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A Study on Handloom Weavers of Thanjavur, Tamilnadu

Vinayagamorthy R.^{1*} and Baskaran B.²

^{1,2}Department of commerce, Dharmapuram Adinam College, Mayiladuthurai.

ABSTRACT

Handloom Weaving has been a well thought out now days as a striking pillar to uplift due to its newly recognized potential. From recent past years, it succeeded in gauging the required attention which was long due and if taken care of in yesteryears it would have been one of the corner stone in enhancing a major portion of our society. Being a niche producing industry it always marks a reflection of inherited asset of our country and steadily it is on the way to capture the marts around the globe. Undoubtedly the art as a profession has been labeled as the occupation for those who are unable to shift to other growing professions, and the evidence for this lies in current situation where many of the entities in the society is in the process of making remarkable attempts to conserve and cultivate the art. The study deals with making a descriptive research of one of that similar entity who aims to sustain the hand weaving tradition of Than javur. The investigation will foster to probe about the contributions it made for the weavers and the current situation specifying their satisfaction level of working under this society. The schedules were used to collect the primary data. Sample of 50 weavers has been drawn to construct a pilot study.

KEYWORDS: weavers, niche, art, handloom, silk.

***Corresponding Author:**

R. Vinayagamorthy

Department of Commerce,

Dharmapuram Adinam College, Mayiladuthurai,

Tamil Nadu-609 001.

E-mail: vinayagamorthycommerce@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Handloom industry can be better referred as the collection of processing series that makes fabric using hand operated looms, which is interestingly capturing on employment front for a volume of over 10 million people in our nation. It would not be an err to believe that government played a key role to sustain this industry till now, apart from the fact that it succeeded more or less but somehow it managed well. Meanwhile in the time of emergence of the industry, entities, in the form of NGO made a way to produce social results by cultivating the art of weavers. The handloom Industry traces the mark in the history with the evolution of Mohenjo-Daro and Harrappa Civilization. It has got the roots in our culture so deepened as the growth outputs of those roots are visible today in the form of contributions which are taking place today to continue that heritage. Being a Niche producer, the unparalleled work speaks the value and efforts are on to make the patrons identify this novel segment.¹⁻²

Table No.1: Handloom production in India

Year	Cloth Production	Exports
2008 - 09	6947	n/a
2009 - 10	6677	n/a
2010 - 11	6806	1252
2011 - 12	6907	1575
2012 - 13	6901	2624
2013 - 14	6952	2812
2014 - 15	7104	2233
2015 - 16	7203	2246

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study the contributions Rehwa Society made for the weavers.

To study the satisfaction level of weavers on working under this society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design has been adopted to obtain information concerning the current status.

Qualitative and Quantitative both type of data has been collected

Qualitative:

Current state of the society prevailing has been noted by opinions of the society administrators and weavers, and through observations also Weaver's opinion in terms of their working condition facilities provided, and difference in terms of their standard of living before and after being associated with society has been collected.

Quantitative:

Demographic profile of weavers like age, gender, income level has been drawn as quantitative data.

Primary: Observation functional perspective of weaving, Non participant, structured, Controlled - value chain of weaving has been noted through observation method. Schedules were used to extract the information.

Secondary Data was collected from Society publications and their website, MSME website and documents.

Sampling Design

Sample size: 50 weavers response has been collected.

Sampling Method: Simple Random Sampling has been done.

REHWA SOCIETY

Handloom weaving dates the ancient history of some 1500 years back. Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar are said to be the one who contributed to a great extent for the rebirth of this art, she ruled at that time from 1765 to 1795. By the time of India's partition in 1947, the local families who use to promote this elite art work earlier began declining and as a result quality of work and income of weavers both diminished. To cope up with the issue Holkar dynasty took initiative to establish Rehwa Society in 1978, the main founders were Richard Holkar and Sally Holkar. Central Welfare Board provided the fund grants to set up this society.³⁻⁴

The beginning of this formal society had only eight handlooms at that time, but the concrete objectives of Rehwa made what it is today. The society had their goal to provide sustainability of Hand woven tradition of Thanjavur district. The distortion and exploitation of women class made them consider this women gender section by enlisting the aim to empower the females by providing employment and hence income to improve standard of living, lastly they made their focus to provide essential amenities to weavers' family free education, healthcare facilities and an accommodation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To probe into the matter of issues generally faced by weavers certain studies were referred.

This attempts to familiarize with the current status and livelihood problems of unorganized women handloom workers and argued on the importance of social security. The author pinpointed the condition of women for weaving and the reasons why they diverted to weaving in a much generalized form, He also took up the issue relating to health a women weaver faces. The study lacks the specific points which can be noted alongside the data comprises Pan India. It details the numbers

of female weavers state wise. There are many other small aspects in a wide variety which prevails in different clusters. So we can't conclude their generalized points as the problems of women weavers. Suggestions were also emphasized in the study by the author who claims that women weaver soul have the facility to indulge in specific development programs, initiatives should be considered to uplift the literacy rates, free of cost medical facilities must be provided, and most importantly the entrepreneurship aspect must be introduced to them.⁵

