CHAPTER 3

WEAVERS CO-OPERATIVE – A BRIEF HISTORY

Co-operative movement in India

Co-operation is that form of economic organisation in which persons willfully and voluntarily pool their resources on a basis of equality for advancement of their economic interests. It is a union and co-ordination of the resources and efforts of each individual with a view to achieve the results sought after by all. According to the co-operative planning committee (1964), “Co-Operatives is a form of organisation in which persons voluntarily associate together on a basis of equality for the promotion of their economic interests. Those who come together have a common economic aim which they cannot achieve by individual isolated action because of the weakness of the economic position of a large majority of them, this element of individual weakness is overcome by the pooling of their resources, by making self help effective through mutual aid and by strengthening the bonds of moral solidarity between them”. From the foregoing definition of co-operation, following basic principles of co-operative organisation can be deduced-

a) Co-operative societies are associations of individuals formed with a view to achieve common economic good and are voluntary.

b) Moral aspect is as much important as the material aspect.

c) Special importance is attached to educative influence of co-operative effort.

Co-Operation as a form of organisation owes its origin to the exploitation of the weaker sections of the society by a few individuals. The nature of exploitation and field of exploitation differs from nation to nation and hence the co-operative movement has developed in different countries in different forms as per the needs of the community. In Great Britian where labourers were exploited by the “Truck System”, consumers co-operation emerged. Germany developed credit co-operation to eliminate exploitation of farmers and artisans by money lenders. In Denmark, the farmers were forced to give up the production of grain due to competition of cheap imports and hence she specialised in the co-operative production of dairy products. The main feature of the co-operative movement in asian countries is the development of rural credit co-operatives even though in recent years co-operative of agriculture marketing & handicrafts have also developed. In countries like India, China, Japan & Thailand, co-operative farming has developed side by side with credit co-operatives. It is thus seen that the co-operatives

31 Bhosekar VV (1979)- Co-operative movement in Dhulia district.
movement is the outcome of necessary and has taken different forms in different nations as the situation demanded.

In west, the co-operative movement owed its origin to the necessity of some kind of economic organisation to fight exploitation and to urge to safeguard individual freedom either from the centralised power in capitalism or from the state. For an Indian Society, material advancement was never the guiding principle of human activity. The ideas of dharma (duty) and subordination of self interest to group interest was the spirit that brought the people together. Co-operation at the levels of “family”, ”Jati” & “Gram” was a clear manifestation of this spirit. Thus the Indian civilisation itself has provided a fertile ground for the development of the co-operative movement.

Broad phases of development of the movement in India

The beginning of the co-operative movement in India can be traced back to 1904 when the first co-operative act was passed. This act known as the “Co-operative credit societies act” initiated the co-operative movement in India. Thereafter the co-operative movement can be said to have underwent the following broad stages of development.32

In 1912 a comprehensive co-op societies act was passed after which there was a rapid growth not only of the co-op credit societies but also of various other types of societies.

The report of the Maclagan committee in 1915 constitutes another important landmark in the history of the movement. As a result of the implementation of many of the suggestions made by the committee, the movement recorded big expansion between 1912 and 1920-21 and all types of co-op societies began to grow. The central financing agencies began to be established in various districts since the publishing of this report.

As a result of the Montague-Chemsford constitutional reforms of 1919 “co-operation“ become a transferred subject. Thereafter the provincial governments undertook various measures to activise the movement.

The movement gathered momentum during 1919-29 expecially in the sphere of non-credit and industrial societies and many noteworthy experiments were tried in these directions with success. However, the movement suffered a serious setback almost all over the country as a result of the world wide economic depression of 1930-31. The Government of India appointed the central banking enquiry committee to report on the existing state of affairs in the

co-operative movement and to suggest ways and means to improve the situation. Consequent to the recommendations of the central banking enquiry committee, the RBI was established and in 1935 the agricultural credit department was created to look after the orderly development of the movement all over the country.

