CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The handloom textile constitutes a timeless facet of the rich cultural heritage of India, the oldest and biggest cottage industry, constituting a vital sector of village economy, next only to agriculture. For over 2000 years, India has enjoyed the position of pre-eminence as a production centre in textiles. Though the machine age sounded the death knell to Indian excellence in the cotton world, the handloom industry has managed to survive and has been playing an indispensable role in the nation’s economy. With 3.9 million handlooms, India is the highest handloom producing country in the world. According to the Fourth Report of the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, Ministry of Textiles (2006), the handloom sector is one of the ancient textile enterprises in India that engages 65 lakh weavers, working in weaving and other allied activities.

India has more than 6,500 handloom / handicraft and micro enterprise clusters. Handlooms in north India and south India are geared for commercial production for domestic market and are also exporting their products abroad. Handloom weaving is an established traditional industry in south India. In some parts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, it has attained the status of a mature industry, and in some other parts, it is still an enterprise confined to the needs of the household. Kerala is a state located in the south western part of India. Kerala is known for its traditional off white hand woven clothing, with gold borders (www.indiatripplanner.com/textile-mills/index.html).
Handloom cloth is regarded as an illustrious example of the heritage and an expression of the unique craftsmanship of Kerala. The significance of the handloom industry compared to other traditional industries is that, it is blended with the values of the culture and daily life of the people.

The Handloom industry in Kerala has a vital role to play in the state economy as well as in the rural employment generation. Handloom weaving is unparalleled in its flexibility and versatility, in our state. Handloom is the second most important industry next only to coir, in terms of employment. This sector provides employment for about 1.75 lakh people directly or indirectly. In Kerala, this sector is concentrated in Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur districts and in some parts of Kozhikode, Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Kollam and Kasaragod districts (Economic Review, 2007).

Thiruvananthapuram district has been concentrating more on production of contemporary and traditional clothes of the people in Kerala. Balaramapuram in Thiruvananthapuram district is famous for the exclusive traditional products such as finer count saris with pure ‘zari’ (kasavu) matching sets with zari pudava (dhothi) and kavani (half sari). Nearly 90 percent of the export from the state is done from Kannur district (Economic Review, 2007).

In early days, majority of handloom weavers followed the hereditary line. The skill of weaving has been passed from parents to children. The main communities engaged in weaving are ‘Shaliyas’ and ‘Devanagas’. Traditional handloom industry once dominated by the Shaliya community, now attracts other communities as a means to ameliorate poverty.
The handloom industry in the state can be classified into two major sectors of production. The first one is the co-operative sector, which consists of factory type (industrial societies) and cottage type societies. It controls approximately 86 percent of the total looms. The societies in the co-operative field are operating with government patronage for their activities (Economic Review, 2007).

The second one which is the private sector that controls the remaining 14 percent of the looms, are with the entrepreneurs. Handloom production is largely facilitated by private investment from master weavers/ entrepreneurs and money lenders (www.solution/exchange-un.net.in/emp/cr/res.). Entrepreneurs operate their manufacturing activities right from the sourcing of raw materials to the marketing of their products (Textile Committee Report, Government of Kerala, 2004).

The entrepreneur weaver is the central figure of the economic activity and prime mover of development. As such, the development of entrepreneurship in the country and entrepreneurial skill is to be regarded as the most needed component for development. Innovative weavers with their skillful blending of myths, faiths, symbols and imagination provide the fabric an appealing dynamism. The strength of handloom lies in introducing innovative designs, which cannot be replicated by the power loom sector (texmin.nic.in/amc_computer-2007-08.pdfMinistry of Textiles, Government of India, 2007).

Bharti (2007) defines an entrepreneur as the person who bears risk, unites various factors of production and carries out innovations. An entrepreneur is an innovator who introduces something new.
An entrepreneur needs inspiration, motivation and sensibility and he is the one who organizes, operates and assumes the risk for a business venture (http://www.woopidoo.com/articles/geimure/entrepreneur-article.htm).

An entrepreneur’s behaviour and characteristics are closely associated with his success as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial behaviour in its broadest sense has become more important in our society, where tasks increasingly require qualities. These entrepreneurial qualities enable individuals to cope with and contribute to rapid changes in the society.

