Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The handloom industry in India is one of the most important cottage industries, next to agriculture. It is a cottage industry par excellence. With its agricultural base, industrial superstructure, and labour intensive nature, it is remarkable for its low investment and quick and high returns, which makes it an ideal industry for the development of a rural or small-town based, economy. Therefore the handloom industry fits very well into the socio-economic fabric of the nation's economy.

Besides being the largest employment-generating industry, both the cotton and silk handloom industries earn valuable foreign exchange for India. Today there are nearly 3.8 million handlooms in India employing nearly 10 million people directly or indirectly. Thus this industry provides a source of livelihood for a large section of the population in India.

The handloom industry in India is the largest unorganized sector and constitutes an integral part of rural life of the country. This industry has a long tradition of excellence and forms a part of the rural life of the country. India is known as a land of villages and the village economy forms an important segment of the nation's economy. In the development of the economy of the rural area, the handloom industry plays an important role by providing employment to a lakhs of people, besides giving indirect employment to a large number of people who are engaged in pre-loom, post-loom, and marketing activities.

It may be confidently asserted that the handloom weavers constitute the largest work force, next only to agriculture in India. The unique feature of this industry is its ability to provide employment to a large number of people with far less capital employment per worker, compared to the other sectors of the textile industry, such as the mill and powerloom sectors. To-day the handloom industry
meets about 30 per cent of the total clothing needs of the country. During 1993-94 the handloom industry produced 5,851 million meters of cloth. The target for the IX plan is to produce 9000 million meters by the end of 1999-2000.

The handloom industry is highly labour intensive. While the employment in the textile industry stood at 10.25 lakhs at the end of 1993-94, that of the powerloom sector stood at 64.1 lakhs, while the handloom industry provided direct employment to a staggering 106 lakh people. The target for the IX Plan is to increase the employment in the handloom industry to 177 lakh people and thereby benefit the rural and semi-rural segment of the national economy. Hence the contribution of the handloom industry to the national exchequer is quite substantial. The popularity of Indian handlooms in foreign countries is on the increase and its promotion has been taken up on a top priority basis. As a result the export of handloom products has increased significantly over the past few decades from Rs.25.61 crores in 1970-71 to Rs.1034 crores in 1992-93. The exports for the financial year 1993-94 in fact far exceeded the target of Rs.1280 crores. (Kurukshetra: 1995:36)

The changing trends in the fashion industry has also contributed to the revival of the handloom industry which, in the recent past, had suffered immeasurably due to the popularity of mill-made cloth with which it was unable to compete. The promotion of handloom cloth by various NGOs and the Government has gone a long way in its revival, though it is not fully free from inherent problems. The ethnic designs, woven in bright earthy colours, the distinct traditional designs and artistry woven with skill by the Indian artisans are becoming increasingly popular both in the Indian, as well as in foreign markets.

A large number of weavers in India are self-employed. They are artisans who have been carrying on their profession in their own homes with the assistance of the members of their family in the pre-loom and post-loom processes.
HISTORY OF HANDLOOM WEAVING:

It is not known with certainty when exactly weaving was adopted by our ancestors. However it can be confidently said that weaving was known about eight thousand years before the birth of Christ. History provides us with sufficient evidence to suggest that people in India knew the art of weaving as long back as 5000s B.C. Remnants of pieces of cloth with artistic designs, woven in silk and cotton, and found in Harappa and Mohenjo Daro shows the artistic skills of Indian weavers. Later historic evidences show that India produced dyed cotton cloth of superior quality. Eminent historians, without any dispute, regard India as the home of cotton weaving. In this connection Lajpat Rai (1957) states that “The birthplace of cotton manufacture is India, where it probably flourished long before the dawn of authentic history. Its introduction into Europe took place at a comparatively late period. The handloom products of India occupy an immeasurable position in the early civilizations of Egypt, Rome and Babylonia. "The high artistic skill of Indian artisans can be visualized from the account of T. N. Mukherjee (1980) who states that: “a piece of muslin, 20 yards long and one yard wide, could be made to pass through a finger ring and which required six months to manufacture”. such was the fine quality of the muslin woven by weavers of ancient India.

Besides the manufacture of the fine Muslin cloth which had gained world-wide recognition, the textile handicrafts of India included chintzes of Lucknow, dhupattas of Ahmedabad, silk border cloth from Nagpur and Murshidabad and beautifully embroidered shawls from Kashmir, Amritsar and Ludhiana. Such were the beautiful designs that many of them found their way into European textile markets and were copied by Western artisans in the weaving of their own cloth. In fact the most popular design

“The Paisley” which is popularly found on English and European textiles was adopted from the small mango designs widely woven on Indian shawls. (Kurukshetra, Feb.1998:36). In fact many Indian words relating to
Indian textiles have found their way into the English language for this reason, for example chintz, Pajama, Seer sucker, Khaki, dungaree, Shawl, and so on.

Evidences in the great Epic of India such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata also provide evidence of the production of superior quality of silk and cotton cloth. It is surmised that the Aryans played an important role in the further development of the art of weaving. There are various references in the Vedas relating to this art. The weaver was referred to as “Tantavay” in Sanskrit which means ‘the protector of the human body’ for the cloth woven by a weaver was responsible in protecting the body from the climate. In the age of the Rig Veda fine textile cloth both in cotton and silk were available, as is evident from both the Vedas and the Upanishads. In the Sukraneeti there is a reference to an officer called “Wastrap”. His duty was to keep a record of all silk, cotton and wool manufactured in the kingdom and keeps track of their quality and designs.

Historical artifacts related to weaving, found in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, show that weaving of cotton and silk was a well known craft during the Indus valley civilization as long back as 5000 B.C. Later evidences from the writings of famous travelers such as Fa Hien, Huen Tsang, Bernier, Marco Polo, and others cast light on the extent of weaving in India. Their glowing accounts of the art of weaving in India shows that India produced excellent and superior handloom textiles.

