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Plight of the Handloom Weavers Leading to Suicides

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ABSTRACT

The Indian handloom sector plays an important role in the economic development of the rural poor. It contributes significantly by generating more employment opportunities and providing bread to the rural poor. It absorbs more than 4 million people in its fold realizing its importance, a plethora of measures is undertaken by the government in order to promote the handloom sector. Unfortunately the situation in Andhra Pradesh is not favour of handloom sector due to multifarious reasons. Despite several measures taken by the government by the way of institutional support and direct financial assistance to the handloom weavers, they are suffering miserably due to myriad problems and are sustaining continuous losses. It is a well known fact that the handloom weavers in some parts of the state are starving and even commit suicides. This paper focused on what are reasons for commit suicides in different type's handloom weavers in the state.

HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN ANDHRA PRADESH:

The State of Andhra Pradesh, which a bounds in villages where the primary occupation is restricted to farming sector is exception as a traditional occupation weaving is correlated with prominent communities, namely Devangas, Padmasali, Karnasali (or) pattusali, Kaikala and Thogata. As the industry provides gainful employment several other communities also are attracted to the sector.

Andhra Pradesh is famous for its shirting fabrics, block printed fabrics and made Ups, tie dye materials known as lkat, saris, lungies, Batik prints, Kalamkari Prints etc., Main production centers of these items are Venkatagiri, Kovur, Chennur, Paturu, Kalahasti, Satyavedu, Varadhapalayam, Puttur, Nagiri, Pudupet, Adoni, Warangal and Pochampalli etc.,In the 1976, the Andhra Pradesh Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd., (APCO) was formed to help the members of the society. It assists by supplying raw materials like yarn, dyes, chemicals, processing and the finished goods are arranging the marketing facilities.

OBJECTIVES :

- To study the different types weaver
- To Examine different weavers and product improvement techniques ,
- To analyze the reasons of weavers committing suicides

SAMPLE DESIGN:

In the Nellore District has famous for Handloom fabrics which is Paturu saries, Chennuru silk saries, Venkatagiri Zari saries and Pattimarpu Cloth which are also exported to some foreign countries. There are 10,532 weavers' house holds in Nellore District. Using simple random sampling technique six weaver households mandal was selected for the study thus, the study is confined to 305 handloom weavers households in different category in the Nellore district. Weavers are mainly categorized into independent weavers, Master weavers, weavers under middlemen, Cooperative weavers and Labour weavers respectively.

1.TYPES OF WEAVER

Weavers of India are broadly classified into categories namely, independent weavers master weavers , weavers under middle men, co-operative weavers and labour weavers.

(a) Independent weavers

The independent weaver is totally independent of any outside agency. He has his own looms and he works in his own or rented house. He purchases yarn in small installments from market and sells his cloth to the customers directly

(b) Master weavers

The master weaver is similar to the independent weaver in many aspects except that he employs out side labourer to weave for him. The master waiver should provide the looms, yarn , and other things. He will give only labour charge for weaving.

© Weaver under middlemen

Some weavers working under master weaver or dealers and they are technically skilled and independent with their own houses and looms. The middlemen supply yarn and specific design of cloth to be woven. The middleman gives the piece rate system.

(d)Co-operative weaver

A weaver, who becomes a member of co-operative society and he obtains yarn directly from the society he has to handed over the finished product to the society. The weaver obtains a piece wage for his weaving effort, in addition to wages he is entitled to have a dividend on his share capital.

(e)Labour weaver

The weavers who work under master weavers are called labour wearers. The master weaver constructs, work sheds and provide suitable looms with equipments to the labour weavers. The labour weaver gets only wages. The following Table 1 shows the category of weavers in the sample area.

TABLE 1. CATEGORIZATION OF THE SAMPLE WEAVERS

Type of weavers	No. of . weavers	Total (percentage)
Independent Weavers	45	14.75
Master weavers	15	4.92
Weavers under Middlemen	132	43.28
Cooperative Weavers	18	5.90
Labour Weavers	95	31.15
TOTAL	305	100.00

Source: Field survey

As reported 305 weavers are drawn into sample frame from the area of study (Nellore District). Of the selected weavers Independent weavers were 45(14.75%), Master weavers were 15(4.92%), weavers under middlemen 132(43.28%),, Cooperative weavers 18 (5.90%) and Labour weavers 95(31.15%). So it's clear that Majority of weavers are weavers under middlemen from the area of study.

2. TECHNIQUES TO PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT:

The details of survey on the opinion of respondents about the techniques to improve production in the area of study are given in the table2. The survey revealed that majority of weavers of all categories (35.41%) opined that Govt. should proved yarn, second majority percentage of respondents (24.26%) preferred the idea of reduction of cost of yarn, around 16.07% of weavers preferred the best technique to improve production is by direct purchase of Raw yarn, 14.75% of weavers felt the best way of improving production is by introducing advanced technology looms.

Where as 08.85 % of weavers feel that technical training is the only way to

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improve production. But only 0.65% of weavers felt the technique of reducing the number of employees is the best way to improve production.

