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The theme of economic exploitation and oppression by the British colonialism has been a fundamental part of the rhetoric of Indian nationalism. It is generally argued that the Indian poverty was due to the interference of the British empire. The destruction of village industries, especially the Indian handloom through European competition and the failure to establish modern industries were pointed out as the most prominent of the consequences of the British rule.

This study is an attempt to examine the impact of these historical processes and the ways in which the handloom weaver coped with it. The aim therefore, is to trace the changing history of the weaver community in the light of the changing patterns of the handloom industry with particular reference to the coastal districts of Andhra belonging to the erstwhile Madras Presidency.

This study analyses the impact of historical processes relating it to the Gandhian ideology and its powerful impact on the material culture of the weaver community in the twentieth century.

1 A massive debate was sparked off by Daniel Thorner’s refutation that deindustrialization resulted in a decline in the handicrafts sector and continued well into the twentieth century. Also this was not compensated by a sufficient rise of modern industry and as a consequence the Indian economy became more and more agricultural. See Daniel Thorner, "De industrialization in India, 1881-1931", in Alice and Daniel Thorner, Land and Labour in India, Bombay, 1962, pp. 70-81.

2 Earlier known as the northern Circars, coastal Andhra is one of the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. It consists of Srikakulam, Vizagapatnam, east Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, and Nellore districts. The northern Circars consisted of Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari which was acquired by the Nizam in 1766, Krishna from the Nizam in 1759 and 1768, and Palnad and the Nellore district from the Nawab of Carnatic in 1801. See S. Srinivasaraghaviangar, Inspector General of Registration, Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years of the British Administration, Madras, 1893.
The genesis, growth and the economic aspects of *Swadeshi* have been reviewed with the specific purpose of understanding its transformed role under the guidance of Gandhi, particularly after 1905. How, during the last phase of the *Swadeshi* movement, i.e., in the Gandhian phase (1920-1948) the Congress became "truly national in its complexion and its composition changed from that of a Western educated minority group to a mass organization with *swaraj* as its only and ultimate goal", has also been discussed in detail.\(^3\)

This study seeks in-depth to examine the influence of the Madras Government's policies, and how it evolved in the twentieth century and influenced the handloom weaver, both in the urban and the rural settings. In our study, in addition to the changes taking place within a society, consideration will also be given to the wider concerns of the external imperial power. Local economic and political institutions could and did respond in a rational manner to the expanding commercial opportunities. Further how did the small scale sector and its ancillary units succeed in adjusting textile output and trade to new demands within a new economic system in a relatively short span of time? In this study this is precisely what has been explored.

This study focuses on the Telugu speaking coastal districts (of the erstwhile Madras Presidency) which had a high concentration of handloom weavers and a long rich history of textile production. It was also a region in which the national struggle assumed a militant form. It is also suggested here that the handloom industry in this region was stronger than elsewhere perhaps due to the relatively more prosperous economy in which it

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\(^3\) Krishnaswamy, "The north and the south in Indian history during the national movement" cited in S. P. Sen (ed), *The North and the South in Indian History: Contact and Adjustment*, Calcutta, 1976, pp. 194-95.
was located. The coastal districts of the erstwhile Madras Presidency, i.e., Guntur, Nellore, Krishna, East and West Godavari and Vizagapatnam districts are taken as the best representative region for our study here, rather than the whole of south India, as it otherwise would get unwieldy.

The Madras Presidency is chosen for this study for several reasons. It was here that the ryotwari system of collecting land revenue from the individual cultivator was introduced in full rigour. Moreover the rates of revenue collected by the British were much higher in this Presidency than in any other part of India. Moreover, it was in south India that the caste system was particularly different compared to north India. Some historians even argued that, the strength of the caste system provides one method of estimating the number of agricultural labourers.4

A note on the cotton textile composition is necessary here. They compose a large group consisting of mill products as well as the textiles produced in the decentralized sector. The mills are of two kinds-spinning mills which produce only yarn and composite mills which produce both yarn and cloth. The decentralized sectors are the ones (which we are here concerned with) consisting of handlooms, powerlooms and khadi.5 Yarn requirements of

4 For further elaboration on this see, Sharada Raju, *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency, 1800-1850*, Madras, 1941. For information and statistics on landless labourers being the highest in the 1960s in the south, in relation to the total population in India, see Dharma Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India: Agricultural labour in the Madras Presidency during the Nineteenth century*, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 180-85.

5 *Khadi* means coarse spun yarn. According to the Cottage Industries' Act, the words 'khaddar' and 'khadi' whether in English or in any other Indian vernacular language when applied to any woven material would be deemed to be trade description within the meaning of the Indian Merchandise Marks Act 1889, indicating that such material is cloth woven on handlooms in India from cotton yarn handspun in India. This Act was passed by the Indian legislature and received assent of the Governor General on 13 March 1934. Refer to the *Act for the Promotion of Cottage Industries Industrial Legislation*, All India, The Khaddar (name protection) Act, 1934.
handlooms and the powerlooms are wholly met by mills which emphasize the close link between the two.\textsuperscript{6}

In coastal Andhra cotton weaving could be divided into two classes: weavers weaving white cloth and those weaving coloured cloths. In the Krishna, Godavari, Vizagapatnam and Ganjam districts there were two distinct varieties of coloured cloths: the first was made at Chirala and Vetapalem and the other place was in the Krishna district. The specialty of these places was a well known and finely dyed cloth worn as \textit{lungies} by Muslims throughout the northern Circars. The second variety of coloured cloths were woven at Rajam in the Vizagapatnam district. Regarding the material and manufacture they were generally superior in quality and the contrast of the richly worked bordered ends with the main background being very effective. These two classes of weavers were common to nearly all districts here.\textsuperscript{7}

The handloom industry was pursued in almost every district of the Madras province particularly in West and East Godavari, Krishna, Nellore, Guntur and Vizagapatnam. The main castes employed in it being the \textit{Kapus}, \textit{Harijans}, \textit{Padmasalis}, \textit{Velamas}, \textit{Telagas} and \textit{Odayars}. The raw material for cotton was either grown by the spinners or bought and then ginned on a country gin called the \textit{raatnam} carded with a bow and slivered usually by the \textit{dudekulas}. The yarn was then spun on the \textit{charkha}\textsuperscript{8} the wheel being


\textsuperscript{7}E.B. Haveli, "The Industries of Madras" (extract), \textit{The journal of Indian Art}, Vol. iii, Nos. 25 - 32, London, 1890.

\textsuperscript{8}\textit{Charkha} was formerly a tiny machine with only one spindle. A new \textit{charkha} was made in Bardoli with certain modifications in the old ones. The wheel in it was kept big to increase the speed of spinning and it had brass bearings in it to ensure smooth movement. The whole buildup was scientific and made strong to avoid rocking in action. The new modifications removed the defects of the old \textit{charkhia} namely the slipping of the belt and the rocking in action. The new modifications removed the defects of the old \textit{charkhas}, of the spindle and the movement of the wheel and minor other imperfections. Gandhi carried on experiments with these \textit{charkhas} during his incarceration in 1930-32, preferring
crude and primitive in many parts of the districts. Some spinners spun it on the takli/spindle. The count of yarn spun varied from 6s to 120s and the finest was being spun at Ponduru, Chicacole in the Vizagapatnam district. The yarn was obtained from the cotton grown in its hilly tracts. The wages paid for ginning, carding and making sliver were more or less the same as in the adjoining districts of East and West Godavari. On an average it was estimated that each woman worked about 4 hours a day and spun about 5 tolas or 1000 yards of 8s to 10s earning about 4 pics a day and the monthly earning of an average spinner came to about 1 rupee per month.10

These Telugu speaking districts, it is emphasized were of a distinct strand in the fabric of India's national heritage. Prior to the First World War these handloom spinners did not face the increasing problems relating to high competitiveness, and accumulation of stocks or capital needs. But the first half of the twentieth century witnessed various economic and political influences by which the handloom workers faced increasing unsteadiness of yarn supplies.