In the Arthashastra, Kautilya lays down stringent punishment for any one who destroys cotton textiles or the handlooms of the weavers. It is said that during this period the people produced both food and cloth themselves. Only the Kings, members of the royal families and the nobility got cloth produced by weavers. It is for this reason that the weavers were given special protection and concessions as their products were purchased by the rich people. (Manjappa: 1933: 14:15).
The Greek philosopher Herodotus remarks in 445 B.C. that Indians were well known for wearing cotton cloth which was most suited for their climate. It is surmised by historians that the art of weaving must have gone to Europe through Arab traders. Because the English word 'cotton' is derived from the Arabian word 'Qutton' for cloth.

According to Pliny, the Romans preferred the cloth imported from India and much of the gold reserves of Rome went to India through trade in exchange of cotton and silk cloth as these products were extremely popular among the Roman nobility. Pliny laments that much of the Gold produced in Rome went to India. Rome purchased Indian cloth in large quantities and hence the word "calico" meaning cotton cloth was thus derived. It is said that Roman ships berthed in the port at Calicut on the Malabar coast of India and purchased cotton cloth and hence the derivation of the word. Most small towns in Peninsular India produced cotton cloth and had specialized in weaving different types of cloth. The existence of Roman and Greek coins in large numbers which are excavated from time to time shows the trade relation India had with these countries in historical times.

Weaving in Medieval Period: The arrival of the Middle Eastern conquerors brought about a significant change in the art of weaving in India. The establishment of the Delhi Sultanates and, later, the expansion of the Mughal Empire had its own influence. It is believed that women spent their leisure time with the "takli" which they twisted with their nimble fingers to make superior cotton for weaving cloth. In India Mugals appointed the handicrafts and started the weaving centres at Lohore, Agra, Fatepur and Amadabad. This was followed by the passion kingdom Safavi. The king Akbar and Jahangeer showed personal interest on weaving development. During the ruling of Jahangeer Sir Thomas Roe hesitated to participate in the function, main reason was the was the participated people ware colourful dresses. Sir Thomas Roe did not participated this was the view of historians. The Muslim rulers gave equal importance to the artisans. They provided new
designs and introduced the art of brocade involving incorporation of gold threads during the weaving operation. The well known centers of weaving during the Mughal era were Machlipatnam for Kalamkari, Gujarat for "chippa" prints, and the world renowned "Dhaka muslin". Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjehan were Mughal emperors who gave a fillip to the art of cotton and silk weaving. In the south the Vijayanagar Empire also encouraged weaving. In Maharashtra the establishment of the Peshwa Empire also helped in the production of superior cotton and silk cloth. When the Europeans came to India out comely reached the final stage in the production of cloths and its development. The Europeans know about the Indian cloths when the Antoman Turks captured Constantinople the trade between Indian and Europe was in a passion to fall. There become a need of invention of sea route. When Vasco-Da-Gama reached the Calicut huirbeus he saw the Italy silk cloths in local markets. By this we came to know the trade was spread from India to Europe.

**Weaving in the Modern Period:**

In India the handloom industry has passed through different phases as is evident from the above discussion. It has been subjected to cycles of prosperity and panic.

Until the arrival of the British, weaving was given great importance, as cloth was necessary for making clothes and other articles. Weavers had an important position in the social hierarchy. However, with the arrival of the British merchants, the decline and the fall of the Indian cotton handloom industry gradually began. The decay of Indian textiles started with the blockade by British merchants of the export of Indian cloth to Europe and other world markets to which India traditionally supplied cloth. This was done to protect the interests of the English cloth manufacturers. Once the East India Company gained ascendancy, they began to impose taxes to strangle the Indian artisans.

It is said that some British merchants even mercilessly cut off the fingers of the Muslin manufacturers in Bengal in order to disable them and prevent the
manufacture of this fine cloth. Adding to the woes of the Indian weavers, the British actively aided the policy of importing textile cloth from Manchester to India. This led to a steady decline of Indian cloth to the West and further people in India began to be attracted to the mill-made cloth from England which was far superior to the rough cloth manufactured by the Indian handloom weavers. Consequently a large number of weavers were rendered unemployed and were forced to abandon their hereditary vocations. Many began to migrate to cities in search of jobs. The establishment of the textile industry in India during the late 19th century created jobs to which handloom weavers flocked. This brought about a crisis in the handloom industry.

However by 1895 Indian textile industry was firmly established. India began to produce textile yarn. By then the handloom industry began to depend more and more on the textile manufactured yarn to keep them alive. Hand-spinning by this time had totally declined. In fact it was this condition which was taken cognizance of by Gandhiji and which led him to re-introduce the art of spinning through the famous “Charka” during the freedom movement.

During 1896-1900 nearly 200 million lbs. of yarn went into the handloom industry. This helped indirectly, to keep the handloom industry, in different areas, from being totally wiped out. Certain small town in India came to be identified with this industry in different parts of the country. The popularity of the textile industry and the import of Manchester-made cloth led to the Swadeshi movement in India. However these historic events could not restore the pre-eminent status that the handloom industry once enjoyed in India. On the contrary India herself became a leader in the manufacture and export of mill-made cloth to various markets in the world.

It was the frequent famines and the resultant poverty and starvation deaths that led the Government of India to take notice of the cottage industry in India as an alternative form of employment for the rural artisans. The Royal Commission on Famine in 1880 and 1898 provided a scheme for the protection
of indigenous crafts in India. The Central Govt. asked the Provincial Governments to investigate the condition of the cottage industries in their region and provide assistance. However the handloom industry did not significantly benefit from any of these programmes.