This research discussed about significant of handloom sector by emphasizing the market assessment need, problems faced by handloom sector, marketing strategy and suggestions and discovered marketing mix if Handloom segment with respect to six clusters; West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Manipur. Author shed the light on the complex nature of handloom industry which he believes is quite unorganized needs to have a detail assessment to know about several other players in the market. Due to a large number of agencies which share the same aim for the development of handloom like NIFT, NHPS, Ministry of textiles, they all lack the coordination which is much needed. The long value chain between raw material supplier and end user makes the margin differ widely for each player involved. Market tapping is also what is required to strengthen the handloom sector. Author also classified the Quality Standardization, improper management of logistics, mill looms as major competitions. Proper organization, well planned pricing strategy according to the target segment, working on brand segment were suggested as the remedial measures for the problems mentioned.⁶

ANALYSIS

With a sample set of 40 weavers the frequency distribution of the demographic profile has been drawn to shed light on the current status of weavers.

Table No.2: Age wise respondents

Female	Male	Gender
23	17	40

There were 17 male weavers recorded in the data set and 23 female weavers. Majority of them were engaged in making Sarees primarily, but they also make shawl and dupattas.

Table No.3: Housing facilities

Accommodation Type	Total
Own	22
Rented	18
Total	40

Though the housing facility has been provided by the society itself, there are many small flat accommodation built for facilitating shelter to weavers. The distribution above shows the weavers who reside in the rented flats by rehwa or if they own their own house in Thanjavur.

Table No.4: Income Level

Income Range	Code	Counts
0 – 5000	1	19
5001 – 10000	2	19
10001 – 15000	3	1
15000 and Above	4	1

A major portion of the respondent set was found earning below 10000, on an average per saree the weaver earns 200 INR. Only two of the weavers were recorded having a monthly income above ten thousand rupees.

Table No.5: Weaving Background

Weaving Background	Total
Ancestral	6
Learnt through Agency	34

The weavers usually have another occupation running parallel to support the earning and they have engagement as a part time, or in some cases it was witnessed that they have their own looms at home by which they weave the Thanjavur silk fabric and sell them in market. The art is encouraged by the society so there are a number of weavers who got the skill set of weaving developed by Rehwa and however there are also major cases whose families from past generations were well seasoned in weaving silk. This distribution gave an insight of number of weavers who learnt the skill through society's support and those whose art is inherited from ages.

Table No.6: Satisfaction Level

Satisfaction Level	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total
Earning	37	3	40
Job	36	4	40
Considering Job Shift	0	40	40

The satisfaction level of the weavers were asked through schedule on income parameter, the type of job they are engaged in and if they considering to shift to some other profession for livelihood to get a fair idea about their satisfaction.

FINDINGS

Total Weavers -180

Available weavers - 147

Interviewed - 40

1. Income of Thanjavur Silk weavers ranges Rs. 160 to 200 per piece.
2. They weave majorly silk sarees, shawls and dress material.
3. Exposure to fairs and Haat is very low, only 5% of the total weavers got the opportunity to exhibit.
4. Awareness about KVIC Schemes was found very low, only 13 weavers out of 30 were aware about KVIC Schemes.
5. Out of those 13 people who are aware about KVIC schemes, only 3 applied for KVIC Scheme and their application is under process, none has yet availed the scheme.
6. 94 percent of weavers were found satisfied working under Rehwa Society which took over Thanjavur Cluster.
7. Society also made them aware about CPF contribution, weavers contribute 12 percent of their earning into CPF, 28 weavers revealed they do contribute.
8. Some of them also have looms at their home and they earn in between 12000 to 15000, they work part time in society or one member of that family is engaged in society and others weave the silk at home.
9. The sarees, shawls and dress material ; all products are sold by society to wholesalers, those who produce at home with their own looms sell directly in market or engage dealer sometimes in between.
10. Most of the weavers were not aware about at what cost the sarees and shawls are finally sold in market. The actual price for their saree in the market was enquired and it was in between 1000 INR to 50000 INR.
11. The weavers who weave silk at home and engage dealers to sell their sarees have linkages with good online brands to – showcase their products - Fabindia and Crafisan.
12. Around 3 weavers made the remarks regarding desire to have more pay per piece.
13. For housing facility Rehwa Society made 50 apartments to accommodate these weavers, 500 INR is the rent per month. The remaining weavers are located in either slums or have own houses or some other rented accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There was number of reasons observed for the success of clustering the weavers under a group which facilitates amenities along with providing livelihood, and in return it is not taking anything but the credit in terms of good name and ownership of being a strong pillar to enhance the potential of weaving group. Following points can be suggested however, there was not much loopholes observed;

1. Such NGO or social entity should be encourages in more numbers so that maximum number of artisans can be located and covered.
2. There should be a more exposure visits for weavers to make them more aware about the market trends, upcoming designs and preferences of customers groups.
3. Awareness should be there for the initiatives taken by Government, there are number of schemes enforced each year to enhance weavers' productivity.
4. There must be some scope of innovation from the weavers side to boggle around to create novel designs.

As discussed there are not much loopholes found in the physical findings of this cluster under Rehwa Society, still the areas of improvements may arise time to time as the society will progress in future. Researches will definitely lead to new results pointing towards the success of such social players.

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