing import of cotton manufactures from the UK and other foreign countries stimulated

8. ibid., p.124.
by a policy of free trade and the increase of the cotton factories within the country led to a further decline of the Indian cotton handicrafts. During this period under review the import of cotton goods had increased five times and the powerloom production in India twelve times. A certain increase in the import can be accounted for by the growth of population, but the increase of powerloom products shows unmistakably the displacement of handloom manufactures. The decline was also due to many other causes. During this period there was a gradual change in the dress habits of the middle class. The change in the saratorial habits effected by the middle class gradually spread to the poorer income groups with the consequence of still further reducing the capacity of the home market to absorb handloom cloth. The change in dress habits affected a significant portion of the weaving population because of the comparative cheapness of the imported varieties. With the opening of the Suez Canal and the construction of a network of railways, the internal market felt the impact of foreign imports in full measure.

9. ibid., p.131.
The decline of handweaving had its chain reactions. Handspinning was ancillary to handweaving and also a subsidiary occupation to a large number of agriculturists. The decline of handweaving gave a death blow to handspinning. The trouble was aggravated by the import of mill-spun yarn. Handloom industry in its desperate struggle for survival gradually learnt to use mill spun yarn. As a result of this changeover from handspun yarn to mill yarn the organization of the industry underwent a change. Hitherto the weaver could get his yarn from his own household or from the immediate neighbourhood. He was creditworthy in his own circle. But now yarn had to be brought from dealers whom he did not know and with whom he had no credit. So the industry fell into the grip of merchant chettis and financiers and the weavers lost most of their independence.

The rapidly declining economic conditions of the weavers during the 19th century as a result of mill competition and foreign piecegoods, attracted the attention of the Madras Government. Since Malabar district was a part of Madras Presidency, measures taken to revive the industry had far reaching impact on Malabar handloom industry. In 1900 Mr. Alfred Chatterton was placed on
special duty to study the condition of the weaving industry and to suggest remedial measures for the amelioration of the conditions of the weavers who were hard hit by mill and powerloom sectors' competition. As a result of his report the handloom weaving section was opened in 1901 and experiments were conducted in the School of Arts, Madras with flyshuttle looms capable of producing greater output of cloth than the country handthrown shuttle loom. After a few years' experiments the department made certain successful attempts to induce the weavers to receive free training in the working of imported automatic domestic looms. Weaving competitions and practical examinations in flyshuttle weaving were then held among the weavers and prizes were awarded with a view to stimulate their interest.

Reasons for the Survival of Handloom Industry

The secret of survival of handloom industry in India is explained by Sir Alfred Chatterton in his book "Industrial Evolution in India." "The handloom weaver still survives today because there is no alternative open to him. The industry survives because the weaver is content with low wages and the women who do winding, warping

and sizing are either very low paid or they are members of a weavers' family. This low standard of value for human labour is at once the cause of handweaving still surviving and great stumbling block to the progress of the weaver.\textsuperscript{14} Again it is the conservatism of South Indian Women that preserves the handloom industry, in a sense. The women prefer artificially and elaborately figured garments that mills can never supply cheaply. On handloom alone it is possible to manufacture varieties of cloths with different patterns and designs to suit the tastes of different communities. It is true that mills have now captured much of this trade and manufacture many of the varieties hitherto produced only on handloom; yet the sovereignty of the handloom in this realm remains undisputed. Also weaving as a work of art is possible on the handloom alone while the mill can only perpetuate monotonous reproduction of stereotyped patterns. But because of the change in the tastes of the rich and ideas of respectability prevalent among the masses of the urban and semi-industrial population who care for more quality, mill production advanced and the handloom industry suffered a severe setback.

\textsuperscript{14} Alfred Chatterton: "Industrial Evolution in India", 1903, p.29.
In spite of the problems created by powerloom and mill sectors, handloom industry survived in the state mainly because of the nature of industrial organisation. Absence of more remunerative employment for the population, abundance of labour and existence of local market were the main reasons for the survival of the industry. Thus the handloom industry is important as:

1) it supports a large number of persons who have handweaving as the only ostensible means of livelihood;

2) it provides a means of subsidiary occupation to agriculturists who have a long off-season;

3) it solves to an extent the increasing unemployment;

4) it gives a measure of relief in tracts where agriculture is almost precarious; and

5) it secures a means of economic justice in the distribution of work and wealth.

