HANDLOOM TEXTILE INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT POLICY: A STUDY OF TWO DISTRICTS IN WEST BENGAL

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Certified that the Thesis entitled "Handloom Textile Industry and Government Policy: A Study of Two Districts in West Bengal" submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Dr. Kamaran M.K. Mondal, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

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Content

Preface

Handloom weaving unfolded the artistic genius of the Indian weavers not only in colour scheme, but also in formal designs, geometry, texture and durability. The weavers not only weave with yarn, but also weave with intense feeling and emotion. In the pursuit, the weaver is more concerned in creating beauty rather than merely providing with the requirement of clothing. The weaver is primarily an artist and then a technician in the craft**.** Hand weaving is the primary link between agriculture and industry. Primitive men started their first industrial activity by weaving fibres of trees and hairs of animals for making cloth for themselves. In due course of time, they learnt how to cultivate cotton or make silk for the purpose of weaving their dress materials. Hand spinning and weaving is the second important art of human civilisation after agriculture. West Bengal had a great heritage of cotton textile industry from the very ancient period of time. This work was traditionally done by rural artisans, where they reflected their hope, aspiration and their life style through their design, the brilliant mix of colours which is admired all over the world.

Tracing the origin of handloom weaving of Nadia is a very difficult task. It can be said that the art of weaving commenced in Santipur even before the arrival of Lord Chaitanya. Most probably the weaving activity started during the early 15th century during the regime of Gaur Ganesh Danu Mardhandev. The time of origin of cotton manufacturing industry in Purba Bardhaman District is partly unknown because of scarcity of proper reliable data, but according to Handloom Development Office, Chinsurah, the Bardhaman cluster was mainly growing since 1942. This cluster has 48407 handlooms. Weavers of Yogi Community were traditionally efficient in lungi, gamcha and matha shari production. People of Basak Community are traditionally efficient in producing fine shari. But nowadays with the decline of handloom made lungi, gamcha and chittaranjan shari and growth of power loom in this sector, Yogi are engaging themselves in tangail shari and jamdani shari production. These efficient weavers were migrated from Nowakhali, Tangail, Dhaka districts (at present under Bangladesh) before and after partition of India and settled in different parts of Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts.

Handloom weaving enjoyed the patronage of Indian ruler since Maurya regime. With the increase of demand of handloom products in India and abroad, complexities in the methods of organizations and operations were also grown. Royal power extended its help, protection and patronage for the smooth functioning and development of the handloom. During the Mughal rule handloom textile of India became the main item of foreign trade all over the world. As British Government took charge of Indian administration, royal patronage abolished for handloom textile industries. Weavers became independent. To mediate between European traders and weavers, mahajani system was emerged. British Parliament passed an Act in 1700 which forbidden the import of Indian silk and printed calicos in Britain to promote their textile industry.

After independence Government of India formed different commissions, and Committees to know the conditions of handloom textile industry in India. These commissions made different recommendations and government took various policies. The most important policy is National Textile Policy 1985, which recommended for the reservation of handloom products. After the Spread of COVID-19 handloom textile industry faces unprecedented challenges. There is a need of survival of handloom specialization in production and designs for different occasions and different tests. The absence of systematic and organized marketing facilities and scarcity of yarn compelled independent weavers to get into the traps of mahajans and money lenders.

All fibers are treated as equal under GST be it natural fiber or synthetic fiber. Now weavers have to pay GST at every stage from procuring yarn to dyeing the cloth, or any other processes the product passes to become marketable. The price of the finished product would therefore be considerably higher, bringing down the competitiveness of the handloom products in the market. As a result, GST is negatively impacting weavers, master weavers, cooperatives, retailers, suppliers and ancillary workers. Earlier weavers used to get yarn on credit from traders, mahajans and master weavers. However, to pay GST on yarn, the weavers will have to buy yarn against payment. This is very problematic for maximum poor weavers. Lack of proper guidance, training and knowledge about the current fashion and trend of the market are another problem, which led to insufficient and inappropriate diversification of the products.

Marketing policy should aim at encouraging only the production of those items which can sell without rebate and would be able to make profits. To bring more weavers under the umbrella of co-operative societies, those working at present with mahajans and master weavers, shall have to be approached. As the products of utility and high artistic value, handloom textiles of West Bengal are looked upon by people throughout the world. In order to popularize the products of handloom weavers, systematic advertisement through electronic media, website, social media and expositions should be resorted. Besides, the private traders and the Government agencies may also collect orders for exploring the foreign markets, which will help survival and development of handloom textile industry of the state.

The handloom products of these districts have good reputation and in recent years, product diversification in the handloom industry has opened new opportunities for their export abroad. This industry, with its environment friendly production trend, requirement of low capital input, demand for human skill and manual labour is suitable for densely populated districts. Thus, this paper analyses that partition of the country as far as employment of people are concerned, handloom industry proved most important for these two districts.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Statement of the Theme:

Hand weaving is the primary link between agriculture and industry. Primitive men started their first industrial activity by weaving fibres of trees and hairs of animals for making cloth for themselves. With the time being, they learnt how to cultivate cotton or make silk for the purpose of weaving their dress materials. Hand spinning and weaving is the second important art of human civilization after agriculture. It is perhaps impossible to assign the origin of any of the useful art like weaving, upon which necessities and comforts of mankind depend to any particular nation or race. Any attempt to do so will prove to be unsatisfactory.

The earliest records of the art of weaving are found in the Old Testament, where frequent hints are made to the loom and its products, of curtains of fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet, with depiction of angel by skilled work. It is believed the earliest historical depiction to the art. The oldest remains of woven material that have hitherto been discovered were found some years ago in the ancient Swiss lake dwelling, which are believed to have belonged to the stone era. Abundant evidence of fishing-gear, consisting of cord, hooks were found. The remains of a kind of cloth, which appeared to be of flax, not woven but plaited, have been detected. Within the last few centuries nearly the whole surface of that portion of the earth which was unknown to our ancestors has been explored, and many races of men have been found that were not known even some decades ago. Nearly all of them were found to have more or less skill in weaving and spinning, mat-making, plaiting, netting, and the making of paper cloth. Since they have become acquainted with civilized nations, they have been able to obtain better and more suitable articles than they could possibly make for themselves, and, in consequence, they neglect their own mode of manufacture. But there are numerous specimens of their workmanship in various ethnographical museums, as well as the descriptions given by travellers the methods adopted for the production of such articles that they were accustomed to their own use. There was a great resemblance in the method of working amongst the various tribes (Soundarapandian 2002: 4-5).

West Bengal had a great heritage of cotton textile industry from the very ancient period of time. This work was traditionally done by rural artisans, where they reflected their hope, aspiration and their life style through their design, the brilliant mix of colours which is admired all over the world. Government of West Bengal in its annual report of 2016-17 mentioned, that it has identified three circuits (Purulia-Bankura-Bishnupur, Kalna-Katwa-Nabadwip-Shantipur and Uttar Dinajpur-Dakhin Dinajpur-Malda) to develop market opportunities for tourism, handloom and handicraft products. The second circuit is my study area.

Tracing the origin of handloom weaving of Nadia is a very difficult task. It can be said that the art of weaving commenced in Santipur even before the arrival of Lord Chaitanya. Most probably the weaving activity started during the early 15th century during the regime of Gaur Ganesh Danu Mardhandev. Sari weaving became popular in the 2nd half of 17th century during the period of the then Nadia king Rudra Roy. The production became systematic and well organized during Mughal rule. The British controlled the industry through the East India Company. Those weavers protested against discriminatory British policies faced brutal punishment. The control of East India Company ceased to exist with the interference of the Governor General. After partition, handloom of Fulia area grows fastest in comparison to other parts of the district; even Fulia is the sole region of the district, where handloom is flourishing today. Nadia district has two handloom zones namely The Santipur Handloom Zone and The Nabadwip Handloom Zone (Poddar 2015).

Shantipur zone have 95200 weavers, 230 Primary weavers Cooperative Societies (PWCS). Within this zone, Ranaghat 1 and 2 block, and Ranaghat Municipality are famous for production of coarse sari, *lungi gamcha*, furnishing fabric. On the other hand, *tangail shari, jamdani shari, santipuri shari*, dhoti, dress materials and exportable fabrics are produced in Santipur block including Santipur and Fulia municipalities and adjoining areas (Report of Handloom Development office, Shantipur: 2022).

There are 48916 handlooms, 65125 weavers 203 P.W.C.Ss. in Nabadwip zone. Within this zone, Nababwip municipality and Nabadwip block mainly produce *jamdani sari*, coarse *shari, lungi*, *gamcha,* shirting. On the other hand Nakashipara and Krishnanagar 1 and 2 blocks and adjoining areas of Rajapur mainly produce jamdani sari, towels, and exportable fabrics (Report of Handloom Development Office 2022).

The time of origin of cotton manufacturing industry in Purb Bardhaman District is partly unknown because of scarcity of proper reliable data, but according to Handloom Development Office, Chinsurah, the Bardhaman cluster was mainly growing since 1942. This cluster has 48407 handlooms (Handloom Census 2019-20). The weaving work is mainly done by two communities namely *Yogi* and *Basak* communities. Weavers of Yogi Community were traditionally efficient in *lungi, gamcha and matha shari* production. People of *Basak* Community are traditionally efficient in producing fine shari. But nowadays with the decline of handloom made *lungi, gamcha* and *chittaranjan shari* and growth of power loom in this sector, *Yogi* are engaging themselves in *tangail shari and jamdani shari* production. These efficient weavers were migrated from Nowakhali, Tangail, Dhaka districts (at present under Bangladesh) before and after partition of India and settled in Katwa, Dhatrigram Samudragarh, Purbasthali-1 block of Purba Bardhaman District.

This renowned cluster of Bengal is full of small weavers, master weavers, P.W.C.Ss weavers, individual private weavers, skilled designers, various technical people who make computerized card and also "National Awardees Weavers". Though the main products of this cluster are jamdani and tangail sari with jacquard design but there are product variations from one block to another, they are as follows: a) Katwa-1 and Katwa 2 blocks, the main production is gamcha, lungi, and 100s tasar tangail sari with buti design, number of weavers 2643. b) Purbasthali -1 and Purbasthali –2 blocks have highest concentration of weavers with product diversifications, such as 100s *tangail jamdani*, cotton *baluchuri* with jacquard design, 100s *tangail naksapar*, *jamdani* shari using jacquard, gamcha, lungi, skarf, home furnishing materials etc, 12529 weavers are engaged here. c) The main product of kalna-1 block is 100s *tangail* shari with jacquard, with 4988 weavers (Handloom Census 2019-20).

Historical Background of Handloom Textile Industry in India

Various types of textiles were produced in various parts of the world. Linen is produced from the fiber of linseed tree was developed in coastal Europe. Wool most probably developed in colder areas of the world. It is believed that woollen fibers were first developed in Middle East, Afghanistan and Kashmir valley. Cotton fibers were most developed in India and Peru, simultaneously. One of the oldest known specimens of spun cotton yarn was found in the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, a city in the Indus Valley was deserted around 3000 B.C. The irony is that, the word "Cotton" is derived from the Arabic word "Qutun" or "Kutun,", but Arabian countries were not the origin of cotton. It might be because Arab was on the route when Indian cotton textiles were exported to Europe (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 1-8).

Silk, is considered as the most precious, and of all textiles were produced in and around China nearly 5000 years back. But this relates to Mulberry silk. On the other hand it seems all other varieties were developed in India. All the types of textiles were produced in and around Asian continent. India makes greatest contribution in textile sector in respect of quality, style, variety and so on. Indian handloom weaving has developed right from fishing nets to muslin, or baluchuri or benarasi or ikat or jamdani etc. Perhaps due to such route of development traditional reputed handloom textile are found flourishing either close to coastal belt or on banks of major rivers (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 49-54).

Before the discussion of gradual development of handloom textile industry in India, we should discuss the definition of handloom. A handloom is a loom that is used to weave cloth by hand. In other word handloom is a loom where weaving is done without the use of electric or automatic machine. Hand weaving is on pit looms, frame looms and stand looms generally located in weavers' houses. Weaving is primarily the interlacing of two sets of yarn- the warp (length) and the weft (width). The device that facilitates this interlacing is the loom. It important to mention that "handloom" is different from "power-loom", is a type of loom that is powered mechanically by electric instead of using human power to weave thread into cloth. The power loom is a invention that combined threads to make cloth. Power loom are assembled in the weaving shed of mill and driven by electric motor by belts from overhead shafting. Power loom is a major advancement over the handloom (Development Commissioner Department of Small Scale Industries, Government of India 1995:11-13).

Indus Valley Civilization: During excavation work at Mohenjo-Daro, it was realized that an Urban Civilization, known as Indus Valley Civilization, was in existence in this area around 3000 B.C. Although there is no exact proof of dress of Indus people, however spindles and spindle whorls found during the excavations proves that spinning of cotton and wool was very common at that time. There was evidence to make us belief that the art of spinning of cotton and wool was known to Indus people. Some dyeing vessels have been found in the debris of the Civilization, which proved that they also knew the art of Dyeing yarn (Soundarapandian 2002: 4-5).

Vedic Period: Spinning and weaving were highly advanced occupations in Rig-veda society. Their weavers were busy weaving cotton and woollen fabrics and there were others who did the work of dyeing and embroideries. There were female weavers called "Vayitris" and "Siris". The term "Vasas, "Vasana" and "Vastra" refer to Gangetic Cotton manufacturers, woollen thread called "Verna Sutra" is mentioned in the later Samhita and Brahmanas. There are reference used by men and women, sandals made of boar-skin, cotton, woollen, and silk clothes, dyed and embroidered clothes (Nambiar 2013: 12-15).

Mauryan Period: Alexander the Great crossed the Indus river and moved on to the Indian Plains in 326 B.C. and died in 323 B.C. in Babylon. The Maurya Empire covered all of North India from Ganges to the Indus and into the Hindu Kush mountains. The Greek historian Herodotus, wrote about the India in 445 B.C. They process a kind of wild plant, instead of fruit produces a wool of a finer, better quality than that of sheep, and of this the Indians made clothes. He was obviously referring to cotton, and another Greek writer of the same century mentioned the bright colours of these printed fabrics and their popularity with the women of the eastern Mediterranean. It is believed that this period marks the stabilization of costume design in India. During this period, costumes became regional or zonal in character, royalty, soldiers, priests and other professions were given distinctive costumes (Soundarapandian 2002: 5).

Greek Influence: Bacterian, Greeks, Parthians, Kushans and Shakes influenced the Indian dress, as depicted on their coins. One of their goddesses is shown wearing a close-fitting long-sleeved bodice or tunic for the upper part of the body and trousers. A typical shari arrangement is found in the images of Greco-Buddhist, Heritage both from north-west and from Mathura. When Alexander invaded India in 327 B.C. he was impressed by our advancement. He took back with him some of our printed cottons as well as many of our finely woven silks, comparable to those of the master weavers of China, though the manner of decoration was similar to that of Persia (Soundarapandian 2002: 5-9).

When the Mohammedans invaded India in 711 A.D. they were intrigued by Indian painted and printed cotton fabrics. The famous ancient Indian fabrics include *mulmulkhas* (king's muslim), *jamdani* (figured muslin), *banarasi brocade, chand-tara, dhupchhaon, mapcher, morgala, manikar, jamaiwar, amilkar* (all *shawals*), *kashida, phulkar, bagh, makmal*, and other fabrics (Kumar and Ganesh 2014: 3-5).

Indian Brocades: Brocade is a king o weave and is also called embroidery made on a loom. The background may be taffeta, twill, stain or damask, usually of one colour or with a warp stripe to contrast with multi- coloured floral pattern. *Banarasi* brocade, the "fabric of dreams" is known as *kinknab*. These silk fabrics have coloured silk or gold threads interwoven to from the most attractive floral designs. The Indian brocades were made with gold and silver thread interwoven with silk threads or cotton silk blended yarns though they were earlier made entirely from fine gold or silver threads. *Himrus* are brocaded silk with cotton or wool blended with silk (Soundarapandian 2002: 5-9).

Handloom was set up in the houses or outhouses of weavers. Materials of weaving were generally produced by the artisans or with the assistance of neighbour with locally available goods. Weaving was often a subsidiary and seasonal profession and weavers used to move from plough to loom and vice-versa. With due course of time, it also gradually developed as market-oriented production to meet the needs of aristocracy, particularly the royal needs. Opening of the sea-borne trade route with countries of Asia and Europe provided a new avenue to the handloom weaving of India. The industry reached its excellence During Mughal period due to the royal patronage and supervision over production and quality (Das 2001: 14-15).

Variety of Indian Textile

Perhaps India is the country which has maximum contribution in textile, especially in handloom textile to the world. India has the finest textile like muslin, brightest textile like silk, cheapest textile like jute and strongest textile like ramie. Even today Indian handloom and spinning wheel contributes maximum variation of designs and products. We should discuss some varieties of Indian handloom.

Linen: Linen is a kind of textile given to us by an oil yielding plant called Linseed. In India, the plant is generally known as atasi in Sanskrit and most of the Indo-Aryan dialect. At present India is the second largest producer of linen. Although it is generally produced for its oil seeds and for the fibre. In India Linseed is rarely cultivated artificially. Although India has less yield in comparison to main producing countries, but Indian linen fiber has superior quality. This fiber is obviously coarse and hares. However they can be spun for being used for twins or for being woven into bags. It can also be woven into floor coverings, carpets, wall hangings and bed spreads. If appropriately designed value added items can be produced. Since oil seed is the target in India, we have no mother scope than to think about products from these coarser fibers from linseed since better fiber can be obtained before the seeds are matured. The spinnable quality of this flax are said to be lower than those of jute. It is highly lustrous, due to the wax which it contains. The wax imparts to it better spinning properties. The fiber is extremely strong twice or thrice as strong as cotton. It takes all dyes easily. It is a good absorbent and resists effects of mildew and moisture. Fabrics made from it lauder well.' India should give more importance to linen production. If proper planning is done we may cultivate linen flax in colder areas and oil seed in the hot areas and increase its production and export (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 1-9).

Ramie Textile: Ramie is indigenous to Japan, China and adjoining countries. We find its use in India from the ancient time. Ramie is known as *reha, pooah, puya, kawkura, kankura kurkunda* in different parts of India in different names. In early Sanskrit literature it is often mentioned as grass linen. Kalidas and Valmiki (writer of Indian epic Ramayana) had frequently mentioned the cloth made out of this fiber. The plant of ramie is neglected in India, because it grows wild in plenty particularly in North Eastern part of India, particularly in Assam but India has favourable soil and climate condition for its well production. The complicated processes and high price of production are responsible for its insufficient share in textile market. In Assam attempts are taken to blend ramie with eri silk. Attempts up to limited extent were also taken by a few textile producers in India to blend ramie with various kinds of fibers. Ramie and wool blended blankets are found to be extremely good which gives a very soft feeling. Ramie or waste fibers can be very good raw material for the production of paper. If proper action is taken, at least in the area where it grows, it may be proved as an important fiber for textile producers (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 12-15).

Cotton Textile: India's pride in textile is mostly on cotton, especially on handloom cotton. In Sanskrit cotton is often called Bharatwaj, Karpas, Tula, or Karpas etc. The English ward "Cotton" is derived from Arabic word "Qutun" or "Kutun" though cotton was never cultivated in Arabian countries. At present handloom cotton centres in India are in a morbid condition. Even coarse cotton products by Indian handloom weavers were very excellent. The quitted fabric called Laisingphee, produced by Manipuri women artisans are excellent in respect of design, warmth and strength. It cannot be imitated by most modern textile mills. Not only shari, Indian cotton handloom products varieties are of gamcha, curtain cloths, bed sheets, bed covers, dress materials, scarf etc. The cotton yarn spun by women and woven by male and female artisans are so excellent in style and design, as if each cloth is painted with care separately.

Handloom weaving unfolded the artistic genius of the Indian weavers not only in colour scheme, but also in formal designs, geometry, texture and in durability. The weaver not only weaves with yarn, but also weaves with intense feeling and emotion. In the pursuit, the weaver is more concerned in creating beauty rather than merely providing with the requirement of clothing. The weaver is primarily an artist and then a technician in the craft. His designs in the fabrics reveal all the development of folk art. Even with all his or her skills artistry with all technological development, the handloom industry in India has been constantly plagued by the twin problems of irregular employment and low wages, leaving the weaver and his dependents in dire distress with hand to mouth existence.' To resolve the problems faced by handloom weavers, Central Government and many state Governments have established various organizations and various measures has been taken by both central government and state governments (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 30).

Muslin: The word muslin came from the name of the city of Mosul, situated in Iraq. This city claimed as the home of muslin, because Aran traders exported muslin to Europe from Mosul. Dhaka in Bengal presidency (Now in Bangladesh) and Masulipatnam in Madras Presidency, were known as the production site of exotic muslins in the Muslim rule. Some scholars also argue that the term muslin might came from the word Masulipatnam. But there are historical proof that Pharaohs of ancient Egypt used muslins to cover mummies and the Roman historian Pliny, mentioned that jhanna muslins were used by higher rank Roman ladies in Imperial Rome. There were varieties of muslins during Mughal period in India. The product named as Sarkar-E-Ala was used for turbans of Mughal Emperors. Imperial Rome also liked and imported muslins with gold and silver embroideries. The varieties of Dhaka muslins were named as Kasidah, Qutun-E-Rumi, Nanbati, Yahudi, AlizolhaandSamandar-Lahar.

Although perhaps not so fine as legendary fabric a piece of muslin brought from India (to England) about the year 1786 AD, proved conclusively that the hand works of that country could produce a yarn and fabric of exquisite fineness. Comparing the yarn with modern standards the yarn number was 250. The length of one pound of 250 count yarn would approximately 119 miles just to give an idea about its extreme fineness' (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 36). Indian muslin was very fine and costly. It is reported that fine muslin produced in and around Kendrapada and Jagatsingpur of Orissa was exported through Balasore port.

Woollen Textile: Wool is known as "Pasham" in India and develops in colder areas like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, hills of West Bengal, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, and few places of Central and Western India. Generally, wool is spun from hair of various types of sheep and woven into various types of fabrics usually meant for winter season or cold climate. In India sheep wool is spun by drop spindle mostly in Kashmir, hills of Uttar Pradesh, foot hill of Himachal Pradesh and Eastern and North Eastern h8ills. The spinning is done by women as their subsidiary occupation. Wool of four ply was used for knitting purpose also by women with the help of knitting sticks. After independence, wool textile industry, especially handloom woollen weaving was developed with the active assistance of Khadi and Village Industries Commission. Bageswari Charka was first developed for hand spinning of wool in hill areas of Uttar Pradesh. New Charka developed then, and process of development still going on. (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 46).

Woollen carpet weaving was traditionally known in Kashmir and few places of Arunachal Pradesh. *Crapas* cotton of these areas is very popular. Carpet weaving is spreading in fastest speed in last few decades in Indian conventional and non-conventional regions. Non-traditional areas like Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, where carpet weaving was unknown became one of the important sources of employment to weavers. After Iran banned production of *carpas* in their country, India became principal carpet exporter in the World.

Silk Handloom Textile: India ranks third in silk production after China and Japan. All varieties of silk (Muga, Eri, Mulberry and Tassar) are produced in India. In the First to Fourth Century AD silk was used mainly by royal and elite people in India. Initially sericulture grew under royal patronage. Mogul Samrats encouraged silk weaving in North India. Tipu Sultan patronized silk in the state of Karnataka. Sericulture and silk weaving in undivided Bengal was developed under thepatronise of Nawabs of Murshidabad. In North East and Assam silk grew naturally. British emperor encourages silk production in India since British were able to profit out of silk selling in European markets.

India's share is more than 7 per cent in world silk production. In general, production of Mulberry silk production in India has been increasing. Indian silk production was 900 metric Ton in 1951 and in 1981 the production reached 5000 Metric Ton. In respect of Mulberry silk in India, Karnataka's share is about 63 per cent and west Bengal's share is about 12 per cent. The remaining 25 per cent silk is produced in the rest of the country. In Karnataka main districts of silk production are Kolar, Bangalore, Mandya, Tumkar, and Mysore. Andhra Pradesh is fast increasing silk production. In Tamil Nadu sericulture was originally confined to Dharampuri and Coimbatore districts but later spreaded to Ramnadhampuram and other districts. In UP the main silk producing area is Doon Valley. Ganjam,Gajapati and Kalahandi districts are main silk producing area. In West Bengal main silk producing districts are Maldah, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Nadia. In Assam Mulberry cocoon rearing was traditionally grown in Shibsagar district. In Manipur silk producing areas are Laimran, Khur, Khul, Sekhmai Fayang etc (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 62-65).

Baluchuri: In 14th or 15th century, during Moghol rule a group of experienced handloom silk weavers from Banaras migrated to Bengal and settled in a villege named Baluchar near Jiaganj in Murshidabad District of Bengal. The term "char" means a land or delta created due to track change of a river. Here Baluchar village is created out of the track change of Bhagirathi River. These weavers were patronized by Nawabs and Nobles to manufacture dresses exclusively for them. The weavers used to produce special type of clothes for Nawabs throughout the year. The average productivity was two to three sharis per family per year (Chowdhury 2014: 9-10).

East India Company patronized the weavers as long as silk shari export to Europe was a high profitable business to them. With the introduction of British mill made cloth in India, gradually it was difficult for those famous weavers to survive. At the same time their village Baluchar was washed away by Bhagirathi river and they were forced to migrated to Jiaganj and other places of Murshidabad district. The lack of government patronage and natural calamities forced this group of handloom weavers to desert this famous profession and with the passage of time the famous art of Baluchuri weaving faced the prospect of abolition (Chowdhury 2014: 9-11).

After independence Central Government tried to revive this art in West Bengal and South India but could not achieve much success. Around 1956 AD Sri Akshay Kumar Das, a designer of Government of India's Textile Design Centre, Sri Hanuman Das Sarda, Chief Organiser, Silk Khadi Seva Mandal Vishnupur tried to revive Baluchurishari weaving at Vishnupur sub-division of Bankura district in the state of West Bengal. With the subsidy by the Design Centre of Government of India, Silk Khadi Seva Mandal of Vishnupur was able to produce first Baluchuri shari in the year 1957. Since ancient process of production of shari production was time consuming which caused escalation of cost of each shari, it became difficult for getting market. To overcome higher production cost Jacquard loom was introduced with punched designs which ensured higher production, higher wage with low production cost. There is a lot of difference in the quality of classical Baluchuri and modern Baluchuri. The modern Baluchuri produced with the help of Jacquard does not hot have reversible design with fineness (Chowdhury 2014: 14-18).

Ikat Art and Handloom Textile of Orissa: Weavers are generally called 'Tanti' in Oriya, a term derived from 'Tant', meaning handloom. This Oriya term has a similarity with Bengali term 'Tanti', means weaver and 'Tant' means handloom. In Orissa handloom are concentrated in the districts of Sambalpur, Bolangir, Phulbani, Puri, Cuttack, Balasore, Nuapatna, and coastal Orissa. Before British rule in India, handloom weaving of Orissa was flourished due to royal patronage. Coastal Orissa was famous for fine muslin cloth, Nuapatan and western Orissa for silk. The cloths of Orissa had international reputation and usually exported to Arab, Iran, Egypt, Pegu Malaya, Sumatra, Java and Europe.

The handloom weavers of Orissa are famous for their expertise and are capable of producing cloth of unique design locally known as 'Bandha', (tie and dye design). Along with Orissa Gujrat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh are also famous for ikat shari production. Weavers of Orissa mainly produce single ikat unlike double ikat of Gujrat. Ikat is the international name for tie and dye. The term originally derived from a Malayan word and tie and dye handloom weaving still continue in Malaysia and Indonesia. The first book on ikat or tie and dye was written by Marie-Louise a lady from Switzerland. In her book named "*Ikat* weaving from Southern Europe", she said '*Ikat* is a Malayan word and refers to a technique for producing pattern in a fabric by partly – dyeing the thread before weaving. The textile consumer will be familiar with the art from the numerous example found among Indonesian woven fabrics, but it is not commonly known that this complicated rescue process is also practiced in some parts of Europe' (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 165).

The Orissa weavers in general and weavers of western Orissa in particular derive the design from their imagination without paper design except in caseof complicated designs. We can say that Orissa's *ikat* designs are more indigenous, in comparison to Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. The uniqueness of any *ikat* design is that, it produces some prominent design on both sides of cloth. This is primarily because the design is on the base fabric and the yarn is dyed instead of cloth. The second advantage is, this design does not require any extra yarn for creation of design. The common pictures of Orissa's *ikat shari* design are lotus and other flowers, fish, deer, creepers, elephant, lion, tiger etc.

There is also influence of Jagannath cult on ikat art of Orissa. Many of the designs are taken from the paintings and carvings of famous Jagannath temple of Puri. The difference dresses of Lord Jagannath like *Boirani, Baralagi, Pata, Geetgovinda, Khanduapata, Negpuri, Goda, Cheheli, Matha, Abakha, Tadap, Sasungapata* etc., are creation of weavers of Orissa. In Geetgovinda, Khenduapata the *Sanskrit sloke* are part of design which is unique feature of their talent. Notable varieties of Orissa's ikat *shari are chariphulia, bhanumati, bichitrapuri, nakhatrabhusana, panchabati, manihare, muktamala, bijoymala, priyatama, madhumati, padmasana rajashree*, etc. Weavers of Orissa are also famous for another design of handloom weaving called *muktapunji*. This design is usually created with a higher count yarn on a lower count base cloth on entire cross section of the cloth. The design resembles bunch of pearls, *mukta* means pearls, *punji* means bunches. Each weaver communities of Orissa are experts to create new world of handloom weaving if proper support of technology, design, dyeing and marketing of products be given. (Soundarapandian 2002: 40-42).

Handloom Textile of Nagaland: There are sixteen recognized talented tribes in Nagaland. Generally, it is said that all these tribes have almost similar textile technology in respect of design and production process. Detail study shows that, although base of the technology is more or less same, there is difference in production process and design. Nagas were considered as primitive people until renowned anthropologists Hutton, Mills discovered that how rich the heritage of those tribes was. Naga weavers depict rainbow design on shawls with density of yarn much higher than any handloom cloth of not only in India, but also anywhere of the World (Soundarapandian 2002:12).

The first step of handloom cotton textile is ginning, which is done by old Naga women. In other parts of India handloom weavers mainly use fly shuttle or throw shuttle loom, but Naga weavers use lions loom which in known as Indonesian Tension loom. Tribes like Ao Naga, Rengmas, Changs use printing in handloom cloth. Ao tribe also produce silk fiber. They produce silk cloth denser and superior in quality, suitable for cold areas. According to G.K. Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh, 'There was tradition of spinning and weaving using coarse wool too in some pockets. During yesteryears, Naga shawl woven out of wool having rainbow of colours and if we use one, we can not only full high standard of weaving but also comfort that reflects Naga hospitality. The spinning used to be done by *tuklee* (or spindle) and weaving by traditional lions loom, while the yarn was dyed by natural vegetable dye' (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 181).

Phee: The classical handloom textile of Manipur is phee. The land of gems, was known as Subarnabhumi in ancient India. Meithis (original inhabitant of Manipur) use hand-spun and hand-woven cotton febric as part of their traditional ritual. There are few places like Khonjam, Kakching etc. which are famous for superior quality of hand spun yarn. Perhaps Manipur is the only state in India where *tarang* or *charka* is still being sold in many big markets. This is one of the main reasons why handloom and *khadi* have good market in Manipur. Handloom operation was believed to be inevitable for Manipuri people during ancient period. They used to produce short staple cotton, ginning them by hand picking or by simple hand operated gins, rolling them into sliver by hand over a thin stick or grass, spinning them into yarn either by *tarang* or *charka* and finally weave them into cloth by lions loom.

Silk was introduced in Manipur during the rule of the powerful king Khagenba about thousand years ago. There are varieties of handloom made dress material in Manipur. *Fanek* is a piece of cloth (made out of cotton or silk) to go one and half times round the body; this gives free space for legs during walking. The famous textile of Manipur is laishen phee (laishen= cotton, phee = cloth). In this variety, cotton sliver is used alternatively in weft on which the warp runs creating a thick stuffed fabric with wavy surface. G.K. Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh, describe varieties of Manipuri handloom textile; such as *kemang chapta*, a white cloth with purple patterns of scrolls stamped on it by means of wooden blocks, which are believed to have been introduced by Chinese merchants around 1630 AD. *Phee-ge-napu* is an orange-coloured cloth which was meant for person of higher class. Now it is open to common people. *Gulap machu* is a rose-coloured silk cloth, of pretty pink shade was worn by privileged person who hole office or enjoy the royal favour. Now it is also used by common public. Use of turban or *pugree* was discontinued since last few decades. It is now used occasionally (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 199).

Dua and Puna: Handloom Textile of Mizoram: Mizo women can be identified in a crowded area through her *puna*. *Puna* is normally about a meter wide   and three to four meters long cloth. In the beginning it was only a thick white piece of cloth, now a days, it has many colours. There are varieties of *puna* like *puanhruih* or *negotekherh*, *puandum*: a dark black cloth, tawlhloh-puna: a cloth about two meters in length and about one and half metre in breadth with a white surface. Four black stripes made of four intertwined threads give a chain-like appearance to the stripes. *Disul* is another earliest known *puna* and is characterized by presence of number of triangular design with different colours. Thangchhuah-puna : a bigger puna in comparison to other *punas*, with surface background of various colours. It could be worn by those person who have achieved highly coveted position. *Puanchai* is by far, the most colourful of their *punas.* It is used in marriage and other ceremonies. There are other types punas, such as Thembupui-Chung, Par- Zam, Naya Swam Par, Arsi Par, Senior Kikiau, Sawhthing Par, Fangham Mu, Semit , Siki par, Zawngdaikalh, Zawngdaikalh Leh lace par, ZawngdaikalhChhunga Lace par (Kumar and Ganesh 2014: 65).

G.K. Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh, described, '….. Lakher man's dress is a loin cloth known as Dua, which are of two types. The Dua-Kalpa is for everyday use which is 3.5 meter long and half a meter wide. Dua-ah used exclusively during special ceremonies and occasions. This cloth is about 3.5 meters long and half a metre wide and worn almost in similar fashion as dua-kalpa. The cloth is an ordinary white cloth but at each end is seen on a metre length of dark blue cloth richly embroidered with patterns with different coloured silk' (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 16).

Handloom Textile of Tripura: Tripura is a small state of North –East India. The state has not heritage of fine handloom cloth like most of the big state of India. The handloom weavers of Tripura use Lions loom. The women weave only a few kinds of cloths such as *rini, basei, risa, pandari, kutai, rikatu, baki and kamchai*. *Rini* is used by women to cover their waist and breasts. *Risa* is a narrow but long piece of beautifully decorated and thickly woven cloth used to cover the breasts only. What is *pandri* to a man, the same piece of cloth is *rini* to a women. *Kamchi* is a turban made of an ordinary piece of cloth (Soundarapandian 2002: 42-45).