9 This was the easiest and the cheapest instrument for spinning. The discs of the old takli were made of stone and the spindles made of bamboo. They were improved subsequently and brass discs of correct weight and iron spindles were used later on. Yarn of fine and coarse, uniform and durable could be spun with the takli. Even though the speed of the takli was somewhat less than that of the charkha, it was the best instrument for attaining self-sufficiency in cloth.

To understand the various economic and political influences that came into operation a background of the growth of British rule in India and its impact on the cotton handloom industry is given below.

After the arrival of the British in India the cotton industry went through three broad phases. The first phase was where India exported a great deal of cotton goods to Europe and imported very little. In the early years of the British East India company (which virtually monopolised India's foreign trade after ousting the rival Dutch, French, Danish and Portuguese traders), exports from India consisted largely of calico and spices while imports into India consisted very largely of bullion. Protests from England condemning the East India Company's activities towards the end of the seventeenth century on the draining of bullion from England led to the imposition of heavy import duties on India's calicoes and even to complete banning of imports of certain varieties. The end of the eighteenth century witnessed the textile revolution, in England enabling that country to produce finer cotton cloth at comparatively low prices which completely reversed the nature of India's trade with England within the next few years.\(^\text{11}\)

England commenced the export of yarn to India regularly from 1817 and touched the south Indian market in the twenties. Imports of yarn rose sharply in the 1830s and by 1845 they reached a million rupees. Imports into the Madras Presidency after 1850 reached a value of two million rupees and quintupled in the following two decades in terms of value as well as in quality. In the all India frame the south Indian yarn imports were only of secondary importance. However the share of Madras Presidency

\(^{11}\text{See for further details, Dhires Bhattacharya, A Concise History of India, Calcutta, 1972, Chapter II, "A History of India's foreign trade and trade policies", pp. 135-45.}\)
in total yarn imports continued to rise to almost 50% in 1889. In the districts of northern Coromandel coast famous for textile production the English yarn was not used much and was moreover, only restricted to certain localities. For example much more foreign yarn was used in the vicinity of the Madras port than in the distant areas.\textsuperscript{12}

This state of affairs changed from the middle of the nineteenth century. Since then onwards, import of cotton piece goods represented about half the total imports of foreign merchandise into India. At the same time that the Indian cotton handicrafts were being ruined by competition from British factory goods, raw cotton from India marked a distinct niche in the British market, aided by the fact that Britain had become eager to reduce her extreme dependence on American sources of supply of cotton. Two major factors helped in the expansion of export of raw cotton and other raw materials from India: (i.) opening of the Indian countryside after the construction of railways, and (ii.) the shortening of the sea route to England by about 3,000 miles after the construction of the Suez canal (1869). Also the emergence of newly industrializing countries like Germany and Japan added to the demand for Indian raw materials. The last phase witnessed in the second half of the nineteenth century saw the growth of a mechanized cotton textile industry in India. The Indian factory textile industry began its swift growth in the early 1870s. While many of the early mills installed some looms, the primary emphasis was on the production of cotton yarn for handlooms.\textsuperscript{13}


Throughout the nineteenth century British producers sold only medium and fine count yarns in India never below 25s counts of yarn. Thus, the vast bulk of yarn required by Indian weavers that was used in the production of coarse count yarn was probably still being produced by hand as late as the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Indian mills started by producing coarse count yarns which did not require them to compete with British mills; but with the local hand spinners. The cost structure was such that cheap labour made it impossible for the British mills to penetrate the coarse yarn market. Therefore, the situation such that, fine count yarn came in from abroad and coarse count yarn was produced by Indian mills.\textsuperscript{14}

However the point to be noted is that the last decades of the nineteenth century saw a relatively faster expansion of the weaving section as opposed to spinning. Also the cotton textiles was a field which was largely developed by Indian capitalist enterprise. But by then, the mechanized cotton textile industry, in Lanchashire had become powerful enough to compete successfully with the Indian handspinning and hand weaving industry. This resulted in a drastic decline of Indian exports, a sharp rise in Indian imports and a definite setback to the Indian pre-mechanized spinning industry.\textsuperscript{15} By the first half of the twentieth century, the industrial capitalist mode of production\textsuperscript{16} became dominant in the British empire (this aspect will be developed later on in this chapter).

\textsuperscript{14}ibid., pp. 109-26.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 109-26.
\textsuperscript{16}In its most narrow sense the term "mode of production" refers here to the forces of production. That is, the natural resources, tools, scientific and technical knowledge and the human labour that puts them to use. The term "mode of production" is used specifically to refer to the extraction of surplus value by capital from wage labour utilising industrial forms of technology.
Therefore, what is perceptible is that in the nineteenth century, British industrial monopoly and domination of the world market began to weaken in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. In India the decline was far slower because the stranglehold was tenaciously held with the aid of political sovereignty. Even up to the war of 1914, Britain held fast to nearly two-thirds of the Indian market against the rest of the world. Yet even in India, the decline was slowly and steadily perceptible from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

During the First World War, Indian mills consumed more of the yarn they previously sold and this forced a reduction of handloom activity during the boom period. What happened between the end of the First and the Second World War, is a matter of considerable debate. There is no doubt that the handloom share of the market continued to decline on an all India scale. The disagreement is over what happened to absolute output and this depends on how one estimates the supply of free yarn available. The Fact Finding Committee, appointed to look into the conditions of the Indian mills and handlooms, concluded that yarn available to handlooms continued to rise so that in 1936-39 the supply averaged nearly 37% more than in 1906-07.\(^{17}\)

S.D. Mehta on the other hand estimated that free yarn supplies available to the non factory sector stagnated.\(^{18}\) But Mehta's conclusions follow from his choice of triennial periods for comparison. Using S.D. Mehta's data differently J. Krishnamurthy estimated that, the handloom output rose from an annual average

\(^{17}\)Report of the Fact Finding Committee, (Mills and Handlooms), Ministry of Commerce, Delhi, 1942.

of over 965 million yards in the period 1902-03 and 1912-13 to 1,068 million yards in the period 1930-31 and 1937-38.\footnote{J. Krishnamurthy, "Deindustrialisation in Gangetic Bihar during the nineteenth century: Another look at the evidence" in \textit{IESHR}. Vol. XXII, No. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1985, pp.399-416. See Helen Miller, "Trading places: Industries for free trade", \textit{World Politics}, Vol. XL, July 1988, pp. 349-376. Elaborating further Wendy Takacs explains that: (a.) the cyclical state of the economy and (b.) the country’s competitive position internationally were the principal determinants of the degree of protectionist pressure.}

Therefore what is emphasized is that, by the 1920s, Great Britain was definitely losing its hegemony which it enjoyed in the nineteenth century. From a peak of 24% in 1870, Great Britain's share of world trade had fallen to 14% before the First World War. In addition, its control over the international monetary system was also declining. Its problem in returning to and maintaining the gold standard in the twenties and its final abandonment of that system in 1931 signaled its loss of influence.\footnote{J. Krishnamurthy, "Deindustrialisation in Gangetic Bihar during the nineteenth century: Another look at the evidence" in \textit{IESHR}. Vol. XXII, No. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1985, pp.399-416. See Helen Miller, "Trading places: Industries for free trade", \textit{World Politics}, Vol. XL, July 1988, pp. 349-376. Elaborating further Wendy Takacs explains that: (a.) the cyclical state of the economy and (b.) the country’s competitive position internationally were the principal determinants of the degree of protectionist pressure.}

This found its echo in India in the 1930s and 1940s when Britain's financial and trade stakes in India rapidly declined, a process especially accelerated by the Second World War. The need to protect those elements of Britain's imperial position disappeared and there appeared a new rapprochement between Britain and Indian business and one which favoured Indian dominion hood. This argument is supported by recent writings by economic historians who argue that an economically and militarily depleted Britain was caught up in a vortex of unpremeditated and unpreventable forces and this forced it to accede its control over India. With this background it is easier to understand the growth of the Indian economy and its consequences on the handloom industry in India.

