



Statistical Survey of Handloom Weavers in India

Sanjay Kumar Singh
Department of Statistics
PGDAV College, University of Delhi, India

ABSTRACT: Indian handlooms are known for their richness, variety and fine quality. They are an integral part of Indian culture due to its diversified nature. The passage of time has brought about a change in the weaves but the importance of handlooms still remains the same. The present work attempts to make an indepth study into the different aspects such as Socio- economic, religion ,educational background , problems as well as government promotional schemes of handloom households.

KEYWORDS: Indian Handlooms, Background, social groups, Religion, Vicious circle, Government schemes, sustainable growth.

Received 12 January, 2015; Accepted 29 January, 2015 © The author(s) 2015. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian handloom industry is one of the oldest and largest cottage industries. The beauty and variety of Indian handloom is legendary. India has a rich tradition of handloom weaving with earliest evidence traces the beginning of handloom in the Indian sub-continent back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Even in ancient times, Indian fabrics were exported, Rome, Egypt and China. Indian cotton and muslin fabrics were traded with the Roman Empire and Indian silk traded through China via the Silk Route to western countries. Various written work applicable to the Rigveda, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Kautilya have mentioned not only spinning and weaving but also the high quality of silk and cotton.

However, with the advent of industrial revolution during British rule, they began executing a protectionist approach policy in order to restrict the trade of hand-woven materials from India and country was flooded with the machine made imported clothes. The sector is beset with various problems, such as obsolete technology, haphazard production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing links, overall stagnation of production and sales and above all, competition from power looms and mill sector. Summarily, India was turned into an exporter of raw cotton and this resulted in a complete loss of livelihood for spinners as well dependence of handloom weavers on machine yarn.

Despite such adversity, Indian artisans have stood the test of time and have kept this great craft alive. Predominantly Mahatma Gandhi recognized the significance of textile handicrafts during the struggle for independence. A notable aspect of Gandhi's views on this issue is that he emphasized not only handloom weaving but also spinning by hand. Gandhi emphasized hand spinning so much that the instrument for this the Charkha become a leading symbol of the freedom movement.

Terms of Reference of the study :

- I. To highlight the distribution of Handloom Workers households by Social Groups, religion, and type etc.
- II. To study the status, problems and prospects of the handloom sector in the country
- III. To identify the socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers and their qualitative differences among male and female, SC-ST-OBC category.
- IV. To evaluate the overall impact of the schemes for the handloom weavers.
- V. To suggest corrective measures to enable a smooth functioning of the schemes.

II. (a) DISTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOM WORKERS HOUSEHOLDS BY SOCIAL GROUPS

Across all social configurations, handloom work is primarily undertaken by Other Backward Castes (OBC) households, and OBCs are found to be the dominant caste group among handloom worker households. A good proportion is found to be from the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category, and this proportion is high especially in the NorthEastern states (other than Assam). Scheduled Castes (SC) households form a relatively small proportion of handloom worker households, and almost one-fourth of all handloom households belong to the other category. A caste-wise distribution of such households is given below:

- OBCs: 11.39 lakh (40.9%).
- Others: 7.56 lakh (27.2%).
- STs: 6.15 lakh (22.1%).
- SCs: 2.73 lakh (9.8%)