Textile of Arunachal Pradesh: Various Buddhist tribe and other tribes live in Arunachal Pradesh. Although there are some variations in weaving pattern among different tribes, basically they manufacture their cloth by yarn from short staple cotton, dye them with the help of vegetable dyes and weave them by lions loom. G.K. Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh, quoted from the book of " the Art of NEFA", written by Elwin Verrier, 'The design of the Kaman and Mismis are of extra ordinary variety. In a tour of Khamlang valley where everyone of five hundred inhabitants was clothed from head to foot in hand woven cloth , I hardly ever saw a pattern exactly duplicated. Many of the people have now forgotton the meaning of the designs, but a few of the elder men and women still had them in mind though their interpretations sometimes varied from village to village' (Ghosh and Ghosh 2017: 236). It is necessary to mention that Kaman and Mismis are two tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Singpos is another tribe, they not only wear beautiful dresses but they are capable of producing them too. Singpos women have the expertise of weaving, spinning acid dyeing. They also learnt the technique of reeling silk cocoons from the state of Assam. In general weavers of Arunachal Pradesh express their artistic expertise in weaving (Bag 1989 :32).

Types of handloom Functional in India

There are various types of handloom operated in India. These are as follows:

Pit loom: A pit loom is a loom where the weaver sits in a pit and operates the loom and the loom itself is fitted into the pit. The pedals for working the shedding motion (*tana*) are placed under the loom digging the floor. There are two types of simple pit looms. In case of first type of loom, where the shuttle (*maku*) which carries spindle (nail) and moves across the loom inserting the weft (*bain*). Yarn is thrown manually by the weaver from one side to another side with the help of a thread. In the second type of pit loom, the shuttle automatically flies from one side to another, with the movement of weft and slay. There may be other types of improved pit loom but above mentioned loom are mainly seen in India particularly in West Bengal (4^{th} Handloom Census: 53).

Pit Loom with Jacquard: To weave designed cloth jacquard machine is used and set up above the loom, this is called pit loom with jacquard. In this loom warp is controlled by a helper of weaver or draw by, in short Dobby. To make design on cloth a jacquard machine is used with the help of punch card made of paper. Punch cards are prepared according to the design of cloth.

Frame loom: An ordinary frame loom is fitted into a frame above the ground. Frame loom follows basically the same principles as pit loom fitted on the floor. The loom is originally made out of wood frame and frames are added with the help of nut bolts of iron. It looks like a box. It is portable and can be set anywhere with a higher roof room in comparison to pit loom of different types. Today frame looms are much larger with strong rectangular wooden frame, replacing earlier thin wooden frame. Still the frame loom shapes like large box or case. This can be easily moved, but is usually kept at one place on the ground with the weaver seated at a high bench. The frame loom is a very versatile loom and can make many kinds of fabrics, usually medium to course, and for such looms, production is faster than pit or lions loom (3rd Handloom Census: 7).

Frame Loom with Jacquard/ Dobby: The frame loom cab be fitted with jacquard machine for making embroidery or design on cloth. .In this loom warp is controlled by a helper of weaver or draw by, in short Dobby. To make design on cloth a jacquard machine is used with the help of punch card made of paper. Punch cards are prepared according to the design of cloth. Thus a frame loom with a Dobby or jacquard makes embroideries on hand woven fabrics such as sharis and other kinds of embroideries on cloths (3rd Handloom Census: 8).

Lion Loom: Lion looms are mostly found in the North-East India. This is a simple loom where one end of the loom is tied normally to the wooden log or any other thing like beam etc. while the other end is rested at the loin of the weaver. There is normally a belt tied around the waist of weaver to keep the frame tight. There is no pedal for the shedding movement, and every weaving motion is done by the both hands of weaver. Fabrics like *shawls*, *chaddars*, wall hangings and floor mate are woven on this loom.

Other Types of Handlooms: There is semi- automatic handloom in India. Some work like shedding, picking and beating or warp let off and cloth let off are done automatically in these types of loom. *chittaranjan* looms, *inchakaranji* looms, *malabar* looms are examples of semi-automatic loom operated in India.

Review of literature

Sailendrakumar Bag (1889) in his book, "The Changing Fortunes Of The Bengal Silk Industry 1757-1833", observed that during British rule (post-Plassey period) fluctuating market conditions, intermittent depression in the London silk market, mismanagement and reckless management on the part of the Company's factory *amlahs*, oppressive conduct on the part of the greedy *paikars*, and rapacious *zamindars*- all these things subjected the poor silk producers to much hardship and miseries. This adverse effects resulting from the decline of the silk industry in Bengal, were partially redressed by extension in the cultivation of indigo and sugar cane. During British rule, the agricultural economy of Bengal comes to be tied to the industrial economy of Great Britain. But in pre -Plassey period silk weavers were certainly not subjected to such an adverse situation of grave nature.

N.K. Meera (1997) in her thesis, “Gandhian Ideology, Swadeshi and the Working of the Handloom Industry in Coastal Andhra Region 1900-1950”, mentioned that textile production in the twentieth century dried up and cheap imports flooded the market. It is important that, though competition was rampant between the mills and the handloom sector, the Indian mills never resented the *khadi* propaganda. The researcher raised an important question whether handlooms’ products to be looked upon as consumer goods or as an ideology? It was demonstrated that *khadi* as an ideology was a panacea to all strata of society. Increasingly it was noticed that social horizon of weaver had also been widened with *swadeshi* and *khadi* movement. It was not expensive to produce the *khadi* cloth. But it was expensive to buy it, compared to mill cloth. In the modern period Gandhi’s *swadeshi* ideology of handloom weaving fulfilled more than one function in the political economy of India.

Ratan Khasnabis and Pranab Nag (2001) in their paper, “Labour Process in the informal sector: A Handloom Industry in Nadia District”, discussed the labour process from alienation point of view, theoretically such a study belong to Marx- Braverman Paradigm. The deskilling and separation between planning and execution happens in case of multi loom production units, especially under *mahajani* production system. This appears to have increased with the increase in the number of looms and not with the technological development. The technology in case of big owner is essentially the same as that of a small one-loom owner. There still exists the unity of conception and execution particularly with respect to the weaving workers with special skill and in case of one loom owner. The unique feature is that in many cases relations between employer and employee is not anonymous like modern capitalist system.

Subhashis Chakraborty (2014) in his book, “Banglar Tant Shilpa: Nadia JelarEkti Samiksha: 1947-2013” (in Bengali), tried to analyze weaving industry from socio-political, economic point of view since independence. As weavers are not able to reach the buyers so they face artificial crisis of selling. Cooperatives are not conducive to weavers as 80% of weavers are outside the umbrella of cooperatives. The apex body *Tantuja* has changed its policy, instead of buying products from cooperatives; it buys handloom products from open market and from *mahajans.* Role of Nadia District Central Cooperative Bank is not satisfactory in financing handloom. Fine cotton and silk weavers have to depend on south Indian states and Gujarat for yarn. Another problem of weaver is that West Bengal State Electricity Board creating pressure on weavers to treat electric connection of their house as commercial, because in maximum cases production site of handloom is adjoining to living room of weavers.

M Ramu (2010) in his Ph.D. thesis, "Growth of Handloom Industry in Chittoor District", made a comparative analysis between Eastern Mandals (region) and Western Mandals (region) regarding age group, male-female ratio, literacy, number of looms, alternative livelihood, marketing facilities, availability of raw materials, facilities of bank loans, wage, rent of production site, cost of transportation, variation of design, volume of production and cost of repairs. Majority of the weavers are ignorant of the Government schemes. He suggested the establishment of Hank Yarn deposit to ensure uninterrupted supply of yarn. He also suggested the increase of design of handloom sector. It is due to unwillingness of investors to take risks and provide incentives to the weavers for effecting the change. He recommended for the protection of handloom designs through registration under geographical indications act.

Subir Kumar Chowdhury (2012) in his Ph.D. thesis, "Handloom Industry: A study on the Problems and Prospects of Rural Industrialization in Bankura, West Bengal", analyzed socio-economic profile of artisans, organizational structure, financing, performance, problems and prospects of the handloom industry of Bankura District. Most of the proprietors act as weaver in their own loom. Most of them belong to O.B.C. community. Female enrolment in school is higher than male in the artisans' family. Nearly half of the households are landless. Non- Governmental financial investment organization like Rose Valley, Basil etc., are most popular among weavers. Here rate of female workers' participation is higher than that of male workers. The important point is that the rate of participation of old age population aged above 59 is high. Old people are engaged in pre-loom and post-loom activities such as sizing, warping, drafting and printing, etc. The researcher mentioned following problems of handloom industry of the District. Cost of raw material is very much higher than other variables cost and fixed overhead charges. The scarcity of finance and credit is the main handicap in the development of handloom industry. Much less comes from government channels and banks. Handloom is unparalleled in its flexibility and versatility.

K Srinivasulu (1996) in his paper, “1985 textile policy and handloom Industry Policy, Promises and Performance”, pointed out clear gap between the five years plans’ declarations, which identified employment generation as the foremost objective of economic planning, the NPT in contrast treated productivity and efficiency and market competitiveness as the priority. The irony is that, between the periods of 1980-81 to 1993-94, 85 lakh handlooms have been thrown out of production, due to inability to face competition from powelooms, but cotton handloom production in this period has doubled according to government record. This is because of the fact that Powerloom products are shown as handloom products. Whatever safeguards are provided to the handlooms (apparently as a matter of habit) are sought to be diluted through indifferences, delay and inactions in NTP 1985.

S Ganesh (2002) in his paper “Indian Textile Industry: Stifled by Warped Policies”, argued that government’s policies have systematically encouraged the fragmentation of the Indian textile industry. Extensive excise exemption/evasion has enabled the small units (power looms, instead of handlooms, for those excise exemption are provided) to obtain pre-eminence at the cost of organized mills, which can be the main sources of exports. He pointed out poor coordination between the textile and agricultural ministries. The textile ministry does not seem to have any deliberate policy for moving up from yarn exports into processed fabric exports. According to him Textile Ministry is in a millstone to maintain its distinct identity from the ministry of industry on the one hand and the ministry of commerce on the other. It is important to note that small units covered under the scheme account for around 65 per cent by number, but 8 per cent by value.

Seemanthini Niranjana, Annapurna M, B Syamasundari, LathaTummuru, Uzramma (2006) in their article, “Marketing Handlooms” argued that each handloom concentrated region is known for a specific products that is unique in design, style, modes and relations of production. In handlooms, traditional linkages between production and marketing of handlooms have been eroded, with no clear institutional replacement. They pointed out to the regulation crisis where existing institutions no longer secure a workable match between the production and consumption of goods. There are some alternative like big chain retail stores, NGOs seeking to set up market links etc. In case of marketing, several choices are made by the handloom organizations or firms which are influenced by market as well as non market parameters.

P Dharmaraju (2006) in his article, “Marketing in Handloom Cooperatives”, pointed out that initially, providing yarn at subsidized rates was the primary concern and latter marketing and other concern emerged. According to the manager of a successful cooperative, named Angara, the key behind success are close observation of the market trends, quality incorporating them in their production process, usage of fine quality of raw materials, no price discrimination between the customers based on their scale of purchase and no credit sale. The experience of Koyyalagudem (another successful cooperative) shows that though orienting production to exports may be beneficial in the short run, a long-term reliance on exports of cloth alone creates instabilities in demand, so it is also important for cooperatives to explore domestic markets much more proactively.

Sarada Mandal (2011) in her Ph.D. thesis entitled “An Appraisal Of The Silk-Weaving Industry of Bishnupur, West Bengal”, divided artisans in India as well as in West Bengal under two groups, one within *khadi* sector and another outside *khadi* sector. *Khadi* sector is under the Ministry of Micro, small and medium enterprises, Government of India and non-*Khadi* sector operates under the Ministry of Textile. In many cases, there is lack of consistency among the schemes introduced by both the ministries. She started with the situation of sericulture and silk weaving industry of the state. She also made a detailed analysis of the process of silk weaving, especially *baluchuri* weaving of Bishnupur. The socio-economic conditions of *baluchuri* weavers have been depicted. She mentioned some strength of *baluchury* industry. The author is concerned about big lacuna between the provision and the practical implementation of central governments’ and state governments’ schemes. For example, COOPTEX of Tamilnadu or APTEX of Andhra Pradesh is flourishing under close supervision of the state governments and TANTUJA, TATUSREE, MANJUSHA are being sick day by day. She also mentioned that *khadi* movement of Murshidabad is far stronger than Bishnupur, due to lack of initiatives and leadership in the second area.

K. Karnan (2012) in his Ph.D. thesis, “Intervention Of Government Schemes On The Standard Of Living Of Handloom Weavers”, outlined that intervention of government schemes have considerable positive impact on living standard, production pattern, productivity, wage level, consumption pattern, savings habits of handloom weavers. The researcher also mentioned some suggestions for handloom weavers: Majority of the weavers are of opinion for supplying of improved quality of yarn, revision of norms for free electric supply scheme, increase amount of old age pension, liberalization of the procedure in payment of family pension scheme, increase of stipend amount paid to the participants in the training under the integrated handloom development project scheme, unnecessary delay in releasing the scholarship amount under scholarship scheme, export through merchandise and export agencies will help them to improve marketing.

Annapurna Mamidipudi, B syamsundari, Wiebe Bijker (2012) in their article, “Mobilizing discourse Handloom as Sustainable Socio-Technology”, mentioned their anxiety about Handloom census Report of 2009-10, which shows that during last 15 years weavers have declined by about 33 per cent to 43.3 lakh in India. They raises an important issue, handloom provides a little more than 10 per cent of textile production in India and second largest rural employer after agriculture. Whether handloom is a sustainable as livelihood or not? According to them, handloom is much more sustainable than common views and standard government policies recognize. Instead of a liner migration out of weaving into other forms of livelihood, weaving communities show a more strategic mobility- flexibility departing form and again returning to weaving, depending on circumstances. According to them the standard image of handloom weaving as pre modern, unproductive and unsustainable should be replaced by an alternative view.

Ms. Runumi Das (2008), in her Ph.D. thesis entitled, “Marketing problems of Handloom Products: A Micro Level Study on Sualkuchi Village, The Prominent Silk Weaving Centre of Assam”, observed that weavers of this area are almost stuck to weaving only for traditional motif and patterns. Sualkuchi’s products are not being able to compete with new products of other places of Assam, although handloom fabrics woven at Sualkuchi are quite superior in quality. Up gradation of technology is a must for handloom industry. The problem of unavailability of raw materials, become chronic. She offers some suggestions, these are as follows: The Directorate of Handloom & Textile, Government of Assam has failed to create the necessary ambience in handloom industry that would have attracted the youths of new generation. A full-fledged survey purely on different aspects of marketing of handloom products is necessary.

K. Mahendra Kumar (2010) in his Ph.D. thesis, “ An Analysis Of Production And Marketing Of Handloom Fabrics In Andhra Pradesh (A study of Prakasam District)”, classified weavers into five broad categories namely , Independent Weavers, Master Weavers, Co-operative Weavers, Weavers under Middlemen, Labour weavers. His major findings are as follows: Products of Master weavers, Independent weavers, and Co-operative weavers are more profitable in comparison to products of middlemen weavers and labour weavers. In production, the major problem that is being faced by all categories of weavers is mainly climatic conditions and power shortages. The Researcher recognizes handloom weaving as a social technology comprised of knowledge, skills, and social relations. They offer clues for continued sustainability of handloom, socio-technical innovation and alleviation of vulnerabilities.

Ajay Kumar (2018) in his Ph.D. thesis, “Handmade ok please A Mixed methods study of urban Indian craft consumers”, tried to investigate how consciousness for sustainable consumption, craft authenticity, craft certification, craft knowledge and social identity contribute in understanding the craft buying behavior of urban Indian consumers. According to him these parameters have positive and significant direct effect on purchase intention. Indian craft consumers still see crafts as largely handmade, which is authentic and/or sustainable. Craft policy makers should try to bring craft out from these binaries.

Tanaya Choudhury (2015) in her Ph.D. thesis, “The decay of handloom industry in the Cachar District of Assam”, identified some factors which are responsible for weakening of handloom textile, such as gap of technology, unfair competition from mills and power looms, poor institutional frame work, low wages, consumers’ preference to modern textiles, absence of information and resource gaps. The impacts of decay have adverse effect for families dependent on handloom in food intake, children’s education, health and sanitation, domestic energy used accessibility to means of entertainment. She pointed out that Budget allocation to the Handloom and Handicrafts sector have not matched their role in the economy. This sector employs approximately 3 per cent of the total workforce, budget allocations only amount to 0.05 per cent of total budget, expenditures. She emphasized the need for increasing budget allocation and explore verify, modify and scientifically validate processes of handloom production.

M. Appalayya (2012) in her Ph.D. thesis, “New product development in handloom industry”, emphasized on product development, and she argued nothing has been done in this regard. According to the author, Central and state governments allocating some sizable amount as “doles” every financial year to handloom under subsidies or schemes. Decrease of employment in handloom sector and handloom weavers shifting to other profession disprove any claim of positive impact of the scheme or subsidies spent by government. She alleged the planning is much more top down rather than bottom up. She identified some negative impact of these scheme and suggested skill up gradation, design input, technical up gradation, powerful brands creation by governments, proper planning, voice of customers should be herd, practice of creative culture and value chain.

Clark Nardinelli (1986) in his paper, “Technology and Unemployment: The case of the Handloom Weavers”, showed that, although technological up gradation was partially responsible for the unemployment of weavers, it was much more cyclical. Since 1826 powerloom gradually replaced handloom, as a result, weavers and prospective weavers shifted to alternative employments, such as workers, laborers, clerks, miners, and so on. Weaving was taken over by part-time and casual workers and constituted social problems only in a few isolated areas. The handloom weavers suffered major declines in their standard of living because of technological progress in power loom weaving. It is highly probable that the cyclical and secular problems caused by technological progress did not include technological unemployment.

Tirthankar Roy (2002) in his paper, “Acceptance of Innovation in Early Twentieth- Century Indian Weaving”, argued that in western and southern part of India migrated and wage labours created the condition where money could be used to start units that employed hired labour and thus could utilize new economics of scale. Economic constrains were weaker in the town areas where caste weavers concentrated, capitalists and producers regarded themselves as part of the same community enabled explicit and implicit cooperation, maintenance of trust, easier contract –enforcement and dispute- settlement, greater commitment to production, and the spread of new techniques within the community.

Abanti Kundu (1980) in her article, “Pattern of Organization of the Handloom Industry in West Bengal”, mentioned that adequate research on diversification of handloom products to cater for a wider export market and home market has not been attempted properly in West Bengal. The issues development of design, colour, fabrics have remained apart from the few finest varieties. The majority of weavers are unable to acquaint itself with the innovation and developments in weaving techniques rendered by Weavers’ Service Centre or the State Handloom Design Centre. In the present organizational framework, there has hardly been any systematic effort for skill diffusion, quality improvement and technological development.

Ashok V. Desai (1983) in his paper, “Technology and Market Structure under Government Regulation: A Case Study of Indian Textile Industry”, argued that in textile industry there are discriminations in taxation and licensing against large mills and subsidies are provided to small industry through *Khadi* and Village Industries Commission and through co-operatives. As a result of this policy the growth of composite mills have been prevented and led to the installation of most of the new looms in extremely small enterprises. The competition started among new enterprises with new and better equipments rather than competition in the areas of technology and development of products. The textile machinery industry has become mainstream industry instead of ancillary industry against the world wave of product development.

L.C. Jain (1983) in his article, “Handlooms Face Liquidation: Power looms Mock at Yojana Bhavan”, mentioned some recommendations of Central Government for gradual conversion of handlooms into powe rlooms. According to him, by such conversion economic conditions of handloom weavers can be developed. He stressed on the modernization of weaving techniques, increase of production and export of textile products. For facilitating modernization, creation of additional capacity for important textile machinery with foreign collaborations, liberalization of licensing and imports of critical components are important steps which should be taken.

Ruma Chatterjee (1987) in her article, “Cotton Handloom Manufactures of Bengal, 1870-1921”, mentioned dependence of weavers on the *mahajans* for capital, raw yarn, and for selling finished cloth. The general features were the advance of yarn for the production of certain length of cloth. After the production *mahajans* purchased it from the weavers at rates decided by them. The weavers were not in a position to sell their products directly to wholesalers. Handloom weaving received a encouragement in the first decade of 20th Century from *swadeshi* and boycott movements, but the high price of handloom cloth in comparison to mill made cloth and general poverty of common mass hindered the success of *swadeshi* and boycott movements also the production of handloom. The condition of handloom weaving worsened due to the competition with modern power looms and mills of Britain and Europe.

Prafull Anubhai (1988) in his article, Sickness in Indian Textile Industry: Causes and Remedies", identified some factors responsible for the sickness of Indian Textile industry including handloom textile These factors were, till 1985, a freeze on loom was imposed on the composite mills, high and fluctuating cost of raw materials, stagnant demand of textile products till four decades of independence, competition between handloom and power loom, strong labour laws hindered the process of modernization in some cases. In a situation of excess floating capacity, and because of the absence of available exit routes, efforts to run all units led to spreading sickness from one segment to another. The older textile centres suffered more in comparison to new centres because of location. The management of Indian textile sector suffered from static perceptions. Textile being a low profit industry did not able to generate funds to meet the increasing requirement of working capital. He also suggested fast implementation of the policy regarding, exit barriers, duty reduction on synthetic raw material and intermediaries, increase the amount of international export by quality development and making textile products competitive.

Tirthankar Roy (1989) in his article, "Relations of Production in Handloom Weaving in Mid- 1930s", argued that with the emergence capitalist production relations, convergence of small and large household and factory, proletarian identity emerged in Indian industrial areas out caste and familial affiliations. Massive reduction of wage during depression encouraged formation of labour unity in different textile based industrial areas, especially in Bombay-Deccan and Malabar. Continuous changes in the labour process created hindrance on the success of labour movements. The main basis of the survival of handlooms were skill intensity and productdifferentiation,. That basis of handloom was replaced by cheap labour process. Due to high price of handloom products, and decrease of demand, many handloom weavers became victim of exploitation of cheap labour in power looms and mills.

Omkar Goswami (1990) in his article, “Sickness and Growth of Indian Textile Industry: Analysis and Policy Options”, showed the causes of sickness of Indian textile sector. He tried to examine the patterns and determinants of household demand for clothing. According to him poor people have shown a very strong interest in mane made durable cloth. If the government policy is clothing the poor people of country , then the best option should be reduction of tariffs both import and excise on man-made fibers. India had less per capita consumption of cloth in comparison to even Srilanka and Pakistan. Since textile producing sectors such as handloom, mill and power loom have large excess capacities, increasing per capita demand by reducing taxes on man-made fiber and yarn cannot be the reason of revenue reduction. Even if the collection of government revenue decreases for a short period of time, it would be increase much more in the long run.

Noorbasha Abdul (1996) in his paper, “Handloom in Distress”, argued that survival oh handloom textile is not possible without support of state, which is also a constitutional obligation. *Janata* Cloth Scheme was a major step for the survival of handloom. This subsidized provided employment to old weaver, women, and less skilled weavers. He mentioned that in the name of resource constraint and ‘better housekeeping’, Government of India totally withdrawn Janata Cloth Scheme in 1995. As a result thousands of handloom faced unfair competition with power looms. That was the violation of Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act 1985 of Government of India. The survival of handloom industry will depend on the modernization of designs and craftsmanship of the weaver, which need institutional support.

Trithankar Roy (1998) in his paper, “Economic Reforms and Textile Industry in India”, argued that textile industry in India was going through a major transition since the policy reforms of 1992. He identified six characteristic of textile sector in post-reform period. He mentioned some strength of Indian cotton textile industry, such as cheap cotton, low wage, knowledge, possibly an incipient but accumulating advantage in manmade. There are important areas of weaknesses and challenges, such as cost, inefficient infrastructure, from fuel to transport to ports to communications to delivery were high and rising in India. Restrictive policies for communicating with world market, growth in informal sector and unreliable quality of Indian products were major hindrances for the growth and development of Indian textile sector.

K. Srinivasalu (1997) in the article, "High –Powered Committee, Low Voltage Report: Mira Seth Report on Handlooms", analyses the report of The Government of India appointed committee under the chairmanship of Mira Seth in 1995 to review the performance of handloom sector since the New Textile Policy came into effect in 1985. According to the article visits of the members in the different parts of country were casual and so, were not helpful in capturing the intensity of the handloom crisis. The main crisis of handloom sector was unprecedented and sudden increase of hunk yarn prices and the challenge which the handlooms faces from the power loom sector in the form of illegal unlicensed power loom using hank yarn reserved for handloom.

Pradosh Nath, N. Mrinalini and G.D. Sandhya (2001) in their paper, "National Textile Policy and Textile Research", argues that lack of appropriate strategy on the part of the government and industry has marginalized the Research and Development works in the textile research system of India. There is a need of cooperative industrial research policy like US and Europe. There is no interface of experts to manage Textile Research Associations (TRAs), and these suffer from research oriented activities. In India, policy of self-sustenance led TRAs to routine services. As a result, R and D became sporadic, piecemeal and without any strategy and comprehensive actions for the further development and sustainability of the industry. The suggested the formation of high-power expert body with representatives from industry, Ministry of Textile and TRAs with the capability and autonomy of designing and implementing Textile policy.

Kanakalatha Mukund and B. Syamasundari (1998) in their paper, "Doomed to Fail? 'Handloom Weavers' Co-operatives in Andhra Pradesh", find that competition from power looms can only partially describe the decline of handloom and handloom co-operatives. There is a substantial and growing market for handlooms. Co-operatives have both success and failures, as success, they have emerged as an alternative and viable practical institutional organization to curb the dominance of traders and middlemen. On the other hand, co-operatives fail because they were not the organization of Weavers' spontaneity, in maximum cases co-operatives were created by the government authority. They recommend setting the co-operatives free, competitive and spontaneous organizations of weavers. At the same time government should extend same institutional support like other organizations for collecting institutional credit.

Maureen Lieble and Tirthankar Roy (2003) in their article, "Handmade in India: Preliminary Analysis of Crafts Producers and Crafts Production", isolated 13 groups of items as handicrafts, *khadi,* cotton handlooms, processing of cotton textile by hand, silk handlooms, processing of silk textile, *zari*, carpets are placed top of the list. They made some recommendations. There need some channels through which artisans can obtain information on existing services, as well as advice their access. Development of 'Brand Image' and new market Channels, research and documentation, enhancement of status of crafts persons are important steps. For the survival in the face challenges posed by globalization, old skill need to study, target, and adapt to new customers and what they want.

B. Syamasundari and Seemanthini Niranjana (2006) in their paper, "Case Study of Master Weavers", represent some case studies, where master weavers dominate handloom textile and cooperatives are more or less non-existence. All of the master weavers are self-financed or have collected capital from relatives. Quality products and proper information about the demand from the market are the basis of successful business enterprise in handlooms. Another factor behind success is changes in design and products are made curiously after the field survey by their marketing personnel. The ability to take risk is often regarded as one of the main factors for success. But in a vast field of handloom the form of risks are different and risks are different for big, middle and small enterprises. Regarding risk taking knowledge of customers and contacts become very important to handle risks.

P. Dharmaraju (2006) in his article, "Marketing in Handloom Cooperatives", argues that over the decades, the experience of handloom cooperatives has been a mixed one. The arbitrary mergers, excessive control by master weavers and local power groups, politicization and bureaucratization and mismanagement of funds are some factors that have stymied the efficient functioning of cooperatives in Andhra Pradesh. The strength of successful cooperatives in marketing their products lies mainly in retail market. Nearly 75 per cent of its sales are in retail market. Reliance on export may be beneficial in the short term but a long-term reliance on exports generally creates instabilities in demand. It is most important for cooperatives to focus more on local demand and local markets.

Semin Anwar (1975) in his paper, "Output, Value Added and Employment in the small-Scale Textile Industry", show ways in which small scale sector has contributed to G.N.P. of Pakistan, especially handloom weaving. The growth of this sector is not at par with the growth op population. They suggest some policy implication like identification and development of foreign market for coarse cloth, technical assistance and arrangement of necessary raw materials to small handloom producers, which must in some instances be imported, to allow them to diversify their output mix.

Jenny Hall (2014) in the paper, "The Spirit in the Machine: Mutual Affinities between Humans and Machines in Japanese Textiles", argued that with the increasing use of tools and machines by the artisans, the process of transition of the "self" to product has became complex. Machines not only obscure the concept of what it means to be handmade, but there is a long association of techniques of mass-production that often indicate a divorce of the artisan or labourer from their product. The author also mentions that Japanese artisans also believe in the unique characteristics of handmade items. They also claim that, rather than producing soulless objects, the tools and machines become a spiritual extension of weavers. In exploring the relationship between human beings and machines through the work of Japanese weavers it appears that the hands of the maker-having had contact with the product, either directly or indirectly, is somehow important for the transmission of maker's essence or spirit.

Significance of the study

There are limited work regarding the role of handloom in promotion of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman Districts. Role of Government policy and welfare scheme for handloom in the study area still remain unexplored, because there is no research from these points. West Bengal Government's apex body, 'TANTUJA' and 'MANJUSA' are not successful as APCO of Andhra Pradesh. This study will try to focus on the issue that, maximum weavers of the study area are outside cooperative society. There are some geographical similarities between Nadia District and eastern part of Purba Bardhaman District, as both areas are flood affected and situated in Gangetic plain, still two districts have some differences in design, products, marketing, use of technology, use of yarn etc in case of handloom textile. There is necessity of comparative analysis of these two districts.

Shantipur cluster has highest concentration of handloom in the country. On the other hand, Nabadwip cluster and Bardhaman cluster are two important handloom clusters among 20 handloom clusters of the country. If we look at the Annual Administrative Report of 2016-17, Directorate of Textile, Government of West Bengal, we can see that state government and central Government also investing more money in these two districts in comparison to other handloom concentrated areas. a) Total sum of Rs. 303.58 lakh has been sanctioned for setting up of *tanterhaat, suto-o-ranger bazar* etc. at Srirampur village, Purbasthali -1 block of Purba Bardhaman District. B) Construction of black top link road of 7.615 Km for easy access of handloom weavers and other allied workers in the GPs of Samudragarh, Nasaratpur, Srirampur under Purbasthali-1 block, PurbaBardhaman District, at the cost of 355.00 lakh has been sanctioned. C) Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) has been set up at Fulia, Nadia. D) One exhibition cum display hall at Fulia Pragatisil Tantubay Samabay Samity Ltd. has been set up at the cost of 17.63 lakh.

Nadia district and Purba Bardhaman district have 168269 and 48407 weavers (4th Handloom Census). Except Fulia area of Nadia and Samudragarh area of Purba Bardhaman district, handloom of all other areas are declining. Although there are local haats at Chakdaha, Ranaghat, Shantipur, Nabadwip, Nasaratpur (two hats), Srirampur, Bardhaman town. In spite of that marketing is one of the main problems for the decline of handloom weaving, as pointed out by many researchers. Government apex body like ‘TANTUJA’, ‘MANJUSA’ are not successful as APCO of Andhra Pradesh. I do not find any study in this regard. This study will try to focus on the issue that 80% of weavers are outside cooperative society in this area. Nadia district and eastern part of Purba Bardhaman has some similarity, as both areas are flood affected. Standard image of handloom weaving is pre-modern, unproductive and unsustainable. This work try to find out an alternative view which recognizes handloom weaving as a social technology comprised of knowledge, skills, social relations, so that Government funding can be seen as investment, not as subsidy in all cases of handloom.

Objectives of the Research

The present study is based on the following objectives:

- To make an overview of handloom textile industry of Nadia and Purba Bardhaman Districts;
- To study various government policies, their implementation, success and failure in the study areas;
- To find out relations between handloom and power loom sector;
- To examine the socio-economic conditions of the weavers and ancillary workers of these districts;
- To find out problems and prospects of the industry in the study area.

Research Questions

- What are the roles of Government policies for the survival and promotion of handloom?
- What are problems and prospects of handloom in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts?
- What are the causes of financial crises in handloom industry?
- What is the impact of partition of Bengal on handloom weaving industry?
- What kinds of roles are played by ancillary workers in the overall process of weaving industry?
- What kinds of roles are played by SHGs and Cooperatives?
- What are the roles of handloom and power loom in the overall process of textile industry?

Hypotheses

- Handloom weaving industry is facing many problems like, high and fluctuating price of yarn, problem of marketability of finished products, lack of innovation in designs, products and use of technology.

- Government policies, formation of cooperatives, Self-Help Groups and their membership are sufficient for survival and promotion of handloom weaving industry.
- Handloom is sustainable as livelihood.

Research Methodology

To have an idea about the history of handloom industry, previous researches, books, journals, magazines, newspapers and previous research papers, theses etc., available in various libraries and websites, have been consulted. To collect data, participatory observation and non participatory observation methods will be followed. During the discussion with weavers, if required, Focus Group discussion method will be followed. Interview of weavers, allied workers, owner of power looms, handlooms, government officials, employees of panchayets, employees of banks, informers etc., will be taken as per requirement of the research. To address hypotheses and research questions case study approach has been followed.

Survey is an important tool of data collection. Sampling is important for survey. Probability sampling, cluster of units sampling, stratified sampling methods to be used (in maximum cases to reduce sampling error, and ensure representation of various variables.) To collect opinion of people single-stage and multistage sampling methods are taken according to necessity. Pilot survey will be done to make the survey and questioner more useful. To test hypotheses, test concerning single subject, single group and two or more groups will be used.

During interaction with weavers, allied workers, master weavers, and their family members, owner of handlooms, owner of power looms, labours of power looms and handlooms, members of cooperatives, members of SHGs, government officials, political personnel, employees of panchayates, structured and unstructured questionnaire to be used as per requirement.

In case of data analysis and report writing, table (frequency distribution tables, relative frequency distribution table), charts and graphs are used, with the help of software like Ms-Excell and SPSS .

Tentative Chapterisation

Chapter I (Introduction and Background of the Research): The first chapter deals with historical background of handloom textile in India. It describes profile of handloom textile, from Mohenjo-Daro civilization to present time. After that there are descriptions of types of handloom, produced in different parts of country with different types of fibers. At the middle author describes different types of handloom functional in India. The chapter ends with different aspects of research.

Chapter II (Government Policies in Handloom Textile Sector): The second chapter describes role of the state in handloom textile since Mughal period. During Mughal Emperors handloom was one of the important foreign currency earner for the Country From 1830s picture reversed, as India became main market of Britain's garments. In the middle of the chapter there are description of various committees and their recommendations and policies of Central government and state governments for handloom, since Independence. The chapter ends with the discussion of effect of COVID- 19 on handloom industry.

Chapter III (Handloom Weavers in West Bengal: Limitations and Opportunities): The chapter describes various aspects of limitations and opportunities for the handloom weavers. The chapter also describes role of incentive scheme for MSMEs for the developments of handloom. It starts with the aims and objective of the scheme and describes various projects of the scheme financed by central government and state government. The chapter ends with comparisons of various aspects of weaver in all India label and label of this state, after the commencement of the scheme.

Chapter IV (Profile of Handloom Textile Industry in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman Districts): There are descriptions of the origin and developments of handloom in different parts of two districts. Variations of production in different areas are also described. Various socio-economic issues related with handloom, like production marketing, health related issues, issue of gender, issue of child labour, issue of decline of handloom are described.