The biggest nationalist critique was, as is well known, propounded over issues of colonial economy which lie in the (i.)
the drain of wealth, (ii.) de-industrialization and (iii.) the lack of indigenous capitalist development.

First, in exploring the concept of the drain of wealth, the core of the argument, i.e., is that a portion of the national product of India was not available for capital formation or consumption by her own people but was drained away to England for political reasons without getting an adequate economic, commercial or material return. The drain took the form of an excess of exports over imports - the difference between exports and imports being a broad measure of the drain. Economic drain had two aspects - external and internal. External drain occurred through a unilateral transfer of goods to England and would have been impossible without an internal drain. In order to meet the external drain commodities such as food grains and raw materials were exhorted from the rural areas by oppressive land revenue, irrigation and other levies which compelled the cultivator to sell their crops which were in turn exported.

This happened mainly during the depression of the 1929-30 when large quantities of "distress gold" flowed from the rural to the urban areas where it flowed out again to England. Just as there was the unilateral transfer of wealth from India to England so was it a transfer from the poorer rural regions to the relatively affluent urban areas. This was the internal drain. Though scholars are in broad agreement on the existence of the drain what is contested is that, "it did not consist of the total sum involved" 21 or that it was exaggerated or overestimated.

Interrelated to the issue of the drain of wealth was the concept of de-industrialization. Notwithstanding a lot of debate

among historians and basing their conclusions on various quantitative analysis about the degree and extent of development of deindustrialization, what has emerged is that deindustrialization was definitely a fact with variations over different items and regions. It was part of a large scale socio-economic disruption that came about as a result of the "integration of the local economy with the commercially and industrially powerful economy of the metropolis."  

Writing in the context of India in contrast to the other parts of the world which was experiencing the industrial revolution the English records termed this period variously as of, 'arrested development', 'de-industrialization', 'ruralization' and peasantization. The Board of Revenue recorded that there were countless references to a situation where the weavers were groaning under poverty and indebtedness mainly due to the very thin margin between the production cost and the sale price of their products. This claim is contested in our study: we not only exposed the falsity of this but also offered evidence on the expansion of the secondary sector of the coastal Andhra regions in the twentieth century.

Industrialization, as J. Krishnamurthy defines it, means a rise in the share of manufacturing in total working force. But a rise in the ratio of workers in manufacturing to total workers is neither


23The word peasantization was used in, The Problem of India, London, 1940, p. 89, and 108-109, cited in Alice and Daniel Thorner, "De industrialization in India", in their book, Land and Labour in India, Bombay, 1962

24Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Madras presidency, Madras, No.317, 6 Nov., 1896. See also its Enclosure, No. 1.
a necessary nor a sufficient condition for industrialization in any theoretical sense. By the same token a decline in manufacturing output per capita constitutes deindustrialization.\textsuperscript{25}

Though works by Morris D. Morris, Alice and Daniel Thorner, Amiya Kumar Bagchi, and Marika Vicziany have increased our understanding their prejudices have also to a large measure impeded our understanding of the contribution of this industry to the total output. Most of their arguments are based on quantitative data. Thorner pointed out by using census data that this de-industrialization thesis could not be sustained.\textsuperscript{26} Subsequently in an elaborate study J. Krishnamurthy substantiated this conclusion.\textsuperscript{27}

It was given an fresh lease of argument by Amiya Kumar Bagchi with the population data compiled by Hamilton Buchanan's for Bihar and Bengal in the years 1809-13.\textsuperscript{28} Comparing the Buchanan data for these years with the all India census data of 1901 for the same regions, Bagchi argues that there was a 10\% drop in the secondary industry employment and almost 50\% fall in the absolute number of such labourers.\textsuperscript{29} This was refuted by Alastair Orr and Marika Vicziany by arguing that the data of Hamilton


\textsuperscript{26} Morris D. Morris, \textit{et al}, \textit{Indian economy in the Nineteenth Century}, New Delhi, 1969.


\textsuperscript{28} D. H. Buchanan, \textit{The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India}, New York, 1939.

Buchanan was highly suspect and therefore cannot sustain the above argument.\textsuperscript{30}

The debate on de-industrialization remains inconclusive for this period. Later on in an elaborate manner Colin Clark presented a table purporting to show that from 1881 to 1911, the proportion of the working force engaged in manufacture and construction fell from 35\% to 17\%.\textsuperscript{31} But Konrad Specker in his recent work on the handlooms remarked that what the classical debate about the fate of the Indian textile sector of the nineteenth century has overlooked was the quantitative product and region wise specific dimensions of the developments.\textsuperscript{32}

The attempt here is to demonstrate that in the twentieth century an analysis of changes in the working force engaged in manufacturing must take into account the changes in the pattern of output and degree of capital intensity in manufacturing. But this hypothesis can only be tested with data on output in manufacturing and the share of total output in economy. This is precisely what is done here keeping the larger arguments in the background but testing it on a micro-level.

Production is of course only one index of measuring prosperity. When British officials and Indian nationalists talked about decline of the handloom industry they had in mind more visible evidence, i.e., the decline in living standards. This was especially true of central Bihar where the weavers expended much


\textsuperscript{31}Referred to by Daniel Thorner and Alice Thorner, "Deindustrialization in India", cited in Alice and Daniel Thorner, \textit{Land and Labour in India}, pp. 70-81.

more labour per pound of material on weaving of fine cloth than those weavers who produced coarse cloth.\textsuperscript{33}

There is evidence at least in the late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century that available yarn consumed by the handlooms was on the increase - though evidence for the inter-war period is less certain. Morris D. Morris is of the opinion that handloom production at worse must have slightly diminished or conversely it might have increased significantly.\textsuperscript{34}

For the nineteenth century, Morris D. Morris argued that Manchester exported both cloth and yarn. While British cloth was competitive with Indian handloom production, machine made yarn seems to have strengthened the competitive position of the indigenous handloom sector despite the fall in cloth prices. Therefore, the demand for cloth in India seems to have been fairly elastic. Second, there seemed a shift away from inferior fabrics to cotton. The handloom weavers were "at least no fewer in number and no worse off economically at the end of the period than at the beginning".\textsuperscript{35} However Bipan Chandra debates this contention of Morris D. Morris. The debate centres around the identification of the demand curve and at a later stage the measurement of its elasticity. However the particular problem that is faced here is that while one has data on imports of British cloth into India and their price, there is in comparison very little information on the domestic

In 1918 the Indian Industrial Commission gave the following examples of manufacturing costs (i.e. the cost of labour per lb. of yarn):