The emergence of Japan, as a producer of silk and cotton yarn, in the early part of the 19th century, led to the decline of the prominent position India enjoyed until then. By then China and Japan began to dominate the textile markets. In such a situation Indian mill manufacturers had to look to other markets for their yarn and this is how they encouraged the handloom weavers to abandon their hand spinning and purchase mill-made yarn.

One can trace the decline of loom cloth from 1910 onwards. Though the Swadeshi movement helped handloom to a certain extent, it also helped the Indian textile industry, because the movement was aimed at boycott of foreign goods and exclusively mill-made cloth if it was manufactured in India. This led to an increase in mill-made cloth production, and a likewise decline in the handloom industry. The plight of the handloom weavers came to the attention of the Government and therefore, between 1911 and 1914, the Government tried to rectify this anomaly. Feeble attempts were made by the then British Indian Government for the welfare of the weaving communities in some of the Provinces. The handloom development schemes comprised of popularization of improved equipment, tools, fly-shuttle, dobby, peripatetic demonstration parties, establishment of a few training schools, and above all the establishment of weavers co-operative societies.

During the period of the 1st World War the import of western made textiles came down significantly, but this opportunity was exploited by the textile mills to the fullest extent by increasing their production. This led to making use of the yarn being produced, throttling the handloom industry which depended upon mill-made yarn. The scarcity of dye-stuff, growing scarcity of mill-made yarn, etc had its impact on the handloom industry all over India.
Consequently the system of Master weavers came into existence. The Master Weaver system is a powerful system that has become built into the handloom industry. It comprises of weaver families that often act as middlemen by buying the essential goods such as yarn, dyestuffs, execution of production orders etc., and giving it to weavers. Being rich they can afford to purchase these ingredients and in the process the actual handloom weaver are often at the mercy of the Master Weavers. The Master Weavers exploited the situation to their advantage.

In the post War period the handloom industry recorded some progress. The Montague-Chelmsford reforms brought about the establishment of the Directorate of Industries in 1921. Financial aid was also given to small-scale industries. To some extent this led to the revival of the handloom industry. The total production from the handloom industry increased to 1502 million yards in 1924-25. However this progressive development needless to say was only for a short while. The handloom production began to face a further sever competition from mill-made textiles.

Therefore (i) Textile Mills began to employ women workers with the result that women who played an important role in handlooms began to migrate to cities in search of employment. (ii) The removal of cotton excise duty led to increased production of mill-made textiles (iii) the development of improved means of transport led to the spread and popularity of fine mill-made textiles all over the country, which became easily available even in small provincial towns, which depended on cotton handloom. (iv) There was simultaneous change in the clothing habits of the people. These factors had an adverse effect on the handloom industry. The Great Depression of 1930 further affected the handloom production adversely. During 1931, the Government of India made a few concrete suggestions to arrest the decline. The Government directed the Banking Enquiry Committee to make specific recommendations for the benefit of cottage industry.
Just as the handloom industry began to revive it was again hit by the II\textsuperscript{nd} World War, bringing with it a scarcity of raw materials. This led the Government to appoint a Fact Finding Committee to enquire into the status of the cottage industry. It recommended that the Government supply handloom cloth to the army wherever possible. This led to placing of order to the tune of 25 percent of their requirement by the British Indian army.

The first Small Scale Industries Conference held in New Delhi decided to encourage the handloom industry in 1942. Arrangements were made to place orders through the Provincial Co-operative Departments or Directorate of Industries to purchase different varieties of handloom cloth for the army.

In this context it may not be out of place to mention that the Famine Enquiry Committee (1945) observed that there was no lack of knowledge regarding the development of cottage industries, nor was there a lack of availability of finances, but what was essentially lacking were the agencies through which these could be made available to the target beneficiaries. Further it also focused attention on the efficiency of several co-operative societies.

The end of the World War led to the lifting of many curbs and controls, and, by 1947, this led to deterioration in the quality of the yarn and the cloth that was produced. This led to the re-introduction of controls once again in August 1948. The Textile Control Order 1948 restricted the establishment of power looms for producing cotton cloth. It also made the registration of handlooms mandatory. Thus, during the entire period of 1947-51, the handloom industry faced several difficulties. Frequent shortages of yarn, great difficulty in disposing and marketing of cloth, high rate of inflation, etc., affected the handloom industry.

After the advent of Independence, the Government of India, took cognizance of the deteriorating condition of the handloom industry and appointed a Textile Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of N. Kanungo.
in November 1952. At the same time the Government also established the Handloom Board, with the Textile Commissioner as its Chairman. The prime duty of the Board was to advise the Government on the improvement and development of the handloom industry. In addition to this, the Government also took steps to issue orders to restrict the manufacture of mill-made dhotis to 60 per cent to the average monthly production beginning with March 1952. The Order also prohibited piece dying of sarees by Textile Mills. The Khadi and Other Handloom Act, passed in 1952, empowered the Government to levy an additional excise duty on mill-made cloth. The fund created out the proceeds was called the Cess Fund. The proceeds of this Fund were released for handloom development schemes that were outlined by the All India Handloom Board. Improved looms, better quality of yarns, better marketing facility, publicity for handloom goods and cloth, fixing of rebate from time to time, were some of the immediate measures implemented by the Board.

The Textile Enquiry Committee estimated that the handloom industry provided employment to about 1.5 million people, working on more than 1.2 million active looms all over the country. These looms provided active employment for more than 200 days in a year. The figures in the Table given below are taken from different studies:

Table 1.1

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<th>1921</th>
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The handloom fabric production in 1954 was estimated to be 1400 million yards per year in 1954, whereas the Mill sector produced 4800 million yards and employed 0.73 million persons for the same period.
The Textile Enquiry Committee recommended a phased conversion of handloom into power looms over a period of fifteen to twenty years. The Handloom Board however totally rejected this suggestion as not feasible and detrimental to the development of the handloom sector. The Government therefore dropped the idea of converting handlooms to power looms.