Chapter V (Problems and Prospects of Handloom Industry of Nadia and Purba Bardhaman Districts): The fifth chapter identifies various areas of problems and prospects of handloom of these districts, with some specific case studies. There is also comparative analysis in different aspects between average situation of the state and these districts. There is also statistical analysis of different aspects of problems and prospects of these two districts. This chapter describes various problems faced by handloom textile industry of the state, like partition of country, organizational disorder, problems of procurement of yarn, effect of GST, problems of production, failure of cooperatives, problem of marketing, competition from powerloom and need of credit. At the end, the author identifies some areas where prospects of handloom lie

Chapter VI: Summary and Conclusion:

Chapter one deals with evolutions and historical backgrounds of handloom in India. Emergence of handloom weaving at Shantipur, Nadia, probably dated back to 15th century, before the birth of Lord Chaitanya. On the other hand handloom of Purba Bardhaman flourished during 1940s, especially after partition of India with the help of refugees of *Basak* and *Yogi* Communities. It describes profile of handloom textile, from Mohenjo-Daro civilization to present time. After that there are descriptions of types of handloom products produced in different parts of the country with different types of fibers. At the end author describes different types of handloom functional in India. The second chapter will deal with the role of state in hahdloom textile. There are description of various committees and their recommendations and policies of Central government and state governments for handloom, since independence.

CHAPTER - II

GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN HANDLOOM TEXTILE SECTOR

The previous chapter deals with evolutions and historical backgrounds of handloom in India. Emergence of handloom weaving at Shantipur, Nadia, probably dated back to 15^{th} century, before the birth of Lord Chaitanya. On the other hand handloom of Purba Bardhaman flourished during 1940s, especially after partition of India with the help of refugees of *Basak* and *Yogi* Communities. It describes profile of handloom textile, from Mohenjo-Daro civilization to present time. After that there are descriptions of types of handloom products produced in different parts of the country with different types of fibers. The present chapter will deal with role of the state in handloom textile since Mughal period. In the middle of the chapter there will be description of various committees and their recommendations and policies of central government and state governments for handloom, since Independence. At the end of the chapter ther will be discussion of effect of COVID- 19 on handloom industry.

Role of the State in Pre-Independence Period

Handloom weaving is a domestic industry where production is conducted mainly with the help of surplus family labour. This industry is not capital intensive one. Having been developed with the life and culture of the people of the country, Handloom weaving had enjoyed patronage of all section of the society. Especially, the handloom weaving enjoyed the patronage of Indian ruler since early period. With the increase of demand of handloom products in India and abroad and complexities in the methods of organization and operations grew, royal power extended its help. Protection and patronage for the smooth functioning and development of the handloom were also provided by royal powers. Sujit kumar Das, mentioned that, ‘During the reigim of the Mauryas, there existed a large organization to deal with matter concerned with spinning and weaving. Kaytilya mentions an important state official, *sutradhayakhya* , (director of spinning) as being in –charge of the department. It is interesting to know how the *sutralaya* (yarn depots) established during the regime of Chandragupta Maurya had a special code of conduct for women spinners, who were sent to brought yarn to the depots. The weaving industry also gave employment to hundreds of helpless women and special arrangements were made for those who did prefer to work outside their homes. Again the guild of the various castes was recognized by the law and they enjoyed the protection of the state in all the periods of Indian history. The guilds, on the other hand, took care of the welfare and well-being of its members and maintained supervision over the quantity, quality of work done by them' (Das 2011:11).

Role of State in Mughal Period: During Mughal period, there was huge increase in the demand of Indian handloom products. In the Mughal period there were large numbers of state woned *karkhanas* in the country for producing handloom products. Even as late as 1800, such royal workshops known as mulbooscaus-cooties existed in Dacca. These were meant for making choice muslins which were sent to the Mughal Emperor as part of tribute due from Bengal. For producing quality fabrics for use by the ruling aristocracy, highly skilled artisans from different parts of the country were assembled in these state workshops. The selected artisans were the salaried servants of the state and were paid directly from the state Treasury these factories were superintended by darogas, and it was their immediate duty to inspect the manufacture of all the cloths made for the emperor's use. The darogas were the state officials employed for the purpose (Das 2001: 14).

During the Mughal rule handloom textile of India become the main item of trade all over the world and merchants of west European and Scandinavians countries used to collect these products from the notable manufacturing centers, like Bengal, Varanasi, Andhra, Kashmir, Utkal and Baroda to sell almost every country of the World. During the last period of Mughal rule, the demand for Indian handloom products increased and European traders started taking growing interests in these products. East India Company started direct trading in Indian handloom products with Europe.

Policy of Colonial Ruler Towards Indian Handloom: The East India Company became main trader of Indian handloom products in the world between1600-1630. In this period common people of Europe become interested in Indian handloom products and East India Company also emphasized on the production of different varieties, luxurious as well as ordinary. With the domestic market intact, the new markets explored by the English East India Company, in particular, provided an additional impetus to the premier industry of India. The years 1670- 1700 were the boom period of the seventeenth century for handloom of India. Orders increased year by year. Every chance, every opportunity to further sales, was exploited; whatever the market wanted, the market got; innovation was the order of the day. Indian producers produced in accordance with the orders placed by the European merchants. Designs and patterns were prepared in England (Chowdhury 2014: 115-17).

Introduction of Mahajani System: With the increase of foreign demand of Indian handloom products, the system and organization of production also changed. As British Government took charge of Indian administration, royal patronage abolished for handloom industries. Weavers became independent, and it was become almost impossible for them to communicate with East India Company directly. They also faced problems to cope with the growing overseas demands. It was also problematic for East India Company, to communicate directly with the weavers and collect handloom products. In this situation, a new class of traders-cum financiers named mahajans emerged. Mahajans used to made advances through their agents namely *paikers* for supplying cloth in accordance with their specific designs for allover the year at a pre fixed price. The *mahajan* through *paikers* and *mookims* (another agent of mahajans) keep vigilance on weavers regarding actual production and supply as per schedule. *Mahajans* were concerned about the demands of European market and weavers were encircled by the clutches of *mahajani* system for finance and marketing the products (Chowdhury 2014: 80-82).

The European cloth merchants, especially the Dutch and The East India Company of England were the main importers of Indian handloom textiles for sale in Europe. Indian textile products had great demands in Europe at that time. According to Sujit Kumar Das, Opposition to the import of textile products of Indian origin received British support in the year 1700 by an Act which forbade the introduction of Indian silk and printed calicos for domestic use, either as apparel or furniture, under a penalty of 200 UK pound on the weaver or seller. After passing of the Act there was considerable decline in the direct import of textile products from India to England. The cotton fibers of India were so beautiful and cheap, that nearly all the governments of Europe thought it necessary to prohibit them, or to load them with heavy duties, in order to protect their own manufacturers. With the demands for the fascinating textile items of Indian origin remaining unaffected in the countries of Europe, even after the imposition of prohibitive barriers against them in those countries, the export from India did not suffer. Till the first half of the eighteenth century there were competition among the different European and Dutch exporters for procuring Indian goods for export. But after 1757 as the English East India Company became the main purchaser of Bengal cotton gods, they wanted to make the best use of the opportunity by increasing the company's investment in goods for Europe. To obtain this increase they took all possible measures and the result was that the manufactures suffered great hardship (Das 2001: 17).

Changes occurred in the system of production and marketing of Indian handloom products. In order to cope with the prohibitive barriers imposed against the Indian products, the English East India Company adopted measures to reduce the cost of procurement. As first step in that direction, the *dadani* system of investment was replaced by direct contact with the producers. Under the system, the weavers were engaged to work against specific orders and payment for the work was made in advance. All this was sought to be achieved through agreement forced upon the weavers by the agreements of the company appointed for the purpose. The agents known as *gomastas, paikars, and dalals* enjoyed wide authority as links between the company and the weavers. In order to secure the manufactures from the weavers in accordance with the terms dictated by the company, the agents used to indulge in various oppressive measures. The weavers ware treated with such cruelty that instances have been known of their cutting off their thumbs themselves to prevent being forced to work. In 1781 the weaving of muslins started in Britain. From 1781-1787 the British cotton manufactures increased in value from British Dollars 2000000 to dollars 7500000. 17855000000 pieces of muslins were manufactured, which were a rival of ordinary Indian muslins (Bag 1989: 224-27).

The development of cotton textile industry of England was occurred through a biased, selfish commercial policy designed to cripple its principal competition, i.e. Indian handloom textile. Sujit Kumar Das cited Karl Marx 'It was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel. England began with driving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan, and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons (Das 2001:20). From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5200. In 1824 the export of British muslins to

India hardly amounted to 1000000 yards, while in 1837 it surpassed 64000000 of yards. But at the same time the population of Dacca decreased from 150000 inhabitants to 20000. This decline of Indian towns celebrated for their fabrics was by no means the worst consequence.’ This task of destruction of Indian handloom textile was done dint of political power, was aimed at making Indian textile industry subservient to the textile industry of Britain and mere supplier of raw materials of the textile industries of Great Britain (Das 2001: 20-22).

The policy of East India Company or the British Government was not growth and development of Indian textile industry. The primary concern of them was profit making. In the first spell, their policy was to acquire as much cotton clothes from India as possible at the lowest price and sell them in European markets. In the second spell, India was looked upon as the supplier of raw material of textile products Britain and the market for finished textile products of Britain. After the invention of cotton gin in 1793, Indian raw cotton was replaced by American cotton till the American civil war. It is generally believed that British cotton textile interest player an important role in the development of transport system, especially rail transport of India. After the outbreak of American civil war, the Government of India encouraged cotton production in India. It was however realized that most serious hindrance of cotton import from India was the insufficient traditional transport system, so British government developed railway transportation system, mainly in cotton producing areas. According to Sujit Kumar Das, ‘The handloom textile industry in India, the mark of artistic excellence of the weavers of the country, the pride of the nation and the testimony of its peoples’ being ahead of others in the journey towards civilization became the victim of extreme coercive regulation and purposeful manipulative commercial practices, since the time the East India Company gained monopoly trading rights in India. The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed this remarkable transformation, and the exports of cotton piece goods which stood at Rs 165 lakhs in 1816-17 declined to Rs 8 lakhs by 1830-31, whereas, during the same period imports of cotton yarn and piece goods rose from Rs.3 lakhs to 60 lakhs’ (Das 2001: 23).

Policy During the Two World Wars: Since the First World War Indian handloom industry started to increase its dependence on Indian mill yarn, at the same time the bulk of the requirement for higher counts continued to flow from the foreign countries, especially from America and England. As a result of the increasing dependence of handloom on mill spun yarn, the system of hand spanning almost ceased to exist and there was a drastic fall in overall employment capacity of handloom weaving sector. Hitherto, the daily yarn supply of the weaver had come either from his own household or his immediate neighborhood. When yarn came from a distance and had to be bought, yarn dealers and financers became necessary. Average weaver had little credit, the industry fell more and more into the grip of middlemen. Thus the independence of most weavers disappeared and the great majority of them came to work for a *mahajan* either on the contract or on the wage basis (Chowdhury 2014: 132-35).

The market for handloom textiles continued to decrease because of the growing supply of cheap mill-made products. It is also important to note that Indian mill made products has little share of the market. Indian mill made products faced discriminations of additional burden of excise duty upon them by British government. Although demands of finer cloths had reduced largely, for various reasons, poor people still used handloom cloths as these were cheap, durable an easily available in locality (Chowdhury 2014: 158-60).

After the establishment of cotton mill in India the handloom weavers increasingly became dependent upon them for supply of yarn. There was not for a long time any serious competition between the Indian mills and handlooms; rather the relationship between them, were complementary. Till 1909 the amount of cloth produced on handloom was larger than that manufactured by the Indian mills. But the Indian textile mills which at first concentrated on the production and supply of yarn were making a slow but steady progress also in terms of the production of cloth. The First World War offered enormous opportunity to the textile mill industry in India to expand their production of cloth. From the time of First World War, taking advantage of the situation and for the demand of war materials, Indian mills made a serious effort to increase production and capture the domestic market. In this way Indian handloom sector, which was capable to preserve its hold over the domestic market so long, even in the face of aggressive mercantilism of the west, had to succumb finally to the competition with the mill industry of its own country (Chowdhury 2014: 158-62).

During the First World War, import of mill made cloth and yarn declined. This provided ample scope for raising the domestic production and the Indian mill were prompt enough to take advantage of the situation. The Indian mills made maximum use of the yarn produced by them, on the other hand handloom weavers, by that time had become dependent on yarn produced by Indian mills and those imported from European Countries. The scarcity and high prices during that period forced maximum handloom weavers to take contract work under *mahajans* through *dadan* system, or to take work as labours in the factories. The competition of the mills has practically destroyed the handloom of Bengal. At the same time, cheap supply of yarn by the mills was the main reason of the survival of handloom (Das 2001: 61).

The main reasons of survival of handloom were specialization in production, designs of different occasions and different tests. The absence of systematic and organized marketing facilities and scarcity of yarn compelled independent weavers to get into the traps of *mahajans* and money lenders. Technological backwardness of handloom was one of important reasons for the decline of handloom. The ray of hope created by *Swadeshi* movement and the establishment of central weaving institute at Seeerampore, with five training sub-centers spread throughout the state. But these failed to bring about any remarkable change in the techniques of production.

After the First World War there were some changes in the overall industrial policy in general and handloom policy in particular. A temporary Department of Industries was created in October 1917 and a Director of Industries was appointed. In case of handloom the supply of yarn increased, the production of handloom cloth increased from the war time average of 853 million yards per annum to 1084 yards in 1922-23. According to Sujit Kumar Das "In the first place , the duty imposed on all imports to India to keep out of foreign goods from the Indian market seriously burdened the handloom industry, as handloom were the principal user of the finer imported yarn. Especially as the imposition of this duty came soon after the removal of the cotton excise duty, the hand-weaving industry got an important setback. On the other hand it may be argued with greater cogency that such increase in mill production armed the mills to compete with the handloom more effectively, for it was with such that Ahmadabad, in particular, put into the shari which displaced of Santipur, Madura and other well-Known centers"(Das 2001: 64). The hand-spinning movement sponsored by the Indian National Congress came as a serious threat to handloom movement, unlike the Swadeshi movement, the new movement encouraged hand-spinning for the purpose of manufacturing khaddar and use of Indian mill- made yarn for manufacturing finer clothes. Production of Khaddar with hand spun yarn was encouraged to make the poorer sections of the population self-sufficient. For these reasons handloom lost their proper customers, because weavers began to spin and weave. They main emphasis of *Swadeshi* movement was the production of Khadi or Khaddar. On the other side, among the rich and elite people, there already developed a demand for the finer clothes prepared by the mill made yarn. Till that time handloom had a monopoly in finer *sharis* and dhotis, but it was well known that those were made of imported yarn. After the ban of imported yarn by Indian National Congress, well-to-do people became disinterested to buy such cloth, and handloom weavers in certain important centers of Bengal faced difficulties. In order to rule out the possibility of using imported yarn by the mills secretly, Congress issued Certificate to the mills manufacturing yarn in India and using them or producing the yarn available for the use in the production of cloth under certain condition. Such certificates were not issued in favor of handlooms, which causes number of difficulties. As a result, handloom weavers lost their age-old traditions as they could not prove that their goods were made out of yarn spin in India. When handlooms were able to secure supply of yarn made in India, maximum market of fine handloom products were lost to the mills. The consumers were attracted both by the elegance in quality and cheapness of the mill-made varieties. As well as by the belief that they mill-made products were real *Swadeshi* and the handloom products were not.

Sujit Kumar Das mentioned, Changes in the clothes and sartorial habits and fashions of the people also helped the mills greatly at the cost of the handlooms Along with the decline of the native rule, dressing outlook of men and women all over the country also begun to change. In general, the change has been towards simplicity and plainness in attire. Such changes in dressing habits helped the mills steadily in expanding their markets, for the mill produced fine but simple and plain clothes. Besides, the power operated weaving machines, called power looms, appeared a new rival to the handlooms in many parts of the country including Bengal, since the early part of the present century. Power loom industry started in the early part of the century when some handloom weavers set up small factories with second hand non-automatic looms sold off by the mill. Power looms possessing the flexibility of the handlooms and superiority of technique combined the advantages of both hand weaving and mills and posed a serious threat to the handloom industry. Lastly, the great depression which begun in 1929 also affected the fortune of the handloom industry by lowering the purchasing power of consumers in general (Das 2001: 65).

Until 1934, there was no step from Government, for the survival and improvement of handloom. IN 1934 Government of India, made a provision of subsidies to the extent of Rs.5 lakh per year to each State Government. When Second World War broke out the supply of yarn to the handlooms became uncertain, the mills consolidated their hold over the market once again. In 1941, Government of India introduced a yarn supply by composite mills without price and the entire production of spinning mills was poled together and distributed to the handloom concentrated states for supply to consumers. Although the supply of free yarn was inadequate to requirement of yarn of handloom, however it enabled the handloom industry to obtain a fairly continuous supply of yarn with Government involvement, a reco0gnition thae was most important (Chowdhury 2014: 164-165).

During the Second World War Government of India introduced a policy of reservation in the field of production by placing restrictions directly on the mills and powerlooms by prohibiting them statutorily from the production of certain items , which ware reserved for handlooms.

Government Policy Since Independence

Cotton Textile Control Order 1948: The Government of India passed the Cotton Textile Control order in 1948. The main objective was to foster the development of handloom industry and to reduce competition between handlooms and mills. It prohibits the production of certain varieties of cloth like dhoti with border exceeding ½ inch width, bordered shari, lungi, zamkhan, chadder, bed sheet, etc in textile mills. This order has been amended many times (Kumar 2010: 60).

Textile Enquiry Comission-1954: The Government of India constituted Textile Enquiry Commission under the chairmanship of Shri Nityananda Kanungo in the year 1952. It submitted its report in 1954. This commission was to study the problems and prospects of Indian textile mills and also the decentralized handloom and powerloom sectors. This commission was of the view that there was no future for handlooms and recommended a progressive conversion of handlooms into powerlooms through organised efforts over a period of fifteen to twenty years, in order to improve the living standards of the weavers (Report of Textile Enquiry Commission 1954).

Karve Committee-1955: Karve Committee was setup in 1955 to study the problems and prospects of village and small scale industries. The recommendations of this committee were in sharp contrasts with that of Textile Enquiry Commission. Karve Committee not only recommended deferring of any proposal for additional spinning capacity in the mill sector, in order to promote handloom sector (Report of Karve Committee 1955).

Ashok Mehta Committee 1964: The Ashok Mehta Committee setup in 1964, nevertheless, echoed the view of Textile Enquiry Commission (Kanungo Committee) and recommended that powerloom be allowed to acquire a paramount position in the textile economy of India. It questioned the long term viability of handlooms and argued for the removal of regulations on powerlooms. The Government did not accept the recommendation in total (Report of Ashok Mehta Committee 1964).

Sivaraman Committee-1974: The Sivaraman Committee on handloom was setup to study the crisis of handloom industry. According to the report of that Committee, lack of government support for product reservations and marketing, benefited the powerloom and aggravating the crisis of handloom. The Committee mentioned that for one job creation in powerloom, 14 handloom weavers were losing their jobs (Report of Sivaraman Committee-1974).

National Textile Policy 1978: In the year 1978, The Janata Government announced ‘controlled cloth scheme’, it declared that the responsibility of handloom was to meet additional requirement of cloth arising out of increasing population and improvement in per capita consumption (Report of National Textile Policy 1974).

National Textile Policy 1981: The Textile Policy of 1981 wanted to regulate the fresh expansion of capacity of power loom in order to promote the development of handlooms. This policy also emphasized on the need for the revival of dormant looms as well as sustained modernization of handlooms (Report of National Textile Policy 1981).

National Textile Policy1985: The most important and compact textile policy of independent India was the National Textile Policy of 1985.

Some important recommendations of this policy were as follows:

- Development of handlooms through co-operatives and cooperation to be intensified;
- Special effort to ensure the availability of yarn and other raw materials through the operations of National Handlooms Development Corporation (NHDC);
- Protection of handloom sector under the Handloom Reservation Act;
- Removal of cost handicap of handlooms vise-a-vise power loom products through sustainable fiscal measures;
- To improve the marketing of handloom products, strengthening the infrastructure of marketing complex, organizing the training of marketing personnel and intensive publicity;
- To strengthen the database and better planning in the handloom sector a census of handlooms has to be undertaken;
- Welfare schemes for handloom weavers such as a contributory Thrift Fund scheme and work shed cum Housing scheme have to be introduced;
- The entire production of control cloth has to be transferred to the handloom sector (Report of National Textile Policy 1985).

Dr. Abid Hussain Committee 1990: A number of recommendations were made by

- The committee to tone up the textile sector as a whole. These were as follows:
- Focus on the weaver rather than looms.
- Area based promotion to enhance weavers' earnings and productivity.
- Search for new organizational forms for target oriented handlooms stepped up plan provision for handloom promotion (Report of Dr. Abid Hussain Committee-1990).

National Textile Policy 2000: In view of changed scenario in 1990s decade occurring due to globalization and to formulate a new textile policy for the millennium, the

Government of India appointed a committee in 1999 under the chairmanship of S. Satyam. Based on the recommendations of Satyam Committee New Textile Policy was announced in the year 2000. The main thrust of this policy was to make the textile industry globally competitive

The various provisions of the policy were as follows:

- Giving thrust on the availability, productivity quality of raw materials like cotton, silk, wool and jute at reasonable price for the industry.
- Establishing textile/ apparel parks with necessary infrastructural facilities with the financial institutions and the private sector.
- Continuing to accord priority to the handloom sector to develop its exclusiveness for the global markets.
- Training to upgrade skills in the handloom sector and introducing welfare and social security measures for better working environment and better security to weavers.
- According priority to technical textiles by taking into consideration the growing prospects in world markets.
- .Latest welfare policies taken by the Government of India are as follows:
- National Handloom Development Programmed (NHDP) for providing financial assistance;
- Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS);
- Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS);
- Yarn supply Scheme (YSS);
- Setting up of CFCs at block / municipality level;
- Concessional credit under weaver's MUDRA scheme:
- Introduction of Indian Handloom Brand to enhance market demand (Report of National Textile Policy 2000).

National Fiber Policy 2010-11: Director, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India published National Fiber Policy 2010-11, on 8th June, 2010.

1. The National Fiber Policy has been designed for 10 years, i.e., 2010-2020 and seek to place India firmly on the World Fiber map by strengthening the existing policy framework and providing institutional and technological support for rapid fiber growth in the country in the coming decade. The

projected growth trajectories envisaged under the National Fiber Policy are ambitious and would benefit all stake holders in the textile Industry value chain.

2. The National Fiber Policy seeks to build a strong and vibrant textile industry competent of producing quality cloth at acceptable price. Increasingly contributing to enhanced employment provision and competing for an increased share of global market. The Fiber neutral policy seeks to balance the existing disparities within the complete range of fibers by providing additional fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for sustainable growth of all fibers and be competitive in the international market.
3. The policy framework has been built keeping in mind the potential growth of technical textiles both for domestic and international demands. Special attention has been drawn to promote the lesser known specialty manmade fibers and other natural fibers. The domestic fiber consumption ratio in India are present is 41: 59 (FY09) between man-made fibers and cotton, where as it is roughly 60:40 globally. The global fiber consumption trend in future is most likely in favor of man-made fibers because there is dearth of growth of cotton worldwide on account of limitation of land for cotton production. So there is a need of special emphasis to boost the consumption and production of man-made fibers in India.
4. Investment needed for modernization and technological development have been envisaged through continuation of the TUFS scheme to man Made fibers production and technical textile sector.
5. The Handloom sector is next only to agriculture and provides employment to economically and socially weaker section of society, with near about 86 per cent of handloom weavers living in villages and semi-urban areas. The National Fiber Policy addresses increasing the demand of raw materials for handloom sectors keeping in view the projected growth rates of the handloom textile.
6. The key features of National Fiber Policy is envisaged to rise the growth of cotton production from 319 lakh bales in 2010-11 to 483 lakh bales in 2019-20. On the other side cotton consumption is planned to increase to 413 lakh bales by 2019-20 with surplus of 70 lakh bales.

7. The National Fiber Policy also envisages significant institutional strengthening mechanisms:

a. A Inter Ministerial Committee of Secretaries headed by Textiles Sectary to calibrate cotton exports to ensure improved supply chain management for domestic consumption, Electronic data exchange between C8ustom Department and Textile Commissioner for monitoring cotton yarn export shipments;

b. Establishment of a Yarn Advisory Board for formulation of a Yarn Balance sheet to ensure adequate yarn availability for handlooms and garment sectors;

c. Launching of a Technology Mission on Technical Textiles and creation of centers of excellence in the identified sub groups of technical textiles;

d. Setting up of an MMF advisory council with all stakeholders to monitor excise duty and other concessions and take an irrigated approach to solving the problems of MMF producers;

e. Adopting a Mission Mode approach and establishing an Inter-Ministerial Board of promotion of Organic, Suvin and ELS cotton sector. (National fiber policy 2010-11)

Aims and Objectives: The Indian Textiles and Garments sector is envisaging a long-term growth trajectory, which entails huge requirements of fibers (natural as well as man- made). In order to augment the value-added segments of the textile value chain, it is extremely important to boost the fiber availability in the country and resolve all inherent issues associated with different fibers. There is a growing concern that the fiber sector requires special attention, especially in view of the fact that the present fiber consumption in India is in the ratio of 59:41 between cotton and man-made fibers as against 40:60 ratio worldwide.

With a view to strengthen the fiber economy of the country and make Indian textiles and garments sector competitive in the near, medium, as well as long-term; Ministry of Textile, Government of India constituted a working group to formulate a National Fiber Policy for textile and Garments sector of India. Within the working Group, 8 subgroups were formulated viz. Cotton, Man-made fibers, Jute, Silk, Other Natural fibers, speciality fibers (Technical Textile), and specialty (Suvin and Organic) Cotton.

The National Fiber Policy Has the Following Aims and Objectives

- Augmenting investment and providing support on both fiscal and non-fiscal front to increase fiber availability in the country and facilitate high growth and competitiveness of the textile sector;
- Focusing on improving quality of the fiber produced in India;
- Devising means to augmenting remuneration of all the stakeholders within the fiber eco-system;
- Correcting fiscal anomalies and policy limitations that are currently present in the fiber eco-system in order to balanced growth of the textile industry;
- Providing assistance for building capacity in both industry segment and human capital required for processing the expected surge in the fiber production;
- Supporting modernization technological up-gradation of various segments of the industry, to increase its competitiveness;
- Addressing the problem of infrastructure bottlenecks.
- The raw materials of handloom of our study area are mainly cotton and silk, so main focus will be on these two materials.

Cotton production in India has more than doubled in a span of 7 years. Cotton production reached a peak of 307 lakhs bales during 2007-08 from 140 lakhs bales in 2000-01 but it decreased to 290 lakh bales in 2008-09. The gradual increase in cotton production over the years can largely be attributed to the phenomenal increase in the production of raw cotton. The introduction of BT cotton seeds has played a important role in increasing cotton production. The consumption of cotton by the textile mills and small-scale spinning units has witnessed sustained increase since 200-01, except in 2002-03 when the total domestic consumption declined. Domestic consumption of cotton fiber increased at a CARG of 7 per cent rising from 168.8 lakh bales in 2002-03 to 236.9 lakh lakhs bales during 2007-08, and fell to 229 lakh bales in 2008-09. Cotton consumption has witnessed a sustained increase since 2003-04 onwards due to growing demand for Indian textiles and subsequently, there has been substantive expansion and modernization of the textile mills. Even though the Indian cotton consumption has increased rapidly in last five years, it did not able to keep pace with the growth in domestic cotton production, which has led to a surplus of production since, 2003-04. As a result, India has emerged as one of the top exporters of raw cotton in the world. At present, India ranked second in cotton export after USA. To boost cotton exports, the Indian Government liberalized raw cotton exports since 2001, doing away with the system of allocation of cotton export quota in favour of different agencies and traders. In last few years Indian cotton exports has been increasing at an impressive rate (Report of The National Fiber Policy 2010-11).

Silk: Total raw silk production showed a growth of about 6.6 per cent in 2009-10 after a period of stagnation during 2006-07 to 2009-10. mulbery Raw silk which constitutes almost 83 per cent of India's total raw silk production, showed a growth of 4.6 per cent during the same period and production of *vanya* silk jumped by 16 per cent. In spite of several limiting factors, the silk industry in India has shown a growth of over 5 per cent over last 10 years, the export of silk goods in terms of quantity has shown a growth of over 6 per cent while imports (mostly from China) continue to grow at about 3 per cent over this period.

Raw silk production is projected to grow at an average rate of 5 per cent during the year 2010-2015 and 7 per cent during 2015-20. The domestic consumption of raw silk is also expected to grow at 4-5 per cent during this period.

Cotton: Cotton is the main ingredient for textile industry in general and handloom weaving in particular. There has been a sustained improvement in cotton yarn production since financial year 2005-06. India's net exporter of cotton yarn in 2007-08, India registered 8.3 per cent growth and 9.9 per cent de-growth in exports and imports respectively. The dismantling of Multi fiber Agreement (MFA) in 2005 provided a boost to India's yarn exports. India will be a cotton surplus nation in the next decade. For the Textiles Ministry therefore, supply side management issues are of vital importance which needs to be addressed in the National Fiber Policy.

The key issues involved in policy formulation include cotton contamination, improving quality, improving infrastructure, problems of admixtures, need for establishing uniform standards and need for an Indian arbitration for imported cotton. The responsibility for enhancing rates was given to the ministry of Agriculture. The policy measures include creating an institutional framework for development of cotton fiber, improving irrigation facilities, water harvesting and increasing awareness for farmers' suitable agronomic practices.

The National fiber policy envisages the following policy measures:

- Aggregate marketing strategy would be adopted by Cotton Council of India to procure at least 20 per cent of cotton production in the country i.e. 60 to 80 lakh bales so as to ensure secured supply of cotton to textile mills at competitive price. This shall obviate the possibility of centralization of individual gains;
- After projecting cotton consumption of domestic mills vis-a-vis expected cotton production, availability of surplus cotton would be ascertained by Cotton Advisory board. An Inter-Ministerial Committee of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of Textile Secretary would, based on recommendations of cotton Advisory Boards and other factors; consider the quantum of export quota to be given to CCI from time to time to calibrate export of cotton from the country and also ensuring the prescribed carry over stock at the end of the season;
- Textile Ministry in consultation with ISRO/Department of Space would put in place improved crop mapping of cotton so as clearly identify production and acreage;
- In consultation with Department of Revenue, Textile Ministry would put in place an electronic data exchange system, that would ensure that every Shipping/ Dry port provides a platform for data exchange on cotton shipments on a weekly basis to the Textile Commissioner (Report of The National Fiber Policy 2010-11).

Cotton Yarn: The National Fiber Policy to the extent possible will seek to eliminate export shipments to bonded warehouses in non-consumption countries and shall be instrumental in getting better per unit export realization, which shall ultimately benefit cotton growers of the country. Textile Ministry would also initiate necessary policy interventions for grater monitoring and streamlining of yarn exports to ensure adequate availability to the handloom and garment sector. The year 2009-10 has witnessed significant price surges in the yarn industry that has resulted in significant distortions in the supply chain to the handlooms and garments sector. The policy interventions envisaged by the Ministry of Textiles to stabilize prices of cotton yarn for improved supply chain management for textile yardage, handloom weavers and garment sector are the following:

- Yarn export registration which has commenced from April 2010 would be established as an institutional strengthening mechanism.

- A yarn Advisory Board would be established to formulate a Yarn Balance Sheet for the Country. The Yarn Advisory Board comprising of representatives of stakeholders, ministries of Government of India and the Industry would function on the lines of the Cotton Advisory Board and would be an enabling mechanism for considered policy making to ensure adequate supplies to downstream industry;

- Ministry of Textiles would intensify the test Check of Hank Yarn Obligations through the Textile Commissioner to ensure that the industry fully adopts the prescribed norms for ensuring adequate availability of hank yarn to the handloom sector. Inspections in 2009-10 have indicated that several spinning mills have not been submitting their mandatory obligations to the textile commissioner and significant branches of the hank yarn obligations are being witnessed. The Ministry of Textiles would advise the Textile Commissioner to explore necessary legal and regulatory options available under the Essential Commodities Act to ensure that the mandatory obligations of the spinning Industry to the handlooms Sector are duly fulfilled.

- In addition to the above, Textile Ministry has constituted a committee under chairmanship of Development Commissioner (handloom) to examine all issues of Hank Yarn Obligations to ensure adequate availability of hank yarn to weavers. The Committee's recommendations would be considered for future policy interventions.

- A prohibitive export duty on yarn would be considered in consultation with Finance Ministry to improve domestic availability of yarn if the trigger point prescribed for yarn exports by the Yarn Advisory Board is breached (Report of the National Fiber Policy 2010-11).

Organic Suvin and ELS Cotton: The policy on organic and suvin cotton aims to ensure that the acreage under Suvin fiber should not be allowed to decline further and prevent suvin from becoming extinct. This p-policy suggests that a special subsidy package could be developed in order to sustain the long duration crop and to keep alive the interest of the current suvin growers. Steps in this direction would include

a) Ensuring seed availability for organic, Suvin and ELS cotton;

b) Incentives to the farmers for sustaining organic cultivation;

c) Streamlining organic certification;

d) Adopting a Mission mode approach and establishing an Inter-Ministerial Board, for the Organic, suvin and ELS Cotton Sector. The National Fiber policy recommends establishment of a Board for specialty cotton comprising of the Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce and Textile with the responsibility to ascertain areas as organic zones/ refuge/zones in Bt Cotton areas as per regulations and ensure timely availability of variety seeds for this purpose. A technology mission on specialty cotton would be developed.

e) A technology mission on specialty cotton would be developed.

Fiber availability for handloom sector Handloom sector is next only to agriculture so far as employment is concerned. During the 11th plan Rs 1370 crores have been utilized till end of 2009-10. Handlooms are being positioned as niche product by using innovative measures of promotion and by branding these products through celebrity endorsements and popularizing measures to encourage the youth and the up-market consumers to use these products as fashion statement. (Report of the National Fiber Policy 2010-11).

With the brand promotion of hand-woven fabrics used in conventional products as well as in home furnishings, bed and table linen, the handlooms are capable of providing ethnic yet contemporary products. The handloom sector is likely to see a resurgence provided there is adequate infrastructure support for timely production and marketing of quality handloom products to meet the demands of national and international markets. The handloom fiber production was continuously increasing at the growth rate of 6-7 per cent from the year 2004-05 to 2007-08 while there was a marginal decline of 3.88 per cent during 2008-09. This has happened due to global economic recession and all sectors including handloom were affected (Annual Handloom Report 2009-10).

The Cluster Approach to provide financial/policy support and necessary regularity framework that fosters the development of viable entities enable artisans and micro enterprises (individually and collectively), assistance for infrastructure support to handloom clusters have been offered under the Cluster Approach, by setting up new/ upgrading existing infrastructure to expedite production and improved product quality. This includes support for setting up Common Facility Centers (CFC), work sheds, setting up or upgrading dye houses dye houses besides offering assistance in acquiring equipment like reeds, heads, jacquard, and winding machines, which have helped in accelerating production and helped enhanced income generation. Financial assistance from banks too has been facilitated to provide credit to weavers through SHGs/consortium/Producers' Companies. Since 2006-07, 2.68 lakh weavers have benefited from the above approach (Annual Handloom Report 20012-13).

Handloom sector represents the rich cultural and traditional heritage unique to India. Being a unique craft woven with dexterous hands, the unique skills need to be protected from languishing. In the face of growing competitiveness in textile industry both in national and international markets and the free trade opportunities emerging in the post-MFA environment, a growing need has been felt for adopting holistic approach to facilitate the handloom weavers to meet the challenges of the globalized environment. Handloom weaving provides a source of livelihood for 65 lakh handloom weavers. For their sustainable development, a focused approach for increase in production, use of innovative yarns and fibers in new designs and developing products of international market requirement is the need of the day (Annual Handloom Report 20013-14).