Fine turbans: Rs. 4-3-8
Intermediate quality of cloth for dhooties, Rs. 1-2-4
Coarse cloth: 7 annas per LB. (1 rupee =16 annas )

\textsuperscript{34} For an extended debate on this see also, Colin Simons, "Deindustrialization, industrialization and the Indian economy, c.1850-1947", \textit{Modern Asian Studies} (hereafter \textit{MAS}). Vol. 19, No. 3,1985, pp. 593-622.

cloth industry as to the output, price and even the number of weavers in the nineteenth century. This is the main issue that Bipan Chandra argues upon when he remarks: "How can one identify the demand curve for cotton textile let alone estimate its elasticity or its shift, given the little information about the weavers of the nineteenth century"?\textsuperscript{36}

The relationship between cotton to yarn to handloom cloth is direct for the first half of the nineteenth century. For the second half of the nineteenth century the Indian factory production of yarn and cloth has to be taken into account. Furthermore, Morris D. Morris argued that cheaper cloth prices, increasing population, changes in cotton and a shift away from inferior fabrics so raised demand that "at worse, the vast expansion of British cloth exports to India skimmed off the expanding demand. The handloom weavers were at least no lower in number and no worse off economically at the end of the (19th. century) than at the beginning".\textsuperscript{37} This bold formulation of Morris provoked a set of responses criticizing his approach with varying degrees of intensity.\textsuperscript{38}

Comparatively, the proportion of the population when compared to the total industrial population of all India figures, fell from 62\% in 1801-13 to 15\% in 1901.\textsuperscript{39} Further small scale producers, manufacturing cotton, silk and woolen textiles, declined from 2.4 million in 1911 to 2.2 million in 1951. However as machine


\textsuperscript{37} Morris D. Morris, "Reinterpretation", p. 9.


spun yarn supplanted handspun yarn and as the fly shuttle replaced the throw shuttle in parts of India, output per worker in handloom production must have risen. The all India handloom production rose from 965 million yards in 1902-03 and 1912-13 to 1068 million yards in 1930-31 and 1937-38, proving that this major traditional activity was marked by rising output per worker. But taking the entire manufacturing sector into account, its share in total employment did not decline if we rely on the figures for males. But if estimated in total, i.e., along with females and males, figures show a decline from 9.6% in 1911 to 8.7% in 1951.40

Although the overall effect on Indian economic activity was small two qualifications have to be kept in mind. First, the absolute numbers were not insignificant. Employment in cotton and jute industries in India was on a very large scale when compared to employment in the same industries in foreign countries. Second, factory employment tended to be concentrated in specific districts and probably had a somewhat greater effect than all India figures might suggest. Employment grew at different rates and in relative importance it declined in (speaking in context of one of the oldest industries) cotton textiles and jute industries. None of the important newer industries ever provided employment on such a massive scale as the cotton handloom industry of the rural areas.41

Whatever the ultimate implications, the direct impact of the industrial developments of the colonial period on the occupational distribution of the Indian labour force was minuscule. After nearly a century of growth of the modern factory activity, the average daily employment in registered factories, though increasing to more than five fold between 1900-01 and 1946-47 from 5,39,000 to


41 Ibid., pp. 644-45.
2,654,000 still amounted to less than 2% of the Indian labour force in the latter year.\textsuperscript{42} Therefore, the argument of Konrad Specker that to talk about a flourishing handloom textile market buckling under its pressure or getting deindustrialized is too simple an answer to the complex changes that were occurring in colonial Indian economic life seems to be reasonable.

Recent studies provide information on the rich variety of the economic system of markets of exchange that flourished within the textile economy. There is evidence at least in the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century that was brought to light on various studies on the handloom industry at a micro-level/regional basis. For the present century, N.K. Kulkarni's study of Ichalkaranji's handlooms, Peter Harnetty's on central Bihar, M.S.Khan's on Coimbatore mills, Sujata B. Patels on Ahmedabad handlooms, and P.C. Mahapatra's on Orissa looms, studies by Raghubir Sahai on the weaving of cotton in the Nizam's dominions and Ruma Chatterji's work on the Bengal handlooms all speak against the simplistic view that the Indian economy was dichotomous- the traditional versus that of the modern- or the vast rural countryside against the urban.\textsuperscript{43} Another recent study summarized that in the twenties and the thirties of the twentieth century the weavers were forced to adapt themselves to changes in

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., pp. 642-43.
Government policies, major structural changes in the industry, and influences on their indigenous technology.  

During the First World War, owing to the shortage of shipping space, the shipment of the low quality piece goods to the Indian market from Britain was curtailed by the decision of the British Cotton Control Board. The import duty on cotton piece goods was raised from 3 1/2 % to 7 1/2% in 1917, but the excise duty on cotton piece goods remained unchanged at 3 1/2%. The import of yarn on which handlooms depended fell because of diversion of resources in Great Britain due to the war effort and because of shortage of shipping. The combined effect of all these developments, resulted in a fall in imports of piece goods and yarn, a fall in the outlet of handlooms and a rise in the output of cotton piece goods by mills. The relative fall in the price of raw cotton also helped the output of cotton piece goods in the Indian mills. The War also led to the invasion of the Indian market by Japan producers of cotton goods. It is certain that the War hastened the process of displacement of Manchester piece goods in the Indian market by the products of Indian and Japanese mills. However, the increase in Japanese exports to India was due to the fact that the Japanese mills were overtaking and surpassing the Indian ones in efficiency.

The tariff policy of the Government of India in relation to the cotton textile industry after First World War was formulated, keeping in view three major considerations: (i.) the need to raise revenue during the years immediately following the war, (ii.) the

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necessity of protecting Indian produce and the exports from Great Britain to India from Japanese competition and (iii.) the need to preserve a large section of the Indian mill industry from extinction during the thirties. Japan became a far more serious competitor of Indian mills than Lanchashire because (a) many Indian mills enjoyed an advantage over Lanchashire mills (in respect of wage-cost per unit of output) whereas the position was reversed with respect to Japanese mills and (b) Japan also sold the coarser kinds of cloth in which the Indian mills specialised before 1930.46

Christopher J. Baker's study on the handloom weaving industry in Tamil Nadu showed how far its development ran counter to the apparent all India trends.47 The handloom weaving industry in Tamil Nadu began to expand in the nineteenth century precisely when it should have gone into decline in the face of the ever growing competition from Indian mills. In fact, the handloom sector grew faster than the factory industry and by 1939, supplied 60% of the market for cloth in the Madras Presidency. This expansion was based in part on the home market, but export to South East Asia quadrupled between the late 1880s and 1920's. Production was organized through various forms of putting out while many families looked upon the manufacture of coarse cloth as a form of social security. They required working capital and the problems of marketing cloth were sufficiently complex to require specialised knowledge precisely because many fly shuttles turned to handloom weaving when the local economy was depressed.

there was a continuous risk of overproduction and the demand for and supply of both labour and cloth had to be carefully coordinated between the two World Wars.