The behavioural approach to entrepreneurial development is potentially promising if certain behavioural patterns can be consistently associated with entrepreneurial success, within clearly defined organizational and contextual variables.(http://www.evancarmichael.com/.../60-The-African-Entrepreneur-Behavioral-Patterns).

A successful entrepreneur weaver needs some characteristics or dimensions of entrepreneurial behaviour. The dimensions like risk taking ability, achievement motivation, entrepreneurial motivation, management orientation, credit orientation, level of aspiration, innovativeness and self confidence are some of the attributes behind the success of an entrepreneur.

**Relevance and Scope**

At present, the handloom sector is beset with manifold problems such as obsolete technologies, unorganized production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional production range, weak marketing link, overall
stagnation of production and sales and above all competition from power loom and mill sector. Handloom weavers today are not a happy lot and are facing a series of problems ranging from unorganized nature of their business to threat from cheap imports.

The specific health problems encountered by the entrepreneurs in the handloom sector are aches and pains of joints, back and head, stomach and respiratory disorders, rheumatic complaints and dimmed vision of eyes. A person who has to work in a poor posture may often get tired or is unable to work efficiently (Ghosh, 2003). The handloom weavers seem to lack a favourable living environment. They are also exposed to unsatisfactory working environment, overcrowding, long hours of paid and unpaid work, poor lighting, poor workplace design and inadequate sanitation.

The other problems are venturing into marketing problems, financial problems, inadequate credit facilities, heavy competition, high cost of production, social barriers, problems created by middle men, lack of information and lack of self confidence.

In a fast developing country like India, the forces of commercialization and modernization are actively operating and transforming the traditional modes of production into modern capitalistic enterprises. Entrepreneurs push back factors are indebtedness, inaccessibility of raw materials and lack of patronage on behalf of government organization. Entrepreneurs, particularly the less educated ones, also
find it more difficult to get financing from banks because they lack information on how to go about securing a loan.

The handloom industry is thus greatly dominated by uncertainty in many respects. Today, handloom industries are handicapped by a multitude of problems in connection with their occupational structure and these lead to under employment, starvation and suicide. If the government do not concentrate on safeguarding them, the handloom sector would be left to die a slow death on its own.

Very few studies have been done on handloom weavers in the past in Kerala. In 1986, a study was conducted on “Handloom industry in North and South Kerala” by Rajagopal. Recent research studies done in this field are “Occupational Problems of handloom weavers in Thiruvananthapuram” by Santhosh (2007) and “A study on health profile of employed women in handloom industry” by Veni (2008). Latest other references are not available regarding handloom weavers in Kerala.

A major chunk of the available research is focused on the problems of handloom weavers. A lot of meaningful reports and comments have been published on handloom weavers and their declining status in the society. But there has been less discussion about the entrepreneurial behaviour of entrepreneur weavers. A close look at their entrepreneurial behaviour would certainly help to unwind the attributes of a successful entrepreneur weaver. By discovering the factors which may influence the success of an entrepreneur weaver, this can be of immense use to the planners, policy makers and administrators to streamline suitable strategies for the development of the entrepreneurs in handloom weaving.
In order to harness the potential for continued growth and development of the handloom entrepreneurs, it is necessary to formulate appropriate strategies for stimulating, supporting and sustaining their efforts in the entrepreneurial world. Realizing this, the investigator undertook this study to examine the entrepreneurial behaviour of handloom weavers.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the study are:-

1. To study the profile characteristics of the entrepreneur weavers and their enterprises.

2. To assess the entrepreneurial behaviour of the entrepreneurs engaged in weaving.

3. To determine the relationship between selected independent variables and entrepreneurial behaviour of the entrepreneur weavers.

4. To measure the entrepreneur weaver’s knowledge with respect to weaving and allied activities.

5. To identify the constraints encountered by the entrepreneur weavers.

Limitations of the study:

A study of this nature in detail would require considerable amount of time, money and energy. The study by a single investigator to explore this area in a greater depth and in a comprehensive manner will be far from easy accomplishment. However sincere efforts have been made to carry out the research in a most systematic and scientific manner.