In fact, the new sires of products namely home furnishings, bed and table linen, made-ups, stoles and scarves have generated a great market demand in the international market. However, this needs to be substantiated by increasing the production pattern suitably. Looking at the potential and growing demand in the export market, there is a need felt for addressing the inherent problems of providing good quality raw materials to the handloom weavers at competitive rates for fulfilling the qualitative and quantitative requirements for the export market.

Moreover the environment friendly nature of handloom products makes them easily accessible to countries with stringent Non-Tariff barriers. For this, international exposure of these goods to showcase innovative and contemporary design to enable a sustained supply chain management service through aggressive e-marketing is required (Annual Handloom Report 20014-15).

As per the estimates of 3rd Handloom Census, the number of looms has declined from 31.40 lakhs to 26.30 lakhs in last ten years due to competition from power looms and mills. Moreover, the number of weavers engaged in handloom weaving has also reduced from 65 lakhs to an estimated number of 45.5 lakhs. Handlooms sector continues to employ a good percent of the total textiles workforce and continues to need infru8structure and technology support (Report of 3rd Handloom Census 2009-10).

Power loom productivity has improved due to upgradation of looms and training of weavers being provided by the Government. Looking ahead, Handloom sector has the potential to grow at a rate of 3-5 per cent per annum. The production cost of handloom products predominantly constitutes of raw material costs which varies from 40-60 per cent depending upon the product. Therefore, the availability of raw material at reasonable cost is of utmost importance to the handloom sector (Annual Handloom Report 2010-11).

Given this scenario, the anticipated growth of 5 per cent will translate into 1.14 lakh new looms, this is likely to generate employment for 3.3 lakhs additional handloom weavers since one loom provides employment to not only one handloom weavers but also to ancillary workers engaged in pre-loom and post- loom activities. If approximate 15 per cent of domestic supply of cotton is likely to be utilized in the handloom sector then, handloom sector's cotton consumption would increase by 30 lakh bales over the next decade. Presently, 6788 million Sq. mtr. handloom fabrics are produced annually by the handloom sector. With additional 1.14 lakh looms, almost 340 square meters of additional fabric is likely to be produced every year (Report of the National Handloom Policy 2010-11).

The office of the Development Commissioner for handloom has taken various schemes for the promotion and development of handloom sector and providing assistance to the handloom weavers in a variety of ways.

According to the Annual Handloom Report of 2002-03, published by Ministry of Textile, Government of India, these are as follows:

a) Employment Generation;

b) Modernization and upgradation of technology

c) Input support;

d) Marketing Support;

e) Publicity;

f) Infrastructural support;

g) Welfare measures;

h) Composite growth oriented package;

i) Development of exportable products and their marketing;

j) Research and development (Annual Report 2002-03: 39-40).

Various policies and schemes taken by the Development Commissioner for Handloom are weaver oriented and address the needs of disadvantaged social and occupational groups, which are at the lower strata of social hierarchy. The aims of the policies were to enhance production, productivity and efficiency of handloom sector and enhance the income and socio-economic conditions of the weaver.

Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana/ (DDHPY): This scheme has been launched to provide assistance to the handloom weavers in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

The scheme has been in operation with effect from 01.04.2000. This scheme is sponsored by the Central Government. Rs. 310 crore had been allotted for the 10th Plan Period. This scheme aims at taking care f wide amount of activities such as basic inputs, like looms and accessories, working capital loans, product development, infrastructure support, institutional support, training of handloom weavers, supply of equipments and supports for marketing products. The handloom organizations like cooperatives can be benefited from DDHPY like design input, publicity, marketing incentive and transport for the handloom weaver of North East region, Sikkim and Jammu & Kashmir. Before the introduction of DDHPY, most of the scheme was aimed art benefiting the weavers, who were under the umbrella of cooperatives. But with the introduction of DDHPY weavers of both cooperative and non-cooperative fold begun to be benefited by this scheme. The national and state level organizations, primary societies, self-help groups etc. are eligible to get benefit of the scheme. The scheme also emphasized on purchase and modification of looms, silk up gradation, design support to facilitate product diversification, enhance production and marketability of handloom products. The handloom agencies could get assistance for installing CAD/CAM system and availing of the services of designer to improve designs and fabric as per requirement of both the domestic and international market. A special mechanism to provide subsidies for the transportation of finished goods from north Eastern parts of Country including Sikkim and J&K has been taken. The plan to strengthen state level weavers' organization had been taken, for restructuring such organization, for better marketing efforts through bankable projects to be cleared by Textile Ministry, Government of India. In order to develop the quality of finished products, financial assistance made available to the handloom agencies for establishing infrastructure facilities, like setting up of processing units with bleaching, dyeing, finishing, sizing and other facilities for marketing finished goods (Report of the Handloom Census 2019-20).

This scheme has a share of 50:50 between central and state governments, except Jammu and Kashmir, North Eastern States, Sikkim, where Central government contributes 90 per cent. Organizations, where 100 per cent members belong to SC/ST/minorities/ women, centre contribute 75 per cent of total cost. During the year 200-01 a sum of Rs. 1695.84 lakhs was released under this scheme to 12 states. Form the year 2001-02, the committed liabilities towards the projects sanctioned under the erstwhile Project Package Scheme, Integrated Handloom Village Development Scheme, Margin Money for Destitute Weavers Scheme, and Handloom Development Centre/Quality Dyeing Unit scheme are also met out of the budget provision under DDHPY project. In the financial year 201-2002, a sum of Rs 6359.33 lakh was released as grant from the scheme (Annual Report 2002-03:39-40-41).

National Centre For Textile Design/ (NCTD): National centre of Textile Design has been set up to promote , project and develop classical and modern designs for preparing weavers to cope up with the rapidly changing demand of market, and providing adequate growth opportunity to the handloom sector.

NCTD has been set up in Handloom Pavilion, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi with online and off-line activities. Its website is www.designdiary.com. This web site has been designed and developed with different segments i.e. international and Indian trends and colour forecast, panel of designers, design pool, linkages, handcraft textiles of India, yellow pages, archives etc. There is scope for individual and agencies to take membership. Off line activities include holding off special Exhibition on sustained basis for product development on handlooms. An exhibition named *Tantavi* was organized in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad in the year 2001-2002. These kinds of exhibition were also organized Sydney, Jakarta, and Milan recently. The exhibition received considerable response from internal as well as external customers. There is also scope to organize exhibition in other parts of the country (Report of the Handloom Census 2009-10).

Policy of Supply of Yarn at Mill Gate Price: The basic reason of dependence of dependence of handloom sector to the mill sector is for the supply of raw material, i.e., yarn. The Central Government had taken initiative since 1992-93 financial year, to ensure regular supply of hank yarn to the handloom sector. The Government has issued order, making it compulsory on the spinning mills to reserve a certain percentage of yarn for handloom as hank yarn.

National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), a government of India undertaking, is the only agency authorized to implement the scheme. The scheme benefits the following organizations and the member of weavers:

- All handloom organizations of national/state/ regional level.
- Handloom Development Centers.
- Handloom producers / exporters / manufacturers registered with HEPC / any other Export Promotion Council under the Union Ministry of Textiles or the State Directors of Industries.
- All approved export houses/trading houses/ star trading houses for production of handloom items.
- Members of recognized / approved handloom associations.
- NGOs fulfilling CAPART norms.
- Any other agency with the approval of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms).

The Government of India is meeting the entire expenditure under the scheme. The yarn is being arranged by NHDC form the mills as per the requirement of user agency (as mentioned above) and is being transported to the storehouse of the agency. A new provision has been made in the guidelines stipulating that at least 10% of the total yarn supplied shall be made to North-Eastern States in conformity with the chart.

In addition to the above, the NHDC has to pay depot operation charges@1% of the value of yarn, wherever the yarn is supplied to weavers through yarn depots. Further there is provision for supply of yarn to the weavers in the remote areas through mobile van during 20 days in a month. The actual expenditure involved for operating the mobile van is to be reimbursed subject to a maximum of Rs.1500 /- per day per van by NHDC.

The expenditure for transportation of yarn and for operation of yarn depots and also the overhead expenditure involved by the NHDC on this yarn transaction is being done by the Government at the flat rate as detailed bellow:

Yarn other than Silk and Jute 3.5 per cent of value

Silk Yarn 2 per cent of value

Jute Yarn 10 per cent value

(Annual Report 2002-03:39-40).

The expenditure for operating the mobile van is being made by NHDC by Government of India in addition to the flat rate given above.

Weavers Service Centre/ (WSC): There are 24 Weavers Service Centers under the office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms which play a vital role in conducting research and development and in implementing training to weavers for the up gradation of their skill and increasing productivity in handloom sector. These centers play important role in evolving new designs and reviving traditional designs. The weavers Service Centers primarily provide extension services, which involves transfer of design inputs, skills and technology involved in Weavers' Service Centers to the weavers at their cottages(Annual Report 2002-03:39-44).

Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT): The Indian Institute of Handloom Technology mainly functioned for providing trained and qualified engineers, technicians and weavers in handloom sector. It was also aimed to undertake experimental and research programmes on all aspects of the handloom industry. There are six IIHTs at Varanasi, Salem, Guwahati, Jodhpur, Venkatagri (AP) and Gadag (Karnataka) (Annual Report 2002-03: 45).

Decentralized Training Programme of Weavers: Decentralized Training Programme is aimed at training of weavers, designers, dyers and printers connected with the handloom industry, on improved technology so that they are able to increase production, improve their earnings and get a better market for their products. The decentralized Training programme provides training to weavers in weaving technology, Design Development and Dyeing Techniques (Annual Report 2002-03:52-54).

Design Exhibition-Cum-Dyeing Workshop: The Weavers Service Centers have been organizing Dyeing-cum-Design Workshops since 1995-96 with a view to creating awareness in the weavers' concentrated areas about the services available in Weavers' Service Centers and to impart training of dyeing techniques and design development. Design Exhibitions dyeing workshops are organized in the handloom clusters by weavers' service centers to promote and propagate modern dyeing techniques besides making available designs to doorsteps of the weavers.

Work Shed-cum-Housing Scheme for Handloom Weavers: The Government of India introduced a centrally sponsored scheme called "Work shed-cum-Housing Scheme" for handloom weavers from the beginning of the 7th Five-Year Plan i.e. 1985-86. The scheme is being implemented primarily for providing suitable work place to the weavers thereby achieving better productivity. The scheme is being implemented by the respective state Handloom Development Corporations, primary societies or any other specialized agencies, set up by the concerned state government for execution of such projects (Report of Handloom Census 2019-20).

Weavers' Welfare Policy: The then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on 15th August 2002, announced the implementation of specially contributed insurance scheme for one million weavers and artisans, combining the 'Janashree BimaYojana', with group insurance scheme. It had been proposed to implement the "Bunkar

‘BimaYojana’. Which is a combination of the ‘Janashree BimaYojana’ and add-on Group Insurance Scheme during the 10th plan period to cover Nine lakh weavers in the handloom sector (Annual Report 2003-04:11-14).

Keeping in view the recommendation of the working Group on Textile and Jute Industry for the 10th Five year Plan and also in accordance with the announcement made by the Prime Minister for launching of the aforesaid special insurance scheme, it is proposed to implement a comprehensive Scheme called ‘Weavers’ Welfare Scheme’ with health package, thrift fund, Bunkar BimaYojana and Package insurance for handloom weavers. The main aim of the scheme was to create a component with revised funding pattern. However for the present the welfare policy had been continued with the existing rule (Annual Report 2007-08:22-24).

Thrift Fund Scheme for Handloom Weavers: The Thrift Fund Scheme for Handloom Weavers was introduced in the 8th Five year Plan as one of the special welfare measure from the Government of India. Creation of provident fund for weavers is the main aim of the scheme. Weavers of corporate sector can participate in the scheme. As per the present funding pattern, 8% of the wage was to be contributed by the weavers and 4 per cent each by the Central and State Governments (Annual Report 2008-09:11-12).

Health Package Policy for Handloom Weavers: The Health Package Policy was introduced in March 1993. Under the Policy, the weavers were provided financial assistance for the treatment of disease like asthma, tuberculosis and inflammation of respiratory system, cost of testing of eyes and spectacle, supply of drinking water, maternity benefits to women weavers, payment of additional compensation for permanent measures of family planning and infrastructure for the primary health care (Report of Handloom Census 2019-20).

Group Insurance Scheme for Handloom Weavers: The government of India introduced a Group Insurance Scheme for Handloom Weavers throughout the country from the year 1992-93 in order to help weavers to meet their socio –economic obligation towards their family and to act as a support system against the uncertainty of their working capacity in old age. Under this policy, a weaver was provided an insurance coverage of 10,000/- for an annual premium of 120/- per annum which was shared equally by the beneficiary, the Central Government and the State Government.

New Insurance Scheme for Handloom Weavers: In order to provide relief to handloom weavers in the 50th year of Independence, the Government of India introduced the new insurance scheme for weavers through United India Insurance Company for the 9th Five-Year Plan. The new Insurance Policy provided coverage against loss or damage to dwelling units due to flood, fire, earthquake etc. damage to contents of the dwelling units like looms, raw material etc.; medical coverage and Personal Accidental Insurance against accident death at a premium of Rs. 120/- by the weaver, Rs. 40/-by the state Government and Rs. 60/- by the Government of India (Report of Handloom Census 2009-2010).

Government of India took different export policies for handloom products. These are as follows:

Development of Exportable Products and the Marketing Policies: The importance of the handloom sector in the national economy is well recognized particularly form the point of view of its contribution to textile exports. On account of having the advantage of flexibility, small production run, uniqueness, constant scope for innovation, eco-friendly production systems, adaptability and above all, the element of rich artistry, this sector has the potential to contribute towards export earnings in a big way. Export of handloom has, therefore, been identified as a thrust area for the overall development of the sector. The Government is exploring the possibility of making optimal use of the resources to enhance production capabilities of exportable handloom products. In order to give an impetus to the export of handloom fabrics, made –ups and other handloom items from the country, a scheme for Development of exportable products and their marketing has been under implementation since 1996-97. Under the scheme, assistance is made available for developing exportable products and building up production capability for export marketing (Report of Handloom Census 2009-2010).

National and state level Handloom Corporations, apex cooperative societies and primary handloom weavers’ cooperative societies are eligible for assistance under this scheme. Private handloom exports could be assisted through HEPC. The project cost under the scheme is shared by Central and the State Government. The agencies sponsored by Central Government like HEPC, HHEC, NHDC, ACASH etc. are entitled to 100 per cent assistance from the Government of India under the scheme (Report of Handloom Census 2009-2010).

Handloom Export Promotion Council: The Handloom Export Promotion Council, registered under Companies Act, 1956, was constituted in 1965 by the Government of India as the nodal agency for export promotion efforts related to the cotton handloom textiles. The Council provides following services to its members:

1) Dissemination of trade information and intelligence;

2) Publicity abroad for Indian handloom Product;

3) Organization of business missions/ buyer seller meets and participation in international trade events;

4) Consultancy and guidance services for handloom exporters;

5) Liaison with the Government of India on all procedural and policy matters relevant to the handloom export trade. Dealing with trade complaints pertaining to handloom exports;

6) Facilitating product diversification and adaptation to meet modern market requirements;

7) Providing impetus to modernization of handlooms for the export market;

8) Provision off design inputs to promote export of handloom products.

The Indian cotton handloom fabrics and made-ups occupy a place of eminence in the sought-after markets of USA, UK, Germany, France, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Japan and Australia. The main items exported belong to the segment of home furnishing which constitutes 90% of our total handloom exports

The DEPM Scheme has been continued during the 10th Five Year Plan, in a modified nomenclature, 'Handloom Export Scheme'. During the 10th Five Year Plan, a sum of Rs.5 crore has been provided for meeting expenses in respect of fresh projects and for meeting committed liabilities in respect of the projects sanctioned in the past (Annual Report 2007-08:22-24).

Marketing Development Programme: To provide marketing support to handloom agencies and the individual weavers, the office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms assists the State Governments in organizing national handloom Expos or special expos, district level events, crafts meals etc. in different parts of the country. For this purpose, financial support is provided to the implementing agencies recommended by the state governments towards infrastructure, publicity etc. The activities are supportive to the handloom agencies, weavers and also the consumers. During 2001-2002, 09 national handloom expos and 09 special expos, 92 District Level Events, 04 Craft Meals and one Master Creation Programme was organized in different parts of the country and 06 urban *hats* were approved. In 10^{th} plan, a scheme called 'Marketing Promotion Programme' is being formulated as an integrated scheme by merging several earlier schemes, on the recommendation of the Planning Commission's working group on jute and textile industry for the 10^{th} plan. The Marketing Promotion Programme is providing organization of exhibitions and fairs, setting up of urban *hats,* setting up of marketing complexes, publicity and awareness (Annual Report 2003-2003: 22-24).

Policy for Reservation of Handloom Products: The Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 aims at protecting millions of handloom weavers from the encroachment made on their livelihood by the power loom and the organized mill sectors. Eleven categorizes of textile articles are reserved under the provisions of the Act at present. The Union Government has also been providing assistance to the States/UTs under the scheme 'Implementation of Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act,1985' to ensure effective implementation of the Act, at state level. The details of state wise assistance extended by the Central Government during the years 1999-2000 and 2001-2002 were as follows:

The central funding to States/UTs has been 100 per cent during the 9th Five Year Plan. During the 10th Five Year Plan, in the first year of the 100 per cent aid had been approved. During 10th Five Year plan period, the outlay earmarked is Rs. 6 crore (Annual Report 2003-004:15).

Research and Development: The Handloom Industry is the most ancient Cottage Industry of India. Its preservation for posterity will ensure continuation of our cultural heritage. Research and Development is very much essential for any industry or art to accommodate it with the fast changing development on account of growing global demand of the Indian handloom products. Hence, undertaking Research and development in the handloom sector is very important in order to have a continuity of feedback on economic, social, aesthetic, technical and promotional aspects of handloom sector. Various reputed research institutes and other professional/voluntary organizations, Non-Government Organizations registered under any of the statutory Acts, Universities, IIHTs and WSCs having basic infrastructural facilities to effectively implement the scheme through studies, need based survey, research and development etc.

Marketing through ACASH: The Association of Corporations and Apex Societies of Handlooms (ACASH), New Delhi was registered in 1984 under the Societies Regulation Act to coordinate and promote marketing in handloom sector. It serves as a nodal agency for supply of handloom goods to be purchased by various Union Government departments, agencies, public sector undertakings etc. under single tender system.

ACASH coordinated participation in the following events:

a) Buyer- seller meet, Tokyo from 15-17 May 2001, organized by India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO). Five agencies participated in it.

b) Textile D' Interior Premiere (TIP'9) Brussels from 8-11 September, 2001. four agencies participated in it.

c) AGS Fair at Jakarta from 14-16 March, 2002. Three agencies participated in it.

d) 'Heimtextile' 2002 at Frankfurt, Germany from 9-12 January, 2002. Twenty two agencies participated in it. Heimtextile India at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi from 4-7 October 2002. Three agencies participated in the fair. This kind of international fairs held every year (Annual Report 2007-08:22-24). For pandemic, COVID-19, in the year 2020-21 and 2021-22 the fairs are not organized.

Domestic Exhibitions: ACASH organized a National Handloom Expo namely 'India Weaves 2001' at Delhi hat from 17-31 October, 2001. 143 handloom agencies from various parts of the country participated. It had also participated in the India International Trade Fair organized by the India Trade Promotion Organization at

Pragati Maidan, New Delhi during November 14-27, 2001. 35 agencies participated. ACASH organized a National Handloom Expo namely ‘India Weaves’ 2002. 121 handloom agencies from various parts of the country participated. It had also participated in the India International Trade Fair organized by the India Trade Promotion Organization at Pragati Maidan,New Delhi November, 14-27 2002. 35 agencies participated (Annual Report 2003-04:22-24).

All India Handloom Fabrics Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd. (AIHFMCS): The All India Handloom Fabric Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd., Delhi is a National level Cooperative society presently governed under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984. The main objective of the Society is to provide employment to the handloom weavers through its marketing services by conducting sales both in domestic and international market. To achieve these objectives, the Society has set up 25 retail outlets, which are popularly known as ‘Handloom House’. The Society has its Export houses at Noida, Salem, Karur, Chennai, and Kolkata. Also, the society has showrooms in Singapore and Mauritius for giving an impetus to marketing of Indian handloom products in the foreign markets.The affairs of the society are administered by an elected board of Directors consisting of the Representative of State Apex/Regional/ Primary Handloom Weavers Cooperative Societies (Report of the Handloom census 2019-2020).

National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum (NHHM): The national Handicrafts and Handloom Museum also known as Crafts Museum is located at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. It is a sub-ordinate office under the office of Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles. Their main objectives are to increase awareness about India’s ancient traditions of handicrafts and handlooms. It provides an interactive forum for the crafts persons, designers, exporters, scholars and public and also helps crafts persons experiences a direct marketing interaction with customers without middlemen, and serves as a resource centre for the Indian handicraft and handloom traditions. Collection, conservation and preservation of crafts, revival, reproduction and development of Art and Craft, constitute the basic activities of the Museum (Annual Report 2019-2020).

Craft Demonstration Programme: The Museum has strengthen the weakening link of traditional handicrafts and handlooms through its regular monthly craft demonstration programme organized round the year except during the monsoon season. Craft men (approximately) fifty per month are invited for the Craft Demonstration Programme to demonstrate their skills in the respective crafts and also sell their products. 304 Craft men were invited from various regions under this programme during the year 2017-18 (Annual Report 2018-19:23-24).

Library: A handloom library has been set up in Salem IIHT campus. Museum has a specialized reference Library on traditional Indian arts, crafts, textiles and major anthropological works on Indian tribes etc. The Library has 20000 reference books and other periodicals. Research scholars and students from various institutions regularly visit the Museum (Report of the Handloom census 2019-2020).

Handloom Policy of Government of West Bengal: Government of West Bengal Directorate of Textiles, (Handlooms, Spinning Mills, Silk Weaving and Handloom Based Handicrafts Division) published Administrative Report, 2016-17. According to this report handloom of policy of Government of West Bengal are as follows:

1. Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme (CHDS) under National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP) (Centrally sponsored)

2. Mega Handloom Cluster Development Project covering entire Murshidabad & part of Nadia District (Centrally Sponsored) under CHCDS.

3. Comprehensive Handloom Development Programme in Dakshin Dinajpur District under BRGF (Backward Regions Grant Fund programme);

4. Handloom cotton and silk projects under Natural Fibre Mission under BRGF in four districts;

5. Tanti Sathi (State Sector);

6. Computerization of PWCS under Revival, Reform & Restructuring Package for handloom sector (centrally sponsored);

7. 10 per cent price subsidy on hank yarn under Mill Gate Price Scheme (Central Sector);

8. Production of cheaper Variety of cotton shari (State Sector) and production of polyester /viscose shari, *dhuti*,*lungi* etc. for supply to disaster Management. (State Sector);

9. Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 (Centrally Sponsored);

10. Incentives with a special emphasis to handloom sector through West Bengal Incentive Scheme, 2013 for MSME in textile Sector under West Bengal Textile Policy 2013-18;

11. West Bengal Handloom Circuit Development Scheme-2014 (State Sector) & ISDS (Centrally Sponsored);

12. Establishment of Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) in Fulia, Nadia District.

13. Infrastructure development (State Sector);

14. Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 (Central Sector);

15. Weavers' Credit Card;

16. MUDRA Scheme for Weavers;

17. State participation in Share capital support to the State Controlled Spinning Mills (State Sector);

18. State participation in Share capital support to the West Bengal State Handloom Weavers Co-operatives Society Ltd. (State Sector); (Notification MSME 2014)

19. Integrating tourism with handloom & handicraft at 3 selected circuits.

Welfare Policies: Government of West Bengal takes various welfare policies for handloom weavers and allied workers, these are as follows:

- Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar BimaYojana (MGBBY);
- RSBY Scheme for Handloom Weaver Family (Centrally Sponsored);
- Old Age Pension to weavers (State Sector).

Development Policies: Government of West Bengal takes various development policies for weavers and allied workers these are as follows:

- Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme (CHDS) under National Handloom Development Programme
- (NHDP) (Centrally sponsored)
- Cluster Development Programme (Centrally Sponsored and State Sector)

The objective of the programme is to facilitate the sustainable development of handloom weavers located in & outside identified handloom clusters into cohesive, self-managing and competitive socio –economic unit.

Handloom Cluster Projects (Under State sector) [having 500 –1000 looms]: Cluster is to be set up at Block Level in the handloom concentrated area. In a Block more than one cluster may also be taken up depending upon need with respect to number of handlooms. Cluster is to be set up in the Handloom concentrated area which is not covered under CHDS.

Main components of the Scheme are as follows:

I) Skill up-gradation training on Weaving / Dyeing;

II) Technology up-gradation;

III) Design development and Product Development;

IV) Purchase of Computer Aided Textile Design System (CATD);

V) Setting up of yarn depot and Common Facility Centre/Dye House/ ETP/Common Service Centre;

VI) Construction of individual work shed for handloom weavers;

VII) Engagement of designer cum marketing executive;

VIII) Publicity and marketing.

Marketing Scheme: Under this scheme 10 per cent Marketing Incentive of the average sales turnover of the last 3 Years is given to the handloom agencies for promotion of marketing of handloom products and to offset the cost disadvantage with respect to men, in power loom and Mill Sectors in the ratio of 50:50 between central government and state government. State government first release the state share of 50 per cent on the basis of which Central government release remaining 50 per cent. The fund sanctioned towards Marketing Incentive in previous years was in 50:50ratio. Except this initiative, a provision of additional Marketing incentive of 5 per cent on the net sales over and above the existing 10 per cent Marketing Incentive subject to the ceiling of five lakh for each handloom agency is there through West Bengal Incentive Scheme, 2013 for MSME in Textile Sector under West Bengal Textile Policy 2013-2014 (Notification MSME 2014)

Promotion of Marketing of Handloom Products: The objective of the scheme is to promote the marketing channels in domestic as well as export market and bring about linkage between the two in a holistic and integrated manner. The performance during 2016-17 is as follows:

Tanti Sathi (State Sector): Under the scheme, new pit looms and accessories are to be supplied to the handloom weavers & *khadi* weavers who have no looms or obsolete/dilapidated loom with back up support for skill development from West Bengal Handloom Circuit scheme 2014, state design centre for design development and marketing tie up with Tantuja and Biswabangla. During the year 2016-17, 41876 (Cumulative 60260) looms and accessories have been supplied to 41876 (Cumulative 60260) handloom weavers of the different districts of the State with the cost of Rs.73.44 crore (Cumulative Rs.106.53 crore) pertaining to this directorate.

Computerization of PWCS under Revival, Reform & Restructuring (RRR) Package for Handloom Sector (Centrally sponsored): Under the Scheme, fund is provided for repayment of 100 per cent of principal and 25 per cent of interest as on date of loan becoming NPA and which is overdue as on 31/3/2010 in respect of viable and potentially viable primary weavers co-operative societies and apex societies as well as in respect of individual handloom weavers, master weavers, self-help groups and joint liability groups who have taken such loans for handloom weaving purposes, provided the banks agree for sanctioning fresh loans. One of the components of RRR package is computerization of PWCs.

Out of 461 Primary Weavers' Co-operative Societies (PWCs) assisted under Revival, Reform and Restructuring (RRR) Package for Handloom Sector, 230 PWCSs have been computerized in 1st phase during 2015-16. Computerization works of PWCS has been done by West Bengal Electronics Industry Development Corporation Limited (WEBEL). The utilisation certificate and other relevant documents for the 1st phase fund have been sent to the Government of India with a copy to NABARD for sanctioning the balance fund for the computerization of rest eligible PWCs which will be undertaken in 2nd phase after receiving of balance fund from Government of India 10% price subsidy on hank yarn under Mill Gate Price Scheme (Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

Objective of the scheme is to make available all types of yarn at Mill Gate Price to the eligible handloom weavers under PWCs / clusters / groups/ master weavers / exporters and Individuals etc. so as to facilitate regular supply of basic raw materials to the handloom sector. National Handloom Development Corporation Ltd. is the implementing Agency.

Production of Cheaper Varieties of Shari**:** The scheme has been introduced to provide sustainable employment to semi-skilled weavers of the state, who cannot go for production of value added, diversified and market oriented products after taking necessary skill up gradation trainings. Allocations of funds under this scheme are as follows:

Year 2016 -17			
Physical		Financial (Rs. in lakh)	
Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement
6.00 lakhs pieces shari	6.35 lakhs Pieces shari	600.00	628.00

(Source Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act,1999: To protect the traditional Handloom products of this State from misuse of its traditional unique technique of weaving and to establish their Commercial Brand naming, action has been taken for registration of the traditional Handloom Products of West Bengal under Geographical Indication of Goods Registration & Projection Act, 1999. *Santipuri, baluchari &dhaniakhali shari* have already been registered under Government of India Act 1999.

West Bengal Handloom Circuit Development Scheme-2014 (State Sector) & ISDS: To fill up the gap for skill development training without depending on the financial assistance from Government of India, department Of MSME & Training along with Dept. of Technical Education and Training launched West Bengal Handloom Circuit Scheme in 2014 to train 96115 weavers and allied workers at the cost of Rs. 44.11 crore. During 2016-17, 22280(cumulative 65821) weavers and allied workers have been imparted training under West Bengal Handloom Circuit Development Scheme. Under Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS) 4203 weavers have been imparted training on product diversification during the year 2016-17.

Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) in Fulia, Nadia district: Indian Institute of Handloom Technology has been set up at ITI Campus, Fulia, Nadia with an intake capacity 30 students including state quota of 15 for conducting three years' Diploma course in Handloom and Textiles Technology from the academic year 2015-16. This institute is providing key personnel for overall Technology up-gradation (weaving, dyeing, designing, printing, finishing etc.) of Handloom sector of West Bengal. Beside this, Certificate course on Handloom Entrepreneur with 4 months duration has also started during 2016-17.

Infrastructure Development of Handloom Industry: This scheme has been taken for infrastructure development of handloom textile industry. Details of the scheme are as follows:

a) A total sum of Rs.303.58 lakh has been sanctioned for setting up of Tanter Hat, Suto-O –Ranger Bazar etc. at Purbasthali, Srirampur in Purba Bardhaman district.

b) Construction of black top link road of 7.615 Km, for easy access of the handloom weavers and other allied workers in the GPs of Samudragarh, Nasaratpur Srirampur under Purbasthali I Block at the cost of Rs.335.00 lakh has beensanctioned.

c) Civil Construction of 1st phase of Udaynarayanpur Rural Handloom Hat in the district of Howrah has been completed. Total project cost is 6.72 crore.

d) Renovation of 4 showrooms of Tantuja at the cost of Rs.86.62lakh.

e) One Exhibition cum display Hall at Fulia Pragatisil Tantubay Samabay Samity Ltd has been set up at the cost of Rs.17.63 lakhs.

Weavers Credit Card: The Weavers Credit Card scheme was introduced with an aim to provide adequate and timely assistance from the Banking Institutions to the weavers to meet their credit requirement by providing credit at concessional rate. Maximum limit to individual weavers is up to Rs. 2 lakh. Normally no margin money is required for limits up to Rs. 25,000/- and 20 per cent margin is required for limits above that. Up to 31st March, 2016, 65,837 WCC (cumulative) have been issued and loan disbursed Rs 17.99 crore (cumulative)**.** The scheme is replaced by Mudra Scheme for Weavers from 1st July, 2016.

Status regarding issuing of Weavers Credit Card and disbursal of loan during 2016-17

Weavers Credit Card issued in 2016-17	Total amount of loan sanctioned during 2016-17(Rs. In lakh)	Total amount of loan disbursed during 2016-17(Rs. In lakh)
255	63.72	37.80

(Source Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

MUDRA Scheme for Weavers: It is a new scheme which, in coordination with the office of D.C (Handlooms), Ministry of Textile, GOI, has been formulated by incorporating the benefits of Margin money assistance, interest subsidy and credit guarantee. These benefits are the sub-component of concessional credit component of package approved for handloom sector by GOI. One of the additional features of the new scheme is that the Ministry is providing the subsidy fund directly to the bank and not through NABARD. The purpose of the scheme is to provide the financial assistance for working capital requirement of the existing Handloom Weavers involved in weaving activity. Need based loan subject to ceiling of Rs. 5.00 lakh per borrower, by way of Cash Credit/Working Capital shall be provided. The Working Capital limit would be assessed by simplified turnover method. 20 per cent of project cost (Working Capital Requirement) shall be treated as margin to be borne by the Government with a maximum of Rs. 10000/-. Rest amount shall be borne by borrower (Handloom Census Report 2019-20).

Status Regarding Issuing of Weavers Mudra Card and Disbursal of Loan During 2016-17:

Total no. of weavers Mudra Cards issued by the Banks during the Year 2016-17	Total amount of loan sanctioned during the Year 2016-17 (Rs. In lakh)	Total amount of loan disbursed during the Year 2016-17(Rs.In lakh)	No. of RUPAY Card issued during 2016-17
620	502.85	276.49	29

(Source Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

State participation in Share capital support to the State Controlled Spinning Mills (State Sector): There are six spinning mills under the administrative control of MSSET department. The State Government has been extending financial support for their smooth functioning. During 2016-17 a total sum of Rs.11348.19 lakh (Plan + Non Plan) released to the Spinning mills.

Plan Fund Released to Spinning Mills in the Year 2016-17

Name of the Spinning Mill	Purpose	Amount (Rs Lakh)
Mayurakshi Cotton Mills Ltd	Equity- Procurement of Raw materials	Rs. 149.15
Kangsabati Cooperative Spinning Mills Ltd	Equity-Purchase of Raw Materials	Rs. 50.00

Tamralipta Cooperative Spinning Mills Ltd	Construction of Factory building for Plant IIatFalta Industrial Growth Centre, sector –IV, Falta, 24 Parganas (South)	Rs. 820.00

(Source Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

State participation in Share capital support to the West Bengal State Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd. (State Sector): The West Bengal State Handloom Weavers' Coop. Society Ltd. (Tantuja), established on 1st October, 1954, is the apex society of primary weavers (Handloom) cooperative societies of West Bengal under the administrative control of the government of West Bengal. Tantuja procures handloom fabrics from cooperative societies and artisans through 12 procurement centers and 2 training cum production centers and has 83 sales outlets all over India. Major works/achievements during 2016-17 include completion of extension & upgradation of two TCPC at Purba Medinipur, repair , renovation of three showrooms at Jalpaiguri, Krishnanagar and Belur, showroom cum godown at Digha, starting of civil works for a *tant* hat, viz, Tantrosree at Purbasthali, Purba Bardhaman with state government funding, opening of an exclusive Baluchari Showroom in Kolkata under Revival of *Baluchari* Projectetc.

Tantuja started to make profit from the year 2015-1016. The main problem of the handloom of west Bengal is that is is not as successful as APTEX of Andhra Pradesh or COPTEX of Karnataka. The profit making of Tantuja is a ray of hope for the development and survival of handloom of West Bengal Business turnover of tantuja is as given below:

Year	Turnover	Operating Profit
2016-17	Rs 147.93 Crore	Rs 6.19 Crore

(Source Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

Integrating tourism with handloom & handicraft at three selected circuits: Survey for developing handloom & handicraft integrated Tourism Circuit at three selected circuits (Purulia-Bankura-Bishnupur, Kalna-Katwa-Nabadweep-Shanitpur, and Uttar Dinajpur-Dakhin Dinajpur–Malda) and to create a road map to develop them to help expand market opportunity for tourism, handloom & handicraft stakeholders has been completed. Coordination with Tourism Department is going on.

