CHAPTER III

HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN ORISSA
(With special reference to western Orissa)
### CHAPTER-III

**HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN ORISSA**

*(With special reference to Western Orissa)*

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Fig-1
Map of Western Orissa
The role of handloom industry cannot be under-emphasised in the industrial scene of Orissa. It is not only an organisation which produces handloom fabrics, but it has also great contribution in strengthening the rural economy of Orissa. This cottage industry is based on traditional customs, practices and hereditary knowledge of weavers. Generally, weavers do not have any institutional background. They learn it from their parents with regular practice.

Art and culture of Orissa have been exposed to handlooms since long. The history of handloom industry of India, shows that, in the past fine apparels woven by the Orissan weavers had great demand in Arab, Persia, Java, Sumatra and Egypt. In the beginning of the 19th Century this industry spread far and wide. During the British rule, the industry faced many problems. Important among them are lack of financial support and institutional help, impact of goods produced by powerlooms and step-motherly attitude of foreign rulers.

Western Orissa, comprising four districts viz. Sambalpur, Balangir, Sundargarh, and Kalahandi forms an important area so far as the weaving of handloom fabrics is concerned. A large number of weavers of Orissa are
inhabitants of this region. Fine pieces of cloth are woven by skilled and adept Bhulia and Kosta weavers. The world famous tie and dye technique of weaving thrives here. Inspite of prevailing illiteracy and poverty in general, local weavers have tried to improve the quality and pattern of weaving, which is really praiseworthy. In western Orissa, handloom as an industry comes next to agriculture. It is an important source of income to both, farmer weavers and landless weavers. Engagement of the whole family is one of the attractive features of the industry in the region.

The present chapter makes an attempt to discuss in brief the economic setting, growth, and development of handloom industries in Orissa with special reference to western Orissa. It illustrates the speciality and rich cultural heritage of handloom industries in the region. Also it throws some light on the plight of weavers of the region and various problems they encounter.

3.1.0 A brief historical perspective

It is not intended here to present a detailed historical background of Orissa. But it is relevant here, because vicissitudes of the handloom industry in Orissa are related to fluctuation of Orissan history. Orissa was known at different times by different names like Kalinga, Utakala and Odra. In olden days, the state had distinguished itself as a pioneer in maritime activities. Upto the 16th Century A.D. it was ruled by Hindu kings and monarchs. It came under the pathan sultans of Bengal and the Moghal emperors of Delhi during the 16th
and 18th centuries. In 1751 it was occupied by the Maratha rulers of Nagpur. In 1803, it was annexed by the British empire 1.

3.1.1 Geographical location of the state

The state of Orissa is located in the east coast of India, and is contained between 17° 48' and 22° 34' north latitude and 81° 29' and 87° 29' east longitude. Orissa is bounded in the north by Bihar, on the west by Madhya Pradesh, in the south by Andhra Pradesh and in the north-east by West Bengal. It has the Bay of Bengal to the south-east washing the entire coast line of 482 Kilometers 2.

3.1.2 Economic background of Orissa

Appendix-IV indicates that Orissa is a backward pocket in India. For the sake of illustration only a few of the economic indicators given in the appendix have been elaborated here. The appendix indicates that the density of population of the state is lower than that of all India average. The degree of urbanisation is fairly low. In case of Orissa, industrialisation is not a major factor for urbanisation. Low urbanisation and its nature in the state indicate inadequate progress in the field of industries as well as economic activities. Then again the state lags behind the national literacy rate. To add to the problem, there is a larger

component of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population in the state.

"Such quality structure of the population on the one hand accounts for inadequate, inefficient, and even wasteful exploitation of resources (e.g. wasteful exploitation of forest resources by the tribal people) and on the other, imposes heavy responsibility on the state to incur large expenditure on social, educational and ameliorative measures to improve the conditions of backward classes". ¹

In 1981, cultivators and agricultural labourers constituted 47 per cent and 27.65 per cent respectively of the total working population. Household industries absorbed 3.47 per cent of total working population. In recent years the improvement in industrial activity in the state, seems to have made only a marginal impact in improving the employment situation. Appendix- IV further reveals the inadequacy of transport system. In relation to agricultural and industrial potential, Orissa has a skeleton means of transport². Per capita income is also considerably less compared to the national level. Appendix-IV indicates that Orissa is a backward pocket in the developing Indian economy.

3.1.3 Ancient weaving in Orissa

It is presumed that man got indications regarding the skill of weaving from the world of nature. The web of the spider and the nest of birds might have created the idea of weaving in him. Gradually, he might have made baskets, mats etc. using those as models. In ancient time the art of weaving begun in India. Even before the Vedic age this art of weaving had reached a state of semi-perfection in India. Ample evidence is available that women were taking the main part in weaving during the Vedic age.

"It is learnt from an inscription dating back to 600 B.C. found in Khandagiri that Utkala (Orissa) had reached in the art of weaving a high place not only in India but also in the whole world. The Tamils used to import very fine fabrics from Orissa. In Tamil language cloth is called "Klinga". Some presume that the name "Kalinga" is a derivative of the root word "Klinga".\footnote{Meher, K.C., Odissar Bayan Kala, Orissa State Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society, Bhubaneswar, 1986, p.3.}

"The oriya poets are apt in their description of a variety of dresses. Poet Vatsa Das of 14th century in his, Kalasa Chautissa has given a beautiful description of the dress worn by Parvati before her marriage. Description of various fabrics are found in the, Mahabharata of Sarala Das, the poet of 15th century. In, Madala Paanji names of lugga, Shaadhi, Shirpaa, Patanee etc. can also be found.\footnote{Ibid, p.4.}"

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2. Ibid, p.4.
The art of weaving has also found a place in the epic of a top ranking rhetorical poet of Orissa, Yadumani Mahapatra's Prabhundha Purnachandra. Baladeva Rath, the sun-poet has also given beautiful narration of cloth in different part of his epic, Chadrakala. The eminent Oriya novelist Fakir Mohan draws images, similes, metaphors and symbols from the weaving materials as is appropriate in the context of a description of the weaver's family, in one of his novels. Many such beautiful descriptions of Orissan fabrics are found in epics and poems of the poet Gangadhar Meher. The description of Sita's fabrics in his literary epic, Tapaswanee is superb. In, Kumar Janmostava he has given an account of tusser fabrics of Barapali, Chanduapadi saree of Sambalpur and Hansabali of Balangir.