In 1956 however, the Government, under the guise of a revised Textile Policy, decided to set up 35,000 power looms in the handloom co-operative sector. However the co-operatives did not show much interest in this programme. In order to overcome this problem the Government went to the extent of establishing power looms in the private sector. According to this Policy the Government declared that power loom units with four or less looms would be free from excise duties. Further, liberal assistance was also announced to encourage weavers to convert their looms to power looms by providing generous financial assistance and loans. Quite naturally this led to a phenomenal increase in the number of power looms all over the country in the handloom sector. As can be surmised a large number of unauthorized power looms came into existence. From 27,000 power looms in 1956, the number suddenly increased to 2,17,000 in 1971. This led to a direct and unhealthy competition between handloom and power loom weavers.

Over the years the Government has realized that such schemes to encourage the power looms are detrimental to the progress of the handloom industry. It has stopped all such schemes since 1961 as there is a significant rise in the number of power looms and textile mills, and the handloom industry has to face a triangular competition. This has led handloom weavers to switch over to other vocations, as they are unable to compete with them. One of the results of this unhealthy competition was rampant poverty, underemployment and unemployment of handloom weavers in the country. Further, political pressure was also brought upon the Government to withdraw the schemes to encourage the setting up of power looms. The Government observed that there
was a need to study the market conditions and therefore appointed the Power loom Enquiry Committee in 1964 under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta.

This Committee was comprised of members representing all the three sectors, namely handloom, power loom and textile mill sectors. Their main aim was to investigate the reasons for the unchecked proliferation of power looms in the country and work out a scheme to protect the interests of the handloom weavers. After making a thorough investigation this Committee gave the following recommendations:

1. Production of dhotis and sarees produced by textile mills should be pegged to the 1961 levels.

2. The weaving of coloured sarees should be exclusively reserved for the handloom sector. It was recommended that the cottage sector, consisting of four or less power looms, be allowed to produce coloured sarees. This suggestion was made because the Committee felt that the small power loom could take advantage of the reservation.

However, there was an agitation by the handloom sector which began making representations to the Government that the Cottage power loom sector was taking undue advantage of this reservation and was offering unhealthy competition. This resulted in the appointment of a High Power Study Team under the chairmanship of Sri Shivaram who made a study of both handloom and power looms and observed that there was a case of deleting the facility for the power loom sector. On the recommendations of the Shivaram Committee Report (1974), the additional Textile Commissioner issued a new Order on 19 Nov. 1966 amending the earlier Textile Commissioner's Order dated 14th April 1960. The result was that the reservation extended to the small cottage power loom sector to produce coloured sarees was withdrawn. By then it was noticed that not only was there a phenomenal growth in the number of cottage power looms, but that they had, in the meantime, captured the market for women's wear as well. They had also survived by adapting to the changes in
the fashion industry by producing other types of cloth, thereby flouting the Government Order. The Shivaram Committee recommended some stringent measures to control the power loom industry and also gave suggestions to encourage the languishing handloom industry. One of its significant recommendations was that Rs.20 crores should be utilized for the development of the handloom sector which, by then, had shrunk to only 35,78,363 looms in the country.

The recommendations of the Shivaram Committee Report were as follows:

(1) The powerloom sector had flouted the Government order to its own advantage.

(2) There was a proliferation of a large number of unlicensed power looms which were competing for the yarn with the handloom sector.

(3) The power looms were producing cloth that had been exclusively reserved for the handloom sector. They were indulging in unhealthy marketing practices.

Their significant recommendation was that eight types of cloth that had been reserved exclusively for the handloom and the cottage power loom sectors, should now be reserved only for the former. These eight varieties were:

- (1) Yarn dyed dhotis
- (2) Chadders and bed covers
- (3) Table cloth and napkins
- (4) Sarees other than those with borders exceeding two feet six inches with real or imitation zari work
- (6) Dusters
- (7) Towels in honey comb weave
- (8) Cloth of plain weave.

Another important suggestion was that 62.5 per cent of the yarn produced should be made available to the handloom sector at a concession. It was hoped these measures would give a fillip to the handloom sector and help it to survive.
In this connection the Shivaram Committee Report observes: "The handloom has survived and will survive in the future, but the question is whether it will survive as a relic of a primitive economy, a symbol of sweat of the brow and low standard of living, or will it survive and grow strong as the corner stone of a healthy decentralized modern economy which will maintain in freedom millions of families on a reasonable standard of living of comfort, while ensuring to the population at large as steady supply of clothing even in times of possible insecurity?"

New Textile policy of 1985 may be regarded as another step towards the that the weaver's co-operatives have an immense scope to play an increasing important role in the overall development of the handloom industry in the country.

The Textile policy of 1985 had outlined that "Protection to handloom would be provided by reserving articles of their exclusive production in the handloom sector under the low. The provision of the Act would be strictly enforced and the machinery for doing so would be suitably strengthened."

Twenty two items have been reserved for exclusive production by the handloom sector. Unfortunately the benefit of subsidy was enjoyed by Government and co-operative society's. Owners of power looms started manufacturing of cloths by power looms but they established some handlooms as nominal. They took admission for weavers co-operative societies to take benefits of handloom by showing nominal handlooms which were established with power looms and they released their products of power looms to market with the seal of handlooms weaver they produced by power looms.

In decades of go, Meerashet committee appointed to survey the textile industry and that committee opined as below.
“Although Government has tried to take action to protect interest of handlooms. Power looms captured from conventional handlooms 30 percent of power looms have not registered and they are unauthorized.”

State Committee of Tamil Nadu on textile (1995-96) recommended power loom to register their name and to have their own seal.

Santanam Committee (2000) gave last knock to handlooms by recommending to cancel handlooms reservation Act and to stop subsidy for handlooms. The purpose of that committee was to force handlooms weavers to establish and join power looms.