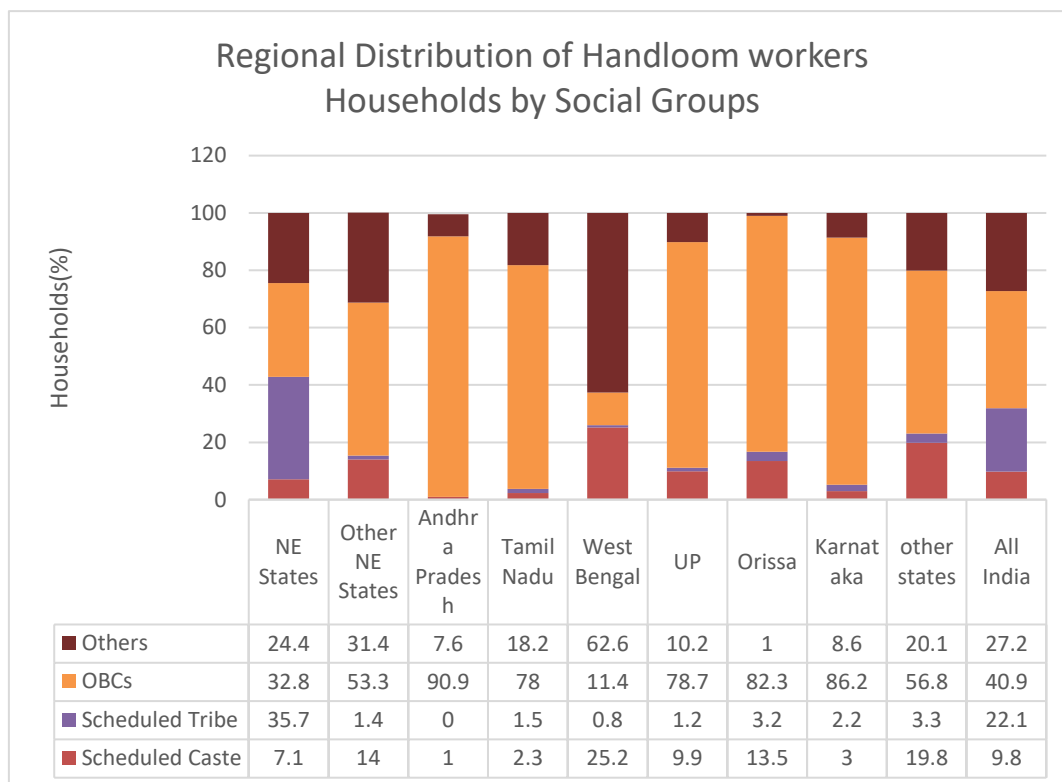
About 87 per cent of all handloom households of different caste groups live in rural areas, but the proportion of ST households living in rural areas (97.3%) is much higher than other social groups. The caste distribution of handloom household units across major handloom concentrated states shows wide differences. However, we noted a few exceptions to this general pattern as below:

- The North-Eastern states have a very different caste distribution, and include OBCs (32.8%), STs (35.7%) and Others (24.4%) as major handloom household groups.
- SC households, although present, are few (7.1%).
- This caste distribution is somewhat reflective of the rural caste distribution of the combined population in the North-East.

Social Groups	Households(Lakhs)	Distribution of Households(%)	Rural Share(%)
Scheduled Castes(SCs)	27.3	9.8	86.5
Scheduled Tribes(STs)	6.15	22.1	97.3
Other Backward Castes(OBCs)	11.39	40.9	81.5
Others	7.56	27.2	87
Total	27.83	100	87

Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010

This is primarily because handloom weaving is part of the culture across all social groups, and a majority of households, especially in rural areas, have a good part of the domestic fabric requirement produced within the house. Thus, weaving in such cases is not undertaken by any particular caste or occupational group. In states outside the North-East, caste distribution is significantly different. In these states, of all handloom households 53.3 per cent are OBCs. The other social group taking up handloom work is the 'Others' group, which accounts for 31.4 per cent of the total handloom households. SC households form a small 14 per cent, while ST households form less than 2 per cent of the total.



Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010

II. (b) DISTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOM WORKERS HOUSEHOLDS BY RELIGION

The majority (77.6%) of handloom worker households follow Hindu religion, though about a sixth are Muslims . About 7.3 per cent of handloom households are from other faiths, mostly Christians. While Hindu and Muslim handloom households are to be found in most states, the North-Eastern states account for a large proportion of Christian handloom households. The rural share of the Hindu Handloom households follows similar trends of the overall rural share of the handloom households. However, it is seen that a comparatively higher proportion of Muslim handloom households are located in urban areas, while a comparatively higher proportion of households of other religions (including Christians) are located in rural areas.