Another important reason for the survival of this industry is that the chaliyans had an inherent reluctance to adopt other occupations. Chaliya caste while preserving their identity and subject to their own caste guilds in respect of their social life, stick on to handweaving through generations. There was little division of labour from the point of view of internal technical organisation
of the industry. The weavers and their dependants working for themselves caused a fusion of labour similar to the modern co-operative production which avoids all conflicts between capital and labour. Moreover, cheapness of labour in villages, its suitability to village life, proximity of market and the ability to satisfy the demands in rural areas are the main factors responsible for the survival of handweaving. There was a time when Travancore was able to produce all the cloths she required and even more.\(^\text{15}\) Most of the weavers who had landed property considered weaving as a subsidiary occupation in slack season. When demand increased they either leased out their land or employed labourers to cultivate fields.\(^\text{16}\) When demand decreased they would come back to cultivation. These aberrations deteriorated the artistic talent of weavers, besides the locking up of capital in land.

**Developments During 1914–1940 Period**

Since the yarn requirements of the handlooms were met by the mills, the prosperity of the handloom industry depended on the regularity of yarn supply by mills. During

\(^\text{15}\) Travancore State Manual, 1940; p.363.

World War I, imports of cloth into India decreased considerably. Added to this, the demand for the cloth in the internal market was brisk. Therefore, the mills found it lucrative to utilise most of the yarn produced by them rather than supply it to the handlooms. Of the total yarn available during 1911-12 to 1915-16, mills took 1297 million lbs., while 1248 million lbs., went to the handlooms; but during 1916-17 to 1920-21, of the total yarn available mills took as much as 1644 million lbs., while only 1097 million lbs., went to the handlooms.17

Table - 2.3  Cloth Production of Mills and Handlooms
1914-15 to 1919-20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mill consumption of yarn (million lbs.)</th>
<th>Estimated Mill production (million lbs.)</th>
<th>Estimated Handloom consumption of yarn (million lbs.)</th>
<th>Estimated Handloom production (million yards)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1176</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>1088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-16</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>1496</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-17</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.3 shows that handloom production decreased by more than 50 per cent from 1914 to 1920. World War I was a serious deterrent to the handloom industry in India. The following were the main trends in this period.

1. After 1908-09 the quantity of yarn consumed by the mills exceeded that of the handlooms.

2. After 1916-17 there was an actual decrease in the consumption of yarn by handlooms; the average annual consumption between the years 1916-17 to 1918-19 was just over 200 million lbs., when the average annual consumption by mills was over 300 million lbs. during the same period.

3. During the postwar period the handloom industry recovered some lost ground; and

4. The handloom industry was functioning under pressure during the inter-war period.

During the years 1920 to 1939 certain economic and political factors adversely affected the handloom industry. From 1896, the import duty on cotton piece goods was 3½% ad valorem, but there are a counter­vailing excise duty to effect this advantage. But in 1917 the duty was raised by 7½% per cent which was further

18. ibid., p.126.
enhanced to 11 per cent in 1921 and 15 per cent in 1930.\textsuperscript{19}

Meanwhile, the excise duty was abolished in 1926. This tariff wall had a very favourable effect on mill production in India. As the handlooms were consuming mostly imported yarn, the burden of the duty fell on them.

The 'Swadeshi' movement designed to boycott goods manufactured out of imported yarn was detrimental to a section of the handloom industry. The handlooms which had a monopoly in finer sarees and dhoties found it difficult to sell these goods, because they were made with imported yarn. But the handloom using the yarn of low counts did not come under such a handicap and perhaps it shared to some extent the benefits resulting from swadeshi movement. Table 2.4 shows the progress of mill and handloom industries during 1920-39.

\textsuperscript{19} ibid.
Table 2.4  The Progress Made by the Handloom and the Mills 1920-39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mill Production (million yards)</th>
<th>Handloom Production (million yards)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>1563.1</td>
<td>931.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>1935.9</td>
<td>1010.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>1959.4</td>
<td>973.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>2383.7</td>
<td>1519.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>3322.1</td>
<td>1265.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>3905.3</td>
<td>1703.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report of the Fact Finding Committee on Mill and Handlooms, 1941, p.11.

The production figures of the textile mill industry bear testimony to the fact that the purpose for which the import duties on piece goods levied was achieved. The mills were made better able to fight the handloom industry while the handlooms were strengthened only for defence. The fact that there has been steady increase in the handloom production in the country as a whole is no indication of the prosperity of the industry. The economic depression of the thirties affected the industry in many ways.
Because of the general decline in the purchasing power of the masses, the demand for handloom goods deteriorated considerably. The Tariff Board of 1932 summarises the position thus: "India is essentially a price market and any fall in the purchasing power of the masses is bound to accentuate this tendency. Depression and foreign competition coupled with exchange depreciation in 1931 resulted in a ruthless price cutting in the market. In order to eke out his living the weaver had to produce more than before." The severe trade depression which prevailed since 1929 seriously reduced the average earning capacity of the weaver. The effect of the depression has been accentuated by the relative increase in the cost of yarn on account of the protective duty. Thus the position of the handloom weaver in comparison with the mill industry has considerably deteriorated since 1927.