Orissan art of weaving finds a glory in the poetry of Upendra Bhanja's Lavanyabati and Abhimanyu's Vidagdha Chintamani. Radhanath Roy, the father of modern oriya literature has written in his epic, Parvati that the princesses put on tusser fabrics for which tusser seeds are being reared in the forest of Mayurbhanja. It is evident from all these descriptions in Oriya literature that there is a rich and excellent tradition of the art of weaving in Orissa.

2. Ibid, p. 11.
3.1.4 The condition of handloom industry during British rule

History reveals that very fine quality fabrics produced in Kalinga or Utkala got exported to Arab, Persia, Egypt, Java etc. for sale. There was a time when as much as 24000 maunds of cotton had been produced from 20 acres of land in the districts of Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore. Orissa was flourishing well with fine and artistic handloom fabrics and skilled weavers. Britishers reached Pipli (Puri) in 1611 looking at the flourishing trade of Orissa. At the time of advent of Englishmen, 3000 weavers were residing at Jagatsinghpur, which was a big centre of handloom industry. Britishers built their trade granary first at Jagatsinghpur and then at Balasore¹.

Balasore was a main export centre of cotton. Cotton was being collected from the western part of Gujurat and exported in huge quantity to distant countries. The muslins and chintzs of this place was so beautiful that demand of these fabrics increased in England to a great extent. Consequently, East India Company was ordered to supply more of these fabrics. But the shrewd diplomatic policy adopted by the company in order to boost the English textile trade adversely affected the native Indian handloom industry².

2. Ibid, p.245.
The Balasore port was famous then for the excellent fabrics named "Chandrakonaa" and "Sanno". These were produced at Konark and Puri, and were cheap, compact in texture, and beautiful as well. It fully captured the market of England. As a result Britishers were much allured to be benefited after purchasing the things here at a cheaper rate and selling the same in the market of England at a higher rate\(^1\).

The unwarranted interference on the reputed Orissan art of weaving by the British Government had sapped life out of it. Hence, the skilled weavers of this state became unemployed, turned idle and lost their initiative. In 1785 A.D. English people started producing muslin in their country. On the other hand, they levied extraordinary taxes on the muslin cloth produced in India. Inhuman atrocities were perpetrated against the skilled weavers and expert spinners. Weavers were caned and kept in prison. Their property was confiscated\(^2\).

Inspite of all odds Indian fabrics produced from cotton and silk yarns were being sold at cheaper rate in the market of England. Therefore, they levied more taxes on Indian cloths and also prohibited their sale. Mill made cloths of Manchester did spread everywhere. So, by all means Britishers tried to safeguard their interest. Indian weavers

\(^1\) Sahu, N.K., History of Orissa, Vol-I, Utkal University, 1964, p.201.
were made beggars. The profession, that helped them were snatched away. Even then, this native industry, almost on the verge of extinction survived for more than a hundred years. In the midst of so many ups and downs, facing so much opposition and animosity, it survived owing to its inherent vitality.

3.1.5 The industry during the present century

The industry in the state, entered 20th century in a languishing condition and its fortune has been fluctuating with that of the handloom industry in India in general. In 19th century the indigenous handloom products were facing competition from imported mill made cloth. During the first half of the present century various economic, political and social influences of a rather unfavourable kind came in to operation. Under these influences, the Indian mills made rapid progress, whereas the handlooms were left behind and continued in a stationary condition.

On the eve of World War II, the condition of handloom industry in Orissa was the worst. But on the other way, it helped to improve the economic status of weavers. According to the annual reports of the Industries Department, Orissa, covering the war period, the handloom industry in the state received great impetus in those years. Prosperity of the industry during the period has been attributed to the manufacture of textile goods on a large scale.

for the defence services. This brought some relief to the
weavers during the period of rising prices.\footnote{1}

However, this condition did not last long for the
industry. During post-war period the industry was craving for
assistance from the Government. A new era has started soon
after adoption of economic planning, which has already been
discussed in the previous chapter.

3.1.6 Weavers and art of weaving in Orissa

Weavers of Orissa specialise in Ikat technique of
weaving. It is also known as "Bandhas" or "Tie and dye"
method of weaving. Weavers of the estern and the western
Orissa have developed their own characteristic styles using
the original methods. "Ikat" a Malayalam word introduced
into the European language by Rauffaer, comes from the word
"Mangikat" which means to bind knot or wind around. It is
used for yarn tie and dye, only as against tie and dye of
fabrics which is generally known as "Bandhani".

Where as the northern India has historically been the
scene of repeated invasions and hence susceptible to external
influence, Orissa enjoyed greater immunity being isolated from
the rest of India by ranges of hills on the west and the Bay
of Bengal in the east. Consequently the Bandha textiles of
this region have a distinct native identity. In contrast to
the imposing, mosaic-like appearence of the "Patolu" from
Gujrat, traditional single ikat bandhas from Orissa have a

\footnote{1. Annual Report of the Industries Department, Govt. of Orissa, 1942-43, Cuttack (1947), p.6.}
soft curvilinear quality. The charm of these cotton and silk ikat textiles lies in the feathered flame like, hazy effect of the forms, as opposed to the sharp grid-based patterns of the patolu, where flaming is deliberately kept to the minimum. Also the effect achieved by the addition of extra weft thread woven beside the ikat areas, gives the Bandhas an uniquely rich texture.\(^1\)

Patronised for generations by the local population of all social strata, Bandha industry thrived owing to two communities of weavers in Orissa, namely, Mehers of Sambalpur and Balangir, and Pataras of Cuttack and Puri. These two group of weavers living in different areas, with different modes of living, spoken dialect, habits and technique of ikat weaving, have glorified the art of weaving in general. Where as patara weavers from Nuapatna (Puri) specialise in bandhas of Pure tusser silk, Mehers of Sambalpur weave mainly cotton ikats. Today bandhas of Orissa are poised on the cross-road of change. Division of labour and specialisation have entered ikat production in many villages. Some weavers specialise in tying and dying, while others in the neighbouring village, do the weaving work. In the realm of design, traditional motifs, once confined to one or the other weaver group, are now borrowed and redesigned by both communities of weavers in Orissa\(^2\). Rangani weavers of Ganjam (South Orissa) are also

\(^{1}\) Desai Chelna, Ikat Textiles of India, Graphic Sa publishing Company, Ltd., 1-9-12,Kudan Kita Chiyoda Ku.Tokyo, 1988, p.5.