The internal economy of the Presidency was subjugated to violent fluctuations of prices and demand arising from its relationship with the international economy. The cost of production for handloom workers as well as the price of cloth also tied to unstable agricultural prices which were highly vulnerable to internal and external fluctuations. The effects of these conditions were registered in a growing emphasis among handloom capitalists upon coarser goods, an increasing concentration of control over the working capital in the industry, the development of largely and more loosely organized production system or the emergence of large putting out networks and a shift of location of the industry, towards the towns.\footnote{48}{Carol Boyack Upadhyay, "The farmer capitalists of coastal Andhra", EPW, Vol. XXIII, No. 27, July 1988, pp. 1376-82.}

This instability did however, encourage the handloom capitalists to diversify their interests in buying lands, trading in the mill made piece goods and investing in film industry.\footnote{49}{Ibid.} The decline of the export trade in the fine goods had undermined the master weavers engaged in luxury production and restricted the independence of the skilled independent weavers from the traditional weaving communities, like the Devangas, Kaikolars and the Padmasalis. As the number of weavers producing coarse cloth increased their incomes fell and the extent of regular employment which was available declined. Many were forced to seek work elsewhere, turning to agricultural labour or service employment in towns. A recent study also points out that, consequently in the
Madras Presidency, the industry was becoming more part time than permanent. By the year 1948, it was declining due to mainly the pressures from factory competition.\textsuperscript{50}

Indian mills tended not to improve the range of products to compete with Lanchashire imports, but to remain specialised within a wide variety of low count yarns and cheap piece goods. In areas of Madras, a partial shift to higher counts was achieved. The barriers to finer goods production, Lanchashire's domination of domestic marketing channels, the lack of suitable long staple cotton for finer yarns (when a large percentage of domestic long staple cotton was exported from Madras), the insecurity of tariff protection under the colonial state, the lack of skilled technical and managerial personnel and the incapacity to mobilise sufficient capital all tended to contain Indian production within the coarser varieties.\textsuperscript{51} Also the immense complexity and fragmentation of the rural cloth market gave marketing a dominant position within this industry.

The Non co-operation movement launched in 1920 and its programme of boycott and \textit{Swadeshi} contributed to the definite strengthening the position of the weaver in coastal Andhra. What is investigated is the position of weaver in this complex interplay of economic forces where the switch over from machine spun yarn (a part of the survival technique) adopted by the weavers and then again re-switching to weaving of coarse \textit{khaddar} under the influence of Gandhi resulted in the development of new networks of credit and marketing. The changing demand in quality standards,

technical innovations and the co-operative movement offered alternatives, thereby strengthening the resolve of the weaver.

From the beginning, the controversy that evolved over what kind of industrial development would suit India was handled not from the economic angle alone. Due to the singular circumstances of traditional India, social and ideological issues also had to be taken into account. Indian thinkers began to be conscious of the social and economic disadvantages that would accompany the coming of a large scale industrial West. Therefore, a search had begun for the particular path that would preserve the virtues of an Indian traditional society but combined with methods that would solve its economic problems.\(^52\)

The solution to this was given in *The Dawn* of April 1900 which explained that the remedy lay first (i.) in organizing most of the industries on a family handicraft basis confining large scale capitalist industry to only a few exercises like engineering projects, railways, etc., and second (ii.) by organizing a corporate ethical life. "By giving to each class a fixed reorganized and independent place in the social organism but all cooperating in such ordered-ordination as to work for the advantage of whole as to further the spiritual evolution of each ascending grade and of the whole Indian society."\(^53\)

It was this nascent Swadeshi movement, that was encouraged and given momentum by the entrepreneurs mainly to counteract foreign industrial interests. With the spread of English language a middle class consisting of men of commerce, bankers,
doctors and other professionals had emerged more powerful than in any other time in the past. The commercial activities had also forced the foreign concerns to train the Indians in technical subjects and even employ them at a senior level to run their activities. Apart from other factors it was the Swadeshi movement that encouraged and acted as a catalyst to the Indian social groups to contemplate on the development of an industrial sector in India itself.\(^{54}\)

Though the ideas of boycott and Swadeshi were advocated earlier in the writings of M.G. Ranade, extremist leaders like Aurobindo, Balagangadhar Tilak and Bipan Chandra Pal gave it more comprehensive meaning. Boycott was to be passive resistance on four major fronts: economic, educational, administrative, judicial and to a lesser extent religious.\(^{55}\)

The Swadeshi spark also ignited the movement towards the artistic revival of indigenous crafts and to protect the rich traditions from the onslaught of the burgeoning mill industry and chemical dyes. All the stirrings of an idealist philosophy of social progress, stressing the integrity of a community depending on self help was evidently the theme stressed on time and again by art critics. Ananda Coomaraswamy is a case in point.\(^{56}\) Attracted by the rich tradition of aesthetic patterns of the traditional handicrafts, art lovers, like, Sir George Birdwood and Edgar B. Haveli pressurised the Government to encourage and preserve the Indian art and handicrafts to a large extent.


\(^{55}\) Amales Tripathi pointed out that through boycott the extremist leaders helped to strike at the root of the British prestige. “The psychological reaction to benevolent despotism was to be benevolent indifference.” For further discussion on this see, Amales Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge*, Calcutta, 1967.

\(^{56}\) Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Art and Swadeshi*, Madras, N.D., pp. 3-5.
The role of Government in advancing or impeding economic growth had been a major theme in relation to the twentieth century especially in the context of colonial intervention in countries like India. From 1877 onwards, it cannot be denied that the British Government had actively participated in almost all spheres of economic activity and made many attempts to introduce various commercial crops including the establishment of experimental farms, the grant of advances to cultivation and rewards for excellence in production and the distribution of new varieties of seeds. These measures were taken up for nearly all cash crops but more particularly and rigourously for cotton.\(^5^7\)

As a result of the efforts of more than half a century a tremendous increase in the output of cotton was effected. While in 1805 the imports of raw cotton into the Presidency, amounted to Rs. 20,00,000 and the exports to Rs. 1,00,000, the imports rose to the value of Rs. 19,709 and exports rose to Rs. 58,22,790 in 1850-51. But interesting to note is the fact that in spite of all the exertions of the Government on the quality of cotton, the methods of cultivation and the implements used by the ryots remained practically the same throughout the nineteenth century.\(^5^8\)

Coming to the twentieth century, the colonial rulers (basing on the doctrine of \textit{laissez faire}, prior to the First World War) held that the Government was not equipped to further industrial development by direct action and that all matters should be left to private enterprise. Therefore, before 1914 the state assistance to industry was meager and took two forms: (a.) a wholly inadequate provision for technical education and (b.) a half hearted attempt at

\(^5^7\)See Sharada Raju, \textit{Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency}, Chapter VI, on Crop Production, pp. 96-101.

\(^5^8\)\textit{ibid.} , p. 101.
commercial and industrial information.\textsuperscript{59} This situation changed after the First World War.

However, it was not until the year 1920 when the Indian Industrial Commission (appointed in May 1916) put forward definite recommendations and the section of the state sent despatches recommending that, "in future the Government should directly participate in the Industrial development of the country and the Government should be provided the necessary administrative infrastructure, i.e., the scientific and technical advise and equipment that was needed". On 15 May 1920, the Governor of Madras Presidency convened a conference and the Board of Industries was created in the Presidency. It was attended largely by the commercial and industrial interests of Madras region as well as the members of the Legislative Council. The Presidency was divided into 5 divisions for organisational convenience. It had the main head quarters at Bezawada, Bellary, Coimbatore, Madurai, and Madras. (Bezawada division had the districts of Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Guntur and Krishna). Each division was duly placed under the supervision of an Assistant Director whose duties were mainly, the collection and dissemination of commercial and industrial intelligence and the supervision of weaving parties within his jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{60}

The pioneering factories which were run on commercial lines approved by the Director of Industrial and Technical Enquires was consented to with reluctance. The British business community regarded the efforts of the new Director who was appointed, i.e., Alfred Chatterton, as unfair competition calculated to drive private

\textsuperscript{59} Bipan Chandra, \textit{The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism}, p.113.