Welfare Policies: Central Government and State Government introduced various welfare police for weavers and allied workers. These policies are as follows:

Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana (MGBBY) [central sector]: This is a group Insurance Scheme for Weavers and *allied* workers between 18 to 59 years having 50 per cent of the annual income from weaving. Insurance Benefit includes natural death: Rs.60,000/-, accidental death: Rs.1,50,000/-, partial disability: Rs.75,000/-, permanent disability: Rs.1,50,000/-.An add-on benefit of the scheme under the sub scheme known as "Siksha Sahajog Yojana" is scholarship of Rs.300/- per quarter per child of a beneficiary studying in standard IX to XII for a maximum period of four years subject to a maximum of 2 children. The Premium per weaver per year is Rs. 470/- out of which Rs.80/- only is to be paid by the weaver.

Performance during 2016-17

Target of enrolment	Achievement
80,000 weavers	62,967 weavers

(Source Handloom Report 2016-17, Government of West Bengal)

Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) for Handloom Weaver Family: This is a health insurance scheme for the weavers. The beneficiaries under RSBY are entitled to hospitalization coverage up to Rs. 30,000/- for most of the diseases that require hospitalization. The government has even fixed the package rates for the hospitals for a large number of interventions. Pre-existing conditions are covered from day one and there is no age limit. The coverage extends to five members of the family which includes the head of household, spouse and up to three dependents. The beneficiaries need to pay only Rs. 30/- as registration fee while Central and State Government pays the premium to the insurer selected by the State Government on the basis of a competitive bidding. During 2016-17, 128219 of Handloom weaver families of 16 districts have been covered (Handloom Census Report 2019-20).

Old Age Pension to Weavers: A weaver above 60 years of age having no source of income and a member of a handloom cooperative society for at least 10 years is eligible to receive pension under the scheme @ Rs. 1000/- per month. The amount admissible as pension has been enhanced from Rs. 750/- to Rs 1000/- w.e.f 01.02.2015 and the quota of beneficiaries under this scheme has been enhanced from 4375 to 5000 with effect from 01.10.2015. During the year 4,913 weavers received pension @ Rs. 1000/- per month. An amount of Rs. 589.56 lakh was expended in 2016-17 from the state exchequer for this purpose (Handloom Census Report 2019-20).

Paschimbanga Resham Shilpi Samabay Mahasangha Ltd: Paschimbanga Resham Shilpi Mahasangha, a State Level Apex Cooperative Society on silk products was registered on the 28th day of January, 1958 under West Bengal Co-Operative Societies Act, 1940 (Bengal Act XXI of 1940) . It came under the purview of this Directorate in 2017.

Business process at present at PBRSSM Ltd :a) The turnover of PBRSSM Ltd is Rs. 3,64,76,294/- in 2016-17. In sync with the objectives of PBRSSM Ltd, the value of Silk fabrics.

b) Procured by PBRSSM Ltd in 2016-17 increased to Rs 2,34,09,545/-, an increase of 23.15% over the previous year.

Special achievements

- E- Marketing of PBRSSM Ltd products through Flipkart which has a tie-up with the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India
- Through the ERP System devised by the NIC, PBRSSM Ltd. has started procuring, marketing, managing the HR and Payroll online through http://reshamshilpi.gov.in which is hosted at the West Bengal State Data Centre, Mani Bhawan, SaltLake.
- Marketing in bulk and retail through E-Commerce sites which operate overseas.
- Suitably modifying the existing ERP System to accept and deliver bulk orders.
- Acquiring Handloom Mark to facilitate E-Commerce.

Handloom and COVID Pandemic

31.45 lakhs households are engaged in handloom activities in India, according to the report of Fourth All India Handloom 3.62 lakhs handloom households increased over the last 10 years. Around 3.5 lakhs people are engaged in handloom weaving in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts of West Bengal. Handloom of these two districts has fallen silent at a time when their activity should have been at the peak owing to upcoming *Durga Puja*. The COVID 19 outbreak has hit the sector so hard that many are now migrating to other parts of country for jobs. Free ration and 100 –days work under MNREGA has prevented starvation among weavers and their families. There need new handloom policy in the new normal world for the survival of the sector.

COVID-19 has caused following difficulties for handloom textile industry:

a) The sector has experienced sudden stagnation of orders as retail store are closed due to worldwide lockdown and there is hardly chance of immediate recovery.

b) Cash flow is stopped like all other sectors, so buyers are unable to make payments and no sale occurring during this pandemic.

c) Buyers and wholesalers are not in a position to make new orders, in the handloom sector. Orders are placed at least 2 to 3 months before, as production takes some times.

d) Retail events like (fare , hawking) where artisans sale in cash, did not happened for last few months and may not happen for coming few months.

d) Market of handloom remains good during summer season, when sale is usually much, has lost in this year. . This not only creates a liquidity crisis, but also impacts their ability to invest in yarns for the coming festive season (August to November) and winter and spring season.

e) Indian handloom has international reputation in traditional aristocrat fashion market, but with this lockdown situation, no orders are coming from abroad. Customer’s priorities may change with curtailed budget resulting crisis to the livelihood of weavers.

According to IANS's report, small artisans and producer groups do not have the financial cushioning to hold through such a crisis nor would they get credit supplies from raw material suppliers. Being part of an informal economy, artisans are also not able to access credit from banks and financial institutions. While the government provides free ration to some extent, the majority of the artisans who earn on a daily basis working for bigger weavers or traders will find it extremely difficult to feed their families and take care of any medical exigencies (IANS: 19.04. 2020).

According to report of "Swarajya"- a Magazine, the handloom sector is one of the worst-hit sectors because of the lockdown. Handlooms depend upon mills for their hank yarn supplies and then compete with them in the market. Since mills are under lockdown, yarn supplies came to a grinding halt, hitting the handloom sector severely. Consequently, both the master weavers (who are private operators) and Cooperative Societies have been unable to provide work to the weavers working for them since 10th March 2020. As raw materials simply disappeared from the market, the Master Weavers and cooperative societies could not provide regular work to the handloom weavers and allied workers. The shutdown of Spinning Mills and Silk Reeling Units has become a death blow to the hand-weaving industry. Handloom weavers, even before the spread of the pandemic, are leading a hand- to –mouth existence. Around 67 per cent of the weaving households are earning less than Rs 5000 per month, another 26 per cent are earning between 5001 to 10000, and only about 7 per cent of the weaving households are able to earn above 10000. The lockdown and consequent shut down have led to massive unemployment of weavers, and they were forced to borrow at exorbitant rates even for their very subsistence. Handloom products and handicraft products have a huge export market. Handloom exports in 2018-19 stood at Rs 2280.18 crores. Export markets are now closed. With the closure of both domestic and export markets and non-availability of yarn supplies, the lives of weavers become more precious than before and are likely to face severe starvation in the coming few weeks unless remedial measures are not initiated (Swarajya: 27.05.2020).

As per report of bengali daily news paper Bartaman, in the village Rahamatpur of Nadia District, 100 handloom weavers family live there. After the outbreak of Covid-19, loom is almost shutdown. In this area each house hold has two looms on an average. Weavers have engaged themselves as daily labour in half wage to run their family. On 15 October the above mentioned daily reported about the low sale of *tantKapar Hat* situated at RMC market of Katwa town, Purba Bardhaman District. As the Train service is not in operation wholesalers and weaver from different place are not coming in this *Hat* (Bartaman Patrika: 13.10.2020).

Policy Recommendations in New Normal World: The 1985 textile policy shifted the Burden of producing Janata cloth entirely to handloom. Extending loans to the handloom weavers under MUDRA scheme at 3 per cent rate of interest through commercial and rural banks providing the necessary amounts for members of co-operatives towards their share capital contribution so that they become eligible for utilizing funds under NABARD Refinance Scheme will help the sector overcome its working capital requirement.

The co-operative at the village level and the apex level, are burdened with unsold stock of finished garments. There is no other way except to procure accumulated stocks from the cooperatives as well as registered master weavers and NGOs to rescue the sector. The tax burden on the handloom sector at present is heavy. The weavers are paying GST on yarn, dyes, chemicals, and the consumer on finished products. Providing tax relief and fiscal concession are the need of the hour to overcome the biggest ever slump in the aggregate demand. Tata Institute of Social Science has made provisions for weavers to seal their products online directly to customers.

As per report of Ananda Bazar Patrika (a Bengali daily) dated October 10, 2020, weavers of Shantipur, Nadia District, are struggling to keep pace with the huge demands of shari at the last moment prior to Durga *Puja* and *mahajans* are making profit out of the stock they made during lockdown, when they bought saris in much lower price from bounded weavers. Government should take note of the situation to stop the unholy practice of *mahajans* and save weavers from oppression and deprivations of *mahajans* (Anandabazar Patrika: 10.10.2020).

According to the report of Bartaman, a bengali daily news paper, West Bengal Government has applied for Geographical Indication of *Taingail, Karial, and Garadshari* of West Bengal. The Government has already applied for Geographical Indication of *Maslin Shari* earlier and logo of *Shantipuri* shari. *Tantuja*, a West Bengal Government undertaking, has purchased handloom products from weavers of

Nadia and Purba Bardhaman during lock down. *Tantuja* organized camps at Shantipur, Fulia, Samudragarh, Dhartigram. . These kind of new policies are necessary for the revival and survival of handloom sector (Bartaman Patrika: 09.10.2020).

During *Mughal* Emperors handloom was one of the important foreign currency earners for the Country. With the arrival of European companies, demand of Indian handloom increased. To meet the demands, *mahajani* system was adverted to mediate between European traders and weavers. From 1830s picture reversed, as India became main market of Britain's garments. In the middle of the chapter there are description of various committees and their recommendations and policies of Central government and state governments for handloom, since Independence. The chapter ends with the discussion of effect of COVID- 19 on handloom industry. The third chapter will describe role of incentive scheme for MSMEs for the developments of handloom. It will discuss the aims and objective of the scheme and various projects of the scheme financed by central government and state government. There wiil also be the analysis of limitations and opportunities of handloom weaving in the state.

CHAPTER - III

HANDLOOM WEAVERS IN WEST BENGAL: LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The previous Chapters dealt with role of the state in handloom textile since Mughal period. During Mughal Emperors handloom was one of the important foreign currency earner for the Country From 1830s picture reversed, as India became main market of Britain's garments. In the middle of the chapter there are description of various committees and their recommendations and policies of Central government and state governments for handloom, since Independence. The chapter ends with the discussion of effect of COVID- 19 on handloom industry. The present chapter will describe various limitations of handloom textile of the state. Areas of prospects will also be explored. The role of incentive scheme for MSMEs will also be analysed.

Limitations of Handloom Industry in West Bengal

West Bengal has a long history and tradition of handloom textile. This sector still provides employment to a large number of people, directly and indirectly. The weavers have potentials to revive this sector and be a major part in the global handloom production. According to the Textile Policy, Government of West Bengal 2013-18, the state's share in textile sector would be double, i.e., from 5.2 per cent to 10 per cent in India within 2022-2023. This sector is still 2nd largest employment generator after agriculture in West Bengal as well as in the country. The products of handloom are still famous all over the world. But the industry is facing different problems from the British colonial period.

After the partition of India, large numbers of weavers migrated to West Bengal from erstwhile East Pakistan and settled in different parts of Bardhaman, Nadia, Murshidabad, Hoogly, North Dinajpur, Maldah districts. Migrated weavers style have amalgamated with that of the local weavers and as a result enriched the weaving tradition of the state. The handloom of Bengal had witnessed ups and downs, but still survived with fame in the world handloom frame. This sector is a part of cultural heritage. The Weavers of the state have attracted not only national but also worldwide attention and bear the timeless legacy from last 3000 years (Chakraborty 2017: 12).

Handloom weaving of West Bengal had received a great impetus after independence due to immigration of weavers in large numbers. They settled in different parts of the state. They began earning their livelihood with the help of their traditional weaving skill, credit from money lenders, *mahajans*, and least government support. After some years, State Government set up rehabilitation colonies in migrated weavers' concentrated areas. Central Government and State Government began to provide financial help for buying hunk yarn, although insufficient to weavers needs. Large numbers of refugee weavers had to take shelter in the house of money lenders and *mahajans*. With the increasing numbers of weavers *mahajans* bought lands in their areas at cheap rate and established handloom factories and shelters for weavers and their family members. Weavers who didn't manage shelter and livelihood started meeting and procession to catch the attention of Government. As a result government came forward to arrange loan for weavers from nationalized banks. Later some weavers organized themselves under the umbrella of cooperative societies (Chakraborty 2017:18).

The handloom sector in India operates within the larger textile industry. Power looms dominate textile production in India and have captured market previously dominated by handlooms. Rising yarn prices, diversion of raw materials to the power looms, improper marketing techniques, negative impact of globalization etc. have led to even suspension of manufacturing handloom products. These incidents are destroying the livelihoods of weavers and ancillary workers. Several new developments in the Indian economy have further deteriorated the situation.

Partition of India and Misery for Weavers: The age-old tradition of the handloom weaving of India suffered severe oppression and discrimination during the colonial ruler. Even after the independence, the concerned industry had to face the sufferings of partition of India as well as Bengal. For example, during partition, the tradition of weaving of saris, which was shared between east and west sectors of Bengal, was extremely disturbed and the division of the state created various problems for handloom. Most of the weavers were displaced from East Pakistan and were homeless. Even after they were able to manage shelters for themselves in West Bengal (especially areas adjoining to erstwhile East Bengal) for survival, they had to face problems like unemployment, poor economic condition, crisis of migration and consequent rehabilitation in an unfamiliar, unhealthy environment, social alienation and cultural differences with weavers of this state (Podder 2015: 164).

Most of weavers of Nadia, Murshidabad, Bardhaman, North Dinajpur, and South Dinajpur are migrants from erstwhile East Bengal. They have inherited skill from ancestors and are engaged in handloom production process but have failed to recognize themselves at par with the native population. These people are mostly illiterate or are educated only up to primary stage. Thus, the lack of unity among the weavers of both parts of Bengal coupled with their ignorance of the benefits of organized production acts as major causes for the weak condition of handloom and exploitation, deprivation of the poor weavers by *mahajans, paikers* and money lenders. Life style of the weavers is substandard and in many cases, they are denied of fundamental social facilities.

Organizational Disorders of the Handloom Industry: Handloom industry is a major employment generator in the non-agricultural sector of rural India. However, in West Bengal, the industry is primarily a household one, where almost every member of a weaver's family is engaged with different stages of production process. The weavers are economically weak and fail to avail hired labours from outside the family. Being members of the same family, most of the workers remain unpaid and thus there is insufficient wage generation at different levels of production. Besides, production pattern is mostly dispersed and decentralized. Most of the weavers are unorganized and lack necessary financial support, infrastructure and don't have knowledge of marketing, which would otherwise been available if they were organized under SHGs cooperatives or similar societies. A few wealthy moneylenders and the master weavers monopolize handloom system in most of the cases. They are decision makers of types and amount of production. The hired weavers, who are abundant in number, are paid only fixed wages which are quite low in comparison to independent weavers and weavers within cooperative societies. They are thus exploited by the *mahajans*, money lenders, *paikars* and master weavers and are unable to enjoy the real profits by selling their products to customers of their choice (Podder 2015: 164).

Problems in Procurement of Yarn: Non-availability of sufficient yarn in the form of hank yarns has been one of the major problems of the contemporary handloom industry of West Bengal. Though the mills are supposed to supply about 50 per cent of their total yarn production in the form of hanks to handlooms, it has always been not more than 25 per cent. In addition, always there has been gross mismatch between the figures of cloth produced by the handloom sector and the hank yarns received by handloom sector. This is because of marketing of power loom cloth as handloom cloth which is very prevalent and takes place with the help of corrupted officials. Besides, a large amount of yarns in the 20s and 40s count are exported abroad without taking into consideration of the requirement of the domestic handloom production. There is a complaint among the weavers that the N.H.D.C. provides yarn to the weavers only after an advance of 25 per cent of the total amount is provided, which, most of the weavers are incapable to afford (Podder 2015: 165).

Effects of GST in Handloom Products: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on 1st July 2017. Before the introduction of GST, handloom products were either exempted from tax or taxed at very low rates. Raw materials for handloom cloth, especially hunk yarn and finished products are now being taxed for the first time after Independence. The cotton fiber which is mainly used in handloom manufacturing was exempted from central excise duty. Cotton fiber was sold at low rate to encourage production and a traditional indigenous art form, and also to generate employment and make it worthwhile for artisans to remain in the trade and for other people to train in the art form and join the trade (Saha 2019: 63). As a result this sector was able to grow and helped it become a major contributor to GDP even though it is basically an unorganized sector, dominated by individual ownership. With the GST being introduced and given its present form, it is feared by the weavers that it will prove to be fatal for the handloom, decreasing its competitiveness and weakening its financial opportunities.

The structure of the GST is affecting the handloom sector in the following manners. There is 5 per cent GST on cotton fiber in the form of hank yarn, previously it was nil, 18 per cent on dyes and chemicals, and 5 per cent on finished products of up to Rs 1,000 and 12 per cent on finished products priced over Rs 1,000, as compared to a 7 per cent tax on finished products under the pre- GST regime. All fibers are treated as equal under GST be it natural fiber or synthetic fiber. Now a weaver have to pay GST at every stage from procuring yarn to dyeing the cloth, to any other process the product passes to become marketable . The price of the finished product would therefore be considerably higher, bringing down the competitiveness of the handloom products in the market. As a result, GST is negatively impacting weavers, master weavers, cooperatives, retailers and suppliers ancillary workers. Actually the imposition of GST is not increasing the tax base considerably because the tax base is very low at only 1.2 per cent.

These effects of the GST on the handloom sector are devastating because of the socio-economic class condition and vulnerability of the weaving community. Weavers come from the most vulnerable sections of society. Majority of weavers, i.e. 77.9 per cent, are women; 87 per cent of the weaving community live in rural areas, and more than 50 per cent live in huts and meadows houses; 36.9 per cent weavers belong to below poverty line (BPL) cards, 34.5 per cent belong to above poverty line (Saha 2019: 64).

GST and Its Impact on Credit System: Earlier weavers used to get yarn on credit from traders, *mahajans*, and master weavers. However, to pay GST on yarn, the weavers will have to buy yarn against payment. The traders, *mahajans*, master weavers are not willing to supply yarn on credit basis any more. This is because GST is applicable on supply of goods or services, as against the previous system of tax on manufacture of goods or on sale of goods or for providing services. So at every point of supply, be it raw material, dyes or chemicals, GST returns have to be filed with details of the outward supply of goods and services provided; this has to be filed every month and a bill is needed to claim input credit. As a result earlier system of credit basis production has became impossible, and poor weavers are not in a position to make the down payment for yarn and have to quit their occupation. Master weavers or cooperatives or individuals used to sell products on credit basis and the buyer would make the payment after some time. This arrangement is impossible under GST and immediate payments are needed because taxes have to be paid and filed every fifteen days. The entire credit system has broken under GST regime (Saha 2019: 64-65).

Table 1: Cost of production of handloom cloth pre- and post-GST introduction

	count	Pre bundle cost INR	GST at mill	Post-GST mill gate price	Pre-GST rate per bundle	Pre GST rate per knot	Post-GST rate per bundle	Post-GST rate per knot
1	40s	1030	5%	1081.50	1030	25.75	1081.50	27.04
2	60s	1520	5%	1596	1520	25.33	1596	26.60
3	80s warp	1960	5%	2085	1960	24.50	2085	25.37
4	80s weft	1630	5%	1711.50	1630	20.38	1711.50	21.39

Source: (Saha 2019: 66)

Table 2: Cost of dyeing pre- and post-GST introduction

	Pre-GST count	Post-GST bundle rate, INR	Total cost Per dyed Knot, INR	Total cost per bundle	Bundle rate	5% GST On dyed yarn	Total Cost per bundle

1	40s	1030	37	1480	1081.50	1608.75	1531.50
2	60s	1520	32.83	1970	1596	2148.30	2046
3	80s warp	1960	30.13	2410	2058	2633.40	2508
4	80s weft	1630	26	2080	1711.50	2269.57	2161.50

Source: (Saha 2019: 66)

Table 1 shows increase of yarn per knot after introduction of GST. Table 2 shows increase of yarn cost per bundle, after implementation of GST.

With the introduction of GST, the handloom sector is facing hard challenges. There is no difference between powerlooms and handlooms in tax structure. GST has increased the price of cotton handloom products and synthetic textiles are comparatively cheap. This leads to lower production of pure cotton products and a shift towards synthetic mixed products. There is an serious crisis to the livelihoods of handloom weavers. It has pushed up the cost of the handloom product. In the existing scenario where general customers already feel that handloom is expensive, the introduction of GST by central government has made the handloom product more expensive. Small and medium-scale handloom business enterprises owned by master weavers, which employ the largest number of handloom weavers directly, are trying to decrease the weavers' wages to keep the final price of the commodity low, in post-GST era (Saha 2019: 67).

Implementation of GST and other problems:

a) Monthly filing of GST returns has created huge burden on all kinds of handloom factories. Maximum enterprise does not have computer or even operational knowledge of computer.

b) Introduction of GST, increases working capital pressure, because weavers have to initially pay GST at different rates before production. As a result enterprises have to invest before production.

c) Power loom products have already flooded the market and are being marketed as handloom with huge margins. In post-GST era, when handloom products have become even more expensive, the power loom sector stands to gain and will make higher margins selling its power loom product as handloom and charge higher rates showing GST.

d) In exhibitions where customers are more eager for buying handloom products, they did not seem to be bothered much about the 5 per cent price increase due to GST. For re-sellers who purchase our saris and sell online, the 5 per cent GST, increases their own investment cost. They are charging the customers more. Pre and post-GST, the online sale price of the same saris has grown in substantial margin (Saha 2019: 67). For big retailers who place orders to producers, as a result of GST, there has been delay in order conversion probably due to less stock liquidation in their own stores.

d) Two GST number are required if a producer enterprise has two production unit in two different states. Selling handloom products at inter-state exhibitions also has become problematic because producer enterprise has to obtain a temporary GST number of the state every time it is going to sell. This number is valid for three months only.

e) The demand of a large section of weavers is the rolling back of GST on handloom. The government should provide tax exemption for all raw materials (hunk yarn, dyes, looms) and finished products of handloom to protect the traditional heritage sector under the Handloom Reservation ACT of 1985.

Technological Upgradation and Diversification of Products: Hand-weaving is mainly combination of cultural heritage, ancient traditions and human skills. It is related with indigenous technology and is labour intensive in nature. Handlooms can be divided pit looms and frame looms. In the attempt of technological upgradation, it became common to convert pit looms into frame loomas. Although frame looms are capable of weaving more cloth than pit looms, they also occupy more space. They are also not easy to operate due to increased vibrations during the weaving process. They cost much more than the pit looms, which occupy less space and are health friendly to weavers. Besides, pit looms are only capable of making saris of finer counts with intricate designs that can fetch weavers' higher values for their products. In some areas, handlooms are also converted to power looms to increase production as well as profit. These conversions in the name of modernization or technological up gradation do not consider welfare of the weavers as their chef goal.

The conservative attitude of the weavers and their lack of proper guidance, training and knowledge about the current fashion and trend of the market lead to insufficient and inappropriate diversification of the products. This hinders the demand and sale of the handloom products and improvement in the standard of living of the associated population hampered as well. Added to this, the willingness of the investors to take risks and to provide incentives to the weavers also affect the situation negatively. Again, the handloom designers' livelihoods are not well protected in this situation. Though there is a recent proposal from the government to patent *tangail*, *balochori* and similar handloom saris, it has not yet been implemented and design duplication by the power loom sector of the popular handloom products still continues (Podder 2015: 166).

One of the most serious weaknesses of the handloom weaving industry in West Bengal is the lack of diversification of production. In other states like Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, diversified production enabled the industry to survive even in unequal competition from power looms and mills. Hence, the diversification of production of the handloom weavers in the State is very much essential. In the context of changing dress habits of women in India to-day, too much reliance on the production of shari by the handloom weavers of the state is proved detrimental for the industry. We have noticed that the many weavers are aware of the problem, but at the same time, they do not know properly, how to solve the problem.

Failure of Cooperatives: The cooperatives are very much essential tools for the sustenance and development of the handloom weaving. The cooperative societies, has proved successful in some cases and failure in others. The cooperatives are mainly situated in rural areas. They are financially weak and so it is not possible for them to appoint trained and skilled personnel to look after the management. They have to manage with unskilled and inefficient staff, which leads to deterioration in the quality of production and performance of cooperative societies. Acceding to the handloom Census 2019-20, 5.6% weavers are under cooperative societies. In the state 5.24%weavers have taken loan from Cooperative societies.

According to Sujit Kumar Das, as recommended by the High Powered Study Team in 1974, the West Bengal State Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Limited, the Apex body of co-operative societies in the State, was expected to sell fifty per cent of the products produced by the sixty percent of the weavers of the State, who were to be brought under the co-operative societies by the end of the fifth five year plan, through their own retail outlets. Acceding to the handloom Census 2019-20, 5.6 per cent weavers are under cooperative societies. In the state 5.24 per cent weavers have taken loan from Cooperative societies. With the Apex body selling only about 2o% of the products woven by the 24 per cent handloom weavers of the State, the share of Apex body in the marketing of handloom products in only around 6.25 per cent of the total production of the State. It has be societies themselves sell around thirty percent of the products produced under them through their retail counters and the remaining forty five per cent through their agents. With the share of co-operative system in the marketing of handloom products of the weavers of the State limited (to 26.25% and those of other

Government agencies to another 2.37 per cent, the total share of the organised sector comes to products produced by 29.30 per cent weavers of the State. Thus, the *Mahajans*, with 41.70 per cent of the handloom products sold through them, are the dominant players in the market for handloom products in the State (Das 2001: 194). It is also significant to note that some weavers from among those who work independently also depend upon the *mahajans*, maser weavers and traders for selling of their products.

Supply and availability of capital in any industry is closely related with the marketing of finished products. The weavers who organisationally depend upon *mahajans*, master weavers and the co-operative societies for selling their products are also dependent upon them for working capital, in . Some weavers who are working independently also depend upon *mahajans*, master weavers and traders for selling their products. Availability of working capital in these cases is closely related with relations of cash from the *mahajans* and traders. Only few independent weavers who sell their products themselves may be said to depend upon themselves for working capital. Handloom weaving is an artisan based industry, with the principal means of production owned by the artisans themselves, risk and uncertainly in marketing of products act as the main hindrances for supplying of working capital and independent operation by the weaver themselves (Das 2001: 188).

Weavers who work under the co-operative societies get slightly higher return than those working under the *mahajans, paikers* and master weavers. But the weavers in general are aware of the fact that the return from direct sale to retail customers or wholesalers is almost twice of what they receive from the co-operative societies, *mahajans* or master weavers. The weavers also certainly know that they will not be able to sell their products directly in market facing competition with the mills and the powerlooms. Therefore, their dependence on these agencies for sale of their products is a matter or compulsions, not choice. The Co-operatives, however, offer certain other benefits to their member -weavers, such as the benefit of contributory provident fund and annual dividend on profit. Those who want to have their products sold through the Mahajans and Master weavers do so on the basis of their good relations with them.

Problem of Production: Co-operatives face major production problem due to unstable and inadequate supply of raw materials like yarn dyes, warp woof etc. They get the least preference when it comes to raw materials supply, thus hindering regular flow of production. These fluctuations lead to increase in the prices of handloom cloth and proper rehabilitation of the poor and the migrant weavers. The workers of this sector, when in need, fail to avail alternate jobs in related sectors (Podder 2015: 170).

Lack of Support From Higher Institution: The cooperatives of West Bengal lack adequate support from the higher institutions and are unable to render much help and guidance to the primary and grass roots level organizations and the poor weavers. Primary weavers' cooperative societies lack assistance and proper guidance from apex cooperative societies like Tantuja, Tantusree and Manjusa.

Lack of Loyalty of Members and Intervention of the *Mahajans* and Master Weavers: Many cooperatives have failed mainly due to the selfish objectives of the members, who use the society for their personal gain rather than fulfilling the objective the organizations and their promotion and development. In many cases, the policies adopted by the cooperative are guided mainly by the gains of the master weavers and *mahajans,* who have monopoly and total control over the societies. Illegal forceful and unwanted political interventions also hinder the smooth working of the cooperatives and their development (Podder 2015: 170).

Problem of Marketing: Some cooperatives are extremely weak in marketing and sales promotion. They lack the finance and the capability to undertake aggressive marketing activities, due to which they are unable to increase sales.

Credit needs and Overdependence on *Mahajan*: The current credit facilities available for weavers are inadequate to their need. The banks and other financial institutions are less in number and have lengthy and complicated process of sanctioning loan. Even loan available through cooperatives rarely reach the section of weavers who desperately need it. The total credit system is dominated by master weavers, *mahajans* and political leaders who corner a substantial amount of institutional credit with their dominance and influence in cooperative societies. Most of the weavers are outside the cooperative system and working for master weavers and *mahajans*. In the present situation master weavers and *mahajans* consume maximum loan ment for poor weavers (Podder 2015: 166).

Competition From the Power Loom Sector: Despite all regulations, there is a phenomenal growth in the number of power looms especially in the last 30 years. In addition to the new power looms, in many cases, handlooms are being converted to power looms to gain more profit. These are easy to operate and do not require particular skills of weaving. Their production capacity is more than the handlooms and the technology is not labour intensive. Thus, the conversions sometimes render the weavers, especially the hired weavers, jobless. The typical handloom designs are easily replicated by the power looms and the products are then sold in the market at a cheaper rate. The common people fail to realize the differences in between the two products and prefer the cheaper varieties. The demand and sale of the handloom products are thus adversely affected and the poor weavers suffer the consequences more (Podder 2015: 170).

According to Sujit Kumar Das, another factor leading to the decline of handloom industry in the State is unequal and unfair competition from the power loom textile industries. Hence, we suggest that the Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 should be suitably amended to enforce the provision of reservations of production strictly. It is also necessary that all State Governments of the country should move collectively against the power loom owners who are violating the provisions of Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985. Without collective movement it would not be possible for any single State Government to take effective steps against the sale of products in its territory, produced by the power looms of other states. It is important to mention that, considerable tension prevails in the rural areas of West Bengal between the handloom weavers and the power loom owners. In several places, including Begampur in Hooghly district, the tension reached such a dimension that power looms were burnt by agitated handloom weavers. Hence, it is high time the State Government should interfere to remove the causes of tension by forcing the power looms owners to produce items mentioned by the Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 (Das 2001: 195).

In the month of August, 2012, a committee headed by experts and government official introduced the conception of hybrid loom. "A handloom redefined as hybrid would require just one process of weaving to be done by manual intervention or human energy. Modernization to reduce drudgery and improve productivity was put out as the Nobel objective of such reform." Handloom weaver considered it as conspiracy against them. There was lot of strikes in different handloom concentrated areas of India as well as in the state (Chatterjee: 35).

In 2013, before 2014 Parliament election, power loom owners lobbied strongly for changing the definition of handloom. Their main purpose was to legitimate power loom product as handmade. That demand encouraged by the intervention of Textile Ministry to attach 0.5 horsepower motors to handloom production. After months of agitation by handloom weavers, Ministry of Textile as well as PMO (Prime Minister's

Office) assured that there would be no change in the definition or technology of handloom.

Failure of the Marketing Organizations; There is a significant mismatch between production and marketing of handloom products in the state. The decline of local markets for handlooms products has already happened. The separation of producers from the market has given rise to middlemen who dominate the existing marketing channels. They know the market well and thus are able to make high profits.

The centralized marketing bodies of weaver cooperatives are also malfunctioning. Inspite of constant endevour from the state and the central government, the marketing organizations have failed miserably to attain their goals. Many of the organizations like Tantuja, Bangasree and Manjusha are running on loss and the outlets are closing down. Tantuja and Tantustee are performing better in comparison with others but they too are facing various problems like absence of proper planning, ineffective budgeting, and financial crisis and accumulating loss, incapability to pay back debts in scheduled time and delay in payment of weavers' dues, paying additional interests, unfavourable settlement of outstanding dues etc. Other problems include indiscriminate procurement of non moving stock overstuffing and shutting down of outlets limited sales in festive season, ineffective marketing and poor sales performance. Money lost on advertising, rebates and putting up stalls at handloom fairs. Sometimes the products are outdated and overpriced (Podder 2015: 167).

Unorganized Nature of Sale of Products with Limited Export Opportunities: Majority of weavers are uneducated and poor. They work as hired labourers for the master weavers and are only paid limited wages for their products. They have no control over the sales. The main market for the products of the handloom industry of the state is in Kolkata, from where, the products are sent to other national and even international places. This market is mainly dominated by the master weavers and *mahajans*. The small scale weavers sell their products at the local haats at a very cheap rate and are thus unable to realize more profits which are otherwise available in the urban markets. Some sell from their homes while a few have their own shops and others sell their products to the local shops instead of direct selling. In all these instances, prices are again comparatively low. These unorganized weavers fail to channel their products to proper markets and secure high profits. Not only that, most of them, to meet immediate financial crisis and clear debts of *mahajans*, sell their products to mahajans, paikers and master weavers in dries seasons even at loses. Mahajans and master weavers give them advances and hunk yarns, in exchenge they collect cloth from the weavers all over the year at fixed price (Podder Sayanti 2015: 168).

Failure of Reservation Policy for Handloom Sector: After independence Government of India issued different types of restrictions both on mills and power looms to protect the handloom sector from their unequal competition. Following that in 1950, eight items of production were reserved both for handlooms and small power loom sectors. However, by 1974, almost 9% of the power loom units were categorized as small. The criterion for small power loom was upto 5 looms. The reservation in this way actually benefitted the power sector than the handlooms. To correct this, in 1985, the Handloom Reservation Act was proposed reserving 22 items exclusively for the handloom sector. However, this could not be properly implemented till 1993 due to the legal disputes posed by the mill and the power loom sectors. To deal with such situation, the Abid Hussain Committee recommended the inclusion of the Act under the Ninth Schedule of Constitution but this was never considered by the Parliament or Government of India. Following this, the Mira Seth Committee recommended the reduction of the number of reserved items from 22 to 11 and the act was then implemented. This act came into effect in 1993, but there were severe violations. Therefore, in spite of desperate requirements, the reservation acts to protect the handloom sector were never been implemented effectively. In fact, there are demands from power looms and mills to remove reservation for handloom in the wake of globalization and liberalization (Podder 2015: 169).

Failure of Welfare Schemes: Numerous schemes were introduced both at the state and the central government levels but most of them failed to perform satisfactorily. In 1993, it was attempted to provide looms to loom less weavers but it was a delayed effort. Again when the immediate concern for the weavers was the procurement of sufficient yarn for current production, policies then were directed towards setting up of CAD CAM centers and market complexes. Added to this multiplicity of schemes (the Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana and the Project Package Scheme are conceptually the same) and duplication of efforts by different agencies has been a major problem for the handloom industry of the state. No serious moves have been made for proper and effective rehabilitations of poor handloom weavers. Weavers and ancillary works have to shift to other jobs, as they did not find any job related to handloom sector (Podder 2015: 169).