Religion	Households(Lakhs)	Distribution of Households(%)	Rural Share(%)
Hindus	21.60	77.6	87.6
Muslims	4.19	15.0	80.7
Others	2.04	7.3	93.5
Total	27.83	100	87.0

Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010

II. (c) DISTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOM WORKERS HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE

Weaver households form the majority of handloom worker households located in rural India. This follows the pattern of most weaver households being found in villages . A distribution is as follows:

- Weaver households: 22.68 lakh household units (81.5%).
- Allied households: 3.91 lakh household units (14.1%).
- Weaver households located in rural areas: 87.5%.
- Allied households located in rural areas: 80.8 %.

Type of Households	Households(Lakhs)	Distribution of Households(%)	Rural Share(%)
Weaver Households	22.68	81.5	87.5
Allied Worker Households	3.91	14.1	80.8
Idle Loom Households	0.81	2.9	96.6
Others(Households with no adult worker)	0.43	1.5	96.6
Total	27.83	100	87.0

Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010

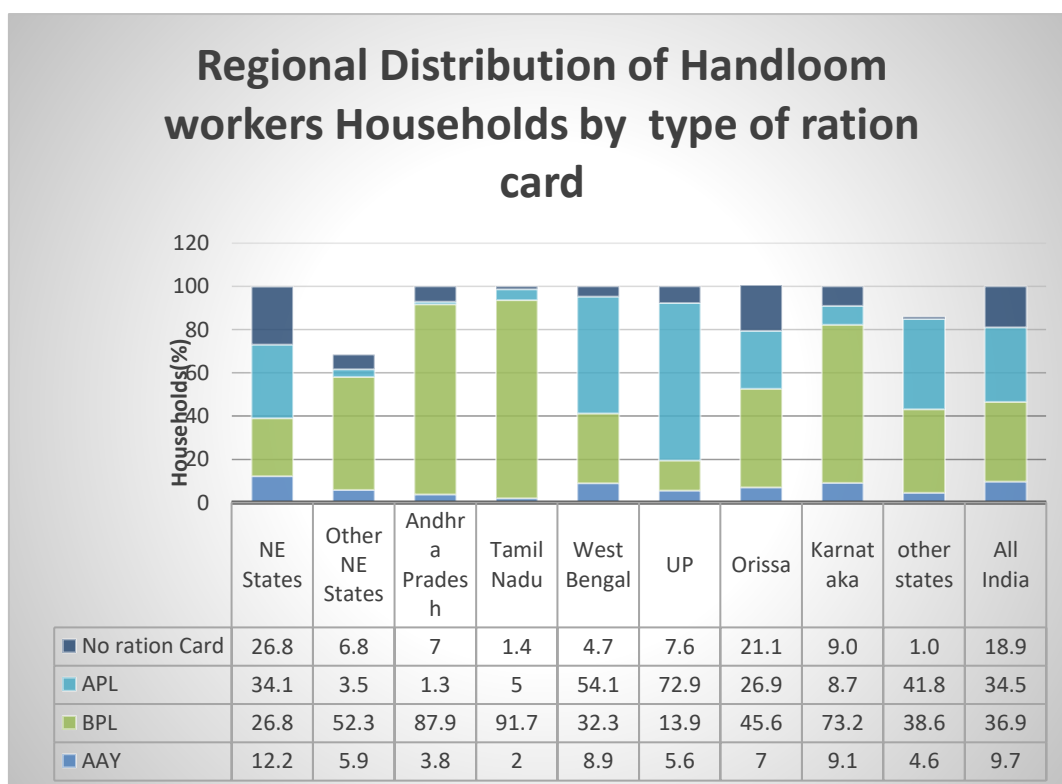
Regional distribution of handloom worker households by type gives two categories . The first category is of states where handloom worker households are mostly weaver households, as in the case of the North-Eastern states. The second category of states includes all states of India outside the North-East, with West Bengal showing a particularly high proportion of households into allied handloom work. In the Third Handloom Census, the households were classified based on a combination of indicators including loom ownership and type of activity undertaken, with inference to the employment structure. Thus, the main classifications of handloom worker households were:

