CHAPTER IV

SILK WEAVING IN THE HANDLOOM SECTOR - A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT

Since we planned to study the silk weaving units of Rayadurg as an organic structure, it would be helpful if we clarify the nature of silk weaving as practised in Rayadurg. The following description is considered to be helpful in appreciating the type of analysis we propose to try later.

The details of the process is broadly presented in a flow chart in the next page.

It is well known that when the cocoons are boiled in hot water they yield a thin filament known as silk. The yarn so drawn through a flying wheel is called a charaka silk and the one drawn through mechanic process in known as filature silk, the latter is being considered an improvement over the former. The lump of yarn is also known as 'Kora silk' and constitute the first important raw material for the silk weaver. Silk twisting factories process this silk besides twisting them into the required degree of tension, strength and thickness. The processing consists mainly reducing the twisted yarn into so-called the warps and the wefts, a term so familiar even to illiterate weavers. 'Warp' refers usually to a eight sarees' length of yarn, thread. This is done invariably through the help of a mechanic and electric power.
Kora silk is processed in Silk Twisting Factories into

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warp</th>
<th>Weft</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length wise cluster of threads stretched on a loom. It would be usually 48 metres in length.</td>
<td>Cross wise threads used for interweaving into the warp to make a fabric or saree.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is made of silk laddes in silk Twisting Factories by power driven machines.

It is also made of silk laddes in silk Twisting Factories by power driven machines.

Warp X Weft = Saree/ cloth

In case of a saree, soon after it is removed from loom would be taken into 'Galigi' process.

Finally, saree is ready for sale.
Warp, therefore are lengthwise cluster of threads, usually of a eight sarees' length, a part of which is stretched on the loom at the time of weaving.

Cross-wise threads to be interlaced among the warps is known as 'wefts' which is also done through mechanical power. There is no predetermined length for weft. It is the weaving of warps and wefts that goes to the making of any fabric.

Once the warps and the wefts are ready, they are to be dyed into appropriate colour(s) scheme. Colours used in Rayadurg seemed to have purchased mainly from Bangalore, Tadpatri and Bangalore markets. The present importance of Pamidi as a centre of cotton textile trade with in the district is traceable to its glory as a place where highly skilled dyers sought even by the Bombay textile millowners. Rayadurg is thus visited by the representatives of reputed chemicals colours and jari merchants from other urban centres. Jari is invariably bought either in the Bangalore market or from Cuddapah.

Dyeing is a highly priced skill but fairly wide spread among the masterweavers. No masterweaver can be unskilled in the art and technique of dyeing. However, Rayadurg has a group of nearly ten professional dyers, who
happened to be Muslims, are employed by almost all masterweavers with a loomage capacity exceeding 25. The dependence on a separate group of dyers is therefore a function of the scale of operation rather than the technique. These professional dyers are contracted for a year and are paid on piece rate basis. The dyeing operation, itself involves no capitalist equipment beyond the household utensials of masterweaver. It is necessary to mention here that the weaving establishment is the location of all activities concerned with the masterweaver. He lives there probably, he was brought up there. The dyeing process is done either in the kitchen or in the place available in between looms. The masterweaver is a dyer too. Very rarely masterweaver is a ready substitute for the absentee as well as the absconding weaver. The masterweaver is a spectrum of skills.

The next process in silk weaving is attaching the warp to the loom in accordance with a predetermined design. This is known in local paralence as 'Achhuathukutamu'. Rayadug has around 12 professional Achhu-workers (Achhuathikevalu) employed mainly, again by the large size masterweaver, an instance of specialisation following the rise in size of unit.
The wefts are winded on to the Panti, a bamboo gadget available locally among the bamboo workers. About 50 grams or 100 grams of silk is the normal amount of silk which is wound on to a panti. From the pantis, the silk is again wound, to make it small enough for the use on the loom, the yarn is thus wound into kandilu, it only contains 5 to 7 grams of silk is normally wound to a kandi on a spindle. Kandilu were formerly made out of a local variety of wood subject to breakage in case of extreme heat; it is now made out of plastic. The silk wound kandi is then inserted into a shuttle which moves to begin with the right to the left, in the reverse process until the weaving is over. This shuttle is made out of cattle harn, unlike in the cotton looms where the wooden ones are used.

The 'Galigi' stage (folding the fabric with a view of presenting its best features forward and concealing as far as possible the defects, short comings and other negative aspects of the fabric) is kept as a private preservation and monopoly of the masterweaver. Though not a skilled labour in some sense, it is certainly a function demanding cunning, wit and all those things that go under the name of advertisement and propoganda.
The woven fabric under uncontrolled indeterminate conditions with respect to the inputs used and also the process of weaving contains far too many defects, though unclear and unseen by the naked eye. A skilled craftsman or another weaver can pinpoint very many shortcomings disapproved by the ethics of the profession.

It is not safe, it is not desirable to expose all these things to all others and hence the masterweaver takes upon himself the rather simple job of galigi process unto himself. Jobs one do under privacy and secrecy assume mythical connotation and are narrowly referred to as trade and business secret. Every masterweaver has some and everyone thinks no one else knows. Thus, a mystery surrounds a plain event.

Now the fabric is ready for sale and in some cases it is already sold out as and when the saree is woven against advanced orders either by the local merchant or by the Bangalore dealer.

To say that the selling operation of a saree is begin when the weaving is completed, is to miss the dynamics of the situation. As soon as the warp and the weft is tied to the achhu, the masterweaver will slanting for opportunity for its sale in the forward market.
Very rarely the small masterweaver's finished product is sold to the final consumer, although stray visitors coming mainly for this purpose during marriage and other seasons are not uncommon.

That selling is a distinct function unconnected with the weaving skill and efficiency is known to all weavers. They also know that the assumption of this function entails risk and degree of uncertainty against which sometimes not normally available. Therefore, weavers with less than five looms prefer to sell their products to a large scale weaving-weavers with a loomage capacity of ten or more, seldom weavers go to traders pure and simple for selling their sarees. The normal custom is, the small weaver sells his wears to the large weaver who sells finally his own product plus the ones he has bought from others to the silk saree dealers in the open market.

In the recent past, however, last two or three years the trader no longer depends mainly on large scale weaver for his supplies, he even goes to small weavers to add to his supplies.