Impact of Globalisation: With liberalization of country's economy, the modern textile industry has posed serious threat to the traditional handloom industry all over the country and West Bengal is no exception. Rapid technological upgradation and automation in modern textile industry has led to high volumes of production of a large variety of quality synthetic and cotton textile items, enjoying competitive advantages over the handloom production in all aspects. The handloom industry, both in co-operative and private sectors, with its vast rural work force, especially of weaver communities, is confronted with challenge of competitive economic environment with powerlooms and mills. The weakening position of handloom sector in the wake of global competition of textile industry has posed a serious threat to the socio-economic life of the traditional weaver communities (Podder 2015: 169). Even the reserved items for handloom are produced by power loom sector in disguise. Products of power looms from Bangladesh have flooded the market of the state in the name of handloom products. These incidents pose a serious threat to the livelihood of handloom weavers of the state.

Denial of Fund Allocation in Handloom Sector by Central Government: Handloom sector has a turn over Rs. 60000 crore per year. Indian handloom products have a market demand of Rs. 100000 crore per year. Every year, India exports handloom products over Rs. 4000 crore. More than 3 crore people earn their livelihood, directly or indirectly on handloom. Ironically, since 1997-98 financial year, budgetary allocations shows that the handloom sector funding is not at par with the increase of cost of production, and inflation.

Allocation for handloom in the Budget of Central Government (INR in crore)

Scheme	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
National Handloom Development Programme			62
Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme		107	
Integrated Handloom Development Scheme (CSS)	170		
Revival Reform and restructuring package for handlooms (CSS)	2205	157	
Market and Export Promotion Scheme (CSS)	48		
Diversified Handloom Development Scheme	20		
Weaver Service Centre	32.50	35	33
Handloom weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme	105	65	55

Mill Gate Price Scheme	350	96.5	125
Scheme for grant of special rebate at the rate of 10% on sale of accumulated handloom stock		0.01	0.01
Others	30	32.99	37.5
Grand total	2960.50	493.50	312.51
CHCDS- Handloom Mega Cluster		26	16
National Handloom Development Programme (State and UT Plan)			292
Grand total			620.51

Source: (Reddy Narasimah Donthi 2015: 25).

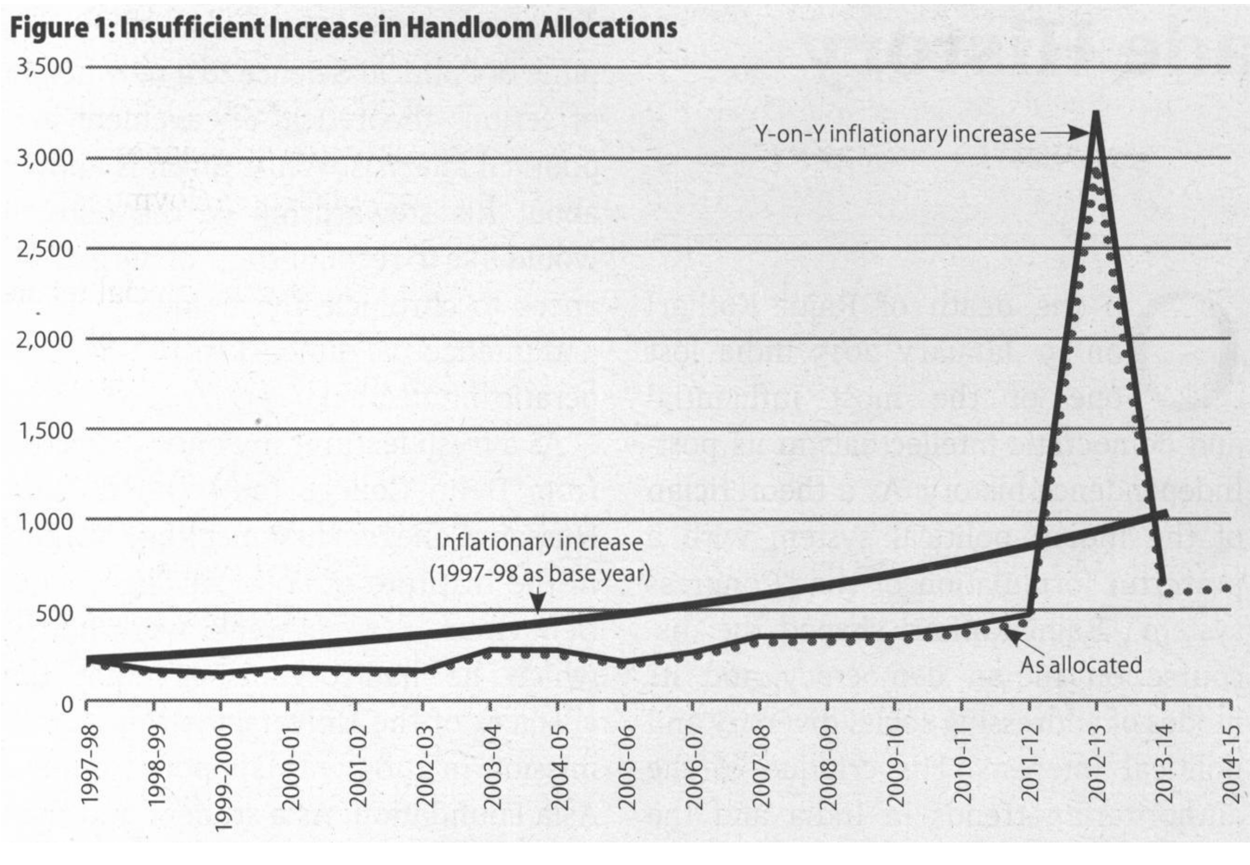
The handloom budget was only 0.003 % in the national budget of 2013-14. In 2014-15 it was 0.03% of the union budget. Investment on handloom sector per metre was 48 paisa in 2008-09, at the same time it was 62 paise for non- handloom sector by central government. Union Government also provides tax breaks, subsidies and incentive for MAITI (modern automated Indian Textile Industry) except budgetary allocations. From 2007-08 to 2014-15 the amount exceeded Rs. 100000 crore. In same period budgetary allocation for handloom has been reducing slowly but constantly (Reddy 2015: 24).

Not only there is constant reduction in the allocation for handloom sector, utilization of allocated fund is not proper. In 2011-12, the revised budget allocation was Rs. 744.73 crore, but the real expenditure did not cross 656.14 crore. In 2012-13, budgetary allocation was Rs. 2960.50 crore, but the expenditure was 793.26 crore, only 26.7% . In 1997-98 the average percentage of handloom allocations in the total Ministry of Textile budget was 27%, where as in 2014-15 it has been reduced to 10.89%.

In the year 2012-13 Rs 291 crore was the total expenditure by the central government, it was only 13% of the budgetary allocation. Various guidelines were issued and modified by the Textile Ministry. NABARD was given the responsibility to disburse funds. Various state level committees were formed, but there was no improvement in the living conditions of poor weavers. Even there was no relief of their debt burden. There was no budgetary allocation in the sector.

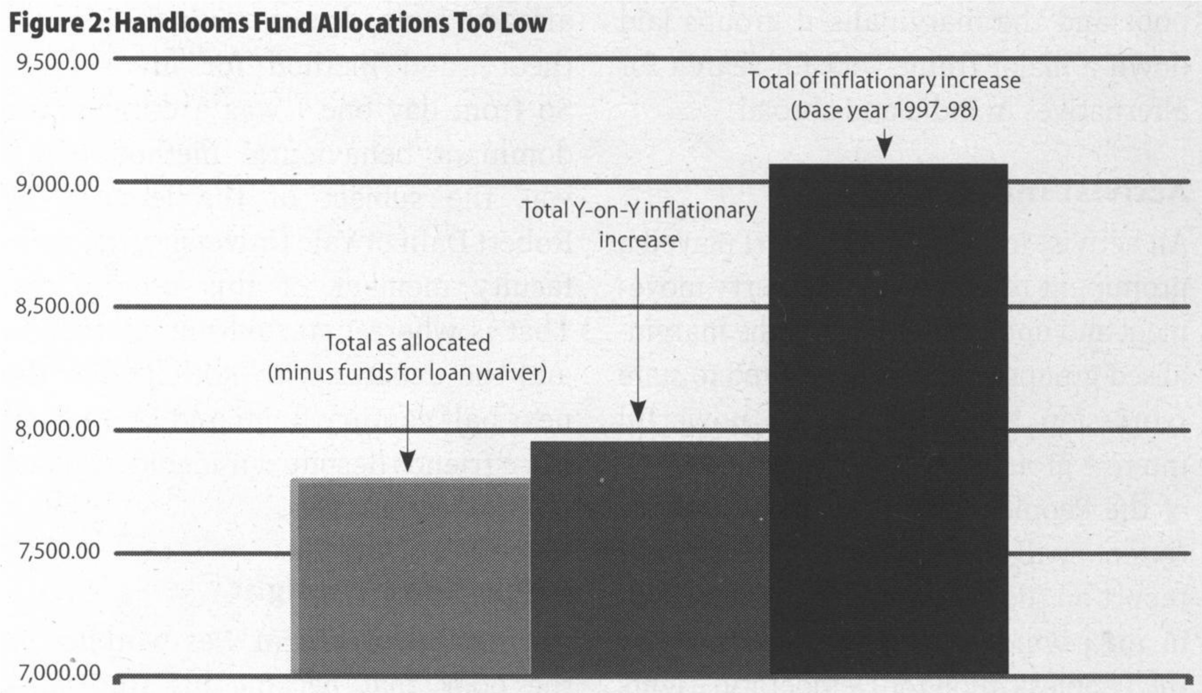
Every year there is increase in the price of yarn and other raw materials. The price of cotton yarn and silk has raised more in comparison to other raw materials. With the competition cheap and fake handloom products, produced by power looms disguised as handloom products, handloom weavers no other way but to raise the price of handloom products. Shortage of flow of working capital from the traditional institution like NABARD has aggravated the situation more. As a result handloom weavers were forced to take loan from *mahajans*, master weaver and *paikars*, where rate of interest is higher and not regulated.

In this scenario loan waiver schemes were very necessary for weavers. Government has reduced allocation in these schemes. From 2012-13 financial year government had reduced these scheme under the guidance of Planning Commission. From 12 scheme it had been reduced to 4 schemes in 2014-15.



Source: (Reddy Narasimah Donthi 2015: 27).

Figure 1 indicates actual allocations have always been below the year-on year inflationary allocation done for the handloom sector. That is, if a mere 10% addition is done to the previous year allocation, actual allocation for most years is below that. On the other hand, taking the 1997-98 allocation of Rs 203.50 crore as the base, and one keeps on add ing 10% increase every year, handloom allocations should have been much higher this year.''



Source: (Reddy Narasimah Donthi 2015: 27).

Total allocations for the handloom sector for the 18-year period are Rs 7,855.09 crore (Figure 2). If the loan waiver allocation for 2012-13 is removed, it would be Rs 5,655.99 crore. Similarly, adding the year-on-year inflationary increase comes to Rs 7,958.04 crore. However, the total inflationary increase (with 1997-98 as base year) is Rs 9,075.93 crore. Thus, with or without loan waiver, allocations have not been commensurate even with the inflationary needs.''

In 1997-98 the handloom sector was allocated Rs. 203.5 crore, which in the next year decreased to Rs. 151.6 crore. In 1999-2000, this allocation reached the low of Rs. 138.30 crore. Between 1997-98 and 2014-15, over a 16 year period, it is obvious that handloom sector did not receive allocation according to needs of handloom weavers. In maximum years, even it did not increase assuming 10% inflation (Reddy 2015: 27).

The lobby for mills and power looms are very strong. They are influencing governments and bureaucrats to change the definition of handloom to remove protection of items for handlooms. Handloom weavers are divided and are not in a position to represent themselves as a strong lobby to Ministry of Textile. Handloom weavers are unorganized, they are scattered in different parts of state. So they are not considered as vote bank. As a result governments are denying higher allocation for handloom even in election years.

Prospects of Handloom of West Bengal

One of the principal factors responsible for the backward and outdated system of production and o in weaving in the state is the neglect of suitable marketing policies and their implementation. All along, the principal policy of sales promotion remains rebate on sales of handloom products. This policy must be replaced by innovative marketing, i.e., marketing assistance should focus on identification of opportunities for new products and making the weavers aware about the reaction of the customers to the new products. Moreover, the rebate is allowed only on products sold through the co-operatives in specific season every year. This policy of rebate encourages large scale corruption by the authorities connected with the distribution of rebate. For, the sub-standard items produced by the weavers outside the co-operative societies are collected at low prices and then higher prices are stamped over them for sealing at prices higher than those paid for them, after allowing the rebate. All these are done through some corrupted agents, who share the profit with the bureaucracy and the management of the co-operative societies, in whose accounts the products are sold. In order to get rid of the corrupted policy the marketing policy should aim at encouraging only the production of those items which can sell without rebate, although make profits.

According to Sujit Kumar Das, it has already been pointed out that the largest number of handloom weavers in the state, operate with working capital and marketing support from the *mahajans*, *paikers* and Master weavers. To bring more weavers under the umbrella of co-operative societies, those working at present with *mahajans* and master weavers, shall have to be approached. *Paikers, mahajans* and master weavers, for perpetuating their hold over the working under them, make advance payments for production and for establishment of looms and thereby keep them indebted. To bring the weavers from under the *paikers,mahajans* and Master weavers the debts they owe to them had to be reimbursed. Hence, the adoption of an effective programme of rehabilitation of weavers work under *paikers, mahajans* and master weavers, is necessary. The debt may either be reimbursed by the cooperative societies to which they will become the members, with funds provided for the purpose by the Government, to be collected from weavers by the co-operative societies from their subsequent product or the weavers may be granted loans by the Government with low interest rate (Das 2001: 196).

Further, in order to extend the horizon of market for the woven products, along with weaving, tailoring of garments should also be brought under the umbrella of the co-operative societies. School uniforms, hospital uniforms, as well as, the skirts and *salwar kamiz* used by the girls and women can be tailored at the initiative of the Weavers' Co-operative societies. Additional job opportunities in tailoring and in the marketing of tailored products will be created in this way.

As the products of utility and high artistic value, handloom textiles of West Bengal are looked upon by people throughout the world, hence, in order to popularize the products of handloom weavers, systematic advertisement through electronic media, website, social media and expositions should be resorted. Through a in depth research, it was established in 1925 that the production of muslin, the pride of the weavers of Bengal, may be revived if there is sufficient demand for such products. The beginning of the weaving of Jamdani and Baluchari shari in West Bengal since early nineteen eighties also lends support to the funding. Thus, if the demand can be created, revival of the glorious past may be achieved in the near future (Das 2001: 197).

There are suggestions that, side by side with the private traders, the government agencies may also collect orders for exploring the foreign markets. Government institutions should try to set standards and norms of services through competition. In the context of the setting up of WTO and phasing out of the Multi Fiber Agreement, there is considerable scope for expansion of export trade in handloom products in near future. The export of cotton yarn, which earns much lower return than the export of handloom fabrics, may be curtailed for facilitating enhancement of handloom production.

The most comprehensive and strong recommendations were made by 12th 5 year plan. There was a balance between innovations and marketing techniques. There were greater securities not only for weavers but also foe ancillary workers. There was proposal for involving all stake holders of handloom headed by Ministry of Textile to "develop a strong, competitive and vibrant sector that can provide sustainable employment and reflect the infinite variety and diversity that distinguishes Indian textile from the world, the plan calls for shift in policy, strategy and implementation, and detailed what these shifts should be." It also emphasized for providing "low-cost and green livelihood opportunities to lakhs of families, besides supplementing incomes in times of agrarian distress, checking migration and preserving the traditional economic relationships between different sections of the society." Handloom products from lower varieties of daily need to super fine cloth of exquisite fabrics are given importance. The requirement of aggressive marketing strategies is given utmost priorities (Chatterjee: 41-53).

MSME and Opportunities of Handloom Weavers

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sectors has taken an important place in the growth of the economy all over the world. In terms of employment generation, output, export, empowerment of people of remote areas, downtrodden people and women MSMEs play crucial role. These sectors create large employment opportunities at comparatively lesser capital investment than heavy and large industries and reduce regional disparities, assuring more justified distribution of income and wealth. MSMEs complement big industries as ancillary units and as a result, these sectors contribute regularly in the socio-economic development of the nation. MSMEs mainly generate employments in informal or disadvantaged sector for achieving national objectives of growth with more inclusion and equality among the citizens. This scheme is also helpful for new and innovative entrepreneurs.

The objective of the scheme is to extend financial incentives to encourage entrepreneurs to set up Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises with a view for focusing on the development of MSMEs in the Backward region of the State and creating a sustainable ecosystem in this sector to increase the utilization of resource and widen the area of operation to make the state, a leader in the MSME sector.

Beginning of MSME in India: The MSMED Act 2006 made a paradigm shift from industry to enterprise for its wide coverage and has redefined the manufacturing and service enterprises depending on the investment in plant, machineries and tools. Before 2006 this sector was under Small Scale Industries (SSI).

According to the MSEAD Act 2006 MSMEs can be classified into two categories:

a) Manufacturing Enterprises: The Manufacturing enterprises are engaged in the manufacturing or producing various items. The manufacturing enterprises are entitled in terms of investment in plants and machineries and production of goods.

b) Service Enterprises: The service enterprises are engaged in providing or rendering of services and are identified in terms of investment in equipments. (Source)

Various Schemes of MSME, Government of India: Various schemes have been provided to boost the sector as well as to overcome the challenges faced by the MSMEs.

Office of Development Commissioner for MSMEs is empowered to offer various schemes. There are some schemes important for handloom textile sector.

a) National Manufacturing Competitiveness Programme (NMCP) Scheme:

The Government of India announced formulation of National Competitiveness Programme in the year 2005 for helping small and medium enterprises in their effort to become competitive and to survive in the era of liberalization and globalization.

b) Micro and Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programme (MES-CDP):

The ministry of central Government started MSE-CDP for holistic development of selected MSMEs clusters through value chain and supply chain management on co-operative basis

c) Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme for Technology upgradation:

The main aims of this scheme is technological upliftment of MSEs by providing 15 per cent capital subsidy(12 per cent before 2005) on institutional finance availed by them for induction of well established, developed and updated technology in approved sub-sectors or products.

d) Credit Guarantee Scheme: The individual MSMEs may get collateral free loans up to a maximum limit of Rs. 50 lakhs.

e) ISO 900/ISO 14001 Certification Reimbursement Scheme: Incentive Scheme of reimbursement of expenses to the extent of 75 per cent or Rs. 75000/- whichever is less for acquiring Quality Management system-ISO 9000 or Environment Management System -14001 certification

f) MSME MDA: This scheme offers funding up to 75 per cent in respect of air fare for participation by MSME entrepreneurs in overseas fairs/ trade delegations. The scheme also provides for funding for producing publicity material (up to 25 per cent of costs), sector specific studies (up to Rs 2 lakhs) and for contesting anti-dumping cases (50 per cent up to Rs. 11 lakhs). This scheme is applicable to all individual MSMEs and associations.

g) Initiatives for Women Entrepreneurs: To cater to the needs of potential women entrepreneurs, without having adequate educational background and skills, the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organizations (MSME-DO) has introduced process/ product oriented Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs). (Source)

Classification of Developed and Backward Areas: According to the locations of districts, state has been divided into four zones. The main objective of this classification is to determine the amount of incentives according to the backwardness of the area. The areas of my research fall under Zone – B (Nadia District) and Zone –C (Purba Brahman District).

State Capital Investment Subsidy: An eligible micro or small enterprise located in Zone C and D area are entitled to State Capital Investment Subsidy for its approved project as follows: Micro Enterprise: Zone C-25 per cent of the Fixed Capital Investment; Zone D- 40 per cent of the fixed Capital Investment; Small Enterprise: Zone C- 15 per cent of the Fixed Capital Investment; Zone D- 30 per cent of the Fixed Capital Investment. An additional subsidy of 20 per cent on state Capital Investment subsidy normally admissible; are provided to all eligible micro or small enterprises wholly owned by women, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe and entrepreneurs belong to minority community. The subsidy normally admissible and additional subsidy taken together will not exceed Rs. 50 Lakh for a small enterprise.

Interest Subsidy on Term Loan: All eligible micro, medium or small enterprises are entitled to interest subsidy on annual interest liability on Term Loan borrowed from a commercial bank/cooperative bank/scheduled banks approved by RBI/RRBs/Financial Institution (Central and State for implementation of the approved project as follows: Micro and Small Enterprise: Zone A and B- Subvention of 6 percent for 5 years; Zone C and D- Subvention of 6.75percent for 5 years; Medium Enterprise: Zone Band C: The interest subsidy will be 25 per cent of total Term Loan interest paid by the enterprise subject to a ceiling of Rs 2.lakh per year for 5 years.

Waiver of Electricity Duty: All eligible micro, medium or small enterprises are entitled to waiver of consumed electricity duty for its sanctioned project. These are as follows: Micro and Small Enterprise: Zone A and B- 50 per cent waiver of electricity duty on the electric consumption for five years from the beginning of the production. Zone C and D- 75 per cent waiver of electricity duty on the electricity consumption for five years from the date of the beginning of production. All eligible micro or small enterprises, totally owned by women, SC/ST and minority community entrepreneurs are entitled to 100% waiver of consumed electricity duty for five years from the beginning of production.

Power Subsidy: All eligible micro, medium or small enterprise for its sanctioned project are entitled to power subsidy on the consumed electric for manufacturing activity which are as follows:

Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises: Subsidy of Rs. 1/Kwh. for enterprises under Zone A&B and Rs.1.50/Kwh. For enterprises under Zone C &D for five years from the dare of the beginning of production. The power subsidy will not cross Rs. 20 Lakh per year for small enterprise and Rs. 30 lakh for medium enterprise and are payable annually. Subsidy on Energy Efficiency: All eligible micro or small enterprises for its sanctioned project are entitled to a reimbursement of 50 per cent of the cost on energy audit undertaken by a certified agency. The reimbursement is paid after implementation of the recommendations. The upper limit of the subsidy is Rs. 2 Lakh. Subsidy on Stamp Duty and Registration Fee: All eligible micro or small enterprises are entitled to a reimbursement of stamp duty and registration fee paid by it during registration of documents within the state relating to purchase of land and /or building for setting up of sanctioned project at the following rates: Zone –B 50%, Zone C- 75%.

Refund of Entry Tax: All eligible micro, medium or small enterprises for its sanctioned project are entitled to refund of entry tax paid by it to the Government of West Bengal for procurement of plant and machinery. The refund is paid after the beginning of production. All eligible micro, medium or small enterprises are entitled to refund of entry tax paid by it to the State Government for purchase of raw materials for the first three years for implementation of sanctioned project. The refund is paid after the beginning of production.

Subsidy for Water Conservation or Environment Compliance: All eligible micro or small enterprises are entitled to a reimbursement of 50 per cent of expenditure incurred by it towards cost of captive Effluent Water Treatment Plant for wastewater recycling and cost of pollution control mechanism subject to a maximum of Rs. 2 Lakh.

Subsidy for Standard Quality Compliance: All eligible micro or small enterprises are entitled to a reimbursement of 50 per cent of the expenditure incurred subject to a maximum of Rs. 5 Lakh for obtaining ISI/BIS certification/ ISO9000/ISO 14000/ ISO18000 certification form the approved Institutions/ research Laboratories.

Work Force Welfare Assistance: All eligible micro, medium or small enterprise for its sanctioned project are entitled to reimbursement of 100 per cent in 1st year 75 per cent in the remaining years of cost beard by it for paying its contribution towards Employees State Insurance (ESI) and Employees Provident Fund (EPF)if at least 50 per cent of the employees in the enterprise are recruited from among the persons registered with Employment Bank of the Government of West Bengal.

Subsidy for Patent Registration: All eligible micro, medium or small enterprises for its sanctioned project are entitled to reimbursement of 50 per cent of expenditure incurred by it for obtaining Patent Registration for its products. The maximum amount is Rs. 5 Lakh.

Relations between MSME and Self Help Group in Development of Handloom

The contribution for economic growth of a country like India is more from the micro small and medium enterprises in comparison to large scale industries. In this MSMEs SHGs play an important role. India is a quasi falderal nation where power and responsibilities are decentralized among Central and State governments. Both governments are trying to educate and industrialize India. Almost 70 percent of Indian population resides in rural areas. Rural people are more poverty stricken. Through incentive scheme for MSMEs Central and State governments are trying to eradicate poverty but still a long way to go to reach the targeted goal. For organizing rural poor especially women, SHG plays a significant role.

Evolution of SHG in India; SHGs in India got their inspiration from the success of Garmin Bank of Bangladesh. First SHG in India was established in MYRADA project.. The members of that SHG were linked together by common trust and support. The members were from homogeneous income group and occupation. SHG as a strategy included in government plan from the financial year 2000-2001. NABARD, RBI, IFAD many other government backed organizations play vital role for the success of the SHGs. Since the year 2000 SHG strategy is playing an important role for poverty eradication. The main objective of the establishment of SHGs was for the benefit of the poor. Within a small period of time SHG become the important vehicle for rural credit delivery system in many parts of the world as well as in India (Datta and Sinha 2008: 2-5)

Micro small and medium scale industries are contributing more than 40 per cent of the total industrial output. Liberalisation of economy and globalization are putting various challenges in front of small and medium industries. To overcome these challenges Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO) and NABARD are taking various steps. MSMEs are trying for employment generation of economically backward and unskilled sections of the population.

West Bengal has well organized plans and polices for the development of MSMEs through SHGs. The handicraft industry is mainly cottage industry and has spread all over the rural semi-urban and urban areas of the nation. Handicraft is mainly labour intensive in nature. Over 20 Lakhs people of West Bengal are employed in this sector. SHG movement was started lately in this state, but it has gain quick speed after commencement. As per record there are around 10 Lakes SHGs in the state in the year 2020.

SHGs in West Bengal are mainly formed under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) and NABARD helps in collection of capital for the development of economic and health conditions of people using micro-credit and financial services (Sen 2005) The State Government has launched Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) which was further expanded and developed and launched as Swayansiddha-Intigrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP). Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY) and Rural Employment Generation Programme are marged and new scheme named as Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), which deserve financial assistance in the form of subsidy of Rs. 25000 for setting up small projects. The scheme has been proposed to be implemented through *Khadi* and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), State/UT *Khadi* and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centers (DIC) of State Government. Government of West Bengal launched Bangla Swanirvar Karma Sansthan Prakalpa (BSKP) for individual entrepreneurs (18-45 years) or groups (SHGs) preferably registered with Employment Bank and having monthly family income not more than Rs. 15000. The main purpose of this scheme is to generate employment by setting up of any unit of industry, trade or services etc. or getting loan for existing unit. Another scheme, jointly sponsored by Centre and State is Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY), where the share of Centre and State Governments respectively is (75%:25%). The main objective of this scheme is to provide gainful employment to urban unemployed and underemployed poor through encouraging the setting up of small employment ventures or provision for wage generation. Handloom is the second employment generator after agriculture in West Bengal. Both State and Central Governments have taken various initiatives for the development of backward districts through Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY). The main agency for execution of this scheme is SHGs. The State Government gave special emphasis on handloom sector.

Through West Bengal incentive scheme-2013 for MSME in Textile sector under West Bengal Textile Policy 2013-2018, 6 per cent interest rebate on working capital loan can be availed from commercial banks, nationalized banks, cooperative banks and other financial institutions by the SHGs, Primary Weavers Co-operative Society

(PWCS)/Handloom Clusters to ensure maximum capacity utilization of handloom in the state. One important scheme in handloom is Cluster Development Programme under Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme (CHDS) aims to facilitate sustainable development of weavers in or outside the handloom clusters into cohesive, competitive socio-economic units with self management. The main components of the scheme concentrate on skill upgradation training on weaving/ dyeing, technology up-gradation, design development and product development, purchase of Computer Aided Textile Design system etc. Taanti Sathi is an front line initiative of Government of West Bengal, where new pit looms and accessories are supplied to the weaver's and groups, *khadi* weavers who have no looms or obsolete looms with backup support for skill development from West Bengal Handloom Circuit Scheme -2014. State Design Centre for design development have a marketing tie up with Tantuja and Biswa Bangla. MUDRA scheme for weavers is a scheme introduced by Government of India on July,2016. The ministry is providing subsidized fund directly to the bank as loan up to Rs. 5 Lakh over working capital to potential weavers and other financial facilities. MUDRA- Rupee card with a limit of Rs. 50000 has been issued to the borrower for withdrawing money from ATM as and when required. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is a poverty alleviation project implemented by Ministry of Rural Development. The Scheme focused on promoting self employment and organization of rural poor. The basic idea behind this project is to organize the poor into SHGs for making them capable of self-employment. This programme supported by World Bank with a credit of $ 1 Billion, this project is further succeeded by Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojanain 2015 (Sarkar and Malik 2019: 45).

Some Backward districts of India are facing problems of left wing extremism. In 2012 Government of India identified 150 areas with left wing extremism effect. Some backward areas of West Bengal fall within this category. Women SHG Programme (WSHG) has been intensified in these areas to counter left wing extremism

West Bengal is among states which are enormously benefited through SHGs. One third of the SHGs are related with co-operative sectors. SHGs under co-operative do not recycle their thrift as loans to the members. As per the rule of NABARD, members of a particular SHG use their savings for lending among themselves. As per the Report of NABARD, till 31st March 2018, there are 847269 SHGs in West Bengal. Total savings of SHGs is Rs. 2,05,053.94 core. Micro and small enterprises have lot of potentials due to easy entry process and requirement of less capital in the beginning.

MSMEs have significant role in generating self –employment when there is dearth of employment generation in big industries and organized sector. Poor households are mainly engaged with livelihood based micro enterprises. Handlooms under PWCs and SHGs can avail loan and other facilities for the establishment of new handlooms or for existing handlooms through W B Incentive scheme for MSMEs. Poor and marginal people can take loan and other facilities for establishment of new handlooms or existing handlooms with individual initiative, through Karmasathi Prakalpa.

In the journey of more than 25 years NABARD has taken an important role in SHG movement. NABARD has extended 100 per cent refinance to banks towards lending to SHGs to supplement their resources. Apart from refinancing of bank NABARD also extended support for awareness creation and capacity building of all stake holders. For the improvement of handloom and handicraft sectors, steps of tie-up with National Institute of Fashion Technology for providing training to members of selected SHGs, engaged with manufacturing of products like kantha stich shari, Handicraft, leather goods (Sarkar and Malik 2019:46).

About 90 per cent of the world's handloom products are manufactured in India. Government of West Bengal is focusing on the development of handlooms and the weavers of the state. Government of India has set up Indian Institute of Handloom Technology in Phulia, Nadia for the development and modernization of the handlooms. Under the scheme ' West Bengal Circuit Development-2014' the institute will provide training to the weavers for modernizing the handlooms, which is helping them in producing maximum quantity of quality products in a minimum time as per the demand of time. Primary Weavers' Co-operative Societies(PWC's) assisted by Revival Reform and Restructuring (RRR) package for Handloom Sector have been computerized by West Bengal Electronic Industry Development Corporation Limited (WEBEL). To protect the traditional unique technique of weaving of the traditional handloom products of West Bengal from being misused and to establish the Commercial Brand name, it is registered under Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act-1999 (Sarkar and Malik 2019:48).

As per the 3rd Handloom Census of 2009-10, around 43 Lakh people are engaged in handloom weaving and allied activities which was 65.5 Lakh according to 2nd Handloom Census of 1995-96. To find out the reasons of decrease of employment in handloom sector, Government of India ordered to form a Sub-Committee on 2nd May

2013 for examination of various issues pertaining to the Handloom and Power loom Sector. The terms of reference for sub-Committee are given bellow:

i) To study different types of loom being operated by handloom weavers in handloom cluster across the country.

ii)To study the extent of modernization being carried out in different parts of the country, scope for further improvement/up gradation of looms to reduce drudgery without compromising with the quality of handloom fabric and possibility to replace those interventions in other handloom clusters/pockets.

iii) To examining the feasibility of mechanizing any 2 out of three basic motions i.e. shedding, picking and beating to reduce drudgery and enhance productivity without losing the artistic creativity of weavers.

iv) To examine and analyze the present definition of 'handloom' in view of changing scenario of textile sector, to assess the impact of proposed change in the definition of handloom with the objective of improving living conditions of handloom weavers. (Planning Commission GOI, Final Report of Sub Committee on Handloom)

Planning Commission approved National Handloom Development Programme by merging with or without up gradation of Integrated Handloom Development Scheme (IHDS), Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme (MEPS) and Diversified Handloom Development Scheme (DHDS) for 11^{th} and 12^{th} plan period. Period of Incentive Scheme for MSMEs and IHDS almost overlap for maximum time.

Brief details of IHDS:

- Focus on formation of weavers group as a visible entity,
- develop handloom Weavers Group to become self- sustainable,
- Inclusive approach to cover handloom weavers and allied workers within and outside the cooperative membership,
- development of skill of weavers and allied workers for improving quality and quantity of products,
- holistic and necessary intervention of government machineries according to the specific necessity of each cluster,
- assistance for marketing of products by associating designers, marketing professionals and entrepreneurs,
- arrangement of loan from banks and other institutions.

The components of the IHDS are as follows:

- Cluster Development Programme.

- Group Approach Projects.
- Marketing Incentive.
- Strengthening of Handloom Organizations. (Planning Commission GOI, Final Report of Sub Committee on Handloom)

Cluster Development Programme: Cluster with 300-500 hand loom are taken for development for three years. Rs. Sixty Lakh was allotted for each cluster. There were also provisions for design development, product diversification, infrastructure or common facility centre, formation of consortium, raw material collection, publicity and marketing, project management cost, purchase of new looms and construction of work sheds etc.

During XI Plan and 2012-13 financial years, 612 Cluster Development Projects were granted and Rs. 213.53 crore was released for 284627 handloom weavers. (Planning Commission GOI, Final Report of Sub Committee on Handloom)

Group Approach: Handloom weavers outside the clusters are helped through a 'Group Approach'. A group with 10-100 weavers is provided financial assistance for basic inputs, training in designing, weaving, dyeing and managerial discipline and construction of work sheds. The allotment per beneficiary is Rs. 10,000-30,000. During XI Plan and 2012-13 financial years, 2248 Group Approach Projects were sanctioned and sum of Rs.104.50 crore was released for the benefit of 64,997 weavers.

Large Clusters: Under Integrated Handlooms Cluster Development Scheme, 20 large clusters were formed. There were 5000 handlooms per cluster with a project cost of Rs. 2crore, were taken up for the development of handloom weavers.

Mega Handloom Cluster: There was project named 'Mega Handloom Cluster', with at least 25000 loom per cluster at a cost of Rs. 70 crore per cluster. The duration of the project is five years. 6 mega clusters have been formed in the country till date.

Marketing Initiative: Marketing initiative is provided to support marketing of handloom products. Financial assistance is provided @ 10 per cent of the average sales turnover of the three years to National or State Handloom Organizations, Primary co-operative societies, which is equally, born by the Government of India and State Governments.

Strengthening Handloom Organizations: There are also provisions for providing financial assistance towards restructuring of National or state level Handloom

Organisations. The main aim is to make these organizations viable by enhancing credit limit or working capital.