- I. Independent weaver households (A): These are households that own and operate looms in their own house.
- II. Independent weaver households (B): These are households that own and operate looms at a place other than their residence.
- III. Hired weaver households with handloom activity in the premises: These are households that do not own looms but engage in weaving activities with loom placed in their premises.
- IV. Hired weaver households with weaving undertaken in their premises outside the house: These are households that do not own looms but engage in weaving activities without any loom placed in premise.
- V. Allied worker households: These are households that do not own looms but engage in allied activities.
- VI. Idle loom households: These are households that own looms but did not operate them during the last one year.
- VII. Households with idle looms, but member undertaking weaving or allied activity outside the house as hired worker: These are households that own looms but did not operate then during last the one year. However, they engaged in weaving and allied activity.

II. (d) DISTRIBUTION OF HANDLOOM WORKERS HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE OF RATION CARD

Type of ration Card	Households(Lakhs)	Distribution of Households(%)	Rural Share(%)
Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Card	2.71	9.7	93.4
Below Poverty line (BPL) Card	10.27	36.9	82.1
Above Poverty line(APL) Card	9.59	34.5	88.1
No ration Card	5.26	18.9	91.2
Total	27.83	100	87.0

Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010



Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010

The majority of the handloom worker households (26.67 lakh or 95.8%) belong to the first 5 categories and the major attributes of such households are:

I. Independent weaver households with looms placed in their premises .They constitute about 53 per cent of the total households (26.67 lakh).While the average number of adult family members engaged in handloom activities is about 1.55, there is higher representation of female members than male members. About 0.21 workers per household are engaged in pre-loom allied activities but rarely in post-loom allied activities. Average number of days worked per weaver household is 229 days. Among such households, a higher proportion of

households who own and operate looms in their houses have Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards (36.5%) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cards (11.3%).

II. Independent weaver households with looms placed outside the premises. Such households are about 7 per cent of total households (26.67 lakhs). While the average number of adult family members engaged in handloom activities is about 1.30, there is higher representation of female members than male members. Average number of days worked per weaver household is 253 days. Most (46.5%) in this group of households do not have ration cards, and most of the remaining have a BPL card (34.5%)

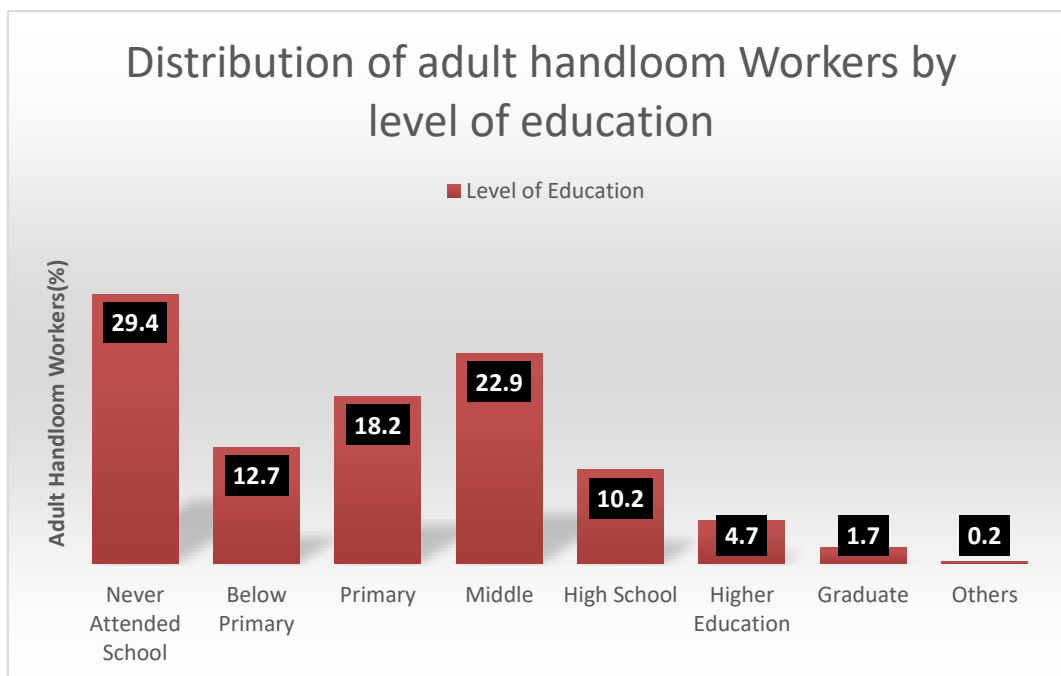
III. Hired weaver households with handloom activity in the premises .Such households are about 5 per cent of total households (26.67 lakhs).In such households, there is higher proportion of male participation, though there are more female workers per household. Such households also have a higher number of adult workers per household (1.63).Such households have a relatively higher proportion of under-age workers (0.3 per household).These households also have 0.27 worker per household undertaking pre-loom allied activity, and 0.01 worker per household undertaking post-loom allied activity.Days worked per weaver is highest (291 days) in hired weaver households that have looms placed in their premises, and as compared to the other weaver household categories, the days per allied worker is comparatively high (65 days).Most of such households own BPL (37.7%) or APL (43.7%) ration cards, which suggests that they get differential wage rates.