\(^{2}\) Ibid, p.6.
Table III.1
District wise details of weavers in Orissa in 1986-87.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>Scheduled caste weavers</th>
<th>Scheduled tribe weavers</th>
<th>General weavers</th>
<th>Total weavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balaore</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21217</td>
<td>23130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balangir</td>
<td>5122</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>35708</td>
<td>41219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuttack</td>
<td>1321</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34814</td>
<td>36135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhenkanal</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7262</td>
<td>9213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganjam</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24910</td>
<td>25719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalahandi</td>
<td>4112</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>9895</td>
<td>15610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keonjhar</td>
<td>2103</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>6198</td>
<td>9113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koraput</td>
<td>2360</td>
<td>2190</td>
<td>11313</td>
<td>15863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M aurabhanj</td>
<td>4811</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>13188</td>
<td>19911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phulabani</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>10959</td>
<td>12103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puri</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>39126</td>
<td>39126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambalpur</td>
<td>13563</td>
<td>1641</td>
<td>54664</td>
<td>69868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 41131 9390 274695 325216

Source: Director of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
equally adept in weaving. They use mainly tusser yarn to produce fabrics. Hinjilikatu (Ganjam) is an important weaving centre.

Table-III.1, indicates that weavers are heavily concentrated in Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur, Balangir, Ganjam and Balasore districts. Out of 3.25 lakhs of weavers, 85 per cent come under general category whereas the rest are scheduled caste and scheduled tribe weavers.

3.1.7 Handloom co-operatives in Orissa in recent times

The Royal Commission on Agriculture was in favour of organising the village artisans on co-operative basis, for providing facilities like credit, supply of raw material and marketing. The importance of giving a distinctly co-operative bias to the handloom industry was first emphasised by the government in its Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948. Fact Finding Committee, in 1941, also recommended the formation of weavers' co-operative societies. After independence national level institutions like AIHB and NCUI were formed to help co-operative societies in implementing policies.

Basically, organisational pattern of weavers' co-operative in Orissa is two tier, i.e. primary weavers' co-operative society (PWCS) at the village level and Apex society at state level. The former acts as production centre of finished goods, whereas the latter acts as the marketing outlet.

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1. Rehman, Mafazoor and Sairuddin, S., Co-operative Sector in India, Sultan Chand and Sons, New Delhi, 1985, p.223.
Table III. 2


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Year (1980-81)</th>
<th>Year (1986-87)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Active societies (Number)</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Weavers under Co-operative fold (Number)</td>
<td>98675</td>
<td>126200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Looms under Co-operative and corporation fold (Number)</td>
<td>39214</td>
<td>75456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Production:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For both co-operative &amp; corporate sector (Rupees in lakhs)</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>1451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sale:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For both co-operative and corporate sector (Rupees in Lakhs)</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>1726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Modernisation of looms (Number)</td>
<td>8213</td>
<td>43057</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Director of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
for PWCS. Out of 3.25 lakh weavers in 1986 only 1.26 lakh have been brought under the co-operative fold, which is calculated at 37.5 per cent. Number of active societies have gone up from 433 in 1980-81 to 644 in 1986-87. Within 1980-81 to 1986-87 production and sale of handloom industry has also considerably increased. In the same period modernisation of looms has increased five fold. These facts are indicated in table III.2.

3.1.8 Institutional support to weavers

Apart from the financial assistance by NABARD, there are a few other institutions that render other types of assistance to the weavers in the state. One of such institutions is the Orissa State Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society (OSHWCS).

The OSHWCS was established in 1956 with 46 primary societies affiliated to it. The headquarters is located at Bhubaneswar. The objective of the Apex society (OSHWCS) is to supply raw material i.e. yarn, dyes and chemicals to primary societies and to act as the marketing outlet of primary societies. Recently, a branch office of the Apex society was opened at Balangir to provide better service facilities to primary societies of western Orissa. Under the Apex society two dye houses have been established at Doarda (Athagarh) and Pichikuli (Khurda). To impart technical training to weavers, two training centres have been opened at Nuapatna (Puri) and Berhampur (Ganjam).
Since 1956, the Apex society has taken various development-oriented steps for affiliated primary societies. For regular supply of yarn, special yarn selling centres have been opened at Cuttack, Balangir, Baripada, Junagarh and Itamati. New drum house and godown have been constructed at Bargarh. To help scheduled caste and scheduled tribe weavers some steps have been taken by the Apex society since 1980. They include supply of new looms, electrification of looms, modernisation of looms and imparting training to weavers. Apex society sales products through 130 outlets, which include 122 selling centres inside the state and 8 outside the state. A brief account of the OSHWCS is given in the table III. 3.

Directorate of Textiles is an integral part of the co-operative sector of the handloom industry in the state. It was established in 1974. It is a supervising and advisory body of the Government of Orissa, with power of sanctioning rebate, looms and subsides etc. All matters relating to handloom co-operatives are being channelised through the Directorate.

Under the corporate sector, the Orissa State Handloom Development Corporation was established on 1st February 1977. It was set up as per the recommendation of Shivaraman Study Team. The reason behind setting up of such an institution is that, till the end of Fourth Five Year Plan assistance was made limited to weavers of co-
### Table III.3
A brief account of the Orissa State Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society Ltd., (Rs. in Lakh)

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Membership (Number)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Share capital</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>24.66</td>
<td>233.63</td>
<td>370.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reserve Fund</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>35.52</td>
<td>50.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Working capital</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>28.61</td>
<td>42.53</td>
<td>967.32</td>
<td>2342.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Purchase of cloth</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>46.14</td>
<td>796.25</td>
<td>1220.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sale of cloth</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td>55.64</td>
<td>832.07</td>
<td>1401.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Purchase of Yarn</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>109.42</td>
<td>613.01</td>
<td>817.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sale of yarn</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>109.19</td>
<td>621.42</td>
<td>858.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Net profit</td>
<td>.0024</td>
<td>-(0.37)</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>61.70</td>
<td>70.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

operative sector only, whereas weavers outside co-operative fold received marginal benefit from the system.

Therefore, the main aim and objective of the corporation is to promote, establish and assist the rehabilitation, development and growth of handloom industry outside the co-operative fold in the State. The activities of the corporation include modernisation of looms, training of weavers, introduction of new design, provision of common pre-weaving and post-weaving facilities, planning of production, steady supply of raw materials, payment of remunerative wages to the weavers and marketing of products.

3.2.0 Handloom industry in western Orissa

Out of the thirteen districts in Orissa Western Orissa comprises four districts; namely Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Balangir and Kalahandi.

3.2.1 Geographical location

The district of Sambalpur lies between 20° 43' N and 22° 11' N latitude and 82° 39' E and 85° 13'E longitude. It is one of the western most districts of Orissa and is roughly triangular in shape. It is bounded on the north by the district of Sundargarh and on the east by the district of Dhenkanal, on the south lies the district of Balangir and on west the district of Kalahandi. It has an area of 17,520.3 Sq. Km.

1. Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Orissa State Handloom Development Corporation Ltd., Bhubaneswar.
2. Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa (Sambalpur), p.3.
The district of Kalahandi occupies the south-western portion of Orissa and is situated between 19° 3' N and 21° 5' N latitudes and 82° 20' E and 83° 47' E longitudes. It is bounded on the north by the districts of Balangir, Sambalpur and Raipur (M.P); on the south by the district of Koraput, on the west by the districts of Koraput and Raipur (M.P) and on the east by the districts of Koraput and Boudh-Khandmals. It extends over an area of 11,835 Sq.K.\textsuperscript{1}.

The district of Balangir lies between 20° 9' and 21° 11' N latitudes and 82° 41' and 84° 16' east longitudes. It is bounded on the north by the district of Sambalpur, on the east by the district of Boudh-Khandmals, on the south by the district of Kalahandi and on the west by the Nawapara sub-division of the district of Kalahandi. The area of the district is 8836 square kilometer\textsuperscript{2}.

Sundargarh occupies the north-western position of the state and is situated between 21° 35' N and 22° 32' N latitudes and 83° 32' E and 85° 22'. E longitudes. The district is bounded on the north by the Ranchi district of Bihar, on the west and north-west by the Raigarh district of Madhya Pradesh, on the south and south east respectively, by Sambalpur and Dehnkanal districts and on the east by Singhbhum district of Bihar and Keonjhar district. It is irregular in shape and extends over an area of 9812.47 square kilometer\textsuperscript{3}.

\textsuperscript{1} Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. Of Orissa(Kalahandi)p.3
\textsuperscript{2} Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa(Balangir)p.2.
\textsuperscript{3} Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa(Sundargarh)p.3.
3.2.2 Economic background of the region

It is evident from Appendix-V which indicates some of the socio-economic factors of districts of western Orissa that it is a backward region of Orissa. The figures shown in respect of these districts are below the averages of Orissa, except a few of them. Percentages of scheduled caste population of Sambalpur, Balangir and Kalahandi are above the state average. Percentages of scheduled tribe population of Sambalpur, Sundargarh and Kalahandi are above the state average. Percentages of cultivators to total working population of all districts are higher than state average. Percentages of people engaged in household industries to the total working population of Sambalpur and Balangir districts are higher than stage average, because of concentration of handloom industry in the above two districts. Percentage of literacy of Sundargarh district is higher than the state average, because of the steel city, Rourkela, which has the largest section of literate people in the whole district. Percentages of urban population of Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts are higher than the state average, because of the presence of several industrial pockets in both districts. Earlier discussions in this chapter has shown that, Orissa is a backward pocket in the developing Indian economy and western Orissa is a backward region in Orissa. Presence of large number of SC, ST population, unbalanced occupational structure amongst people, lower percentage of literacy, insufficient surface
Weaving is one of the important professions of the people in the region, which is only next to agriculture. A large number of weaving families earn their livelihood from weaving and they have adopted weaving as their life style.

3.2.3 Handloom industry in the region in retrospect

A brief economic history of the handloom industry in western Orissa may help to assess and ascertain its inherent strength and weakness. This will also help in determining the economic status of this industry in the state.

In western Orissa and particularly in districts of Sambalpur and Balangir, skilled weavers produce intricately woven fabrics of cotton and silk. But weavers of Kalahandi and Sundargarh, in contrast, produce plain and coarse cloth. Tusser silk weaving was for many years a principal industry of Sambalpur district. Dr. Shortt who visited Sambalpur in 1855 found that tusser silk was manufactured to a great extent, the fabrics being used locally and also exported. Only one third of the cloth is retained in the district, the rest being sent to Cuttack and Berhampur and also to Raipur and Bilaspur (M.P). Again in 1876, it was reported that Sambalpur was more advanced than other districts of the central province (now M.P) both in the quality of cocoons exported and in the workmanship of the cloth produced by its weavers. The export of manufactured tusser had fallen off, but half of the cocoons produced were sent to Ganjam, Cuttack, Raipur and Bilaspur¹. Textile employs the largest

¹ Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa(Sambalapur)p.4.
number of persons as it is supported by the Annual report on Administration of Patna 1934-35. Textile industry is the principal industry of the state, one tenth of population being of weaving community. This industry was in a state of decline owing to competition from expert weavers of the neighbouring districts and also from that of cotton mills.¹

Hand spinning and weaving of cotton is one of the oldest industries of Sundargarh. In almost all the villages are found the local cotton weavers who are Panas (Gandas) or Hansis. They are poor and had a precarious existence. In the past the entire local requirement of linen was met by the local weavers and spinners. Cotton was grown extensively in the district, specially in Bonai Sub-division. This local trade had to face challenge when mill made yarn from Calcutta began to find its way during the beginning of the present century and ousted the locally-produced articles. Gradually cheap mill-made cloths were imported and the handloom weaving lost its former position. Cotton cultivation was almost discontinued and the weavers were reduced to mere wage earners or petty cultivators. To preserve the traditional skill of these artisans some co-operative societies have been organised during the recent years and they get financial and technical help from the Government².

Kalahandi is industrially the most backward

¹. Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa (Balangir) p. 199.
². Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa (Sundargarh) p. 175.
district of Orissa. Weaving is however one of the oldest cottage industries of the district. Weavers belong to Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe and Bhulia caste. To preserve the tradition, as well as to support the poor weavers, two primary co-operative societies were opened in Sunamal and Charbahal exclusively for Harijan and tribal weavers. Inadequate financing of the industry and poor economic condition and illiteracy of weavers has retarded the growth of the sector in the district. ¹

Apart from the above silver lining, the handloom industry in western Orissa suffered the same fate as that of Orissa. By the end of the 18th century the handloom industry in Orissa was heading towards its inevitable end. At that time the enslavement of artisan weavers, under the chains of dadni (tax), in the hand of merchant capitalists, became one of the features of the industry. The native traders and entrepreneurs had lost their importance. The British Company had withdrawn its investment in textiles. Raw cotton trade with Nagpur had come to a standstill. Prevailing political and economic conditions could not stimulate local cotton cultivation.