TABLE 2. OPINION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVE TECHNIQUES

Weavers opinion	Independent Weaver	Master Weaver	Weaver under Middlemen	Co-operative Weaver	Labour Weaver	TOTAL
Govt. should provide yarn	21 (46.67)	4 (26.27)	44 (33.33)	8 (44.44)	31 (32.63)	108 (35.41)
Reduction of cost of yarn	12 (26.67)	6 (40.00)	34 (25.76)	4 (22.22)	18 (18.95)	74 (24.26)
Direct purchase of raw yarn	4w (08.89)	- -	28 (21.21)	3 (16.67)	14 (14.74)	49 (16.07)
Reduction of employees	- -	2 (13.33)	- -	- -	- -	2 (00.65)
Technical Training is needed	- -	- -	12 (09.09)	3 (16.67)	12 (12.63)	27 (08.85)
New Technology looms introducing	8 (17.77)	3 (20.00)	14 (10.60)	- -	20 (21.05)	45 (14.75)
TOTAL	45 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	132 (100.00)	18 (100.00)	95 (100.00)	305 (100.00)

Source: Field survey , Note : "-" Indicates 'Nil". ( ) indicates percentage

Coming to category wise opinions of various weavers regarding techniques to improve production in the area of study, only a major percentage of Master Weavers (40%) preferred, reduction of cost yarn is the best technique to improve production. Where as majority of remaining all categories of weavers and independent and independent weaver (46.67%) , weavers under middlemen(33.33%), Cooperative weavers (44.44%) and Labour weavers (32.63%) opined that Govt. should provide yarn. They felt it as the best way to improve production. So its clear that majority of weavers of all categories from the area of study preferred the opinion that Govt. should provide yarn is the best way to improve production.

3. REASONS FOR COMMIT SUICIDES:

Andhra Pradesh weavers are facing severe livelihood crises because of adverse government policies, globalization and changing socio economic conditions. From the year 2000 to 2003 the Andhra Pradesh state has witnessed 500 deaths of weavers out of which some were due to starvation and the remaining were suicides. Majority of weavers ended their lives due to various problems they come across in their profession. A sample survey conducted on opinions of the weavers regarding problems that drive them towards suicides. The details of sample survey on various problems that are driving weavers to commit suicides in the area of study are given table 3.

The sample survey revealed various types of problems that ruined the lives of different categories of weavers leading them towards death. If ranking is given to the type of problem suffered by the no.of people, the major problem suffered by majority of weavers from all categories (22.95%) that stood rank 1 in the area of study is lack of Govt. assistance, the second major problem suffered by more no.of weavers of all categories (16.72%) is due to power loom products, followed by creditor force as the third highest problem faced by 16.39% of weavers around 15.74% of weavers suffer the involvement of middlemen, 08.85% weavers suffer lack of financial support and 08.20% of weavers feel lack of marketing facilities as major problem, where as 06.89% of weavers mentioned main reason as family problems but very less percentage of weavers (04.26%) think the major problem that is driving weavers to commit suicides is price hike in yarn.

Looking into problems faced by category wise of weavers majority of weavers from all categories Independent weavers (20%), Master weavers (46.67%), weavers under middlemen (24.24%) and labour weavers (21.06%) suffer mainly from lack of Govt. assistance where as majority of Cooperative weavers (50%) feel the major problem that drives them towards suicides is due to power –loom products. Second highest percentages of Master weavers (20%), weavers under middlemen (16.67%) and labour weavers (18.95%) suffer due to middlemen involvement, where as (17.78%) independent weavers suffer due to power –loom products and (33.33%) of Cooperative weavers suffer due to creditor force. In over all, majority of weavers from all categories commit suicides majority due to lack of Govt. assistance, power-loom products credit for force and middlemen involvement in the area of study.

TABLE 3.REASONS OF WEAVERS TO COMMIT SUICIDES

Problems	Independent weaver	Master Weaver	Weaver under Middlemen	Co-operative Weaver	Labour Weaver	TOTAL	Rank
Creditor force	7 (15.56)	2 (13.33)	21 (15.91)	6 (33.33)	14 (14.74)	50 (16.39)	3
Middlemen involvement	5 (11.11)	3 (20.00)	22 (16.67)	- -	18 (18.95)	48 (15.74)	4
Due to power loom products	8 (17.78)	- -	19 (14.39)	9 (50.00)	15 (15.79)	51 (16.72)	2
Lack of financial support	5 (11.11)	- -	9 (06.82)	- -	13 (13.68)	27 (08.85)	5
Price hike in yarn	2 (04.44)	3 (20.00)	8 (06.06)	- -	- -	13 (04.26)	8
Lack of govt. Assistance	9 (20.00)	7 (46.67)	32 (24.24)	2 (11.11)	20 (21.06)	70 (22.95)	1
Lack of Marketing facilities	5 (11.11)	- -	14 (10.61)	- -	6 (06.31)	25 (08.20)	6
Family problems	4 (08.89)	- -	7 (05.30)	1 (05.56)	9 (09.47)	21 (06.89)	7
TOTAL	45 (100)	15 (100)	132 (100)	18 (100)	95 (100)	305 (100)	

Source: Field survey , Note : "-" Indicates 'Nil". ( ) indicates percentage

SUGGESTION:

The handloom industry can be given fair weather treatment by the Government though series of steps, measures and programs which include strict reservation of viable items to the handloom sector, providing necessary infrastructure for the handloom industry, supply of raw materials in appropriate time at reasonable price, providing necessary capital and strengthening marketing structure for the handloom products. Above all what is needed is a right approach to the industry from the view points

of its place in the economy, its role towards to the weaver sections without any other skills, and its significance in the labour surplus economy.

CONCLUSION:

While the Country depend equally on all the three sectors i.e., Handloom, Power loom and the Mills to meet the clothing needs, the declining trend in handloom sector is certainly and unhealthy phenomena. The handloom sector is next only to agriculture in respect of employment potential and economy. If the government neglecting the handloom sector, automatically the unemployment will agitate resulting that starvation and suicide deaths may take place.

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