IV. Hired weaver households with weaving undertaken in premises outside the house .Such households are about 20 per cent of total households (26.67 lakhs).These are higher proportion of male workers in hired weaver households: male participation is comparatively high, although there are more female workers per household.The number of adult workers per household is comparatively low (1.3as compared to other categories of households, where hired weavers have to go outside the house for work. Such households also have a presence of under-age workers (0.2 workers per household).In such households, 0.19 workers per household undertake pre-loom allied activity, but none undertake post-loom allied activity.The days of work per weaver are 218 days and 44 days per allied worker.Most of such households own BPL (40.1%) cards. APL ration card owners account for 31.6 per cent of the households, as wages for hired weaving activity are not same across the board, but differ with type of fabric (silk sari and cotton sari/gamcha), and between young and skilled weavers, as well as between male and female weavers, with higher weightage for males, skilled weavers and more costly yarn.

V. Allied worker households . Such households are about 15 per cent of total households (26.67 lakhs).Almost half (51%) of the allied worker population is from the allied worker households. There are lower numbers of adult workers per household (1.2) and these are mostly female (1.02). In such household, 1.2 workers per household undertake pre-loom allied handloom work, while 0.03 workers undertake post-loom allied activity.The number of days worked per allied worker (251 days) is highest in the allied worker households.A higher proportion of the allied worker households have BPL ration cards (42.6%), than APL cards (38%). This suggests that allied work is remunerative for some kinds of work while not for others. For example, winding of the warping drum is very remunerative, while winding the pirns for weft preparation is not.

III. EDUCATIONAL STATUS

As indicated in the 3rd handloom census of weavers and allied workers 2010, a majority (60%) of adult handloom workforce has attained little or no schooling. The handloom weavers in Uttar Pradesh (60%), Andhra Pradesh (42%), Karnataka (39%) and West Bengal (37%) have a very high proportion of adult handloom workers reported of never having attended the school. Most of the handloom weavers interacted with during the study were illiterate or educated only up to only primary classes. Women members of the handloom households largely participate in weaving and different works associated to weaving, thus live at home, causing high dropout rates from school. The status is depicted in figure.