The most important development in the co-operative field took place after independence when the RBI appointed the All India Rural Credit Survey committee consisting of officials, non-officials and experts, with Shri A D Gorwala as its chairman. The Gorwala committee submitted its report in Dec 1954. The recommendations of this committee brought about some very radical changes in all spheres and sectors of the co-operative movement in the nation and can be said to be the basis of the working of the Co-operative movement today.

**History of co-operative movement in Kachipuram**

The first information available about organisation of silk weavers in Kanchipuram and the surrounding villages in their own interests concerns a strike in 1937 against the master weavers. The strike idled 7000 looms, but judging by the official figures of active looms during that period the figure is exaggerated. The strike lasted 21 days and won an increase in base pay from Rs 13.50 to Rs 15/- for the weavers.

The first co-operative for silk weavers in Tamilnadu state was established in Kanchipuram in 1942, 37 years after the establishment of the first cotton handloom co-operative society. A Co-operative for weavers producing a mixed cotton and silk fabric had been established 03 years earlier in Tanjore. The Kanchipuram silk weavers co-operative production and sales society was operative until 1946, when it closed because of a great financial loss. Rumours of mismanagement of the society were reported by informants, but the greatest difficulty seemed to be lack of adequate capital combined with rising silk prices and poor markets. The Madras handloom weaver co-operative society which was started with a government subsidy in 1935, assisted the primary cotton weaver societies by arranging for yarn supplies and for marketing their goods, it did not provide these services for silk weavers co-operative.

After independence the responsibility for the development of the silk industry was placed under the Central silk board when the All India handloom board was reconstituted in 1952, the members recommended that the Central silk board retain responsibility for the development of this sector except for the external marketing of handloom silk cloth. Consequently the cess fund could not be used to give financial aid to silk weavers co-operatives because the dispersal of these funds was made by the All India handloom board.

34 Yvonne J Arterburn-The loom of interdependence Silk weaving co-operatives in Kanchipuram
The co-operative movement in Kanchipuram

The All India co-operative movement had been largely initiated by Government officials trying to organise co-operative societies. In the case of the silk weavers of Kanchipuram, however co-operative organisation has not been Government initiated. The activities of the weavers themselves brought Government capital to the industry and Co-operative to Kanchipuram.\(^{35}\)

The co-operative movement in Kanchipuram is an outgrowth of the labour movement in the handloom industry. Parthasarthy, the individual most responsible for the co-operative movement in Kanchipuram is also involved in the labour and economic conditions of the cotton weavers in the state. A former silk weaver of the Padma Saliyar caste he is active in the Tamilnadu provincial handloom weavers federation, a cotton weavers union which was organised in 1944. The activities of this union alone with other weaver unions and association in the state, led to a Court of Inquiry into the labour conditions of the cotton handloom industry in 1947.

Parthasarthy experience with the cotton weavers union provided the background for establishing the Kanchipuram silk weavers union in 1953. In 1954 the master weavers decided to cut the wages of their dependent weavers. Union leaders with Parthasarthy as president organised the weavers and obtained 6000 signatures protesting the wage cut. He and four other union leaders visited the minister for labour and presented a memorandum and a copy of notice of a strike. The commissioner for labour agreed to mediate a peaceful settlement at Kanchipuram. The issue was not settled and a 15 day strike resulted. The purpose of the strike was not only to prevent a wage cut, but also to draw Government’s attention to the conditions of the silk weavers so that demands could be made directly to the Government for support and financial assistance. The weavers had three specific objectives, first to obtain a wage increase from the master weavers second, to have state funds allocated for the establishment of silk weavers co-operatives and third to get cess funds available for silk weavers co-operatives. All the objectives of the strike were achieved. The dependent weavers obtained an increase in base pay from Rs 35 to Rs 40 from the master weavers, the state allocated funds for the establishment of the Kamakshiamman silk weavers co-operative production and marketing society and the Kanchipuram silk weavers co-operative marketing society, and cess funds were made available for silk co-operatives.

\(^{35}\) Yvonne J Arterburn-The loom of interdependence Silk weaving co-operatives in Kanchipuram
Assistance to the silk handloom industry was broadly on the same lines as it was to the cotton handloom industry, except that larger looms were permitted for share and working capital and no rebates were given on the sales.