In the new textile policy which is announced in November 2000 decided to keep India textile production and export at top. The target is to increase 50 percent at cotton production and man made yam will be supporting in the production of polyester.

Textile export was 11 billion dollar in 1998-99 and it is decided to increase 50 billion dollar on 2010 and export of ready males is to increase from 4.44 billion to 25 billion dollars.

To reach that target, the restriction for large scale industry too don’t produce ready made which were reserved foreign investors are welcomed. The permission is given for 100 per cent foreign investments and before it was only 24 Per cent.

No place for handlooms in new textile policy power loom will work as 20 handlooms and we can imagine that now bodily powerlooms and new textile policy. Affecting on lakh together handlooms weavers lives, so many weavers families will suffer from hungry and unempolyment. Intention of policy is to increase marketing cloths but it is reducising empolyment opportunities another side.
Weavers co-operative societies which have provided security for weavers now are neglected. There are no features of restructure of these co-operatives the announcement that handlooms separation would retained is very cruel. Artistic cloths like carpet, bed sheets, chadars etc., can be woven only by the handlooms. The loom conversation requires high level technology and computer design are only dramatic words.

For modern textile industries chemical colors are necessary. There will be computerized colour matching. No chance for natural and plant based colors, environment friendly colors can be used in traditional handloom. Till Indian traditional textile industry in employment oriented handlooms industries but now these have been globalising. The bell of death of weavers who have been depending on handlooms, has started to ring.

Handloom Weaving in Karnataka:

In Karnataka handloom weaving has progressed and developed as in other parts of the country. Early evidence of this craft may be ascertained from various inscriptions and epigraphic evidences. The kings of various prominent dynasties protected weavers in times of war and gave them special concessions, as their services were considered valuable. Clothing to protect the body and for various other uses, even for supplying the needs of the army came from the cloth supplied weavers. There was a system of taxation on cloth that was utilized for the benefit of the weaving community. Fine cloth was woven which went to many parts of the country. In the book “Vikramankabyudayam” written in the 10th century by Someshwara there is a reference to the almost transparent cloth that was woven by the weavers of Kalyan in North Karnataka and which was very popular with the aristocracy though it was quite expensive. This shows that cloth of a superior quality was woven in Karnataka in historical times.

During the times of the Bahamani sultans, Gulbarga, their capital, was a very well known center for producing cotton cloth. Even silk weaving had
become popular and was patronized by the nobility and the rich merchants of North Karnataka. Bijapur too produced cloth of good quality and was a market of muslin and silk cloth produced locally. The Portuguese merchants who went to Vijayanagar often traded with the Sultans of Bijapur. They brought Arabian horses for sale in Bijapur and purchased large quantities of cloth for the European markets. Many Portuguese travelers such as Domingo Paes, Barbarosa, and other have left behind accounts of these markets (Sewell 1972).

Today, North Karnataka is very well known for its weaving centers. Irkal sarees, from Irkal in Bijapur district are very famous. Other centers of weaving in this District are Banhatti-Rabkavi, Nidgundi, Golsangi, Guledgudda, Bavoor etc. Belgaum district has many weaving centers such as Khasbag, Vadgaon, Sulebhavi, Bailhongal, Kittur etc, which produce cloth of fine quality. Shahpuri silk saris, turban cloth, blouse pieces etc, are sold in large numbers not only in Karnataka but have become famous in the adjoining state of Maharashtra.

As in most parts of India, even in Karnataka, weaving is a caste-based vocation. Some of the prominent weaver castes in Karnataka are the Devangas, Padmasali, Kuruvinshetti, Jadas. These are Hindu sub-castes whose hereditary occupation is handloom weaving. The Momins are Muslim handloom weavers of this region.

Today, due to changing fashions and market needs these handloom weavers have taken to weaving cloth of different varieties in order to keep themselves alive. Hence many have taken to weaving shawls, Jamkhanas, towels, turbans, and cloth with ethnic designs to cater to the needs of current fashion. However, a majority of North Karnataka weavers are still in the clutches of moneylenders and middlemen and are unable to repay the loans taken by them. Their condition is pitiable. When this region was included in the state of Karnataka (from the erstwhile Bombay state), a serious effort was made by the Govt. of Karnataka to solve some of the problems of weavers.
through the Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation. The State Government has initiated several programmes for the benefit of weavers, details of which are dealt with in the appropriate chapter in this research work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

After having briefly discussed the development of handloom weaving in the country and in Karnataka, it would be appropriate to understand the condition of handloom weaving through a critical review of available literature.

A review of literature on handloom weaving shows that quite a few scholars have studied and conducted research on both silk and cotton handloom in various parts of India since handloom is a popular cottage industry in the country. However most of these studies provide information on the economic problems of handloom weavers without going into the social condition. However these studies are important as they give a fair idea of the condition of handloom weaver in India.

In his well known study of the socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers of Poona, Gadgil D. R. (1945) has made an extensive survey of this group in this well known city in Maharashtra. He observes that most of the handloom weavers in Poona are migrants from neighbouring weaving centers in the state of Maharashtra such as Paithan, Yeola, Solapur, and Narayan Peth who were forced to migrate due to poverty and lack of marketing facilities in their own towns. However, a large majority of Poona handloom weavers had migrated due to the patronage offered by the Peshwa rulers during the 18th century. During this period the aristocracy preferred silk cloth and hence, during this period, the handloom weavers came to be divided into silk weavers and cotton weavers, among both Hindus and Muslims, thereby becoming a sub-caste by themselves. Among the Hindu the Padamsali account for the bulk of the cotton handloom weavers.
Another study of weavers from Maharashtra is on the well-known city of Solapur, which produces Chaddars. Kakade. P. G. (1947) has made a systematic and in-depth study of the handloom weavers of Solapur. The scholar notes that though the Padmasalis form the major weaving caste in this city, there are other castes such as Swakulsali, Togata, Kurvinshetti, Jayandra, Khetri and Momin who have taken to handloom weaving. To-day Solapur has become a well known Textile center with many Textile mills and factories producing mill made cloth thereby offering stiff competition to the handloom industry. Consequently weavers are facing ruin and poverty. Illiteracy, indebtedness, malnutrition, and ill health due to unsatisfactory housing conditions are spreading among weavers' families. The study points out that a large number of children of school-going age have dropped out of school because several children are sent as apprentices and child labour in factories.