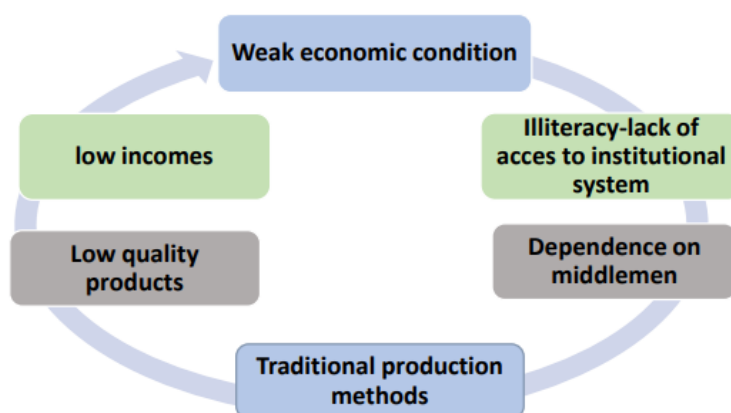


Source: 3rd National handloom census weavers and allied workers 2010

IV. VICIOUS CIRCLE OF POVERTY

As can be seen from the above table the handloom weavers come from the disadvantaged sections of the society. Their literacy level is abysmally low and the economic condition very poor. Though they possess valuable skills, they are in the clutches of middlemen and money 29.4, 12.7, 18.2, 22.9, 10.2, 4.7, 1.7, 0.2 are Never attended school ,Below primary, Primary, Middle ,High school, Higher education ,Graduate and Others respectively. The vicious cycle of poverty in case of weavers is captured below

Vicious Circle of poverty-handloom weavers



Source:Study Report on Problems and Prospects of Handloom Sector in Employment Generation in the Globally Competitive Environment,Bankers Institute of Rural Development, Lucknow 2016

V. GOVERNMENT PROMOTIONAL INITIATIVES

During 11th plan & 2012-13, the Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms has been implementing six schemes which are

- Integrated Handloom Development Scheme (IHDS)
- Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme;
- Marketing & Export Promotion Scheme (MEPS)
- Mill Gate Price Scheme;
- Diversified Handloom Development Scheme (DHDS), and
- Revival, Reform and Restructuring (RRR) Package for Handloom Sector.

Now, IHDS, MEPS and DHDS have been merged into Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme (CHDS). Further, RRR package & CHDS have been merged into a single centrally sponsored scheme viz. National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP). Mill Gate Price scheme has also been renamed as Yarn Supply Scheme.

Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme (IHDS) was introduced in 2007-08 for its implementation in 11th Plan as a centrally sponsored plan scheme for the development of handloom sector and welfare of handloom weavers. The scheme aims to focus on formation of weavers group as a visible entity, develop the handlooms weavers groups to become self-sustainable, inclusive approach to cover weavers both within and outside the cooperative fold, skill upgradation of handlooms weavers/workers to produce diversified products with improved quality to meet the market requirements, provide suitable workplace to weavers to enable them to produce quality products with improved productivity etc.

In 2013-14, this scheme was merged with Comprehensive Handlooms Development Scheme (CHDS) introduced 2007-08. The erstwhile Marketing & Export Promotion Scheme has been merged into CHDS and Handloom Marketing Assistance, as one of the components of Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme has been introduced during the 12th Plan. The main objectives of the handloom marketing assistance are to provide marketing platform to the weavers and handloom organisations to sell their products directly to the consumers. Since 2005-06 and 2006-07 the Government of India was implementing two separate schemes namely the 'Health Insurance Scheme' for providing health care facilities to the handloom weavers in the country and the 'Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana' for providing life insurance cover to handloom weavers in case of natural/accidental death, total/partial disability due to accident. During the 11th plan, both schemes have been amalgamated into one scheme namely Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme.

Health Insurance Scheme (HIS) is implemented through ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Ltd. The HIS covers not only the weaver but his wife and two children also. The ancillary handlooms workers like those engaged in warping, winding, dyeing, printing, finishing, sizing, Jhala making, jacquard cutting etc. are also eligible to be covered under the scheme. The scheme covers all pre-existing diseases as well as new diseases and a substantial provision has been kept for outdoor patients (OPD). The annual limit per family is Rs.15, 000/- out of which OPD cover will be Rs.7500/-. In this scheme present, 1749452 weavers (1223239 General and 526213 NER) have been enrolled for the period 1.04.2013 to 31.03.2014.