The last part of the Nineteenth century saw the declining trend of handloom industry in Orissa. It is mostly due to the development of communication system, mainly opening up of new railway lines, which opened market for British goods. Also agrarian policy of the people was

¹ Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa (Kalahandi) p.159.
shifted from cultivation of cotton to paddy cultivation.¹ The fate of handloom industry of western Orissa, in the 20th century, was the same as that of Orissa. The industry had reached such a stage, that it became necessary to boost it with sufficient financial and other help. There was no competition between Indian mills and handloom industry before the World War I, so far as the supply of yarn is concerned. But later on, they went on to compete with the handloom sector, because pressure was on them to produce more. Again, the changing habits and choice of people towards simple garments, strengthened the position of the mill sector. Thus, on the eve of independence of India, owing to above factors handloom industry had reached a pitiable stage in western Orissa, as else where in Orissa. But since then, Government has taken different progressive steps, through five year plans, to ameliorate the pitiable economic condition of the weavers at large.

3.2.4 Tie and dye art of western Orissa

Weaving is a living and lovely art in Orissa. The fascinating tie and dye sarees are very much in vogue in western Orissa and famous for their weaving, art and colour, in and outside India. They reflect the natural artistic sense of the weavers. They have not only excellence in art and texture but also display a keen sense of colour and beauty.

The intricate and embellished fabrics are woven mainly by a method known as tie and dye. Sarees, curtains, furnishings and dress materials with beautiful creeper, flowers, birds, animals and temple motif in brilliant colour and aesthetic senses are used extensively in the homes of many people. If in western Orissa, there grew up peerless craft in handloom weaving, it is because, the weaver himself happens to be an artist. His sensitivity to rhythm and colour, line and curve, size and shape, makes him a perfect artist and designer. What he dreams, he executes aptly on the fabrics. In fine, he is a Midas of art, who transmutes everything into a golden beauty by the alchemic touch of his excellent fingers. Hence, he envisages a design and a colour scheme and transforms his vision into reality by imposing distinctive harmony and beauty in the shape of fabrics.¹

The west Orissan Meher weavers specialise in a unique tie and dye works known as "Bandha", the originality of which is recognised as a work of art throughout the world. Nature, with its charming scenes of the movements of clouds, the rains of the months of Ashara, distant mountains, birds flying in the air, is pictorially imitated in various colours on the bodies of sarees, table cloths, wall hanging through the artistic weaving of yarns, after the Bandha style. Which ever place be the source of this art, it has reached its perfection in the hands the Meher weavers of Sambalpur and Balangir district.²

2. Ibid., pp.71-72.
One gets its imperfect analogies in the Jaipur regions of Rajasthan, at Patan of Gujrat and at Pochampally of Andhra Pradesh. Unlike this tie and dye works of other regions in India, the motifs and designs of western Orissa are infinite in number and every motif is categorised under a special caption. No design is left without a name. It shows the creative mind of the Bandha weavers of this region. Bandha (Tie and dye) design keeps its speciality and peculiarity in many ways. First, the face and back is exactly the same of every motif, which is impossible to be attained by the help of machine. Secondly, no extra yarn is needed for the different motifs of this art. Thirdly, almost all traditional motifs carry poetic ideas and aesthetic senses. Fourthly, its designs are many. And every design has a first and harmonious colour combination.

This renowned craft tradition built up and sustained against the tide of cheaper production of mills and western influences in the outlook of common people. It is a craft inherited through generations. The son watches his father at work. Gradually his hand acquires deftness. Then he attunes himself to the art gradually. Prints of individual sensitiveness, conception and perception comes to his mind in course of time. Hence, the tradition of Banhda art is preserved and it gives birth to thousands of novel motifs catering to the need, taste and outlook of the customers of this country and abroad.

The tie and dye technique in this area does not seem to have been introduced from outside, though it is not known how it originated in this area. Most probably, simple spot and line designs were formed on yarn by tying and dyeing a bunch of course weft thread. The technique has greatly improved and attained a very high level owing to the patronage extended to it by the local people. The reason for such patronage is not far to seek, as the feudatory states were not easily accessible to mill-made textiles owing to poor communication facilities. The people of these areas patronised colourful fabrics manufactured within their easy reach and in course of time developed a taste for tie and dye fabrics.

3.2.5 Skilled workmanship and ornamental fabrics

Woven designs produced by the tie and dye method differ from printed and Jacquard designs. The figures produced by printing and Jacquard can be developed only in one side of the cloth where as equally prominent design can be produced on both sides of cloth under the above method. Of course, it requires great precision and deftness on the part of the weaver to do it. An expert weaver will have to be engaged nearly 20 to 24 days to prepare the yarn for a new motif. In western Orissa, this art of weaving is practised, mainly by the weavers of Sambalpur and Balangir district. Mention may be made of a few important designs here, with a view to exhibit skilled workmanship of the area.

Patola

Animal and floral motifs constitute this design. Popular among animal motifs are elephant, deer and horses; rose and jasmine in case of floral motifs. The fabric excels both the richness and variety of colour and once used to be a necessary bridal wear.¹

Nakshtra Bhusan

In case of coarse as well as fine fabrics, this design has been used. It comprises motifs having spotted star and different colour. It adds elegance to the ladies dress material and has an universal appeal. Skirt fabrics under this design is used in summer.²

Saptapadi

This design has a motif of dice board. It has been formulated keeping in view the local post wedding custom, which requires the newly married couple to play the game of dice after the ceremony is over. Furnishing fabrics, quilting, table mats, table covers in coarser textures, skirts and palav in finer texture have also adopted this design.³

Bichitrapuri

This is a design in check pattern with elaborate figuring in a wide range of colours. Both animal and floral motifs are placed in between the squares. Such an

¹. Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa (Sambalpur), p.223.
². Ibid, p.223.
³. Ibid, p.223.
ornamental fabric can grace any customary occasion. The design is lively and full of aesthetic appeal. Most of the modern designs has been dervied from this traditional pattern.\(^1\)

**Muktajhari**

This is a design which combines beautifully both animal and floral motifs, with rich colour mix and contrast. It is generally used in case of sarees and dress materials.\(^2\)

**Kumbha**

It has a motif of temple tower. Except the skilled weavers of tie and dye method, it will be difficult for other weavers to attain the prominence of the Kumbha design. This design requires pre-dyeing of warp and weft in same colour. It is mostly used in the borders of different dress material.\(^3\)

The above designs are only a few from the vast gallery of tie and dye fabrics and they are in no way exhaustive. It affords unlimited scope for improvement in the traditional process, by adding new type of colours. Previously, weavers only used some of the vegetable colours like, red, green, yellow and black. Chemical dyes have made it possible to use a vast range of colours with different shades and toning effects.