\textsuperscript{60} Annual Report of the Department of Industries, for the Year ending 31 March 1921, Madras Presidency, Madras, 1922, pp. 1-2.
enterprise from the field. Their fundamental objection was articulated invoking the general principle that, the Government should restrain itself only to governing and not to indulge in silly schemes”.

However, this was not the opinion of all India Government’s advisors on industrial policy. Many of them were sympathetic to Indian cottage industries and its handicrafts than factory based ones. They tended to see the principal function of an industrial policy as that of excluding protection as a defense of the handicrafts especially the art industries against the rise of factories. These fundamental disagreements over the best path to encourage industrialisation and the kind of industry to be adapted were never properly resolved. These found its echo in the Congress ranks and persisted beyond the fifties.

The attack by the nationalists over the drain of wealth' was defended by the Britain on grounds that the railways, plantations, irrigation, etc. were after all 'modernising' India. However, recent studies have proved that this modernisation theory requires several qualifications, for it did not always lead to genuine capitalist farming. Shahid Amin in his recent work on Gorakhpur demonstrated elaborately that a simple enlargement of market or arrival of small peasant production did not strive to

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See, Papers relating to the Industrial Conference held at Ootacamund, Madras, 1908; See also the note by A. J. Yorke, Chairman of the Madras Chamber of Commerce, 14 Sept. 1908, pp. 194-96.

Recent reviews debated that thriving handicraft manufacturing centres by no means guaranteed a smooth transition to industrialism. Proto-industrialization in south Asia as in other areas of the world fueled the industrialization of the core of the world economy without establishing the basis for the region’s own industrial transformation. To simplify, the term ‘proto-industrialization, as a general concept, is used here to locate the origins of industrialization in a particular analytical configuration of a rural industry, an agricultural specialization, presence of merchant capitalism and a household organization. In theoretical orientation, the term of reference varied. See Geoff Eley, “The social history of industrialization: Proto-industry and the origins of capitalism”, Economy and Society, Vol. 13, No. 4, November 1984, pp. 519-39.
change or capitalize the mechanics of small peasant production.\textsuperscript{63}

An interplay of internal tensions and external pressures began to create the India of the twentieth century. The change that was wrought was not dramatic but a continuous transformation and adaptation by the traditional institutions and groups of people. The handloom weaver in this scenario, chose new techniques that seemed more profitable and moulded it to achieve economic benefits. The complex pattern of rural and urban re-distributive system and the demand in both internal and external markets created conditions which necessitated the weaver to change the quality standard of cloth and to come out of their seclusion and be linked up with a wider market network.

However, the transition was not a very smooth one for the weavers, speaking in context of south India. Alfred Chatterton, writing in the first decades of twentieth century found that the handloom weavers being, the most difficult of the artisans of south India he had work with. Though he did not attribute their conservatism solely to the Indian conditions these weavers he remarked, when faced with competition from the powerloom, worked longer hours for a small income and preferred to face famine at close quarters rather than surrender their way of life.\textsuperscript{64} Chatterton also observed that the willingness of the weavers to accept innovation varied from place to place. In large centres such

To use the general argument, Shahid Amin's study points out that, on the contrary, the newer systems of trading and credit took advantage of the peculiarities of the processes of small peasant production already existing and further deepened the dependence of small peasants by superimposing themselves upon the existing structure. This was what was increasingly being recognized in the context of colonial India in which exchange and production relations assumed their full significance only in the context of their role and place within the processes of production and the economic conditions of peasantry in a given area. Shahid Amin, \textit{Sugarcane and Sugar in Gorakhpur - An Enquiry into Peasant Production for Capitalist Enterprise in Colonial India}, Delhi, 1984. \textsuperscript{64} Alfred Chatterton, \textit{Industrial Evolution in India}, Madras, 1912 p. 252-53.
as Conjeevaram, Madurai and Salem he achieved no success in popularising the fly shuttle. In Guntur and Krishna districts the weavers were more responsive and by the end of 1911 nearly 11,000 fly shuttles were being working in the coastal districts. A probable cause for this difference in adaptation of new techniques could be the greater rigidities of the caste system in the urban centres of Conjeevaram, Madurai and Salem compared to the coastal districts of Andhra.\(^{65}\)

One can infer from this fact that Telugu districts were more receptive to outside ideas. On the other hand the three principal weaving castes of the Tamil areas like the Devangas, Padmasalis and Kaikolars, had developed a very high degree of dependence on middlemen as early as the Vijayanagara period and this aspect continued for the next few centuries in one form or the other. This it is suggested, could have affected their ability to respond to technical innovations.\(^{66}\)

Hamza Alavi and others emphasized that in the nineteenth and twentieth century Indian economy was colonial/peripheral capitalist production and not metropolitan like in England. Elaborating further, Alavi explains that though generalized commodity production came to characterize Indian economy, it was disarticulated internally as a large proportion of India's commodities were sold in Britain, while most of the manufactured goods purchased in India were made in Britain. In essence, Alavi argues that India's commodity production and exchange were deeply impoverishing the weaver, the profits from both commodities sold abroad and those brought from abroad to India

\(^{65}\) See, Dharma Kumar, *Land and Caste*, pp. 45-47

went mainly to the British firms and were eventually remitted to the metropolis. It is this well known drain of capital that kept the Indian economy in a condition of partial industrialisation. Therefore, he emphasises, there is a distinct separation of the colonial mode of production from the capitalist mode as a whole and the colonial economy was extricably linked with metropolitan capital but in a subordinate position.67

What is relevant to note in our study is that production relations were not identified with those in the metropolitan industrial countries. By and large as the old technology and methods of labour continued to be used, so also the extraction of surplus value was mainly that of absolute rather than of a relative surplus value. This aspect was seen in the handicrafts industry and in fields such as weaving for local consumption which employed pre-industrial technology for most part and did not increase in any significant way in the basic composition of capital.68

Amiya Kumar Bagchi has demonstrated that although there was animosity from the manufacturing interests in Britain and their...
agents in India to make any concerted effort for industrial development, the real handicap lay in the system which would permit the smooth transfer of resources from India through the traditional sources of land revenue and home charges. The magnitude of expenditure necessary for industrial development in the colony would have jeopardized the flow of surplus capital to the metropolis and therefore funds for it were meager and tightly controlled in the Presidency.\textsuperscript{69}

Another view projected is that, it was during the Civil Disobedience movement that the Congress (with its branches operating in the deltas) found support in its agitations among the cream of the local society. Wealthy landholders and prominent traders particularly those involved in production poured in funds for the Congress: the Rice Mill owners Association of Guntur financed the local Congress, the Masulipatnam Grain Association provided a free mess for Congress volunteers and the Reddi Grain traders of Nellore and the Cotton merchants of Bezawada led Congress agitations in the coastal regions.\textsuperscript{70}

In the towns of east Godavari, the civil disobedience was the work of a handful of prominent lawyers and merchants who resented the pervasive influence of the Raja of Pitthapuram in the local politics.\textsuperscript{71} In these and other Congress demonstrations the butt of the campaigns was not always the raj but also those who had profited from the political circumstances of the 1920s. It was this that had in part made the campaigns more intense in the deltas and in the towns, for in these areas there were many people who

\textsuperscript{69} Amiya Bagchi, \textit{Private Investment in India}, \textit{See} Introduction.
\textsuperscript{70} See \textit{The Hindu}, 31 Mar. 1930, 11 Nov. 1930, 3 April 1930 and 16 Mar. 1931.
\textsuperscript{71} See \textit{The Hindu}, 9 Sept. 1930.
could not find a satisfactory niche in the local Government. This is another view that is projected. Therefore, what is suggested is that though various responses and motivations to the khadi movement by various groups participating in it may have been different, the rich industrialist and the poor weaver alike was equally involved in it.