Revival reform and Restructuring (RRR) Package for Handloom Sector: On 28th February, 2011 the then Finance Minister, Government of India announced a financial Programme, acknowledging the financial distress faced by handloom weavers and cooperatives due to their inability to repay and market downturn. The scheme was implemented from 1st January 2103.The RRR package included one-time waiver of overdue loans and interest (100 per cent principal and 25 per cent interest) of eligible handloom cooperative societies and individual weavers as on 31st March 2010, provision of fresh credit with subsidies to handloom cooperative societies, recapitalization of viable and potentially viable handloom cooperative societies, carrying out legal and institutional reforms for the cooperative societies.24 apex, 4073 PWCs and 50403 individual weavers and 5462 SHGs, have been found eligible as per the existing guidelines of the scheme. Different state Governments have submitted claims of Rs. 514.82 crore to NABARD, but it had sanctioned Rs. 490.96 crore and released 454.82 crore and remaining amount (20 per cent of Central Government's share) had been released once state Governments carry out legal and institutional reforms.

During the implementation of RRR package, various state Governments requested to relax eligibility norms, especially for potentially viable societies, so that leftover apex and PWC societies could be covered under the package has been considered favourably and the Central Government has allowed the modification proposed by the Ministry of Textile, which were as follows:

a) To interpret the condition of eligibility regarding the net worth as ' a society will be considered as potentially viable, if its net worth becomes positive after loan waiver and recapitalization.

b) The earlier criteria that 'society should not be incurring operating losses in more than four out of five years, would be modified as 'society should have earned operating profit in at least one out of five years and operating profit means 'gross profit before depreciation, interest and tax' for the purpose of assessing the viability norms.

c) The condition that working capital or Cash Credit limit should be rotated at least once in a year shall not be applicable where a cooperative society has not taken loan from any bank.

d) To limit the waiver amount of overdue loan and recapitalization assistance as on 31st March, 2010 for apex Cooperatives, PWCs and individual weavers not covered, so far, under the RRR package, while permitting the assessment of the same on the basis of statutory audit report up to 2011-12.

e) The statutory audit for apex cooperative societies and PWCs would be completed up to 2011-12 (instead of 2009-10 as specified in the earlier guidelines) and eligibility of cooperative societies would be decided on the basis of statutory audit report up to the year 2011- 2012 instead 2009-2010 financial year.

Institutional Credit for Handloom Sector: To ensure easy access to subsidized credit from banks to those handloom weavers and PWC societies, which would not be covered under RRR package, the CCEA on 18/11/2011 approved a new component "Institutional Credit for handloom sector" by modifying the existing plan scheme of Integrated Handloom Development Scheme (IHDS). The Government of India approved margin money assistance @ 4200 per weaver, 3 per cent interest subsidy for three years on loan extended by banks, and credit guarantee to such loans for three years through Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE). During the year 2012-13, 677 awareness –cum- registration camps were organized across the country where in 3.70 lakh application for WCCs ware received and 3.32 lakh application were submitted to various banks after verification by the State Governments. As against, the target of 1.60 lakh WCCs and Rs. 700 crore credit disbursement during 2012-13, around 53600 WCCs have been issued, loan of 169.70 crore was sanctioned and only Rs. 79.57 crore disbursed.

In the financial year 2014-15, the target was issuance of two lakh WCCs for handloom sector. The state-wise target for WCC had been communicated to important nationalized banks, NABARD and State Governments. D.O. letter had been issued to CDMs of bank & a monitoring proforma had been prescribed to monitor the progress of issuance of WCC. Further review meeting with CMDs of national banks had been held under the chairmanship of Minister of Textile Government of India.

Measures for providing Loan to PWCs and SHGs

a) To provide the terms loans and working capital loans at 6 per cent interest rate to handloom sector; the quantum of interest subsidy to be borne by the GOI will be limited to the difference between the actual rate of interest as applicable or charged by the bank and 6 per cent interest to be borne by the borrower. The maximum interest subversion would be capped at 7 per cent.

b) Margin money assistance @Rs. 10,000 /- per weaver to individual weaver, their self-help groups and joint liability groups.

c) Credit guarantee for 3 years by Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Small and Micro Enterprises (CGTMSE) for which the required guarantee fee and annual service fee will be paid by the Central Government.

d) Incentive to banks to engage Bunkar Facilities @0.5 per cent of loan amount disbursed subject to minimum Rs.200 and maximum of Rs. 200 per WCC by the Central Government.

e) The fresh loan to apex cooperative societies, PWCs and individual weavers covered under RRR package would also be as per the norms of concessional credit component.

Visit of Sub Committee in West Bengal the year 2013: The Central Government appointed Sub Committee visited Fulia, Shantipur and Nabadwip of Nadia District of West Bengal on 23rd August, 2013. The members of Sub Committee interacted with weavers to know the condition of handloom production. During the interaction weavers raised the issue of production of reserved items for handloom by power looms. They opposed any change in the definition of handlooms and also expressed that they are not averse in providing the support to power loom weavers but this should not be done at the cost and suffering of handloom sector. They also expressed concern that power loom made shares are being exported abroad in bulk volume by Bangladesh labeled as handloom Shari. As a result the market of Indian handloom was being destroying abroad. Weavers strongly demanded stoppage of this incident and government should take strong action against it.

According to the Fourth All India Handloom Census (2019-20), the total number of households engaged in handloom activities (weaving and allied activities) is 31.45 lakhs. According to 3rd Census (2009-10) it was 27.83 lakhs.

Banking penetration among weavers by gender and location

	Male	Female	Total
Rural	35.5%	15.8%	20.8%
Urban	46.6%	37.0%	41.8%
Total	37.8%	17.6%	23.3%

(Source the Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20), Table 1

Indebtedness and their distribution by purpose for taking loans

States/All India	Indebted handloom households(Lakh	Share of total handloom households (%)	Distribution by purpose of loan (%			Total
			Handloom	Non-Handloom	Both	
All India	3.1	11.0	19.7	72.8	7.4	100
West Bengal	1.4	33.6	11.1	85.8	3.1	100

(Source the Third All India Handloom Census 2009-10) Table 2

Distribution of handloom worker households by major sources of loan percentage

All India/State	Moneylender	Master weavers	Friend or relatives	Cooperative societies	Commercial banks	SHGs	Traders	Others	Total
All India	13.4	44.6	4.9	5.9	14.8	5.0	4.3	7.2	100
West Bengal	7.6	24.8	1.7	3.0	14.7	9.1	13.6	25.6	100

(Source the Third All India Handloom Census 2009-10) Table 3

Distribution of handloom worker households by major sources of loan percentage

AllIndia/State	Moneylender	Master weavers	Friend or relatives	Cooperative societies	Commercial banks	SHGs	Government	Others	Total
All India	3.52	8.31	4.23	34.45	23.17	6.56	17.54	2.80	100
West Bengal	8.18	19.6	0.65	5.24	31.04	14.25	16.65	4.39	100

(Source the Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20)Table 4

Distribution of handloom worker households having membership of cooperative societies

States	Member handloom households (thousand)	Share of total handloom households (%)

Andhra pradesh	49579	28.0
Tamil Nadu	75614	40.0
West Bengal	22746	5.6
Uttar Pradesh	8427	7.6
Orissa	19661	48.3
Karnataka	21744	57.7
Other States	30150	20.7
All-India	273914	9.8

(Source the Third All India Handloom Census 2009-10) Table 5

Distribution of handloom weavers by employment status

All India/ State	Independen	Under Cooperative society	Under Khadi &village Industries commission/boards	Under master weavers	Under State handloom Developmen Corporation	Total
All India	78.35	6.31	0.26	14.59	0.49	100
West Bengal	45.79	2.37	0.17	50.73	0.93	100

(Source the Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20)Table 6

To understand the influence of incentive scheme for MSMEs and its success we have to analyses data of the tables. The Table 1 shows that banking penetration among weavers till 2019-20 financial year is only 23.3%, which is very low. The success of the Incentive Scheme indispensably related to the banking system , because each financial steps like application of loan, loan sanction, repayment of loan, getting subsidy, purchase of machineries , purchase of raw materials, selling of finished goods, collection of price of the finished handloom products are done through banking system. So without bank account weavers can’t be parts of the scheme and are not able to take benefit from the scheme.

Table 2 shows status of indebtedness of handloom weavers. The all India scenario is, 11 % handloom weaver were indebt condition. In case of west Bengal it was much higher, i.e. 33.6%, among them 85.50% were taken loan for non handloom purpose and only 11.11% weavers took loan for handloom purpose. It reveals the economic conditions of Handloom weavers of the country especially poor economic condition of handloom weavers of West Bengal. This picture also emphasis on the necessity of Incentive Scheme for MSMEs. If we look at the nature, conditions and amount to loan through Incentive Scheme, we'll find it is more suitable for handloom weavers under PWCs, Apex Societies, or SHGs.

Terms of taking loan from other sources rate of reduction in all India level was @ 4.4%, but in Case of Bengal it was 21.21%. The new source of loan which was introduced by Incentive Scheme for MSMEs directly from Government was reflected in the Handloom Census 2019-20 , shown loan from government Coolum of table 4. In this sector West Bengal is lagging little behind in comparison to all India rates which is 17.54%. The rate in case of West Bengal was .89% less. These data showed the indication of the successes of Incentive scheme for MSMEs. Because between 2009 to 2019, handloom weavers taken loan from cooperative societies, commercial banks, SHGs, and Governments in much higher rate. Influence of money lenders and traders was reduced in huge rate in those 10 years.

Handloom weaving is a labour intensive industry. Throughout its existence, it not only provided one of the basic requirements of civilized living but in course of time also come to be known as the products of high artistic expertise. During the entire period of its existence, the industry has survived a series of Challenges, discriminations and crisis. Its reorganization in West Bengal, after partition has been made possible for its unique position in the economy of the country and for the efficiency of the artisans, backed by the helpful attitude of the State. But the reorganized handloom industry in West Bengal is only a shadow of the glorious past of the famous handloom industry in undivided Bengal. Hand weaving, being an artisan based and unorganized industry, is largely exploited by the resourceful middlemen. The helping hand of the State fails to reach all corners of the industry. But we firmly believe that the proper implementation of the Reservation Act for Handloom, welfare schemes for weavers, reorganization of production process, technological up gradation and marketing facilities, can go a long way for making the industry play its legitimate role in the decentralized economic development of the State through revival of the much of the glorious past of the industry of undivided Bengal.

This chapter describes various problems faced by handloom textile industry of the state, like partition of country, organizational disorder, and problems of procurement of yarn, effect of GST, problems of production, failure of cooperatives, problem of marketing, competition from power loom and need of credit. At the end, the author identifies some areas where prospects of handloom lay, like diversification of products, production of those items which have demands in market, bring more weavers under cooperatives, advertisement in different types of media, collections of order by government agencies etc. The next chapter will describe the origin and developments of handloom in different parts of two districts. Variations of production in different areas will also be described. Various socio-economic issues related with handloom, like production, marketing, health related issues, issues of gender discrimination, child labour and decline of handloom will be narrated.

CHAPTER - IV

PROFILE OF HANDLOOM TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN NADIA AND PURBA BARDHAMAN DISTRICTS

The previous chapter dealt with various aspects of limitations and opportunities for the handloom weavers. The chapter also describes role of incentive scheme for MSMEs for the developments of handloom. The chapter ends with comparisons of various aspects of weaver in all India label and in the label of this state, after the commencement of the scheme. The present chapter will describe the profile of the handloom textile industry of these two districts, like origin, growth, production systems, product variations, marketing etc.

The weaving industry of Nadia district has been divided into two zones - Nabadwip and Shantipur. There are 12 blocks in Nabadwip zone, more or less handloom weaving presents everywhere. There are 6 blocks in Shantipur zone. There are two Handloom Development Officers in charge of these two regions. Their offices are at Navadwip and Shantipur. The Deputy Director, Handloom and Textiles, of the Presidency division is the coordinator and regulator of the two offices. His head office is at Krishnanagar. All the financial assistance from the Central and State Governments for handloom, comes to Nadia through these offices. These are the government regulators and supervisors of the handloom industry of the district. There are 2 municipalities, 16 blocks and 1 notified area in the handloom zone of Nadia district.

The weaving industry of Bengal reached its peak during the times of Sultanate and *Mughal*. *Abul Fazl's* book '*Ain-e-Akbari'* mentions textile factories in Bengal. These handloom material production centers were run by the government and produced high quality *'muslin'*. Emperor Akbar was personally fond of liter weaving of handloom. Nur Jahan Bagam was also particularly fond of *muslin* produced in Bengal (Bhattacharya1967: 173-174). Under his patronage and under the direct supervision of the then ruler of Bengal, Ibrahim Khan many muslin factories were set up in Bengal (now in Bangladesh and West Bengal).These factories were run by a class of employees called *daroga* whose wage were paid from the government exchequer. The best textiles produced were exported abroad by Arab merchants. Besides muslin, the names of shari like *Nilambri,Meghdambru*, *Near Melani* etc.are associated with Bengali literature and folk culture from ancient time(Mitra 1978: 41). Fine handloom products were exported from Bengal to different parts of Asia and Europe.

Description of handloom of Nadia

The weaving process started in Shantipur long before Lord *Chaitanya*. Lord Advaitacharya's (1480-156 AD) biographical book *'Advaitamangale'* mentions the devote *vaishnav* weavers *'Shantipurajatochilotantubai, Acharya Pranganaasi Harigun Gai*' (Chakraborty 2014: 6).

Shantipur is the center of weaving industry in Nadia district. The weaving industry of Shantipur is ancient. The weavers' community has been living here since ancient times. The women of their families used to spin the yarn and the men used it to weave dhoti, shari and towels. The raw material required for this, i.e., cotton, was procured from the villages near Shastipur, especially from the villages of Purba Bardhaman district on the west Bank of river Ganga (Tantubai Saranika 1999: 09). These dhoti and sari were made of thick yarn and they met the needs of the poor and lower middle class people of the local and surrounding areas. The original weavers of Shantipur did not know how to cut fine yarn like the weavers of Dhaka and Mymensingh districts of erstwhile East Bengal. At the end of the twelfth century AD, at the invitation of Lakshman Sen, the Sen Dynasty king of Bengal, some weavers from Dhaka district, who were skilled in spinning and weaving fine yarns for muslin cloth, came and settled in Shantipur. Nabadwip was the capital of Lakshman Sen. His aim was to produce muslin cloth by the weavers of Dhaka in Shastipur and export it abroad and earn foreign currency from it. At the same time teaching local weavers the method of weaving fine yarns and weaving of muslin cloth (Das 2001: 15). But the skilled weavers of Dhaka could not weave fine fabrics like muslin due to the difference of climate of Shantipur from Dhaka and lack of fine *karpas* cotton. But the thing they made, it was like muslin and was admired abroad. The name of this garment was *malmal*. Through the sultans and *badshahs* of Delhi, the local merchants earned a lot of foreign currency by exporting it by land and sea routes, outside India, such as Kabul, Baluchistan, Iraq, Iran, Arab, Turkey, Sri

Lanka, Italy and other Western European countries. A fine shari would take about 30 to 35 days to weave. No one could cut the fine yarn required for this without skilled yarn cutter and only skilled weavers could weave fine muslin.

Expansion of Handloom in Nadia: During the regime of Nadiaraj Rudra Roy (1863-94) the hand weaving industry of Shantipur began to expand gradually. Even today, Shantipur is known for a world-famous weaver. Shantipur is also known as one of the most handloom concentrated centers in India. The handloom weaving industry of Shantipur is bright and glorious as the family tradition and craft of weavers. During the Mughal period, the excellent textiles of Shantipur created markets in and outside Bengal as well as outside India. However, there is no sufficient information as to whether there was any state's direct encouragement for handloom during the Mughal era. During the régime of *Nadiaraj* Krishna chandra Roy (1728-82), a big handloom shop (*arat*) was established at Shantipur and from this shop or godown Shantipuri weaving cloth were exported abroad, especially to Europe. Not only shari, but also fine dhoti was produced in Shantipur and soon became popular (Chakraborty 2014: 3-4).

As the Mughal Empire weakened, various European countries set up handloom factories in different parts of the country for the purpose of export. The mainstay of Indo-European trade was textile products made in Bengal and in India. Textiles began to be exported, and as a result demand and production began to increase. The trade reached its peak during the period 1600-1700 AD, but textile production in Europe did not begin that period. The demand for Indian textiles in the European market continued to grow as a result of that, to meet the increasing demand East India company established many *'kuthi'* and engaged many *gomastas*, to look after the business and provided advance for production. In that way they monopolized the handloom industry of Bengal.

During the Mughal rule and even during the time of Nawab Alivardi Khan, weavers of Bengal produced clothes independently. At this time, they would not be harassed so much. Weavers used to invest their own capital in the weaving industry and sell the products as per their desire. The weavers of Bengal were very laborious and skillful. It is true that they have developed a wonderful textile industry with a long experience and traditions, but they have had to endure exploitation and oppression at the hands of big business. However, exclusive business did not emerge until the régime of Siraj- Ud-Daula. Weavers had the opportunities to appeal to the Nawab's court for redressal of their grievances (Roy1996: 68-69). That was a good time for the weavers of Bengal in terms of independence of production and income. Nawab Siraj-Ud-Daula put an end to this practice as handlom weavers had to endure a lot of torture at the hands of these "*dadani* merchants". The English merchants took the place of the native merchant class by introducing a new system of payment. On the other hand, as the demand for Indian textiles in England increased, East India Company became deeply attracted to handloom textile production in Bengal (Baines 1835: 23-25).

Due to the impact of mass production, a number of changes took place in the production system of the East India Company in Bengal. One of these is the infiltration of *mahajans* as capital investors in the production system. The moneylenders employed *paikers*. These *paikers* traveled from village to village to collect cloths from weavers. Provide them advances. Thus, an interdependent, money investment-production supervision and distribution process developed in Bengal. This system was still in use long after the establishment of economic dominance in Bengal. The British organized the textile weaving process in Bengal to protect the commercial interests of East India Company British Traders patronized the textile industry of the country for several years after the fall of the Mughal Empire. Situation began to change gradually from the beginning of the eighteenth century when industrial revolution took place in England (Mitra 1978: 40-42).

Industrial Revolution in England and Misery of Weavers of Nadia: It was at this time that Lancashire's textile manufacturers in England began to make steady improvements in textile production. The British government enacted a law banning the import of Indian textiles on the grounds that workers were not getting adequate jobs and wages in England. The decline has had a devastating effect on the textile production system in Bengal. Company’s merchants increased the level of oppression on weavers in the hope of making extra profit. English merchants were forcing weavers to sell goods at low prices. Production also increased manifold in England (Mitra 1978: 51).

The weavers went from house to house took evidence and recorded their cases of oppression by the employee of Company. Submitting their report to the Secretariat of the then Governor General Warren Hastings in Calcutta. The report suggested that weavers should not be forced to advance. The company would not pay weavers by forcibly signing bonds; otherwise company employees would be punished. Local traders would be able to enter into direct contract with the company to supply the required garments. Weavers would have to pay cash. The handloom weaving industry of Shantipur has not made much progress as the company has partially implemented this recommendation (Mallick 1986: 63).

After the entry, the East India Company launched attack on the weaving industry of Shantipur in the name of business. The weavers became aware of the English company from the very beginning. So, they decided to unite for the purpose of resistance. Blackware, a contractor of Company at Shantipur, told authorities that, weavers were avoiding signing contracts and sold clothes under the guise of not signing contracts to other merchants of Dutch or Portugal. Company was forced to raise wages, and the weavers of Shantipur staged a violent protest against Blackware, the contractor of the company's factory. Nine leaders of weavers were arrested. Six were later released on conditions, while the other three were sentenced to imprisonment. Vijay Ram, Lochan Dalal, Ramhari Dalal, Krishnachandra Baral, Ram Das and others led the long heroic struggle of the weavers of Shastipur. A delegation of weavers marched from Shastipur to Calcutta and appealed to the authorities to protest against the inhuman and degrading treatment to weavers by the employees of the company. Thus weavers of Shantipur formed an organized resistance struggle similar to the modern trade union movement and introduced a formidable united force and struggle against the oppressions of the East India Company (Chakraborty 2014: 8).

The weaver community of Nadia district and Bengal struggled but could not save this unique industry of its own. The all-out resistance of weavers to the onslaught of the English company was defeated and the textile industry of this country was rapidly wiped out by the atrocities and oppression of the employees of the company. Weavers abandoned handloom weaving and became dependent on agriculture as a means of livelihood. The monopoly capital of England created a monopoly market for textile products, produced in England. Broke the barrier of

Bengal's advanced handloom industry and made the country a major supplier of cotton yarn to English factories. Foreign yarn imports put them in a fierce competition, and the textile production process in Bengal and India was severely hampered. The Indian economy became dependent on agriculture. After the destruction of the handicrafts, 'Permanent Settlement' was introduced in 1793 and the weavers had to rely entirely on agriculture for their livelihood.

On the other hand, due to the Industrial Revolution in Britain, large quantities of textiles manufactured by British factories had flooded the market of India. British companies above all, the English merchants encouraged the weavers of Shantipur to weave fine cloth. By 1813 the prices of imported textiles from Manchester had become cheaper than indigenous handloom cloth. A good market was created in India for mill made cloth of Britain. The price of indigenous handloom cloth could not compete with the price of British factory cloth. Until 1813 AD, money came to this country from England, France, and Portugal and other west European Countries. After that period, the merchants of those countries started taking a lot of money from this country to their own country. Many weavers left the weaving industry and engaged in goldsmith, iron and other industries. In the 1860s, many people started making a living as independent labours due to the establishment of jute mills on both banks of river Ganges. Weavers became labours in many districts of Bengal (Das 2001: 20-22).

This condition of the weavers was miserable till 1823-24. After 1824 the yarn prepared by England began to be imported to this country. As a result, the financial situation of the weavers changed a bit, but the spinning of the spinning wheel stopped. As a result, the production of fine muslin also stopped. And the ready-made dhoti, *mathapar shari* and towel spread all over the market of India. The production of yarn produced in England continued to support the weavers, but the women who made their living by cutting yarn became jobless. However, they continue to earn a little money by spinning the yarn with the help of *nata* and *chakki*, or by starching yarn of mill. Thus the use of indigenous yarn almost ceased to exist. In 1828, Samachar Darpan published a story about sad yarn cutter of Shantipur (Chakraborty 2014: 10).

Innovation in Handloom of Nadia: In the late nineteenth century, some modernity was introduced in the weaving industry of Nadia through the efforts of Girish

Chandra Pal a resident of Shantipur. He had his own handloom factory and employed a number of skilled weavers. As a result of his activities, the weavers learned to weave forty dangishari with the help of dobby machine. Earlier, only twenty *dangipar shari* were produced in Nadia. The weavers made a very beautiful sari called *Kalabati* with the help of a dobby machine (Tantubai Smaranika 1999: 11). At that time Shantipuur was a sub-division town. In the year 1868 sub-division shifted to Ranaghat.

In the early twentieth century, Debendranath Mukherjee introduced the jacquard machine for making designs on the edges of Shari. With the introduction of this machine, the weaving industry of Nadia regained some of its past glory. As a result of using this device, weavers started making beautiful designs on the edges of shari. On the other hand, the first two decades of the twentieth century was an era of *Swadeshi* movement in the industrial world of Bengal. Nadia district was pioneer to establish and revive industry in different parts of Bengal. There is a new impetus for self-reliance instead of foreign dependence. And there was no lack of interest and enthusiasm due to the *Swadeshi* movement. However, the economic perspective of the *Swadeshi* era began to become unclear. In the *Swadeshi* era, about 1200 looms were run in Shantipur and 50-60 count yarn was used in it. It produced an average of 6,400 garments a year and had an average value of Rs. 6,04,600. However, the weavers received half of this value as wages (Chakraborty 2014: 11). At this time, of course, *shari* was worn somewhere in Shantipur on British yarn, but the National Congress called for their boycott. This decline in the production of cotton textiles was partially stopped by the *Swadeshi* movement. Many of the weavers returned to their old occupation in the first two decades of 20th Century.

Another reason behind the revival of handloom was the improvement of the conventional shuttle. The director of Weaving Training Center in Srirampur, B. Havel, replaces the old shuttle with a new fly-shuttle loom. It was used all over Bengal (Bhattacharya 2009: 60-62). Textile weaving schools were set up all over Bengal, including Nadia district, as the initiative of nationalist activists of National Congress and Swadeshi movement.

***Swadeshi* Movement and Handloom:** As the demand for indigenous products increased as a result of Swadeshi movement, handloom weavers in all parts of Bengal, including Nadia district, increased the level of production. With the help of the cloth produced during this time, it was possible to meet the local demand, even the surplus materials were exported to the adjoining areas. Above all, the demand for Shantipuri dhoti and shari were increased. As a result, a new tide came in the process of handloom weaving of Shantipur. The main ingredients of Shantipur's weaving were fine yarn. The use of *charkars* in the basic education curriculum developed under the leadership of Gandhiji. It was new impetus by his followers. Above all, during the national movements led by Gandhiji, like other places, Nadia's weavers also wanted to bring an end to the British rule and develop the weaving industry to help national movements. Weavers thought they were performing their duty to mother land by producing indigenous cloth.

Partition of Bengal and its Impact on Handloom of Nadia and Brahman: The influx of these refugees into Nadia's economy has been various since independence. Along with the refugee problem, there was severe food crisis in almost all parts of West Bengal including Nadia and Bardhaman districts. Added to the food crisis was the question of rehabilitating countless refugees. It is pertinent to mention here that the adoption of the property and public exchange policy of the Central Government resulted in quick resolution of the problem in Punjab. But the problem became critical and long term as the policy was not adopted in Bengal like Punjab. Whether the role of the central and state governments in resolving the problem of refugee in West Bengal was positive at all, is subject to investigation. During the period from 1947 to 1950, the central government spent as little as possible on the relief of refugees in Bengal. In 1950, Union Minister for Rehabilitation Mohanlal Saxena refused to take up the responsibility of rehabilitating the refugees in Bengal. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee and Khitish Chandra Niyogi resigned from the Union Cabinet Ministry in protest (Chakraborty 2014: 27-28). And Nehru believed that refugees from East Pakistan were not refugees at all they had left in fear and would return. Although there does not seem to be any reason behind this belief. Again, Nehru was against the exchange of property in Bengal (Bhattacharya 2009: 71-73). The then Chief Minister of Bengal Bidhan Chandra Roy also was very much dissatisfied about the fund allocation by the Central Government for refugees of West Bengal.

After the partition of the country, refugees tried to make a living by associating themselves with small cottage industries in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman.

In 1950, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru ordered the construction of Fulia suburb in Bengal. He also announced that the Government of India would take up the responsibility of rehabilitating those who had fled the riots of 1950 in West Bengal. The amount of government work required to solve the refugee problem was, in fact, insufficient. At this time the government n should open a well-equipped office for small cottage industries in these districts, and introduce comprehensive plans for their economic rehabilitation and sustainable livelihood for refugees of West Bengal (Mitra 1978: 26-28).

Partition upset the well-organized economy of Bengal. Prior to partition, Bangladesh's economy depended entirely on its traditional textile weaving production. Eighty-five per cent of the migrant weavers who came from East Bengal were directly or indirectly involved in mass production, but they were engaged in joint weaving before the partition of the country. The production of *Jamdani* sari in East Bengal was also well-known for its fine craftsmanship and design (Kundu1950: 41). In particular, Muslim rulers encouraged the production of *jamdani*. Initially *jamdani* was produced only by Muslim weavers but gradually Hindus also mastered this special weaving style and engaged themselves in the production of *jamdani* (Das 2001:71).

After the end of the Muslim rule, during the time of European rulers, Hindu women became fond of *Jamdani* shari. In spite of the division of the country on the basis of religion, West Bengal and India was a big market of handloom textiles. These post-independence weavers from East Pakistan were instrumental in the expansion of the handloom weaving in West Bengal. Returning to their old profession, they got the opportunity to make a livelihood of their choice. The process of identifying who are weavers among the refugee families and settled in Nadia and Bardhaman districts, adjoining to the erstwhile Pakistan started very fast. Organizing themselves, they started *jamdani* weaving and other cloth weaving with which they were already acquainted (Das 2001:73). Very quickly in the early 1950s, various programs were adopted by the government to ensure the proper expansion of the weaving industry in post-independent West Bengal.

Most of refugees belong to weavers’ community from East Bengal have come to Shastipur, Nabadwip, Ranaghat, Fulia, Chakdaha in Nadia District and also in Srirampur, Katwa, Dhatrigram, Samudragar of Purba Bardhaman District. These places are adjoining to erstwhile Purba Pakistan. After some time, 'Phulia suburb' was formed with a lot of effort. The handloom weavin started with the activities of the refugee people. Dhakai Jamdani, Matha cloth of Jessore (without design) and Tangail sari of Tangail District of present Bangladesh, quickly became popular. The amount of textile production in Bengal also changes. Between the two world wars, the quantity of handloom cloth in Bengal decreased considerably. Between 1921 and 1940, the number of looms in Bangladesh decreased from 2,13,8 to 1, 42,471. Immediately after the partition of Bengal (1952-53) their number of handlooms in Bengal decreased to 97000. But the reorganization of the weaving industry in the 1980s led to an increase in the number of looms. The number of newly registered looms in 1980-81 stood at 13,500. A departmental inquiry by the Government of West Bengal in 1986 found that the number of looms in Bengal as a whole was 2,12,000. Nadia and Bardhaman Districts were areas where the number of looms increased in Bengal after independence (Chakraborty 2014: 16).

Expansion of Weaving Industry in Different Parts of Nadia District

Shantipur: After independence, there was a revolution in the weaving industry of Shantipur. Weaving cloth was produced in Shantipur long before partition. Although there is a debate as to when weaving cloth was produced in Shastipur, weaving started in Shantipur long before lord Chaitanya. However, weaving in Shantipur did not become 'Shastipuri' then. It is known from *'Shastipur Parichay'* composed by Kalikrishna Bhattacharya that during the reign of Lakshman Sen from Dhamrai in Dhaka, it was mainly in his interest that weaving and fine artisans came to Shantipur and few Hindu tailors or *ostagar*. Although before him the weavers of Shastipur used to weave thick cotton cloth (Bhattacharya 1987: 209-213). Gradually many came to Shastipur from Dhaka region. Of course, some of them used to come for partition.

The history of the weaving industry of Bengal shows that until the time of Nawab Alibardi Khan, the weavers were independent, meaning that weavers could invest their own capital in making garments and selling them wherever and however they wished. With the rise of the East India Company during the regime of *Nawab* Siraj-Ud-Daula, the weavers became increasingly dependent. This is because the company has already gone directly into the textile business and the local employees were employed as supervisors of the company, whom the weavers used to call *gomasta* or *dalal*. Through these *gomastas* the company bought cloth from the weavers at a lower price.The company forced the weavers of Shastipur to sell cloth to them at a lower price. If weavers sold the cloth elsewhere, the weaver would be caught and tortured, and the loom's weaving equipment would be destroyed, along with the yarn. In 1892, the weavers of Shantipur marched from Shantipur to Calcutta and held a dharna in the court of the senior officers of the company and submitted a memorandum demanding redressal of such grievances and injustice against the employees of the company. The senior executives of the company sympathetically reviewed the demands of the weavers and accepted the demands of the weavers. Several employees of the company were sacked in Shantipur. The loom workers' movement was victorious. This weaving workers' movement in Shantipur is considered by many to be the first trade union movement in India.The religious and social movements of the nineteenth century also had an impact on the weavers of Shantipur. The patriotic songs of the *Swadeshi* movement and the speeches in favor of Vidyasagar's widow marriage and Rammohun's abolition of *satidaha* were highlighted through designs of shari. Many other weavers of Shantipur used to embellish the weaving cloth with their handicrafts, including the songs of Mukunda Das (Kundu 1950: 30-32).

Then began the weaving of fine cloth in Shantipur. The weavers of Dhamrai are mainly muslin weavers. When they came to Shantipur, they started weaving muslin which was later transformed into *Nakshadarpar shari* and became known as 'Shastipuri' ". In fact, throughout the first half of the eighteenth-century handloom textile weavers occupied the most important place in the economy of Bengal. There are different names for Shantipur and its adjoining areas at that time: *Jamdani, Hammam, ShirbandDuri, Khasa, Bata, Sano, Amriti, Chinj, Malmal, Talib, Abu, Sarabati, Shura, Taridram, Sarkar Ali, Jhuna, Ranga, Jangalkhasa, Sandhyashishir* etc. *Sarkar Ali* and *Jamdani* were expensive, priced four to five hundred rupees in that era. Those expensive clothes were used by the kings and arostracate people. A type of silk garment called *Shirband* was made for use as a turban. According to Subhasis Chakraborty, the *SandyhaSishir* cloth was so fine that, it matched the grass on a field on a winter's evening, it would not be visible in few hours. In other words, it would mix with that grass in a few hours of dew (Chakraborty 2014: 18).

The center of fine muslin cloth of handloom looms was established in different parts of Bengal. Among those various centers, Shantipur of Nadia was one of the main manufacturing centers. Shantipur is still one of the weaving centers today. A large weaving textile area is formed around the present Shantipur town in the whole of Nadia, adjoining Purba Bardhaman and Hooghly Districts. Shari made in Burdwan and Nadia, has now crossed the national level and taken its place abroad. Varieties of weaving fabrics are being made, not only cotton yarn made from corpus cotton now, weaving fabrics of various designs are being made from various types of artificial yarn, silk, polyester etc.

Initially, the designs were made by middle, and then it was woven on the net and in the *jhape*, hand-pushed shuttle. Then came the Fly Shuttle Loom, then the Jacquard Machine. But after the independence of the country, the number of looms in Shantipur started increasing rapidly. The reason for this increase is mainly the arrival of refugees from East Bengal. In other words, as a result of partition, many theoretical families migrated from East Pakistan i.e., Bangladesh to West Bengal. Some of them settled at Shantipur and Phulia, and Samudragarh, a village near Nabadwip. Due to the skill and innovative power of all those weavers, the tide of handloom industry came again (Das 2001: 22-25).

The weavers of Shantipur learned the method of weaving embroidery with high quality modern art from weavers from Dhaka and Tangail. All these landscaping on *shari* are really admirable. At present the famous Jamdani sari of Dhaka is being made at Shantipur, Phulia and Samudragarh. These sarees are in great demand in the Indian market and abroad and are getting good prices. As a result, the financial condition of the weavers has improved a bit. Shantipur is the highest handloom concentrated cluster of the country (Nath 1388 bengali year: 20-22).

As the tastes of Bengali women changed with the times, the weavers of Shantipur also started changing the designs of *shari*. Although some costs of production increased, they are benefiting overall. The demands for Shari are increasing and the price is also increasing. The weavers of Shantipur now produce different types handloom products throughout the year. Even some decades ago, if it rained, weavers would often stop working. The work of wrapping and wafting , had to be done in an empty field or garden outside the house. If it rained, that work would be stopped. As a result, weavers also used to sit without work. But now weavers do not have to stop working. They sit at home and do these works with the help of drums. Moreover, weavers are working even at night when electric light is on in the loom factory. Now jacquard designs are made with computer. Previously the work of starching cloth was done with the weaving; now it is done by machine after production (Nath 1388 bengali year: 27-28).

In Shantipur, mainly *dadandars mahajans* are at the root of this textile business. They supply the yarn, and also buy the cloth produced from the weavers and sell it in hats, shops, Harisa hat and Manglar hat in the barabazar of Kolkata and in exhibitions and outside the state. Shantipur hat sits every Sunday and Thursday. The yarn numbered 80 and 100 is used in *shantipuri shari*. Local traders supply yarn from Kolkata agents and from mills. In this process, the exploitation of moneylenders increased. After independence, especially from 1980s the cooperative movements got impetus. Many Primary Weavers' cooperative societies have been established. These PWCS look after the whole process of production from supplying raw materials to marketing products (Banarjee 1388 bengali year: 45-47).