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1. Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa (Sambalpur), p.223.
2. Ibid., p.223.
3. Ibid., pp.223-224.
3.3.0 Characteristics of the industry and weavers in the region

Handloom industry in western Orissa is essentially a household one. Weavers weave fabrics at their homes. There are some handloom factories (Karakhanas) in the district of Sambalpur and Balangir. There is one such karkhana, under the Handloom Development Corporation at Sonepur (Balangir) and another one under co-operative society, at Kirei (Sundargarh). All such karkhanas taken together cover only a few hundreds of looms. The household industry, in all the four districts consists of small units with one or two looms each.

3.3.1 Pattern of household and looms

Table III.4 indicates that, weaver households are more concentrated in Sambalpur and Balangir. In all the districts, the average size of household is 3.87 and loom per household is one or two. During the field study it is found that, many households have sufficient hand to work, but they do not have good number of looms. In 1987-88, according to Director of Textiles, out of 1.05 lakh looms in Orissa 48,638 looms are located in the four districts of western Orissa only. But all the looms in the handloom industry is not equal to that of a mill. Looms are not used, when weaving ceases in a mill. But in case of domestic loom, loom is kept, even if it is not operated. In the region, looms do not remain idle for quite a long period of time, since large number of weavers come under low income group.
### Table III. 4

District wise distribution of weaving households, 1987-88

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1.No.</th>
<th>Name of District</th>
<th>Number of weaving households</th>
<th>Number of looms</th>
<th>Total number of weavers</th>
<th>Average size of household.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sambalpur</td>
<td>17314</td>
<td>25769</td>
<td>69868</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Balangir</td>
<td>11089</td>
<td>13271</td>
<td>41219</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sundargarh</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>3625</td>
<td>8116</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kalahandi</td>
<td>3954</td>
<td>5973</td>
<td>15610</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** | 34772 | 48638 | 134813 | 3.07

*Source: Director of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.*
About 85 per cent of looms used by weavers in western Orissa, came under the throw shuttle category, because it offers an unlimited scope of weaving, with large variety extra weft designs. Like weavers, looms are also concentrated in Sambalpur and Balangir. Maximum percentage of looms have come under co-operative fold in Balangir, as indicated in Table- III.5. It is lowest in Sundargarh. The Table-III.5 indicates that, maximum percentage of looms have been modernised in Kalahandi. Modernisation of looms refer to, electrification, renovation and replacement of looms. It is found that authorities are encouraging replacement of throw shuttle loom by fly shuttle loom, under the scheme of modernisation. It is true that, weavers produce more amount of cloth with fly shuttle than with throw shuttle looms. But this hold good only for plain weaving¹.

It is not suitable to weave solid bordered double ikat fabrics, for weavers of western Orissa. This is the reason why modernisation programme has not picked up in Sambalpur, rather it has fared well in Kalahandi. It is also felt necessary, that throw shuttle looms of Sambalpur and Balangir district, which produce double ikat fabrics, should not be replaced by other looms. Weavers are also not interested in frame looms, because it requires heavy investment and during emergency like fire, it can not be dismantled easily.

Table-III.5 indicates, the number of weavers covered under the State Handloom Development Corporation,

### Table III.5

Position of looms in Western Orissa (1987-88)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total looms</th>
<th>Looms under co-operative fold</th>
<th>Looms under corporation</th>
<th>Looms modernised</th>
<th>Percentage of looms under co-operative fold to total</th>
<th>Percentage of modernisation to the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sambalpur</td>
<td>25769</td>
<td>14289</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8078</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Balangir</td>
<td>13271</td>
<td>8176</td>
<td>3426</td>
<td>6142</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sundargarh</td>
<td>3625</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kalahandi</td>
<td>5973</td>
<td>2727</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>2779</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>48638</strong></td>
<td><strong>23848</strong></td>
<td><strong>4138</strong></td>
<td><strong>17448</strong></td>
<td><strong>49.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Director of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.*
which came into existence in 1977. Primarily it helps the weavers in supply of raw material and also takes the responsibility of marketing their products. Only the weavers who are outside the co-operative fold are admitted to this organisation.

On the whole only 8 per cent of the total looms in Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Balangir and Kalahandi districts come under the corporation. Balangir has maximum number of looms in the fold of the Corporation. Surprisingly, it has not made any successful inroad in Sambalpur. The possible reason for this may be that, weavers are more loyal to co-operative organisation, because benefit under co-operative fold is not available under corporate fold.

3.3.2 Caste structure of the weavers

In western Orissa there is a strong association between caste and occupation. The chief castes among those are Bhulia (Meher), Deras, Debangs, Panas(Gonda), Hansis(Tanti). There are also some weavers among scheduled caste and scheduled tribe.

Caste and occupational association may be the factors which show that weavers are a closed orthodox group and they do not allow any outsider. "The influx of new entrants from other castes into handloom weaving activity has been .............least in Orissa". But it has been noticed

that, this is a loose and flexible factor. Another more rational factor may be that, only weavers having no other alternative or any tangible asset stick to it.

Bhulia weavers (also known as Mehers) are the main caste weavers of western Orissa. They are adept in tie and dye work. It is presumed that they had come to Balangir and Sambalpur district, during the reign of King Balarama Deva, towards the later part of sixteenth century. They had migrated from Garsambar (Rajasthan) and came to western Orissa via Raipur (Madhya Pradesh). Finally they settled in groups around Barapali, Remunda, Saranda, Jhilminda, Laumunda, Bijepur, Bargarh in Sambalpur district and in Sagarpali, Kendupali, Tarva, Subyalaya, Kamalpur and Jaganathpali under Sonepur sub-division of Balangir district. Many of them later on settled in groups around Narla and Junagarh in Kalahandi and Subedega in Sundargarh district.1

Panas (Harijans) are known as Gondas in Sambalpur. They come under scheduled caste. In all the four districts, they are scattered. But Hansis are scattered in and around Sundargarh and in Bonai sub-division of Sundargarh. Cloth woven by Panas and Hansis are plain and coarse but durable. The looms used by both the caste are same, but cloths turned out by Hansis are finer than that of Panas.2 Almost all of them are seasonal weavers. They do

2. Orissa District Gazetters, Govt. of Orissa, (Sundargarh), p.175.
not have any landed property. During off-period they weave dhoti, towel and sarees. As most of them are poor, they have to eke out a precarious existence from proceeds of their sale. During cultivating season, they work as agricultural labourers to increase their earnings.

Table-III.6 indicates that, out of total weavers in the co-operative fold in western Orissa, 28.4 per cent belong to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and the rest 71.6 per cent are general weavers. Percentage of SC, ST, weavers are maximum in Sambalpur and Kalahandi districts.