The Kanchipuram movement had an effect on silk weavers in other areas of the state. By making it possible for the state to allocate cess funds for silk weaving co-operative in Kanchipuram, it opened up the possibility for their establishment in other areas. In the next two years four co-operatives were opened in other parts of the state.

One production and marketing co-operative could not accommodate the number of weavers who wished to join under co-operative law, individuals wishing to establish a new society submit to the Registrar or Deputy Registrar of co-operative societies a formal application signed by ten persons and a copy of the proposed bylaws of the society. If the registrar is satisfied that the application and bylaws are in accordance with the provisions of the state co-operative act he may register the society. However when societies require financial assistance the registrar has to decide in consultation with the government on what kind of financial aid to provide.

Direct appeal to congress and DMK political party leaders, both local and state, has been the most common channel. In one case a caste association as the channel.

The local chapter of the Saurashtra caste association was established in Kanchipuram in 1961. In 1963 four silk weavers co-operative were operating and the saurashtra weavers felt that members of their community were not being given as many memberships as they should be, they appealed to the President of the saurashtra association for help in obtaining a co-operative for their community. The president a cotton merchant used his position as caste association president to gain access to the political structure. Members were signed up and he petitioned the handloom dept for the establishment of the saurashtra handloom silk weavers co-operative society. The petition was refused on the basis of caste bias, but the president was given the understanding that if members of other caste were included and the name changed the petition would be granted. Members were recruited from only one other caste the Naicker. This caste posed no threat to the saurashtrians in silk weaving, they lived in close proximity and they were involved in labour exchanges with the saurashtrians. The society was opened in 1964 when the silk co-operatives in the entire sate came under the cess fund, the number of societies in Kanchipuram has since grown36.

36 Yvonne J Arterburn-The loom of interdependence Silk weaving co-operatives in Kanchipuram
Government investment in the handloom silk industry has increased over the years, some of it in the form of direct benefits to the weavers through the co-operative societies and same in the form of services to the industry.

A number of changes have been made in the administration and funding of co-operative since silk weavers entered into this form of organisation. Since April 1957, credit facilities for working capital for the co-operative societies have been transferred from the cess fund to the RBI through state co-operative banks, loans are at a concessional rate of 1.5% below the going bank rate. In case of loss through non-recovery of loans, the state government 40% and the co-operative bank 10%. The amount of money a co-operative can borrow was originally based on the number of looms included in the membership list. The basis of financing societies was changed in 1966 from number of looms to the value of the goods produced by the society. Money for co-operative, other than share and working capital, continued to be provided from the cess fund until 1960.

The change from cess fund financing to Reserve bank loans had no effect on the co-operative societies, however the change from the number of looms in the society to value of the goods produced as the basis for credit affected many of the societies.

**WEAVERS CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN INDIA**

Weavers Co-Operative societies occupy an important place in the Indian Co-operative movement. By June 1977 there were 3,16,147 Co-operative societies in India with a membership of 896.56 lakhs, out of which 45,257 were industrial co-operatives societies covering 24.09 lakh members. Within the industrial co-operative sector, weavers co-operative societies form the biggest part accounting for 21.61% of the industrial co-operative sector. There were 10,232 societies with a membership of the 8.19 lakhs constituting 34% of the membership of the industrial co-operative sector as on June 1977.

The handloom sector plays a very important role in the country’s economy. It is the second largest sector in terms of employment, next only to agriculture. This sector accounts for about fourteen percentage of the total cloth produced by the country (Annual Report Ministry of Textile 2010-11). Handloom Weaving is one of the major economic activities in Tamil Nadu which employs more than 1.89 lakh weavers household and 3.19 lakh weavers. It is mainly in the

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37 A Kumudha, M Rizwana - Problems Faced by Handloom Industry - A Study with Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative Societies in Erode District.
Co-operative Sector where 50% of the handloom weavers have been brought under the Co-operative fold which is against the national average of 25%. According to the Handlooms and Textiles Policy Note (2012 – 2013) in the year 2011-2012, the Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative Societies in TamilNadu have produced 892.22 lakh metres of handloom cloth valued at Rs.695.08 crore and sold handloom fabrics to the extent of Rs.852.42 crore. During the year 2011-2012 as many as 824 Weavers Co-operative Societies are working on profit. But of late the performance of the working Societies in the Co-operative fold has been affected. There are various factors responsible for deteriorating performance of handloom Societies, of which the problems associated with weavers, input material and marketing clutches more weightage.

OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

Weavers co-operative society is established in any area where there is concentration of weavers with the following objectives. 

(a) Improvement of the handloom industry.
(b) Improvement of the economic condition of the weavers residing in the area of operation. For achieving these two main objectives, the society undertakes the following functions –
   (i) Raising money from the weavers and others by
      (aa) Issue of shares
      (ab) Borrowing
      (ac) Receiving deposits
   (ii) Purchasing raw materials and appliances as may be required for the industry.
   (iii) Distributing raw materials and appliances for cash or credit to the members.
   (iv) Purchasing yarn and other raw materials.
   (v) Advancing yarn and other raw materials to the weaver-members for the purpose of converting the same into finished goods.
   (vi) Payment of wages to members for converting the raw materials into finished goods.

38 A Kumudha, M Rizwana -Problems Faced by Handloom Industry - A Study with Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative Societies in Erode District.
39 Dr S Shannuga Sundaram –Weavers Co-operatives
(vii) Arranging for the marketing of the finished goods to the best advantage of the society.

(viii) Purchasing and holding in common or letting on hire improved appliances connected with the industry.

(iii) Acting as the agent for the joint purchase of the domestic and other requirements of its members and for the sale of their finished goods.

(iv) Taking up insurance agency any arranging for the insurance of the lives of the members.

(v) Opening sales depots in places selected by the board of directors subject to the previous approval of the registrar.

(vi) Borrowing funds from the government to the utilised for the issue of loans to members for the discharge of prior debts to master weavers, contracted prior to the admission into the society.

(vii) Doing any other acts conducive to the attainment of the main objective.

WORKING OF SILK WEAVERS CO-OP SOCIETIES

Operations

The Weavers co-operative societies buys yarn in bulk from the co-operative spinning mills and gets the same dyed in private or co-operative dye factories. The yarn so dyed is distributed to the members for weaving and the members have to deliver the cloth within a stipulated time which is normally 15 days. As yarn is issued for weaving a particular type of cloth such as sarees, towels and dhoties in fixed numbers, the members will have to first arrange for the pre-loom processing of yarn. The yarn is warped and sized and the warp is fitted into looms. Weft is also simultaneously prepared on small bobbins to be fitted into the flying shuttle. Since the members is to engage skilled weavers in these processes, he needs money to pay wages to them, for which purpose the society may pay him an advance called piece advance. Cloth can be delivered to the society in pieces as and when it is woven. On each delivery, some societies pay wage advance to the members. When the cloth delivers all the given number of pieces of cloth item, he is paid all his wages calculated at piece rate, after deducting his piece and wage advance. Besides advances, the society also issues “cash advance” or loan to help the member tide over financial difficulties on certain occasions like festivals and death of a member of the family. This advance is recovered in instalments from the wages.

When the member settles account for the set of yarn by delivering a corresponding set of a given item of cloth, he can get yarn for weaving further and this process continues. If the member does not make delivery of cloth within 3 months from the date of issue of yarn, the value of yarn and other materials issued is classified as overdues and the society will have to take steps for the recovery of the same. After collecting cloth from the members, the society markets the same directly and through the Apex Handloom Weavers Cooperative society, as well.

**MEMBERSHIP & SHARE CAPITAL**

Any weaver over 18 years of age, who is competent to enter into contract and residing within the area of operation is eligible for admission as a member. However in the case of non-weavers, other than master weavers and dealers in cloth, membership is limited to 10% of the total member of “A” class members. Master weavers and dealers in cloth are not eligible to become members. Minors owning looms and possessing ration cards for the supply of yarn are admitted as “B” class members, who will not enjoy voting rights. The face value of each “A” class share is ten rupees and “B” class share one rupee. This amount is collected in one lumpsum on allotment.