If we analyse the growth of handloom industry in Travancore, it is evident that it depended heavily for yarn requirements on cotton mills which are concentrated in Bombay and Ahmedabad. The gigantic growth of cotton mills in various parts of India, affected the handweaving industry in many ways. With the development of railways

and roads, mills could easily capture the traditional markets of handlooms. Besides, weavers had to pay too much money for the mill yarn by way of transporting charges. During this period massive quantity of cotton threads and piecegoods were imported to Travancore State through the various parts. See Appendix 2.1. Even though the growth of cotton mills captured the traditional markets of handlooms, the overproduction in cotton mills favoured the handloom industry. Due to the increased production, mill owners could not dispose of their yarn easily. Practically the only market left before them is handloom industry. So Bombay Mill Owners were in favour of developing handloom industry.21 The cheapening of the price of mill made yarn and its superior quality caused a steady expansion of handloom industry since 1920. There were no mills in Travancore and Malabar in 19th century.

The first cotton mill in Kerala is Sitaram Spinning Mill. It was registered as a joint stock company in 1909 with a capital of Rs.1,20,000.22 The mill started production with 50 powerlooms and 25 handlooms.23 Later on, a large number of spindles were installed. Mill goods had earned reputation

22. Speeches of C.W.E. Cotton, the First Agent to the Government General, Madras State, 1925, p.77.
23. ibid.
in places like Delhi, Kanpur, Agra and made huge profits. In 1925 there were 10,138 spindles and 307 looms. During this period, this mill could supply a large quantity of yarns to handlooms.

The protection of the Indian spinning industry by imposing import duty decreased the import of yarn from Japan and Britain. It had affected the handloom industry in Travancore to a certain extent as the price of the yarns above 60s went up considerably. The earnings of the handloom weavers producing cloth from fine counts were affected by the higher import duties as the margin was in between the net cost price of yarn and the sale price of cloth.

According to the 1921 Census Report total number of persons engaged in weaving was 14,713 in Travancore. But it was only 15,636 according to 1931 Census Report. Weaving has been accepted as a subsidiary occupation by a number of persons and according to the Census Report of 1931, there were 1588 such persons. If these were added to the full-time workers the total number in 1931 shows an increase of about 10 per cent over the figure of 1921.

24. ibid., p.78
26. ibid.
27. ibid.
This has not been the case in Malabar district. Between 1921 and 1931 there was increase of 44 per cent in the total number of men weavers. (See Table 2.5).
In 1901 the total number of men weavers were 12,269. But in 1921 it fell to 11330. It is because of the decline of handspinning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Weavers</th>
<th>No. of looms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>12,269</td>
<td>3,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>11,330</td>
<td>3,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>16,230</td>
<td>4,323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. From the Handloom Census taken along with the General Census of Madras Presidency in 1931.

Table 2.5 shows an increasing trend in the case of looms. Between 1921 and 1931, 2810 looms were installed. There was a large number of looms unidentified. The spirit of 'swadeshi' had also reclaimed many handlooms.
from idleness and put them into operation. Seeing the increased demand for the fabrics, weavers employed more looms during this period. This was one of the reasons for the increase in the number of handlooms and weavers in Travancore State and Malabar district between 1921 and 1931. In 1930, Indian National Congress unleashed the civil disobedience movement and boycott of foreign goods particularly British. Along with this, Mahatma Gandhi preached the economics of Khadi and handspinning. These factors favoured the development of handloom industry.

In Malabar district, the growth of handloom weaving in the above period was tremendous. Fabrics produced in Malabar district was exported massively through the Madras Port. (See Table 2.6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Export (million yards)</th>
<th>Value (Rs. lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>160.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-25</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-30</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2.6 it is seen that in 1875, the export was only 7.5 million yards valued at Rs.28 lakhs. It has increased to 38.5 million yards in 1926-30 valued at Rs.195 lakhs. But in 1921-25, 37.6 million yards of cloth fetched Rs.230 lakhs. This shows a decline in the value of handloom cloths since 1925. This is mainly due to the world economic recession that set in 1929-30, and which adversely affected the economies of all countries. Though it was a period of depression to all industries, handloom industry suffered less from its effects.28

In Cochin State, handloom employed 3992 actual workers who supported 2971 persons of both sex in 1901.29 A large number of native christians, Muslims and Ezhavas took to weaving besides hereditary weavers. Many items produced were coarse napkins, towels and the fine 'pavu' and cloths of delicate texture had a large demand. Formerly, the local market was captured by handloom products of Tinnelvelly.30 By 1911, high quality fabrics, especially famous Chennamangalam products ousted Tinnelvelly products.31

30. ibid.
New Technology and Government Attitude

Our weavers have been averse in the past to adopting flyshuttle looms for reasons of higher prices and shyness of handling newer types. The primitive throwshuttle loom which could produce only 3 yards per day was converted to flyshuttle loom producing 6 to 8 yards and was in vogue in the beginning of this century.32 The operation on the throwshuttle loom was restricted to able-bodied adults, but the flyshuttle loom could be easily handled even by teenagers. Now almost all the weavers are using either pitlooms or framelooms.