3.3.3 Weavers in the co-operative fold in the region

Table-III.7 indicates that, 45.1 per cent of total weavers of the region are in the co-operative fold. 41.3 per cent, 54.2 per cent, 46.6 per cent and 37.3 per cent of total weavers, of Sambalpur, Balangir, Sundargarh and Kalahandi districts respectively, are in the co-operative fold. Table-III.7 further indicates that 52.03 per cent of total PWCS in the region are active. 57 per cent, 71.2 per cent, 56 per cent and 20.1 per cent of total PWCS, of Sambalpur, Balangir, Sundargarh and Kalahandi districts respectively, are active.

PWCS, of western Orissa produced cloth of Rs.1061.86 lakh and have registered a sale of Rs.743.55 lakh in 1987-88. PWCS of Sambalpur and Balangir produce large quantity of cloth and in that respect position of Kalahandi and Sundargarh is insignificant. Working of PWCS, in Sambalpur district is noteworthy, because of the Sambalpuri Bastralaya.
### Table III.6

District wise distribution of different categories of weavers under co-operative societies in 1987-88.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1. Districts</th>
<th>Total members</th>
<th>Of which scheduled caste</th>
<th>Of which scheduled Tribe</th>
<th>Of which general weavers</th>
<th>Percentage of scheduled caste weavers to total</th>
<th>Percentage of scheduled tribe weavers to total</th>
<th>Percentage of general weavers to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sambalpur</td>
<td>28869</td>
<td>10463</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>18017</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Balangir</td>
<td>22346</td>
<td>2775</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>19383</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sundargarh</td>
<td>3790</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>2668</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kalahandi</td>
<td>5831</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>3443</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60836</strong></td>
<td><strong>15904</strong></td>
<td><strong>1401</strong></td>
<td><strong>43531</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>71.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Director of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total number of primary H.C.</th>
<th>Total number of primary societies</th>
<th>Percentage of societies to the total.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sambalpur</td>
<td>69868</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Balangir</td>
<td>41219</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sundargarh</td>
<td>8116</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kalahandi</td>
<td>15610</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>134813</strong></td>
<td><strong>339</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weavers under co-operative fold**: 60836

**Total number of weavers**: 134813

Source: Director of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
3.3.4 Sambalpuri Bastralaya

Study of PWCS will be incomplete, unless a reference is made to the pioneer PWCS of western Orissa i.e Sambalpuri Bastralaya. It is also known as BPHCS, as its headquarter is at Bargarh. It is the biggest PWCS in Orissa. Sambalpuri Bastralaya, is one of premier PWCS of India, which performs in part the job of an apex society by giving work to other small PWCS in the area. There are 32 such PWCS affiliated to the Bastralaya in 1987-88. Padmashree Krutartha Acharya, a stalwart in handloom industry had started a small private firm in 1930, with the objective of preserving, improving and propagating the traditional tie and dye designs, which are the speciality of handloom textiles of western Orissa. He had also the objective to improve the economic standard of weavers of the region. The small private firm of 1930 was converted to a partnership concern and then ultimately into a co-operative society in 1954.

Main objectives of the BPHCS are to manufacture cloth of improved design, regular supply of raw material and payment of wages to its members, undertake retail and wholesale selling and maintain the traditional art of weaving in the region. Progress of the Bastralaya, is indicated in Table-III.8. From the table, it can be seen that in all respects, the BPHCS, has done a good amount of progress.
### Table III.8

A brief account of the Sambalpuri Bastralaya.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Share capital</th>
<th>Owned fund</th>
<th>Loan &amp; deposit stock</th>
<th>Opening stock</th>
<th>Amount of production</th>
<th>Amount of sale</th>
<th>Profit</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Production centres</th>
<th>Affiliated societies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>58.12</td>
<td>25.84</td>
<td>10.21</td>
<td>61.78</td>
<td>52.03</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>108.13</td>
<td>85.36</td>
<td>31.23</td>
<td>137.19</td>
<td>121.72</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>3147</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>148.66</td>
<td>188.21</td>
<td>59.61</td>
<td>387.92</td>
<td>316.01</td>
<td>20.01</td>
<td>5650</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>190.26</td>
<td>392.74</td>
<td>89.23</td>
<td>634.97</td>
<td>608.34</td>
<td>24.07</td>
<td>8876</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Sambalpuri Bastralaya, Bargarh (Sambalpur)
FIG. 2: PRODUCTION AND SALE OF SAMBALPURI BAS TRALAYA
3.4.0 Problems of the handloom industry in western Orissa

Problems faced by the weavers of this region is more or less same with the difficulties encountered by the weavers in other parts of Orissa. An attempt has been made here to highlight some of these common problems. However, it has been dealt in detail in Chapter IV with the help of field survey.

3.4.1 Supply of Yarn

Weavers of the area mainly depend upon spinning and composite mills and traders for their yarn requirement. Cotton yarn is available inside Orissa whereas for the silk yarn, they depend upon other states such as Tamilnadu and Karnataka, (procured through traders or the Apex). Spinning mills in western Orissa, generally supply yarn having counts of 17s, 26s and 40s.

It is observed that a spinning mill with 25000 spindles can meet the demand of about 5000 looms. In western Orissa, total number of handlooms is 48638. There are three spinning mills functioning in this area; the Bargah co-operative spinning mill with a spindle capacity of 30280, the Gangpur co-operative spinning mill, Sundargarh with a capacity of 25080, and spinning mill of Sonepur (Balangir), which works under IDICOL (Industrial Development and

Investment Corporation of Orissa Limited) has a capacity of 22,190.1 Spinning mills of the area supply yarn for only 15,000 looms. This inadequate production of yarn implies the dependence of independent weavers on traders. Apex society also depends on outside states. Shortage of yarn leads to black marketing. Weavers could secure yarn only at market price which is decidedly higher by 30 per cent.

Although the yarn problem is common for many states, it is acute for Orissa and specially for the western region. That is why, there is urgent need to set up more number of new spinning mills to bridge the gap between demand and supply, as recommended by the Sivaraman Committee.

3.4.2 channel of distribution

Besides shortage of yarn, the distribution of it to the weavers is also another problem area. It is particularly so for independent weavers, because they go through a number of dealers before they get the raw material. Ultimately they pay a higher price. It is observed that most of weavers do not get yarn at their homes. They go to the nearest town, once a week to purchase it. So the cost of travel and partial absence from the loom indirectly increases the cost of production.