The basic objective of the **Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana (MGBBY)** is to provide enhanced insurance cover to the handloom weavers in the case of natural as well as accidental death and in cases of total or partial disability. The scheme will be administered by the LIC of India. The authority in-charge of Handlooms in the State shall finalise insurance coverage of the weavers with the Life Insurance Corporation of India. During 2013-14, 574818 weavers (471026 General & 103792 in NER) have been covered under MGBBY. During the 11th Plan the Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Yojana will continue to be implemented with the same benefits as were given in 11th plan period. The scheme will cover 26.19 lakh weavers during the period 2012-13 to 2016-17 including maximum renewal cases each year.

The **Mill Gate Price Scheme (MGPS)** was introduced during 1992-93 with the objective of providing all types of yarn to the eligible handloom weavers at Mill Gate Price. National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), a Government of India undertaking, is the implementing agency of the scheme. Under the scheme, the Government of India reimburses the transportation expenses involved in the supply of yarn. There is also a provision for supply of yarn through yarn depots. 788 yarn depots are functioning throughout the country at present. In the year 2008-09, the Govt. was allocated and released Rs.29.59 crore, this amount was increased highly in 2012-13, allocated Rs. 133 crore and released only Rs.122.91 crore and next two years amount has declined during 2013-14, the Govt. has allocated Rs.100 crore, but released Rs.96.86 crore. In 2014-15, the Govt. has allocated Rs. 130 crore

The Central Sector **Diversified Handloom Development Scheme (DHDS)** which was one of the Scheme in operation during 11th Plan, aimed at providing technical and institutional support to the handloom sector for skill up-gradation, capacity building and dissemination of technological interventions to the handloom weavers. Main component of the scheme were 'Strengthening of Weavers Service Centres (WSCs)/Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology (IIHTs), setting up of new WSCs/IIHTs, National Centre for Textile Design (NCTD), Research & Development (R&D) and conducting Handloom Census etc.'. Against the approved outlay of Rs.20.00 crore, a sum of Rs.17.08 crore has been incurred under the DHDS during 2012-13. During 2013-14, an amount of Rs. 11.84 crore has been incurred against the approved outlay Rs.15.00 crore

VI. PROBLEMS OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN INDIA

1. **Disorders of an unorganized sector:** Primarily a household industry, the weavers are unorganized and there is a lack the necessary financial support and infrastructure. In addition to this, the production pattern is mostly dispersed and decentralized and there are no marketing strategies in place, unlike in a cooperative sector. This stagnates growth.
2. **Lack of product diversification and problems with yarn procurement:** Non-availability of sufficient yarn in the form of hanks and the conservative attitude of the weavers, coupled with their ignorance about current fashion and market trends results in insufficient diversification of products.
3. **Credit Needs:** The credit facilities available to weavers are often much less than satisfactory. Loan offering financial institutions/banks are not many and have lengthy and complicated procedures of availing the same. The problems of handloom industry in India are well pronounced.
4. **Shortage of inputs and problem of working capital:** The high costs of inputs such as yarn, cotton, silk, art silk, chemicals & dyes and zari and irregular supply of working capital affects the operations and continuity of the industry thereby leading to a decline in the production of handloom products. The major raw materials have low yield which creates hurdles in production planning and aggravates the problem due to lack of economies of scale
5. **Greater competition from power looms and mill sector:** The modernization of the textile industry with increased usage of sophisticated technology in production of cloth has led to serious threat to the traditional handloom industry.