Lastly, to elaborate on the lack of indigenous capitalist development, there are studies that have categorised the Indian capitalist class as undergoing rapid spurts of growth especially during the depression and during the Second World War when the ties of the colonial economy with the metropolis had considerably weakened. However, the dependent position of the Indian capitalism was maintained as the "structural aspects of colonialism were at no stage shattered or transformed ... the result (being) merely industrial growth and not industrial revolution".

However, it can be concluded that while on the one hand the Indian capitalist class fought for the expulsion of foreign capital or at least for keeping it out the key industries, on the hand it was compelled to seek assistance from foreign capital and even allowed for direct investments though controlled and regulated by the state. This, Bipan Chandra argues, is an aspect of the dependent nature of Indian capitalism and did not reflect fully the attitude of the capitalist class. Most interpretations have attributed the unsatisfactory performance of the Indian economy and the limited

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Bipan Chandra, Presidential Address delivered at the Indian History Congress at the Modern Indian History section, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 32nd session held at Jabalpur, December, 1970, p. 21.

74 Bipan Chandra, "Capitalist Class and Imperialism", Paper read at Seminar on *Imperialism, Independence and Social Transformation in the Contemporary World*, held at New Delhi, March 1972. For an elaboration on this also see his book, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 144-70.
scale of modern industrial development either to British policy which inhibited local initiative or to the Indian value system and social structure which diminished entrepreneurial drives.

It cannot be denied that the British Government had actively participated in almost all spheres of economic life to facilitate trade, transport, commerce, building of canals and agriculture, improvement schemes, etc. But how far had it improved the economic condition of the masses and if succeeded/failed why or how had it all come about? Why the sudden interest at all in developing the countries indigenous industrial forces and in the lower forms of industry? It should also be remembered that the general tax payers had been saddled for years passed with extra taxation by way of import duties on cotton cloth beginning with 3½% in 1896 to 1946 with countervailing excise duty which was as high as 100% or more in case of competing fabrics.\(^7^5\)

As regards to the impact of the colonialism on the fragmentation of the Indian economy two facts bring this out: the narrowly allocated areas for modern industry in the colonial period and the disastrous impact of colonial policies on the availability of food grains. D.R. Gadgil, D.H. Buchanan, W. Mandelbaum, Alice and Daniel Thorner among others outlined the salient features of the Indian economy in the nineteenth century: it opened up to the forces of the international trade; witnessed simultaneous opening of internal transport systems; expansion of primary production and the subsequent development of raw material based industries such as cotton textiles and plantations. The industrial expansion due to the impact of the World Wars and the tariff protection particularly to steel, cement, paper and sugar are well known. These descriptive studies pinpoint the narrowly allocated regions for each industry

primarily based around port towns and the raw material supply centres. A recent study has the view that commerce and colonialism created enclaves' of prosperity and that a great deal of physical investments reinforced enclavist tendencies by serving the sectors which created narrow spheres of affluence.

In exploring themes in the context of social history of colonial south Asia, the school of subaltern studies have provided a most provocative and interesting intervention in recent years. According to them the whole national movement is seen as an elitist struggle with its classes mainly being two: the Zamindari and the rural strata. The latter have an autonomy of their own and based on this autonomy they contested for power with the imperialist forces whereas the elite merely benefited from the struggle of the rural strata, and instead of transferring power to the subaltern groups transferred power to themselves. What is interesting to note is setting the role of the weaver in this schema. By treating the subaltern group (here assuming the weaver) as an autonomous category, would be then denying the charisma of Gandhi on them and no social historian can really deny the far reaching ideological influence of Gandhi on the vast masses, especially the handloom weaver. In the historiography of the

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78 For Gramsci, "The subaltern classes by definition are not united and cannot unite until they able to become a 'state'... The history of the subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency (at least in the provincial stages) of unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continuously interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups..... In reality are merely anxious to defend themselves". Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York, 1971, pp. 52-55. But according to the subaltern historians, the middle agricultural castes or the poor weavers are always striving to improve their ritual status by forming caste associations or by various methods of self improvement.
subaltern studies, leaders do not constitute the national experience. They remain combatants but not contestants in the struggle for hegemony. 79

During the period under study Gandhi's name, his anti-imperialist policies and innovative methods of preaching and mobilising to the masses symbolize the political consciousness and political life of India. The task of awakening and articulating the political consciousness of the handloom weavers (in particular) was undertaken by Gandhi on a scale far greater than had been performed by any other leader in modern India. This was certainly his greatest achievement and in essence here lay the root of the whole liberation movement. 80 "Though such men are innovators and acknowledge their role as pioneer it should be seen that their roots and strength of their greatness lie in epoch or more concretely -- the ethos of the period which just precedes them. They are not disciples of men but children of momentous period of material and cultural history". 81 Gandhi's image conjured up before us has been that of national leader, a saint or an idealist who did not face the

If this being the case can we try to explain in the later years, the association of the handloom weaver with the Gandhian ideology and the weavers' centrality in the samagra satra movement by which he tried to consciously or otherwise assert his definite position in society?

"Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, in their recently published three volumes, provide an interesting argument. According to them, the history of Indian people's struggle against imperialism was ideologically over-determined because of the fully structured colonial ideology of the ruling power and the corresponding evolution of a nationalist ideology which sought to replace it-aiming at overthrowing colonialism. This ideological over-determination was even more pronounced due to the fact that the struggle between the congress mass led movements and the British imperialism was fought on the terrain of hegemony, over which ideology was bound to play a major role. (The term ideology was used in the sense of being a material force and an objective basis for political action). See for an elaboration, Shashi Joshi, Struggle for Hegemony, The Colonial state, The Left and The National Movement, Vol. I, 1920-1934, New Delhi, 1992; Bhagwan Joshi, Struggle for Hegemony, 1920-1947, Vol. II, 1934-1941, New Delhi, 1992; Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Joshi, Struggle for Hegemony, 1920-1947, Vol. III, 1941-1947, New Delhi, 1994.

80 This has been suggested by Rostilov Ulyanavosky, Present day Problems, in Asia and Africa, Moscow, 1980, pp. 163-94.
cruel realities of life. The effort here is not to make him appear as a charismatic leader or a remote super-human saint. The concern throughout this study has not been in analyzing the attributes of Gandhi’s personal charm or charisma but how his interpretation of Swadeshi registered in the consciousness of the weaver community.

The economic changes under colonial rule were not only limited in scale and scope but they also inevitably generated contradictory features. All this will be kept in mind as we examine the fluctuations in the small scale sector. Therefore, what is examined is that, though various responses and motivations to the khadi movement by various groups participating in it may have been different, the rich industrialist and poor weaver alike was equally involved in it.