**FUNDS**

Besides the share capital collected from members the society raises funds from the following sources -

(a) Share capital participation upto Rs 10,000/- from the state government.

(b) Borrowings from the District Central Co-operative bank in the form of cash credit.

(c) Deposits from members and non-members as follows-

(i) Thrift deposit is collected from the member at the rate of 6 paise per rupee of wages paid by way of deductions from wages and is credited to his thrift deposit account in the name of the member. When a sizeable amount of thrift deposit accumulates, the same is transferred to the share capital of the member.

(ii) Fixed deposits are accepted by the societies from members and non-members, carrying interest at the rate of not more than 6% per annum.

(iii) Newly started societies collect earnest deposits from members for the purpose of yarn issue.

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41 Mathur BS (1994)-Co-operatives in india, Sahitya Bhavan, Agra.
(iv) Reserve fund loan upto Rs 10,000/- from the state government in the initial years of establishment.

**MANAGEMENT**

The ultimate authority of management vests with the central body consisting of all the “A” class members. This authority is exercised through a board of directors elected by the “A” class members. The tenure of the directors is 03 years and a third team retire by rotation every year. However the retiring directors are eligible for re-election. The composition of the board ranges from 7 to 9 of whom at least 5 should be weavers.

The authority of day to day administration is delegated to a full time secretary, who may be a departmental officer on deputation or an individual appointed by the board. However in the case of erring managements, the board has been superseded by the government and a special officer is appointed to manage the society. The rest of the management from the rank and file employees, which group is insignificant in number and status.

**DISTRIBUTION OF PROFIT**

The net profit of the weavers co-operative society is appropriated as follows

(a) 20% to 30 % is credited to Reserve fund.

(b) 5% is credited to the Co-operative development fund.

(c) Dividend is paid on the share capital upto 9 % of its paid up value.

(d) 33 1/3 % of the net profit is utilised for payment of bonus to weaver members.

(e) Payment of bonus to staff.

(f) Upto 20 % of the net profit is credited to the Co-Operative education fund.

(g) Upto 10 % of the net profit is credited to the building fund.

(h) Upto 10 % of the net profit is credited to Price Equalisation fund.

(i) Upto 3 1/8 % is credited to Wages Equalisation fund.

(j) Upto 10 % of the net profit is credited to the common good fund. This fund can be utilised for the purpose of giving medical relief, sanitation, education and propaganda and maintenance of library.

(k) Lastly upto 5 % of the net profit is credited to a special rebate and

(l) The balance if any is credited to the Reserve fund.

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REBATE ON THE SALE OF HANDLOOM CLOTH

In order to push up the sale of handloom cloth by weavers co-operative societies, the government sanctions rebate on the price of handloom goods sold to the consumers. Consumers get the goods at a reduced price and the reduction in the price is borne by the central and state governments equally. The percentage of rebate varies according to the availability of funds and the accumulation of stocks. This rebate is available for 30 days in a year and is staggered on various occasions like diwali and pongal.

GOVERNMENT AID

The state government helps the weavers co-operative societies in the following ways -

(a) Granting share capital loan to weavers to enable them to purchase shares in weavers co-operative societies, upto Rs 90/- for each member.
(b) Assistance for the supply of weaving appliances to members 75 % subsidy and 25 % loan.
(c) Assistance for the construction of house for the members 70 % loan and 30 % subsidy.

HISTORY OF KANCHIPURAM

INTRODUCTION

Conjeevaram is the English name of the ancient Kanchipuram. Like all ancient cities, Kanchipuram is also situated on the banks of a river, Vegavati. The city was the capital of the Early Cholas as far back as the 2nd century BC and a Pallava capital between the 6th and 8th centuries. It is surrounded by the historic places like Mamallapuram, Thiruvannamalai, Vellore, Sholingar, Thiruthani and Thirupathi.