VII. SUGGESTION TO IMPROVE THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE WEAVERS

1. At the Apex Society level there is need to establish a design centre which will coordinate the entire work of developing latest designs, patterns, bringing newer dyeing technologies, colour combinations etc. The centre will also provide training to all the weavers associated with handlooms and in each cluster at least one Weavers Resource Person may be identified who will provide hands-on training to the weavers
2. Solar home lights systems may be included as a part of scale of finance and can be made part of Weavers Credit Card.
3. All the weavers may be linked to PMJDY, PMSBY, PMJJBY, and Atal Pension Yojana as a part of strengthening the social security for handloom weavers.
4. Credit for renovation of work shed and loom may be made a part of the weavers' credit card.
5. The District Urban Development Agency/ Dist. Rural Development Agency/PRIs, may be made responsible to create basic amenities on health and hygiene, drinking water, lights, drains cleaning, etc., in handloom concentrated areas.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

In order to achieve sustainable growth, it is necessary that efforts are made to address the challenges the sector is currently facing. The following suggestions for promoting Handloom Industry in India are made for consideration

1. **Providing Market Intelligence to Weavers** Providing marketing linkages and intelligence to the weavers will help them earn a sustainable earning from the craft and produce market relevant products. An ecosystem which can provide ready access to raw materials, working capital, customer knowledge, design capabilities, reliable sales channel, health and insurance cover needs to be created to revive the sector. Besides, there is a need to educate the artisans about the raw materials and the products used and how to market them. Proper education and training should be provided to weavers about modern and innovative techniques of production.
2. **Regular Supply of Raw Materials** Good quality yarn is the basic raw material for weavers who are spread across the country. NHDC is responsible for providing / supplying yarn to the weavers but currently only 15% of the yarn needed by weavers is provided by NHDC. NHDC should scale up its operations and set up a network

of regional yarn depots with support from private sector mills. The e-Dhaga app should also be promoted extensively amongst the weavers.

3. Introduce New Design Elements While preserving the traditional designs, there is a need to simultaneously evolve with the time. Weavers should be engaged in design workshops and guided to experiment to improve marketability of new products. There is a need for innovation and experimentation in designs by the artisans so that they can differentiate and withstand competition from the mechanized processes.

4. Improve Credit Delivery Easy access to credit and increasing awareness about the available schemes needs to be spread among the artisans so that they can benefit from the initiatives. Weavers must get the credit on soft terms as they are supposed to with the new initiatives like opening up of bank accounts, direct delivery of subsidies and digital governance. They should be brought under the purview of Jan Dhan–Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) Trinity as this would effectively cut leakages by enabling better delivery of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), eliminate fake beneficiaries and lead to financial inclusion.

5. Focus on quality standards Extensive education campaigns are needed to highlight the importance of high standards in the raw materials used in handloom products. Weavers also need to be guided on use of quality dyes. Workshops on dyeing processes and colour fastness processes should be held regularly

6. Leverage e-commerce platforms E-commerce platforms must be used to increase the outreach to newer customers and markets. Already platforms like Amazon and Flipkart are working with several artisans to take their products global.

7. Connect with private sector through CSR Leverage the expertise of private companies by connecting women weavers with corporate CSR funds through CSR programmes in line with UN SDG goals to achieve gender equality and empower all girls and women and eradicate poverty

IX. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above discussion it can be concluded that the handloom sector despite being the dominant segment of Indian textiles industry is surviving in plight. This sector has opened the doors for Indian handloom market to showcase its beauty, strength & capabilities in international market. On the basis of 3rd census on handloom data we see that this sector has immense potential to grow and contribute in Indian economy. Govt. Should pay attention towards the need of weavers i.e. health, welfare, educational facility, etc. So that traditional weavers can sustain themselves in India as well as global economy.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Study Report on Problems and Prospects of Handloom Sector in Employment Generation in the Globally Competitive Environment, Bankers Institute of Rural Development, Lucknow 2016
- [2]. THIRD NATIONAL HANDLOOM CENSUS OF WEAVERS AND ALLIED WORKERS 2010
- [3]. TARI Research Team, based on Indian Handloom Industry, Working Paper No. 80, EXIM Bank and Human Resources and Skills Requirements in the Handlooms and Handicrafts Sector, KPMG
- [4]. Welfare scheme of handloom weavers in India: an analysis Dr. P. Surya Kumar, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development
- [5]. Ministry of Textiles. (Handloom data 2009-2014)

Sanjay Kumar Singh
Department of Statistics
PGDAV College, University of Delhi, India
Email: skspgdav@gmail.com