While it is difficult to disentangle the ideological motivations from the purely material, this study seeks to demonstrate that economic conditions constitute the field in which ideology operates. The hypotheses put forth is that are large scale industries the only source of dynamism or adapters of change in an economically developing country? The attempt is to argue otherwise. Small scale and cottage industries are small in name only, actually they make a giant contribution to the economy. During the twentieth century especially during the World wars, we see it doing precisely the same. All those factors which went against this industry should have necessarily eliminated it or at least handicapped it. Likewise what were those counter factors that helped it to steady and indirectly resuscitate it? As discussed in the above paragraphs on the all India level figures itself, there is a debate on whether there was a decline in handloom production in the early years of the twentieth century. Whether this was so or not, one has clear evidence at the micro-level to prove that in
coastal Andhra there was an increase in production and sales value of handlooms. Specific questions are answered in the following chapters:

Chapter II elaborately explains the historical perspective of the handloom industry in coastal Andhra and its transition in the twentieth century. The changes in the organizational mode and the various options open for the production shift allowed by the cloth market are explored here keeping in view the regional dimension. While drawing on the theoretical basis contained in the earlier studies the investigation treads on a different path in two unique ways: (i.) it focuses on a region which hitherto has not been explored in detail and (ii.) relatedly seeks to locate the handloom weaver not only in the regional economy but within the framework of nationalist politics.

Chapter III deals with the definition of Swadeshi and its transformation in the early years of twentieth century and the working of Gandhian politics in coastal Andhra region. The handloom industry was affected not only by the economic changes, but perhaps more significantly by the nationalist politics and in particular the Gandhian ideology. This study is an attempt to define the concept of Swadeshi and its new avatar under the leadership of Gandhi which struck resonant chords in various elements of the handloom industry.

Chapter IV details, the fluctuations and fortunes of weavers and their movements in wages, rate of industrialisation, and their role in getting integrated in the world economy. Did these societal institutions possess enough resilience and vitality to absorb the changes brought about by the foreign rule? How did they react to changes in technology, indigenous or Government sponsored? Interesting changes were witnessed in Government policies and an
increasing dependence on the merchant capital as a result of product diversification.

It is also demonstrated that from the point of view of profitability alone, handlooms in India did enjoy certain advantages at the beginning of the century: coarse handloom cloth was considered by the average Indian villages to be more durable than mill made cloth. Handlooms produced multicoloured sarees which the Indian mills could not imitate, at least before the First World War. There were also local specialties in which the individual skill of the weaver was the critical factor. In any case the cotton mills had still to learn to weave, bleach and print the finer varieties of cloth. The workers in handlooms also enjoyed the advantage of working with low cost capital and with family labour so that the family (rather than the wage labour alone) formed the economic unit. They also enjoyed the special advantages of sizing the yarn. Lastly, what was the impact of technical changes introduced by indigenous and colonial enterprise? The concluding chapter summarizes the tentative findings and research done in the study.

Lastly, a word on the difficulty in relations to this industry is the inaccurate statistics collected. For the study of this particular industry one is very much handicapped by the lack of requisite data such as investments in the case of handloom industry. The yarn that goes into the handlooms or even the actual yarn consumed by mills is not recorded correctly. The Fact Finding Committee appointed in 1941 to study the conditions prevailing in the handloom sector in comparison with the mill industry, observed that the total produce in hand weaving could be gauged out by first obtaining the total amount of mill yarn available for consumption in India, adding the imports but minus the exports.
Then an estimate of the total amount consumed by the Indian mill industry would have to be made and the balance be likely to be made available to the looms - and this one knows, is no easy task. Second, the level of output in the cotton spinning industry is directly related to the counts of yarn spun. The production per spindle measured in terms of weight is significantly lower for finer counts than for the coarser cloth. Added to this is the fact that yarns from different counts are non-homogenous and cannot be added together without first reducing them to a standard count of say 20s to 30s. It is only such a figure that can be validly used for measuring productive activity in the cotton spinning industry.\(^2\)

Thus this study found that there is no universal constant in the investments that goes into the handloom industry and the true relative cost of capital and labour cannot be inferred simply from the price of each. In fact in textiles, it varied within rather narrow bounds. It should also be noted that much of the literature dealing with the handloom weavers treats them as an undifferentiated group but it is important in this study at the outset to state that this was not so and that the fate of different groups within the broad category of 'handloom weaver' was not similar. Besides there is this vexing problem of tracing the source material associated with studying social groups who left few written records of their own and were mere objects in the inquiries of external observers especially in the colonial records.

There have been published sources though not exhaustive, but it has been of immense help in providing thought provoking arguments. Articles by N.G.Ranga, B.S. Baliga, Konrad Specker, Thirthankar Roy, Christopher J. Baker, Brian Stoddart,

\(^2\)Report of the Fact Finding Committee, (Mills and Handlooms), Ministry of Commerce, Delhi, 1942.
Carol Boyack Upadhyay, David A. Washbrook, David Arnold, on
south India. On an all India basis studies by Morris D.Morris,
Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Daniel and Alice Thorner and N.H.Thakkar,
among a host of others have given extensive in-depth analysis of
the handloom industry and its progress.

Gandhi's complete volume of his Collected Works
give us a comprehensive view of his otherwise paradoxical ideas
on the Telugudesa and its people. The study here mainly based
itself on sources like the Census reports, Development records,
Reports of the Department of Industries and the vernacular
newspapers like Krishna Patrika, Andhra Patrika, Vahini, Bliarati, etc.
The information secured from these sources were supplemented by
oral interviews with a number of people actively associated with
the handloom industry in the coastal districts of Andhra.

There has been considerable work on the cotton mill
industries in general, prior to 1950. The earliest studies however
were mainly historical, institutional and descriptive concentrating
mainly on aspects such as the managing agency systems, location,
size and integration of units in the industry. For example, P.S.
Lokanathan, Industrial organization in India, London, 1935, M.P.
Gandhi, The Indian Cotton Textile Industry in India, 1851-1950,
Bombay, N.D. (but internal evidence suggest 1950), N.S.R. Sastry,
Indian Cotton Industry, 1943, S.D.Mehta, The Indian Cotton Textile
Industry: An Economic Analysis, Bombay, 1953 and M.M. Mehta,

In all these studies the handloom industry was
sketchily touched upon until recently. As with all the unregistered
industries in India the material from official sources on the looms is
not very exhaustive particularly, when it comes to understanding
the strength and characteristics of the industry in terms of the
number of several employed, the districts among rural and urban areas by districts and different types of productional units. However as efforts are now being made empirical work and new data is continuously being unearthed and the need to update the information on the weaving community becomes pertinent to pursue.

Finally to conclude, the history of industrialization in the West is taken primarily to mean the evolution of the factory from craft industry, generally presupposing the prior developments of a market economy the social differentiation of the peasantry and the changing legal and social structures. In India all these forces were working together at the same time and if some showed signs of acceleration in the late nineteenth century (as seen in the case of Andhra), that development usually had long historical roots, predating the imposition of colonial rule.\textsuperscript{83}

In other words, no simple evolutionary schemata of social change and economic development can be readily applied to the Indian evidence and this micro-level study therefore becomes necessary. Though a general theoretical discussion in the scope and regional differentiation of the deindustrialization model and its critique is undertaken the observations in various aspects of development and explaining why rapid economic growth occurred in particular places and not in other regions is attempted here by substantiate evidence.

This study devoted itself throughout to Gandhi's ideology having deep linkages with the production, development and use of the handloom sector of Andhra as an economic and ideological instrument to achieve \textit{swaraj} during the tumultuous twentieth

century. To throw of the yoke of imperial rule the cult of *Swadeshi* as used by Gandhi centered chiefly around *khaddar* and extended to everything that could be produced by India and its villages. Hence the attempt in the following chapters has been a case study of coastal Andhra’s economy and in connecting the three seemingly unrelated subjects mentioned in the title.