Kanchipuram district is situated on the northern East Coast of Tamil Nadu and is adjacent by Bay of Bengal and Chennai city and is bounded in the west by Vellore and Thiruvannamalai district, in the north by Thiruvallur district and Chennai district, in the south by Villuppuram district in the east by Bay of Bangal. It lies between 11° 00’ to 12° 00’ North latitudes and 77° 28’ to 78° 50’ East longitudes. The district has a total geographical area of 4393.37 hectares and coastline of 57 Kms. Kanchipuram, the temple town is the district

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43 RBI 1999 to 2004-The task force to study the co-operative credit system and suggest measures for its strengthening ,RBI Mumbai.
44 Government of Tamil Nadu- A profile of Kachipuram district.
headquarters. For administrative reasons, the district has been divided into 3 revenue divisions comprising of 8 taluks with 1137 revenue villages. For development reasons, it is divided into 13 development blocks with 648 Village Panchayats.

The Silk City

Today, apart from its temples, this small town is also known for its thriving handloom industry. Kanchipuram town is also known as Silk City since the main profession of the people is weaving silk sarees. The silk weavers of Kanchi settled more than 400 years ago and have given it an enviable reputation as the producer of the best silk sarees in the country.

Its economy is entirely dependent on tourism and the well-established handloom industry. Kanchipuram has thousands of handlooms and skilled weavers that make its silk sarees one of the best in the entire world. About 75% of the city's population are associated with the handloom industry in some way. About 75% of Kanchipuram's population is dependent on the Silk Saree industry, either directly or indirectly. Yet, the city does not manufacture Silk or any other raw material that goes into its silk sarees. The Silk industry is entirely made up of Handloom weavers and merchants.

The Kanchipuram Silk Saree is hand-woven with dyed silk yarn with interleaved designs made with 'Zari' - a Silk thread twisted with a thin Silver wire and then gilded with pure Gold. Technically, the silk thread used for weaving Kanchipuram Sarees is made up of three single threads twisted together. Woven from pure mulberry silk and have an enviable reputation for texture, lustre, durability and finish. Hence, the Kanchipuram Silk Saree is usually stronger (and more expensive) than its counterparts from Arni, Dharmavaram, etc. However, the designs on the Saree itself are what brings it the fame.

The sarees in dazzling colours are available in every imaginable design and variety, which can make the job of selection quite challenging. To compare with other silk sarees, the Kanchipuram silk sarees are very famous in the world.

SILK HANDLOOMS UNDER THE CO-OP SECTOR

The all India handloom board extends assistance to the silk co-op at present a loan of Rs 250/- is given to each weaver to enable him to pay the share capital and become a member. This amount has to be repaid in 04 years. A loom of Rs 500/- is issued for each loom towards the working capital to purchase furniture, appliances etc. The Sivaraman committee appointed by the

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46 Ganapathy Palanithurai, R Ramesh – Globalisation issues at the grassroots.
The government of India has recommended that 60% of the handloom weavers should be brought under the co-op sector to enable them to carry on the industry on profitable lines.\footnote{Taimni KK (1994)- Creating a favourable climate and condition for co-operation development in asia, enterprise and co-operative development ,ILO,Geneva.}

It also recommended the following:

(a) Revitalisation of the existing co-op societies and activisation of idle looms in the societies.

(b) Formation of a network of new weavers co-op societies at all important weavers centre.

(c) Setting up 200 industrial weavers co-op societies to provide employment to looms weaver in the state.

CLASSIFICATION OF WEAVERS

Silk weavers are classified as \footnote{R S Gandhi, Y C Mahta and A B Table- Decentralised sector of the Indian textile industry , NICTAS , Ahmedabad 1992.}

(a) Weavers who are members of Co-op societies and work for them.

(b) Weavers who work for agencies other than Co-op societies.

(c) Independent weavers who work o their own account.