As referred to earlier, the Report submitted under the chairmanship of Nityanand Kanungo (1954) has brought out the problems and prospects of the handloom industry in India. The Report mainly recommends that handloom cloth is of an inferior quality due to which it has not become popular. Therefore the Report recommended the technological up gradation of the looms and the gradual conversion of handlooms into power looms. However, as already stated, the conversion into power looms was not a healthy development as it led to further deterioration of the handloom industry as is evidenced.

In 1958 the National Council of Applied Economic Research made a survey of handloom industry in the four districts of Karnataka. This study is mostly confined to a study of the organizational, production and marketing facilities of the handloom units and does not cover the social conditions of the weavers' families, nor the functioning of weavers' co-operatives in the state.

The Report (1959) of the All India Handloom Board which conducted yet another survey of the Handloom industry in the erstwhile Madras state in 1959 made a detailed analysis of the socio-economic conditions of weavers in
Tamil Nadu. The Report focuses on the problems faced by weavers in handloom units and their access to marketing facilities. However, this study has neglected to study the impact of the primary weavers’ co-operative societies which were established for the upliftment of the down trodden weavers.

One of the earliest studies in Sociology was the one conducted in the village of Samripet by S. C. Dube (1959). In his study of the social hierarchy prevailing in this village, Dube analyses the conditions of the artisan caste called ‘Sale’ who were the traditional weavers of this region. During better times the weavers had a good working relation with the agriculturists in the village of Samirpet. According to the prevailing barter system of economy, the weaver supplied a newly woven piece of cloth of a certain length in return for grains at the time of each new harvest. However, the changing economic conditions have affected the village economy. Dube notes: “They no longer work on this basis, but buy their yarn from yarn dealers, weave the cloth and sell it in the market for cash”. Thus the barter system that brought a sense of interdependency and community feeling has eroded.

Many of the problems faced by handloom weavers according to Jain L. C. (1993) is due to the stiff competition offered by power looms which produce finer cloth. He stresses the fact that the proliferation of power looms, if not contained, could, one day, wipe out the handloom weavers in the country.

Other than the above studies many other scholars have undertaken studies making a situational analysis of the handloom weaving industry in various parts of the country. For example, G. Subramanyam, B. Ramakrishna Rao et.al (1986), in their extensive study of the conditions of the handloom industry in coastal Andhra, point out that the weavers in coastal Andhra Pradesh are facing a period of crisis. They are hard hit due to a shortage of yarn, accumulation of unsold stocks, low wages, etc. The authors observe that the Government has take immediate steps to preserve this industry. As a first step they suggest that the youths from families of weavers should be made
more responsive to their ancestral craft in order to preserve the ancient and traditional art of weaving such as the famous Kalamkari designs. This will also help to provide employment to the younger generation.

Subhasini Subramaniam (1975) has also made a study of the condition of weavers of Andhra Pradesh. She points out that the handloom weavers are unable to compete with the cloth produced by the power looms and the textile mills since they are superior and find a ready market. The Padamsalis of Devepuram, whose condition she has studied are now hesitating to take up their 'Kula- Vritti' or hereditary occupation for earning a livelihood. Many of them have become agriculturists to make ends meet, while some have taken up pottery. Some more information can be gleaned from the study made by Akruti Venketeswara Rao (1989:150-157) who observes that the condition of the weaver in Andhra Pradesh can be sufficiently improved if the Government helps in marketing their cloth and getting them a better price from time to time as the handloom weavers are illiterate and ignorant of existing conditions and can be easily exploited. Pragada Kotiah (1991:11) also dwells at length on a similar aspect. He observes that the Government should step in before it is too late by providing appropriate marketing facilities, preferably by making the cloth more popular in neighbouring states and other parts of the country by giving it proper publicity.

Bhaskar Rao and Himachalam (1998:23-38), in their study of weavers of Nellore, also come to the conclusion that many of the communities whose ancestral vocation is handloom weaving have a strong tendency towards artistic skill which should be exploited by the Government. In their study more than 68 per cent belong to the caste of weavers called the 'Devanglus' who are very well known for their artistic skill.

A similar conclusion is drawn by Jyotirmoyee Sarm (1960) in the study of weavers of a village near Calcutta in West Bengal. The author concludes that weaving is no longer a profitable vocation due to the high cost of cotton yarn.
coupled with the high cost of living. A majority of the weavers take orders from the Master weavers who supply the yarn as well as the designs to be woven. The weavers, who mainly belong to the Tantli caste, generally take orders from Master weavers or work for daily wage or receive a part of the price of the cloth. Since the market at Calcutta is not far away those who weave their own cloth try to sell it at the weekly market at Howrah. The study also shows that due to these conditions many of the younger generation of weavers are abandoning their hereditary vocation and are migrating to Calcutta in search of office jobs.

Durganand Sinha (1969) has studied the condition of weavers of a village near the city of Allahabad in U.P. The traditional caste to which weavers belong here is called the ‘Jolas’ to which a good number of weavers belong. Most of these weavers are Muslims and weave sarees. The weavers opine that their condition in the past was quite good and that they had no problems in the olden days, but their socio-economic condition is now degenerating especially due to the high cost of yarn and changing fashion trends which make their sarees outdated with the younger generations.