The assumption behind the introduction of the flyshuttle looms was that it would improve the productivity of the weavers and thereby their condition. The fundamental difference between the loom in use and the flyshuttle was the picking motion. In the traditional handlooms the picking motion was performed by the weaver who threw the shuttle with one hand from one side of the loom and held it with the other when it reached the other side of the loom. The chief disadvantage of this loom was that if the width of the cloth woven was greater than the stretch of a

weaver's arms, two operators were necessary, one at each end of the loom. Moreover, the weaver had to change his hand constantly to hold the sley in beating up the weft. These looms naturally required great labour and skill to manipulate, yet worked very slowly. Moreover, the adoption of flyshuttle looms made possible a quicker method of warping. It was claimed that with the flyshuttle loom a weaver could weave 10 to 12 yards of cloth per day as against 5 yards with the country loom.\(^{33}\) The flyshuttle loom doubles the productivity of the country loom. Thus the flyshuttle had definite advantages.

Since the factory system was developed in Malabar coast in the beginning of the present century, weavers could easily understand the advantages of flyshuttle looms. The limited success of the flyshuttle loom among the weavers may be attributed to the high cost of new technology which was beyond the reach of the weavers struggling for existence. Relatively affluent weavers were being brought and taught in the new technological methods in schools. On completion of their course they were provided with looms and preparatory appliances, for which payment was recovered from them by small annual instalments.\(^ {34}\) The weavers on


\(^{34}\) Monteiro, A.D., op.cit., p.99.
their part were reluctant to enter schools as it would deprive them of their daily earnings. Establishment of Commonwealth Weaving Trust Factories in Cannanore and Kozhikode in the 19th century, initiated master weavers to commence similar types of factories with improved looms. But in Travancore and Cochin most of the weavers remained with primitive looms till the first half of the 20th century.

In Travancore State, massive share of the revenue was expended for importing cotton goods. So the government was very keen in developing handloom industry in the State. In 1919 there was 19 private and industrial schools teaching weaving (Theory and Practice). Total strength of the students were 446 and there were 47 teachers to teach them. One of the prominent schools was Mangad Weaving School, Quilon, a private one with 49 students and 7 teachers. Teachers of these schools were selected to Central Technological Institute, Trivandrum for training. Every year 12 teachers were admitted into the Institute and were paid a stipend of ₹10 each per mensum. Government encouraged weavers of backward communities by supplying

36. ibid., p.58.
37. ibid., p.59.
looms and accessories to the Pulaya community. After 1930, congress men started Harijan hostels in various parts of the State and inmates were taught handspinning and weaving.

Students who went out from these schools encouraged the installation of flyshuttle looms and modern techniques of weaving. They started weaving establishments in various parts of the State. In Guruvayur there was a weaving factory which employed 30 to 35 workers in 1917. The looms employed were ordinary country type made of wood and hand-driven and it is suited only for purpose of cottage industry. During this period various shops sprang up selling mill cloths; but later on, it had to be closed down.

An itinerant weaving party was constituted by the government to encourage and propagate handloom weaving in various parts of the State. This party consisted of weaving experts with improved looms and jacquards with which weavers could produce better quality products. They conducted camps in various parts. Temporary schools were

41. ibid., p.326.
42. Travancore Administration Report, 1940, p.128.
set up and students were taught the methods of weaving. Examinations were held and most deserving pupils in each of the schools were given looms free of cost. They took part in YMCA Exhibition at Marthandam, the Vavubali Exhibition at Kuzhithura demonstrating modern weaving techniques.

The wave of 'Swadeshi' enthusiasm and the fall in the price of mill yarn gave further impetus to the development of handloom industry. Again, it is the conservatism of the South Indian women that preserved the handloom industry in a sense. Malayalee women preferred to wear 'Kattimundu' and 'Neriathu' that mills could never supply cheaply. On handlooms alone it was possible to manufacture different varieties of cloths with different patterns and colours to suit the tastes of different communities. But gradually mills captured much of this market and started manufacturing many of the varieties hitherto produced only on handlooms. Whatever may have been the extent of decline of handweaving in the 19th century, there has undoubtedly been an increase in the production on the handlooms during the first four decades of the 20th century.

43. ibid.
44. ibid.