% Distribution of weavers

\begin{verbatim}
   (a) Independent weavers       0 9.70 %
   (b) Weavers working under master weavers  46.79 %
   (c) Weavers working in the handloom factories  16.51 %
   (d) Weavers working in the co-op sector     27.00%

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   100 %
\end{verbatim}

The handloom industry TN may be divided into organised sector represented by primary weavers, co-op societies and an apex society and unorganised sector comprising of independent weavers, master weavers with weavers working under them and weavers in the handloom factories.\footnote{Rama Mohana Rao- Development of handloom industries , Discovery publishing house, New Delhi 1990.}

Independent weavers are those who work on their own account. They purchase raw materials from the master weavers or from the traders and sell the finished products directly to the consumers or the merchants.
The master weavers supply yarn and other inputs to their weavers. The barons are those master weavers who possess 50 or more looms under their control. The wage weavers produce cloth according to the specification given by the master weaver for agreed wages. The master weavers arrange for marketing the finished goods and they get lions share of the profit. The master weavers have a powerful control over the wage weavers they give cash advances, dwelling places etc. The relationship between the master weaver and the wage weaver have feudal characteristics. The master weaver keep the wage weavers like bonded labourers. The wage weavers find it difficult to come out of the clutches of the master weavers needless to say the weaver is completely at the mercy of the master weaver.  

Intermediary master weaver are those who own a few looms each they get raw materials and other inputs from big master weavers and engage workers out of the wage received from master weavers they appropriate a major share.

Co-op weavers are better paid compared to other types of weavers for these weavers raw materials and other inputs are supplied by the co-op societies.

TECHNO-ECONOMICS OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

Technology, and the economic benefit a given technology offer are crucial aspects in studying any livelihood proposition. This is based on the premise that any livelihood endeavour involves technology application which is otherwise known as putting to use certain physical assets. Handloom weavers use very traditional technology – hand operated looms. They are applauded on three counts, viz, (i) zero use of electric power, (ii) rich in providing employment opportunity and (iii) setting up a loom does not require big financial investment. The main drawback are poor productivity and meager production, and every thing associated with it such as high unit cost of production, high price, poor wages for labourers and so on.

Technology Description

In terms of technology there are at least five versions of looms available in Tamil Nadu which can be called ‘technologies of handloom weaving’. They are:

(1) Pit Looms,
(2) Frame Looms,
(3) Jacquard Looms,
(4) Nepal Looms,
(5) Nepal Loom semi-automated.

50 The warp and weft, Indian hand woven textiles, HERO Exporters Directory, 1991-92, Madras PP 5-10
Pit Loom: Wooden frame loom set up with a pit on the ground for the man to get down and do the pedaling. It requires pedaling by legs and pulling a string by hands. It is known for the balance it gives while weaving and it is still the least cost option.

Frame Loom: Wooden frame loom set up above the ground level. It requires two parapet walls on either side where the weaver sits. The rampart walls are meant to hold the loom frames and accessories. This is also pedaled for carrying out weaving. It also requires pedaling by legs and pulling a string by hands. It is a little costlier compared to Pit looms because of the need to construct parapet walls. It’s advantage is there is no need to dig pits inside the house. It is suitable for rented houses.

Jacquard Loom: This is a modified form of Pit loom (or sometimes it is done in frame looms also). The extra fitting is at the top of the loom where design cards are held. The design cards (made from thick card boards or from plastic) serve to produce different designs. The design can be changed by changing the jacquard card / design card.

Nepal Loom: Perhaps, the birth place of this loom could be Nepal. This loom is made from iron rods and iron wheels. The structure is same like that of the frame loom. But, there is little use of wooden frames. This looks almost a miniature model of a power loom minus the use of electric power.

Nepal Loom Automated: This is Nepal loom with a ¼ HP or ½ HP motor attached to it. Strictly speaking this cannot be brought under handloom (Baby Power Loom?). However, attaching electric motor to Nepal loom is a local fabrication by the weaver in order to ease the drudgery involved in handloom weaving. In terms of productivity no handloom would compare even 30 per cent of the performance / out put of power loom. Whereas, Nepal semi automated loom does. It matches up 80% with power looms.