Mahopatra P. C. (1986: 6-7) in his study of the handloom weavers of Orissa has studied the economic history of handloom weaving in this coastal state. He has very effectively brought out the capital and organizational structure of the handloom industry and the economic condition of the household of the weavers studied by him. According to him their condition is now slowing improving due to the role of co-operatives but they are still poor and they have yet to recover from their condition of poverty.

A few studies have been undertaken on the condition of the handloom weavers of Karnataka. Angadi V. B. (1970: 143-150) has made a comparative study of handloom and power loom industries in North Karnataka. He notes, in his study, that female workers outnumber male workers. He observes that a
majority of the female work force is engaged in preparatory processes, especially in Guledgudda and Ilkal, his study area.

An important observation that Angadi makes is that power looms and automatic looms are not a substitute for handlooms, especially for weaving certain types of fabrics for which the shuttle looms are most suited. He observes that the handloom industry in Karnataka faces the same problems as elsewhere in India due to a developing economy such as (1) shortage of capital (2) very incidence of regional and rural unemployment (3) lack of technical knowledge (4) lack of entrepreneurial ability (5) limited markets

Continuing further, Angadi (1971:104-112) observes that the profit from the sale of the cloth often accrues to middlemen who purchase the cloth during the slack season and await the brisk season to offload it in the markets. The weavers themselves are often unable to do this. Owing to poverty, they cannot wait for the appropriate season, also they have to make immediate payments for the yarn purchased, while others are caught in the clutches of the Master weavers.

Apppana Reddy (1996) profiles the condition of the handloom weavers of Karnataka. He observes that the middlemen are the bane of the weavers and their problems are further aggravated by Master weavers, both of whom exploit them to their own advantage. Another difficulty faced by the weaver is the uncertain quality of the yarn that is supplied by the KHDC. Therefore he observes: “most of them stay in small rented houses and are working under master weavers under prior commitment”.

There are a number of studies pertaining to the role of Weavers’ Cooperative societies and the manner in which they are trying to help the weavers. Many state governments have initiated programmes to help the weavers. As K. Ram Mohan Rao (1997:13-14) observes: “The wheel of the handloom industry revolves round the weaver. The human factor involved in the industry forging the survival of the industry has a social problem rather
than a problem of an industry. The cooperative form of organization has been encouraged since Independence. As a result a number of primary weaver' co-operative societies came into being enrolling a number of weavers. The objective the societies is to promote the industry and the work for the well being of weaving community at large. Unfortunately a few are successful in this endeavour and many societies are dormant or defunct. The government has encouraged the apex societies throughout the country as the leader societies in each state." Apart from these societies many societies have formed handloom textile corporations for the promotion and sale of handloom cloth. Thus the weavers' co-operative societies, apex federations, weavers' service centers, cooperative banks, and development commissionarates are the basic structural components.

Among the various studies which have made a detailed analysis of the role of co-operative societies one may cite the study of Ansari T. A. (1970:259-264) who has examined the various types of assistance given by the government to weavers through weavers' co-operative societies such as working capital loans, setting up thrift funds, low cost housing etc. However, he observes:" Mostly the weavers are illiterate. They are not able to know the various developmental schemes sponsored by the Government and thus they do not get their advantages."

Venkatappa (1977:129-140) in his study of weavers' co-operative societies in Karnataka bring out the various employmental potential created by them and the efforts made for the promotion and popularization of handloom cloth in the urban centers. Many weavers are availing benefit of these societies but they are not without its inherent problems especially the appointment of efficient staff.

Panditrao Y. A. (1987:24-38) has made a thorough analysis of the functioning of the Khadi Gramodyog which has initiated co-operative effort between the weavers themselves and the soft loans floated by it in order to free
the weavers from the clutches of money lenders and middle men. In a similar article Anjaneyulu. G. and Dakshinmurty (1985:23-24) have studied the role of co-operative societies in some of the villages of Andhra Pradesh which have helped the weavers to raise their standard of living by helping to market the cloth and helping them to save money and utilize it purposefully.

Bharati P. K. (1988: 530-533) similarly analysed the functioning of the weavers’ co-operatives in some parts of Andhra Pradesh and the role of apex societies in marketing handloom fabrics. She has also very effectively brought out the structure of these societies and how they function. Rayudu C. S. (1988:16-20) has examined the steps taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh insetting up weavers’ co-operative societies in various parts of the state since the beginning of the co-operative movement began.

Rama Mohan Rao (1990: 4-5) has studied the socio-economic profile of weavers of Andhra Pradesh and makes a systematic analysis of weavers’ co-operatives in that state. Similarly Pragada Kotaiah (1991:11) says that the government has not given sufficient attention to the productive capacity of handloom weavers over a period of time in Andhra Pradesh and traces most of the ills to this fact. He feels that the establishment of Handloom Development centers in various parts of the state is one solution to overcome the crisis that the handloom industry has been facing periodically from time to time.

A study of co-operative societies in Tamil Nadu has been made by Gopalan and Thiru N. Dorai (1986: 205-221) who have focused attention some of the urgent developmental work taken by such societies in various parts of this state which is widely known as the home of handloom weaving. They have helped in extensively marketing the handloom products not only within the state but have also helped the export of handloom cloth in other parts of the country and have successfully helped to export the cloth in many foreign countries. A similar study has been made by Krishnaswamy (1987: 13) who says that the co-operative societies in Tamil Nadu function effectively and
efficiently in helping the handloom weavers dispose of their products in urban markets. This has considerably helped the weavers in raising their standards of living in recent times, though they are not fully free from some of their problems. However he notes that a good beginning has been made.

Sundari S and Manimekhali N. (1989:28) have taken up the function of one co-operative society at Vengamudi in Tamil Nadu with particular reference to the misery and hardship faced by women weavers. At the outset the authors point out that the Santanam Committee appointed by Government of Tamil Nadu found that only 30 per cent of the handlooms were co-operative, while the remaining 70 per cent were working for private producers in 1972. But over the years this has changed. Today these societies are trying to help the weavers, but women weavers (most of them in the sample being between the ages of 15 and 30 years) still face peculiar problems.