Without depending upon the Apex society, primaries could be strengthened to purchase raw materials directly.

2. All India Conference on Handloom Weavers' Co-operatives, Agenda Notes, NCUI, New Delhi, 12.04.78, p.32.
from spinning mills. It may act as, indirect attraction for weavers and they could be brought to co-operative fold. Setting up of new spinning mills could fulfil the requirement of the industry. In course of time, co-operative spinning mills should produce more yarn to meet the requirement of looms in the area.

3.4.3 Marketing

Weavers in the region sell their products through different marketing outlets. Weavers under co-operative fold and under the corporation, do not face much difficulty like independent weavers. The later category of weavers sell their products either directly to consumer or to the intermediaries and master weavers. Independent weaver is also in the midst of a buyers market. So he has to approach a number of middlemen to sell his product and in the process, the price he gets is not up to the actual selling price of the product. As he has no bargaining power, he is compelled to dispose off his cloth at a lower price. In many cases, the weaver works for the master weaver. He returns the finished product against the raw materials and receives wages for his labour. Sometimes the master weaver deducts a part of the wage for unsatisfactory work. Also, the weaver sells his product in the weekly fair (Hata) in urban as well as in rural areas. Generally plain and coarse cloths like dhoti, lungi, chaddar etc. is sold in hata. Weavers under co-operative and corporate fold do not face such an acute marketing problem. It is because the Apex society generally
lifts 50 per cent production of the primaries. The rest 50 per cent is sold by the primaries or weavers themselves.

Competitors from outside states are penetrating into the area by their aggressive marketing policy which require intensive campaign and effective distribution network. These facts suggest that some urgent steps should be taken for popularisation of handloom products of western Orissa, because products from other states cannot satisfy local preference.

As far as loyalty and preferences for handloom fabrics is concerned, percentage wise Balangir, Phulabani, Sambalpur and Kalahandi take the first four places in the state. Western Orissa continue to be the traditional market for tie and dye fabrics. But consumers of Kalahandi prefer durable and cheap cloth.¹

It is important to note that, Sambalpuri Bastralaya is the backbone of handloom industry in western Orissa. Special sarees constitute the strength of the weavers of western Orissa in general and Bastralaya in particular. This indicates that sarees of superior quality constitute an important element in tapping the internal market.

Actual market for the products remained limited to a part of potential home market, because of lack of standardisation and inability to produce fashion fabrics in accordance with the changed taste of consumers. Though, it is found that, societies affiliated to Bastralaya, check the

size, design and quality of fabrics, but in case of other societies, this aspect is not taken care of. Product development and diversification is yet to be in tune with the dynamic changing habits and fashions of people, except a few attempts here and there.

Price of handloom fabrics is also an important factors for marketing, because consumers of western Orissa and other parts of Orissa desire to have products of tie and dye art, at resonable price. Price of such products could be controlled by supplying raw yarn at a resonable price and by eliminating number of intermediaries from the distribution channel.

3.4.4 Finance

Working capital arrangement is the main problem for the weavers. In this area, master weavers and money lenders continue to be the main source of finance. The problem is acute, particularly in Kalahandi and Sundargarh. That is why, they indirectly control most of the weaving units irrespective of the weavers\' affiliation to co-operative societies. Also the co-operatives do not meet all types of credit requirements and their functioning is not satisfactory. Banks play a secondary role, as poor weavers cannot afford to give any material guarantee. On the other hand, banks are always reluctant to extend loan, because in most of the cases it is misutilised and not repaid. But the crux of the problem is to provide credit for consumption and
social needs of the weavers. Without this it may not be possible to make them free from clutches of master weavers. One of the solutions may be the creation of some sort of thrift deposit for weavers. This habit of saving will inculcate a sense of self-confidence among the weavers. Bastralaya has already introduced the scheme and has benefited 411 weavers in 1985-86, 205 in 1987-88 and another 436 in the year 1988-89.¹

For the weavers outside the co-operative fold government provides credit facilities through IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), TRYSEM (National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment), ERRP (Economic Rehabilitation of Rural poor Programme). Under these schemes, Government also contributes 50 per cent of the share capital of primary weavers' co-operative societies. An individual weaver is given Rs. 200 to contribute towards his share capital of co-operative society. Fifty per cent of this is given as subsidy and rest in form of loan. In short, it can be said that, Government encourages weavers to become members of co-operative societies.

3.4 Summing up

Handloom industry is one of the oldest cottage industries in Orissa. It employs largest number of families, next only to agriculture. Fabrics woven by Orissan weavers have got an appeal in and outside Orissa from time immemorial. The industry specially after 18th century, has

¹. 28th Annual Report of Sambalpuri Bastralaya (in Oriya) Dt.30.5.89,p.8.
gone through many economic and political ups and downs. Role of European traders, non availability of raw cotton, Orissa Salt Law, famine of 1865 and more over the step-motherly attitude of the British Government had lead to its decline. But in spite of all odds, it has survived by dint of its inherent skill and art of weavers.

After independence, central as well as the state Government have been sympathetic towards the condition of the industry. Measures have been taken to assist weavers through implementation of different programmes. In Orissa, the Apex co-operative society and the Handloom Development Corporation are taking active participation, as the main media in implementing the programme. But till now the coverage under both co-operative and corporate sector is not satisfactory.

Handloom industry in western Orissa has also passed through the same historical vissicitudes. Out of four districts in the region, weavers are mainly concentrated in Sambalpur and Balangir. And the industry in this region has thrived mainly owing to the skilled tie and dye work of the adept Meher weavers of these two districts. Majority of the weavers in the area, either work independently or under master weavers. Only 45.1 per cent of them are in the co-operative fold. Most of the weavers in the region follow the traditional method of weaving. There is a strong association between caste and occupation of weavers in the
region and most of them belong to socially and economically backward class. Weaving is not a remunerative profession for many of them. Apart from weaving, very often they work as agricultural labourers.

Sambalpuri Bastralaya, has emerged as one of the most important primary society of its own kind in the state. It is gaining strength year after year, as far as, production and sale of handloom fabrics are concerned. Being the leader of handloom co-operatives in the region it is successfully upholding the rich weaving heritage of western Orissa.

Non availability of adequate yarn and working capital has been a barrier mainly for weavers outside the co-operative fold. Marketing of products is an important problem for the weavers in the region. Actual market for the products remained limited to a part of potential home market, because of lack of standardisation and inability to produce fashion fabrics in accordance with changing taste of consumers. No doubt, the Apex society is taking initiative to market the products at home and aboard, but the products of the region are yet to attract the attention of export houses.