Thus, these women had large families to look after and hence were not only tied down to domestic work but also had also to work on the looms for as many as 6 to 8 hours every day. Additionally they had to save money from the sale proceeds of the fabrics from which they had to spend on non-food items like medicines, clothing, education of children, alcoholic drinks of male members as also on entertainment for themselves such as cinema. Most of them were addicted to tea or coffee, which they drank regularly and thus suffered from ailments. Some had succumbed to consumption due to working in airless rooms where the looms were located. The study reveals that 90 per cent were living below the poverty line and poverty and indebtedness were rampant. Insecurity loomed large. In conclusion the authors observe that co-operative societies and voluntary organizations could play a very important part in alleviating the misery of women handloom workers. They feel that the anti-poverty programmes under IRDP and DWCRA should be extended to women, and Universities in the region should start extension programmes to provide literacy for women in their spare time as literacy alone could free the women from traditional from exploitation.
Gurumoorthy (1991:77-78) and (1992: 13-14) analyses the steps taken by the government of Tamil Nadu in effectively implementing the weavers' co-operative societies in the state in recent times and how measures are being undertaken to help the weavers.

Krishnaswami O. R. (1987:24) observes that co-operative societies can become successful only if they can make handloom fabrics popular among urban residents and this can be done only if they can get the weavers to weave the type of cloth for which there is a market, such as introducing latest fashions and designs. Thus customers' interest has to be created for marketing the fabrics. He also points out that technological advancement and innovation and effective management are to the key to the effective management and improvement of weavers' co-operatives.

Financial management plays an important role in the well-being of co-operative societies as underlined by Aswinikumar Mishra (1990:77-78). Here he makes a thorough analysis of the resources available and how they are distributed to the weavers by the societies. In as similar article Venketeswara Rao (1990:420-21) makes an analysis of some of the societies which have not functioned effectively due to financial mismanagement. He also observes that failure to find an effective market for the fabrics is one of the reasons as to why these societies are unable to recover their loans.

Tripathi S. L. (1993:56-73) has made a study of the Co-optex Society of Tamil Nadu which is one of the largest marketing agencies for handloom fabrics in Tamil Nadu and which has successfully popularized handloom cloth in urban centers.

Jyoti Rani and Prema Kumari (1998: 36-39) in their study of the rural areas of Tamil Nadu observe that the Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative societies should advance loans to the weavers as also yarn of a good quality in order that the fabrics that they turn out are made attractive for urban purchasers. Supervision by the societies to check the quality from time to time
is very much essential as also the imparting of modern technology to the illiterate weavers as they are often unaware of the latest developments. It is only then that such societies can play an effective role in helping the weavers.

There are a few studies on the co-operative movement undertaken in Karnataka. Hanamshetti J. S. (1994) in his study of weaving centers in the region of Banhatti in North Karnataka has studied the role of the KHDC co-operative societies. He analyses of the link between the KHDC, the co-operative societies, the master weavers and the primary weavers. He notes that the first two categories function on almost organized lines whereas the last two are unorganized. The organized sectors use better looms while the unorganized use ordinary ones. The KHDC and the societies sell their product through their own shops, but the master weavers and the primary weavers make use of the intermediary dealers or middlemen or even the moneylenders who have advanced loans for the purchase of raw materials. Thus he finds an imbalance between the socio-economic status of the primary weavers, the potters and the basket weavers. He notices that the interest on loans taken by primary weavers is often higher than those taken by other artisans. This is perhaps due to the risk involved and also due to the fact that the labour absorption per unit in the handloom sector is lower than that of basket makers and potters.

Suresh Kumar K. C. and Ganesh C. (1998:45-52) have made a study of the weavers’ economic condition in terms of the help rendered by co-operative societies. They feel that such societies have been quite successful as they find that those weavers who are members of co-operative societies are better off, have some savings and some of them even own some land in the village as compared to those weavers who are not members. This is because of the help, guidance rendered and the marketing facilities offered by the societies. This makes the members financially better off than those who are not.
Anand Ram.K. S. and Medha Dubashi (1999:108-113) have made an analysis of co-operative societies in different parts of the country. The authors note that such societies have played an effective role in most regions in successfully helping the weavers. However in some regions the societies have not functioned properly due to the personnel and due to financial mismanagement. They provide certain guidelines to strengthen such societies.

In conclusion K. Rama Mohan Rao and Prof. G. Subramanyam (1995:37) in their systematic analysis of weavers’ co-operative societies point out some remedial measures for their effective functioning. These are:

1) An effective change is to be brought about in the outlook of the weavers. They must be oriented towards betterment of knowledge, skills, and technology. They should have some literacy in order to guard them against exploitation by moneylenders and middlemen.

2) The co-operative societies should develop as nerve centers of the handloom industry. They should provide working capital, financial assistance and marketing facilities.

3) Weaving is not only a family activity but also a concentrated activity. The weaving activity requires space for dying, warping, etc, which requires space. The work sheds, houses, raw material depots, communication facilities, should be provided in each village.

4) The industry must develop a market-orientation and the apex societies must take up this issue. Market survey from time to time are essential and assistance of market research organizations should be taken.

5) The most important part is to make handloom fabrics fashionable and attractive with latest designs and this can only happen when there is a nexus between the societies and the fashion technology.

6) Introduction of branding in order to maintain strict quality control.
7) Develop local markets and bring about healthy competition and create a demand for the fabrics locally before they are exported. (8) A handloom research center to undertake research surveys periodically to experiment with new yarns, new designs weaving technology etc.

The authors conclude that if the above measures are strictly implemented the co-operative society movement will benefit the weavers. The Indian handloom industry will have a great future if it adapts to changes periodically and gets well organized.