Handloom Weaving of Phulia: Phulia village is next to Shantipur. Present Phulia suburb is composed of some villeges. Phulia is famous because, it is the birth place of Krittibas Ojha, the writer of great Indian epic, Ramayana. The political earthquake that shook the Indian subcontinent in 1947 caused lakhs of refugees from East Bengal and East Pakistan to flee in West Bengal. The old village 'Buicha', a colony of the central government, took the name 'Fulia Suburb' adjacent to Phulia Station as the living quarters of some of them. The Phulia suburb was established in 1950-51 with government funding. Today, major population of Phulia are ancestors of weavers of Tangail, now in Bangladesh. Tangail subdivision was one of the five subdivisions of Mymensingh district in present day Bangladesh and. At present Tangail has been transformed from a subdivision into a district. Twenty-two villages in the vicinity of Tangail town were inhabited by the *Basak* community. Handloom weaving was the main occupation of the *Basak* community. The weavers of Phulia are mainly from Bask community. The name of tangail *shari* is originated from the place *Tangail*(Mitra 1978:74-75).

Some frightened people from East Pakistan took shelter at Phulia. Some people from Cochbihar came to Phulia. Many weavers were forced to take shelter in the houses of moneylenders as there was no place for everyone in the rehabilitation colony. Due to the problem of space some moneylenders bought cheap land in the vicinity and arranged for their settlement. In this way Phulia was formed around the suburbs - Buicha, Mathapara, Chatkatla, Bahambigha, Taltala etc. In this way the Basak community of Tangail, the successor of muslin shari, introduced their skillful Tangail saree tradition at Phulia after partition and it became most populated and famous handloomconcentrated area not only within state but also in the country.

The three main pillars of the Phulia's economy are cottage industries, agriculture, labor industries and trade. Although the land behind Phulia is heavily dependent on agriculture, the cottage industry has topped the list in terms of financial transactions. The cottage industry is run in four streams - *Tangail*shari of 100 yarn, *Matha* cloth of 40/60 yarn, *Santiniketani* cotton bag and pottery. However, the influence of Tangail shari is at the top. Tangail shari has played an important role in changing the livelihood of Habibpur, Taherpur, Batna, Shastipuri, Arabandi and Badakulla . As a result, the way of life is changing. Durgapur village north of Habibpur station. Some *Rajbangshi* refugees settled on the grazing high lands surrounded by the Dead River,PocharBeel and Chakar Beel on both sides. Formerly inhabited by some tribe and *Durlav* communities. Occupations were agriculture, fishing, farm labor, few *Chittaranjan* handloom weavers. Most of the people lived in cottages. Financial income depended on fishing so; the income of the people theirware uncertain, poverty was a constant companion. After gaining experience in *tangail* shari weaving, they established *tangail* weaving (matha) and later Naksha (jacquard) weaving in their villages and they got involved in handloom weaving and business (Kundu 1950:77-78).

Thus, the migrant weavers from East Bengal revived the ancestral *tangail* weaving tradition centered around Phulia and they embrass the industry quickly despite enduring extreme poverty. The *tangail* shari that has won the attention of the market all over India today is the shari of Naksha Par which they weave in various designs and beautiful colors. Note that *tangail* and *dhakai Buti* and *jamdani* shari are not same. Tangail sari is basically a patterned work of smooth texture of different colors, which is done on a jacquard machine. And the 'Jamdani' or embroidered shari, the craftsmanship of which can be seen only on the touch of the weaver's hand,on the texture of the sari, has nothing to do with Jacquard. The shariweaven by the weavers of Phulia, not Jamdani, is the original and genuine Tangail shari.

According to Subahsis Chakraborty, by 1973, the number of weavers in Phulia had exceeded 10,000. Weavers went on the path of movement due to exploitation of moneylenders, low wages etc. To save the weavers came the weavers' Cooperative Societies which are still active in Phulia. The annual production of Phulia's Tangail shari is approximately over 200 crore rupees. Products are cotton, silk, tassar, polyester shari and various exportable garments. It is in great demand in the Bara Bazar of Kolkata. Outside Bengal, especially in South India, the demand for Phulia's Tangail shari is increasing. Exports go to Japan, Germany, France and the Middle East. The number of looms is increasing day by day due to the increasing demand for Tangail shari of Fulia. As a result, the number of people dependent on the business of weaving accessories has also increased. Today, Tangail saree is at the top position in the economy of Phulia. On an average 15 sari are produced in each loom in every month. From this it is understood how much influence Tangail shari has on the financial transactions of Fulia. Today hundreds of tea, sweet and other shops, hotels lodges have sprung up along the national high way of Phulia. Large numbers of rickshaw vans, electric rikshaws running there. Handloom shari is directly and indirectly related to the development of the area (Chakraborty 2014:23).

Since time immemorial, Shantipuri shari is popular in West Bengal and world market. Needless to say, this can be understood from the production of tangail shari in Fulia that Not only tangail shari is well-established, but also has to compete with sharis like dhanekhali, shantipuri, begumpuri etc. of present-day Bengal. Tangail has occupied the top position in its own glory. Behind this is a cooperative mind, a fondness for past traditions and a wonderful affection for artistry. Today, those people have found a way to survive by reviving the memory of the abandoned Tangail industry. Although Shastipuri dhoti-shari or Gujarati, Madrasichickadari shari is popular in the market. Its popularity is surpassing other current shari day by day due to its fine and strong embroidery with fine designs of Fulia's Tangail shari industry. In fact, in its own glory, Tangail continues to occupy its rightful place in the shari market. The main role in the creation, promotion and expansion of the all-India market of Tangail shari is played by Phulia Cooperative Society. This is accompanied by financial cooperation. Today, the economy of Phulia and its adjoining areas is totally dependent on weaving industry. This is Nadia's pride. The development of this industry can be very helpful in the economic development of Nadia and West Bengal (Banarjee 1388 bengali year: 22-24).

Handloom of Ranaghat: According to Ramanuj Chattopadhyaya handloom weaving industry did not exist in Ranaghat before partition. During the reign of King Krishnachandra Roy of Nadia, some energetic youths of Mallik familyof Ranaghat used to export muslin to Europe. They used to collect many valuable fine muslins from Dhaka, Shantipur etc. and sent it to Europe. As the business gradually improved, they set up cloth warehouses in Dhaka, Enatganj, Calcutta and Shantipur. They also set up a blue factory at Ranaghat. This export business of the Mallik youth seems to be an isolated incident. After the partition of the country, some of the peoplehad been expelled from East Pakistan inand some others had come voluntarily atRanaghatand took shelter in the surrounding areas. Although some well-to-do families took refuge in the village of Hijuli in Ranaghat, they started living in the vast vacant lands on the banks of the riverChurni and its adjoining areas. Since most of them are directly or indirectly involved in the handloom weaving industry of their homeland, they choose their own cottage industry as their livelihood. This is how the weaving industry started atRanaghat. In fact, most of the people who came from East Pakistan were almost without capital. So those outsiders chose the weaving industry as their livelihood because they were already familiar with the industry and handloom needed little capital in comparison to other industries. As the refugees ware landless handloom weaving was best available to them (Chakraborty 2014: 21).

Later, this cottage industry spread from house to house in Aishtala of Ranaghat and its surrounding areas. The knocking sound of hand looms is constantly heard in the villages on both sides of the river Churni. As a result of working unskilled workers with skilled workers, they also become skilled over time. Gradually handloom weaving industry spread beyond the boundaries of Aishtala and spread to Hijuli, Seem-Aishtala, Birnagar, Taherpur, Habibpur areas. Handloom textiles are also produced in 23 bighas, Chatkrishtapur, Dhantala, Aranghata and Ghoralia areas.

Shri Brajgopal Basak added a whole new dimension to the textile industry of Ranaghat. In 1946, he started a machine-powered loom with the help of a diesel engine on the banks of the river Churni. After the arrival of electricity at Ranaghat in 1950, Shri Basak set up a mechanical loom in the town of Ranaghat. It was during this time that Shri Ashutosh Debnath and Shri Devendra Debnath played a major role in setting up mechanical looms. After the government approval in 1955, the power loom industry in Ranaghat expanded rapidly (Chakraborty 2014: 94). On the one hand the number of powerloom industry is increasing and on the other hand handloom weaving is considered as the main means of livelihood in almost every household in the village. At present the power loom industry is actively located at east of Ranaghat station and in the vicinity of Ranaghat College. Not only men but also women are involved in this industry from the very beginning. But with the proliferation of power-looms, handloom weaving has become a thing of the past and faced challenges. All the weavers who could have improved the handloom weaving in Ranaghat turned their attention to the power loom with the gift of science in mind. As it could produce much more in a short time, the amount of profit also increased at a very fast pace. Over time, handloom weaving has been associated with economic judgment of the poor, lower middle class, middle class and a small number of upper class people.

Ranaghat occupies one of the leading positions in West Bengal in terms of the number of looms (hand operated and machine operated), even though it is quite insignificant in terms of quality and unique features. The number of mechanical looms in Ranaghat and its adjoining areas is more than two thousand. Nowhere else in West Bengal has such a large number of powerlooms concentrations been seen in such a small area. Twelve thousand people are employed in machine looms (Textile report 2019-2020). The business of small shops at Ranaghat is mostly related with textile products. At Ranaghat region, the importance of power looms is much higher in the overall trade and commerce. There are working people of different levels associated with it. The work of textile process in power looms - such as steaming, calendaring, etc. is currently in progress. Shari, dhoti as well as industrial cloth are being made. This type of fabric is required in the tire, footwear and some leather industries (Mallick 1986: 21-23).

The textiles produced in the handlooms and power looms of Ranaghat do not have any significant features. Handloom produced shari are woven in thick yarn in this region. The shari produced as a result is only useful for removing shame. As a result, such clothes are acceptable to economically backward people. Besides cloth, bed sheets, towels, lungis etc. are also produced. In case of shari, yarn from 25th to 60th is used. However, the market is shrinking as the demand for this kind of thick yarn is declining day by day. The cloth made here is taken to Aishtala hat, Chakdaha hat, Navadwip hat and Mangla hat in Howrah and sold. Handloom cloths of Ranaghat are facing challenges from power loom sector.

Handloom of Nabadwip: The time of origin of handloom at Nabadwip is unknown. According to Kalikrishna Bhattacharya, at the time of Lord Chaitanya, there was probably no weaving at Nabadwip, because when the first Shivram Dhamrai of the *Boka* family came to Lord Chaitanya, he asked him to settle in Shantipur. If there was any opportunity for weaving at Nabadwip, he would not ask him to go elsewhere. During East India Company, there may have had a small number of handlooms at Nabadwip. After independence, weaving industry spread at Nabadwip. Nath and Debnaths came mainly from Pabna, Dhaka and Tangail and started weaving at Nabadwip. Besides thick cloth, they also started production of Jamdani shari. At present, Jamdani shari is being made at Nabadwip with fine thread number 100, which is in demand and reputation all over India. Yarn and silk - both are *jamdani* priced from three six hundred to five thousand rupees (Mitra 1978:20-22).

The number of looms in the Navadwip municipal area was 18,000 according to the 1967 census. At present this number is close to triple. Karimpur, Kaliganj, Nakashipara, Tehatta, Chapra, Krishnaganj, Krishnanagar, Nabadwip block areas are under Handloom Development Office, Nabadwip. These areas together belong to the Nabadwip zone and (the number of looms in the entire zone as per2019-20 census is 45203). *Atpore shari*, lungi, towel, bed sheet etc. are made in the loom, with 40/60 number yarn. Jamdani is woven in about 15 percent of the looms. However, the demand for Jamdani *shari* remains unchanged. With the emergence of power loom, ordinary handloom products of Nabadwip are losing their market day by day.

Nabadwip has become important in the handloom industry of Bengal. In the socio-economic context here, handlooms are gradually occupying a special place. Most of the handloom weavers in the area are skilled. Very few weavers are unskilled and they weave traditional tangail shari. There is considerable demand in the local market for the products, produced in the Nabadwip zone. However, the weavers here are trying to make themselves proficient by adapting with various schemes, adopted by the state and central governments. The process of diversification of manufactured goods is also underway. Emphasis is now being laid on the production of exportable weaving garments as per the market demand. Nadia *Zila Parishad* and Nadia District Central Cooperative Bank are providing necessary financial assistance for this. There is *Tant Kapar Hat* (Wholesale market) at Nabadwip municipal area. Buyers and sellers gather at this market on Thursday, Friday and Sunday, every week. Weekly turnover of this *hat* is around Rs 1.5 Crore (interviews of local weavers).

Handloom in Other Areas of Nadia: Apart from Shantipur, Phulia, Nabadwip and Ranaghat, weaving industry is scattered in different parts of Nadia district. Numerous looms of *Jamdani* are scattered in the vast area of Durgapur and its vicinity on the north side of Habibpur station. Under the patronage of a moneylender of Phulia, a few non-*Basak* people started weaving *jamdani* here. A lot of people have come to this profession after seeing them. Those who used to be farmers, landless farmers and daily labours, now also have looms in their homes. Thus, many farming villages have turned into weavers' village (Chakraborty 2014:27). Here women are also work with men in weaving, designing and allied activities for becoming farmer to weaver. Their income has increased remarkably.

The number of looms at Chakdaha block is formidable in number. The number of looms in this block is 5010 as per the census of 2019-20. Ordinary thick cloth, *lungi* and *chadar* were mainly made here in *chittaranjan* loom. There are also pit looms. Thick cotton embroidered cloth is also woven in it throughout the villages. Chakdaha hat is held every Friday. Tangail, *jamdani*, polyester, printed shari are also bought and sold at this market. As a result of the closure of the Janata Project, the chittaranjan looms in all these areas were also shut down. The number of pit loom weavers is only increasing. Darappur at Chakdaha is one of the textile manufacturing areas in the block. It is to be noted that after independence of India and during the Bangladesh's War of Independence, many people from East Bengal took refuge in Chakdaha block. Many of them associate themselves with handloom weaving as a livelihood. Even today, many of these refugees are directly or indirectly involved in handloom weaving. This block is not so famous for handloom, but a large section of population are related with this profession (Chakraborty 2014: 45-47).

There are numbers of weavers in Tehatta, Jitpur, Hudo, Chapra, Debagram, Kaliganj and Nakashipara. There are also people of many weavers' communities in Palashi and Karimpur. In Kalinarayanpur adjacent to Ranaghat, towels and sheets are also widely produced in handloom, of cotton number 60/70.Handloom production has also expanded in Dattafulia adjacent to Ranaghat. So, it can be said that weaving industry is spread all over Nadia district. From Karimpur in the north to Haringhata in the south, many people are making a living by weaving, rolling *noli*, spinning yarn, dyeing etc. Although they have not yet seen the face of financial well-being however, they are able to manage irregular wages, relatively more, than daily wages.

Handloom in Purba Bardhaman District

Bardhaman district occupies an important and very significant place in the handloom Industry of West Bengal. Though this district is rich in natural resources, a substantial number of people under rural sector maintain their livelihood through traditional skills of handloom weaving**.** History of Burdwan handloom cluster has never faced a setback rather it is a growing industry since 1942. The weaver mainly belong to *Basak* and Yogi community who migrated from Nowakhali, Dhaka and Tangail districts (at present under Bangladesh) before partition of India and settled in Katwa, Dhatrigram, Samudragarh, Tamaghata areas. Weavers of Ketugram, Parulia, Ghoshhat of Katwa, Dhatrigram, Tamaghata , have broaden their field of activities in producing various diversified products for the initiatives taken by some leading PWCS in these areas. Weavers of some areas are still producing traditional items like *lungi*, *gamcha* etc. They require Immediate diversification of their products .

Burdwan cluster is famous and very significant place in Bengal handloom Industry. Two sub-divisions, Katwa and Kalna are mainly dependent on handloom industry in Burdwan district. About 37500 active looms are still working in this cluster. At least 94000 (approximately) people are engaging on full time and part time basis with this Industry. As per the Kolkata Gazette, Extraordinary Notification (No.83/AR/O/2R-3/12) issued by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, Govt. of West Bengal on 24 March 2017, Purba Bardhaman was bifurcated from the erstwhile Bardhaman district. Purba Bardhaman has only 8 Blocks as handloom rich area out of 23 Blocks. The traditional art of jamdani weaving is a labour-intensive process and time-consuming. It is estimated that there were 36 varieties of muslin products in the South Asian region and jamdani was one of the very best varieties of the muslin. The uniqueness of *jamdani shari* lies in the intricacy of designs created with muted or vibrant colours, on the traditional loom during the process of weaving. They are not done either by embroidery or by a printing process. The finished garments are highly breathable (Datta 2018: 264).

Bardhaman cluster is recognized as one of the heritage cluster of west Bengal among twenty renowned clusters all over the country and well known for *nakshipar tangail* shari and *jamdani* shari weaving. Integrated cluster Development Scheme has launched by ministry of Textile in 2005-06, the main aim of this project is to make our age old traditional handloom industry globally competitive and protect this sector from the threats of powerloom. Handloom industry is one of the important labour intensive industries of Bardhaman. So this industry has a great possibility to operate in a profitable and productive way, which can bring economic development in the rural India. A vast areas of Purba Bardhaman district (Katwa,Dhatrigram, samudragar, Srirampur, Tamaghata) Produce lungi,gamcha,tangail shari and jamdani shari which can easily compete with any kind of mill products by their beautiful craftsmanship, exclusive design, fine texture and attractive colour combination. Large number of weavers, master weavers, skilled designers, have a good connection with state level Handloom Development Corporation and apex body like *Tantuja*, *Manjusha* (Sarkar 2017: 2-3).

The time of origin of cotton manufacturing industry in Bardhaman district is partly unknown because of scarcity of proper reliable data. According to Handllom Development Office, Chinsurah and also other sources the Bardhaman cluster was mainly growing since 1942. The weaving work is mainly done by two communities namely *Yogi* and *Basak* . Weavers of Yogi community were traditionally efficient in Lungi**,** Gamcha and Production of *Matha shari*. People of *Basak* Community are traditionally efficient in producing fine shari. But now a days with the decline of handloom made *lungi*, *gamcha* and *chittaranjan shari* and growth of powerloom in this sector yogis are also engaged themselves in tangail *shari* and *jamdani* shari production. These efficient weavers were migrated from Nowakhali, Tangail, Dhaka districts (at present under Bangladesh) before and after partition of India and settled in Katwa, Dhatrigram,Samudragarh, Purbasthali of Purba Bardhaman district(Datta 2018: 1-2)

Weaving Community: Traditionally, handloom weaving is a family activity, performed in a rural household set-up and is spread across the weaving villages of Kethugram I, II; Katwa I, II; Purbasthali I, II and Kalna I, II Block. There are nearly 36096 weavers with about 94,000 handloom households, spreading in the weaving villages and depending on this industry for their livelihood. The production process in handloom sector is vertically integrated and the workforce is mainly confined to *Basak* and *Yogi* Communities of Hindu religion. At present 55% of weavers is located in the district itself and 45% come from other districts of North Bengal. 95% of weavers are Hindu while 5% belong to Muslim. However, preparatory work like reeling, starching, Design cutting, sizing and bobbin filling work is generally done by women members of the house (Datta 2018:3-4).

Weavers of Bardhaman cluster are renowned for their expertise and knowledge in the weaving of silk and cotton variety of handloom products in their jacquard looms. Jamdani variety *shari*, *tangail shari* with *naksapar* and *buti shari* with attractive design and colours, are the pioneers in the field of bengal heritage handloom products. The products are highly appreciated in the other states of India and are recognized the world over (Roy 2001:14-16).

Socio-economic condition of weavers and allied workers

The handloom sector is a small-scale industry and the operating system is very similar to the other traditional cottage industry, having the *mahajani* (moneylender) system. They belong to the same weaver's community and also belong to the capitalist class. Over the years, they acquired funds and kept aside the weaving work to become businessmen. All *mahajan* acts as a distributor, supplier and maintain full control over the production, and marketing activities. Despite not being involved in the main production process, the *mahajans* have an indirect but oligopolistic presence in the entire value chain of the handloom production and marketing of products to enjoy the maximum profit.

The *mahajan* provides the raw silk or cotton yarn to the wage weavers on credit and the entire family gets involved in reeling, dyeing and weaving activities. The final fabric material is handed over to *mahajan*, and payments to the weavers are done on per piece rate. In this system, the payment to the weavers is based on the number of finished cloth produced despite the time spent to produce it. Handloom workers usually incur loss, especially in dry seasons (during monsoom and when marriage like occasion are not there) since they underestimated their investment of time under this system.

The occupational structure of the handloom community consists of three categories

- The *mahajans* enjoying maximum profit
- Some independent master weavers are in the middle position
- A large number of weavers, depending on piece rate system for their wages, posited at the bottom level with minimal profit.

The *mahajan* and the independent master weavers practically have a similar controlling position in the handloom production other than a striking difference where the master weavers generally have their own looms and engage weavers by paying wages to work for them. *Mahajan,* generally like the capitalist system, do not run looms and supply yarns to the weavers and also do marketing of the finished products. The weavers are mostly simple, lack formal education and negotiation skill and hence left with no other option other than depending on *mahajans*. They know that the *mahajans* are exploiting them and get the products done at low rates and sell them at considerably higher rates to consumers but are unable to confront their sway. Since the livelihoods totally depend on the *mahajans,* and this might become difficult to get work from them (Chattopadhyay 2001: 43-45)

The occupational structure of handloom industry reveals the darker side of the capitalist system, showing that the powers are in the hands of few people. Further, the economic activities of the *mahajan* can be regarded as malfeasance and opportunists who have an adequate amount of wealth due to better linkages with associates (Sarkar2015: 4). However, in the handloom sector where most of the activities are manual and labourious, a weaver family working on a normal day, cannot weave more than 8-10 meters of fabric, as a matter of fact, the payment based on piece rate system reflects marginalisation and deprivation of the weavers.

The work shed of some individual weavers needs repair and maintenance. Therefore, necessary support in this regard is required by the individual weavers. The bank does not provide credit facility for their working capital and hence, the conditions of individual weavers are deplorable. Intervention in this area in required so that the weavers can have a better work environment. In the preparatory process, women members of the weavers' family perform allied activities. There is need of skill upgradation training in order to save time (interview of weavers and allied workers).

The dyeing unit follows old techniques using conventional methods and is not environment friendly. The quality of dye stuffs and improper dyeing technique are the reasons for defective dyeing and poor function of properties. Since the cluster does not have a good dyeing unit to have quality dyeing of yarns, the cost of dying gets higher and hence proper intervention is required.

The weaving industry of Bengal is the most prominent and oldest industry in the country. Organized or unorganized, many skilled or less skilled people are associated with it. Although the equipment used by the weavers was not up-to-date. In Nadia district and almost everywhere in Bengal, many people are still choosing a livelihood by rising above the caste system. The strategic shift in production may have attracted different classes of people to the weaving. Many of them have embraced this industry so sincerely that they cannot think of moving to another profession despite their various problems. About ten percent of the new generations from weavers' families are involved in handloom. However, the participation of 25 to 40 year olds is relatively high. The instances are very rare that people of this age group leave weaving after joining this profession. But many instances are there ,of shifting handloom to powerloom or taking handloom as a part-time job (interview of weavers and allied workers).

According to survey, most of the weavers in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts are Hindus, some are Muslims. More over, the exiled refugees from East Bengal, many of whom had never been involved in the weaving process at all, associated themselves with the weaving process as a total alternative livelihood after coming in these areas. However, weavers' refugees from Tangail and Dhaka took shelter at Phulia and kept themselves attached with the traditional handloom production process. And the non-weavers refugees, who come to this country, keeping themselves in tune with the rural economy, engage themselves in the traditional production of handloom. Another big reason to involve them in this production process is that it does not require much investment. Naturally, handloom gained popularity very fast in these districts flooded by refugees after partition (Roy 2007: 15-16).

Role of Family in Handloom Production: The role of the family in small or home-based cottage industries like handloom is especially noteworthy. Productive strategies also depend on the family. Handloom weaving has become the mainstay of the livelihood of these families. The head of the household (in most cases the eldest of the family) leads the whole process of hand loom production and the other adult members of the family, including children collectively carry forward the whole production process. The exceptions, however, are in some cases individuals who, despite belonging to this weaving family, are not entirely dependent on the weaving process. However, in most cases, the role of adult members or members of the family is particularly active. However, as the joint family system breaks, the family-centered production process is indirectly backward. Previously, minor members of the family who are involved in the textile weaving production process; have become proficient by mastering the productive techniques from the active members of the family. This special assistance is definitely helpful in increasing the quality of production which is never mentioned. In some cases it is seen that only the other members take the production process forward under the direction of the head of the family. The eldest member only oversees the main production techniques, designs, etc. The family-centered production process is impossible without the active support of two or three members of the family. The production process is going on in Nadia district and most of the districts of Bengal with the help of two or three members of the family. In some cases it has been observed that the weaving process continues with the participation of five or six members of family. Naturally it can be said that handloom weaving in Bengal is mainly family oriented and the amount of production is also very small (interview of weavers and allied workers).

The weaving process is not done by the efforts of any single member of the family. This production is the result of the joint efforts of the whole family. When a weaver weaves cloth while sitting on the loom, it takes a lot of labor to make the yarn suitable for weaving. And with that labuor come the mother, wife, sister and children of every weaver's family. In case of handloom weaving, apart from the family of the weaver, especially without the labor of women, the art created by the weaver cannot be developed. Ninety per cent of the industrial resources created by the weavers are used by women. They in the first stage turned the raw material used for weaving into usable material and made them suitable for industry. If they had not done so, weaving cloth would not have been possible for a weaver alone (Chakraborty 2014: 27).

Weaving textile production has a long tradition of dependence on the families of loom workers. It is known from the book ' Jessore Khulnar Itihas' written by Satish Chandra Mitra that from dawn, that is, before sunrise, the wives and children of weavers' family used to spin yarn with spinning wheel. It would have been much better to make *dhakai* muslin on the yarn made with the light touch of the fingers of the children's hands. The main feature of the rural economy was that weaving was done depending on the diversity of labor. Almost everyone is involved in this family-centered production system. However, special importance is always given to the skilled person (Chakraborty 2014: 41).

The role of women workers in handloom weaving is unique. When a weaver weaves cloth while sitting on the loom, it takes a lot of labor to make the yarn suitable for weaving. Before independence, the daughters and wives of the family usually cut the thread. They were called *katuni*. In the weaving industry, women workers were especially involved in three tasks - (a) spinning the yarn of woof, that is, to lighten the yarn with starch, and (b) to make a tube by spinning the yarn hardened with that starch for warp and woof, (c) making design in the body or side of the cloth with yarn or jari. At that time young widows and those who were left out by husband were mainly involved in stitching work. They were paid very low wages.

In the post-independence period, women workers in the weaving industry took part in weaving along with men in the hope of earning money for their family's needs. So the girls of weavers' house are still spinning and weaving looms in the hope of earning extra money. But today, if all the girls are attracted to making clothes sitting on the loom (which earns more income), then there will be a problem for the male workers to complete the work of weaving.

Today, it is also true that many women, children and adolescents have been employed as weavers in pursuit of their livelihood. Yet these workers are not important. In different parts of Nadia and Purba bardhaman, such family-oriented workers are working in looms in Ranaghat, Phulia, Shastipur, Habibpur, Taherpur, Badakulla, Navadwip, Chabadah etc. Thick yarn work is done in places like Ranaghat, Kali Narayanpur, Chakdaha and the help of women workers is very important. Yet in many cases these women workers are being paid less than the male workers. Despite the fact that the cloth produced by women workers is being sold at good prices in the market, women weavers were paid lower wages. Therefore, it is necessary for the male workers to come forward with the female workers in this industry to bring equality in the wages of female and male workers. The number of unmarried workers is higher than that of married workers. It is undeniable that married women are weaving here at par with unmarried workers. The entertainment in their life is to help in weaving or weaving. Almost everywhere in these two districts they are paid per cloth, so discrimination between male and female worker gone now a days. However, women work shorter times than men in jacquard machines because they cannot use hands and legs continuously in a jacquard machine like men (Chakraborty 2014: 55-57).

It is pertinent to note that no strong union of workers in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts is present. However, the cooperatives and SHGs have the support for women workers. The PWCs open after two o'clock in the afternoon so that the women do not have any difficulty in their family work. Therefore, in view of the role of weaver family members, especially women, in this handloom weaving industry, there is a definite need for economic development with due dignity.

It should also be noted that although handloom weaving is family oriented, it is also market oriented. So naturally the role of wage-based workers is also here. At present the role of wage laborers in the handloom industry is considerable. According to All India Handloom Census of 1987 district-wise research shows that about 26% of wage workers exist in Nadia district. According to the handloom census, this figure is 15% in the context of the whole country. The number of wage-oriented loom workers has increased in the district. This is because at this time it is seen that there is a lot of variety in the design of weaving in these two districts and this diversified production process really required a lot of labor. And there was considerable demand in the market for this diversified product (Datta 2018: 4-5).

So the handloom industry is totally labour intensive in nature. However, any weaver can weave any garment even if it is of ordinary quality. Baluchari, Jamdani shari or dhoti weaving process of Shantipur, has some uniqueness. These two districts have its own handloom production in the context of Bengal's handloom production system. The manner in which the dhoti or sari of Shantipur is woven with 100 counts of yarn is unique in other parts of Bengal. Fulia's "Tangail" and "Jamdani" shari are in great demand in Bengal and all parts of India. Weavers from different parts of the district produce sari and dhoti. The production of shari has increased considerably from 1987 to 1995 in the whole country (All India Handloom Census, 2009-10). In the context of Bengal, the variety and design of shari production is remarkable. In the past large number of weavers used to weave mosquito nets. Now they are producing towels, bed sheets etc. Lungi and towels are popular all over the country despite low wages.

Economic Condition of Weavers: The handloom weaving process is a major source of employment for the rural population. The rural area does not require any agricultural land for handloom. The main source of income and employment is the handloom weaving industry for landless people. However, its existence depends on market demand. The weavers can also give more time if required as the production of hand looms is completely home oriented. However, many weavers are involved in the process of handloom production as well as rural labour. The wage of a weaver was 300-400 rupees per shari befor COVID-19. Not it is 200-300 rupees per Shari. However, the wages of full body design are definitely higher. Apart from weaving, handloom weavers are also employed as laborers in agricultural, business or other fields. A large number of the people from weavers' family make a living by employing themselves in other fields besides weaving. Few members of the weavers' family are also working in government services. Many weavers are also directly involved in agricultural production, business and other activities. That is to say, weaving cloth is not entirely conducive to their survival. Therefore, due to the reality, many weaving families look at weaving as well as other professions (interview of weavers and allied workers).

Although members of the weaving family spend a lot of time producing weaving garments, in many cases it has been observed that the producers themselves do not use handloom materials. In cases, where weavers use handloom products, which are discarded by the moneylenders. They live in extreme poverty and use cheap readymade garments of polyester. However, they use handloom materials in special cases i.e. during ceremonies. These poor weavers are naturally attracted to ready-made textiles as they are relatively cheap compared to the prices of handloom materials. However, the demand of thick yarn products is much higher. In weavers family the women mostly use this thick yarn woven cloth. Although beautiful dhoti is made from fine thread in Shastipur of Nadia, there is not much use of dhoti anywhere in the district including the men of weavers' family. This dhoti is used only for religious occasions and in very small quantities (interview of weavers and allied workers).

Most of the weaver families in Nadia district are living below the poverty line. Most of these families live in houses surrounded by mulberry fences and tin sheets and made of tile sheds or tin sheds. These houses or slum houses are not safe at all for their own family. There are also asbestos tents somewhere. Weavers mostly weave cloth or other materials under moneylenders. Weavers weave somewhere or under cooperative societies. The handloom industry is the second largest source of employment in the rural agrarian economy. The new generation is seen to be directly or indirectly engaged in handloom industry, though less in number. Still handlooms are their only hope of survival (interview of weavers and allied workers).

Marketing: Looking into the present market trend, product diversification is highly required to yield consistently higher returns. Although the local designers are skilled, training on new design development by an expert may help in value addition of the existing products. Marketing and distribution system for handloom products is of conventional type and there is a lack of market opportunities. In order to generate a special market space and popularize the handloom products, frequent buyer-seller meet, the formation of marketing consortium, exhibition cum sale, and proper advertising campaign using different media sources is desired.

It has been observed through value chain analysis of *tangail shari*, that local traders are enjoying maximum margin where as weavers / PWCS/ Master weavers share is negligible. After proper intervention it is found that for reduction of input procurement cost of yarn, bulk purchase is important. Upgrading the design for value addition to the product and ultimately direct selling mechanism, instead of indirectly through local trader, will help to increase weaver's share (wages) as well as entrepreneur's margin (interview of weavers and allied workers).

After closure of state handloom development corporation (Tantushree) and squeezing the activities of state Apex (Tantuja) the marketing channel of PWCS in this cluster is in stake. The outlets and showrooms for cluster products in major cities are highly essential and it should be a step for Intervention. Maximum participation in special fairs/ exhibitions throughout the year on the eve of different festivals can also help direct marketing of the product to the customer (interview of weavers and allied workers).

Health Related Issues: Barring these economic issues, there are common health problems which came forward during a discussion with the weavers. The issue that needs attention is the prevalence of work related stress, problem of spine, back pain, eyestrain, headache, and hearing loss among the weavers of these areas. There is lack of proper medical amenities to address the health problems. The workplaces are congested with non favorable conditions of high temperatures and humidity, poor illumination, and high noise levels. These conditions expose them to various types of health related risks that get implicated in their impaired health. The lack of proper health-care facilities and medication is also a reason for migration from this handloom sector. All most all weavers have "Swastha Sathi", a health insurance of Government of West Bengal, but they complain about the effectiveness of the scheme. They also informed that, this scheme is not sufficient for their treatment (interview of weavers and allied workers).

Decline Situation of Handloom: West Bengal has an exquisite weaving tradition that reflects craftsmanship and aesthetic appeal. Weavers toil for most of their waking hours to weave the rich fabric that delight consumers across the world. The beauty is barely reflected in their lives as they stare at a bleak future, uncertainty is all that is left of the warp and weft. The lives of these skilled artisans are in perpetual crisis, where motifs of distress and denial are dominant. Burdened by the weight of mounting debt, the weavers owe their debts to *mahajans*, as banks have cut their lending. The single borrower is *Tantuja*, but is financially weak and makes long delays in making payments to the primary societies supplying textile products. Consequently, the society becomes a defaulter as it fails to make a scheduled payment to various raw material suppliers. This makes the societies dysfunctional and weavers' depend upon the *mahajans* for capital and gets far more caught in the vicious cycle. Apart from the government approved handloom societies, around 400000 handlooms in the state, provide work to more than 6,5,0000 workforce. About one-third of the weavers in the district have formed cooperatives. Marketing is seasonal businesses and takes place mostly during the festive seasons of March-April and October-November. Hence, there is an urgent requirement for giving consumption credit to weavers along with a liberal and targeted social security support intervention to ensure the sale of handloom products throughout the year in profitable rate. If it happens, weavers can live a dignified life with their family members (Sarkar 2015: 3-4).

Change in lifestyles and market scenario illustrate that handloom weaving is no more a viable profession. The production has been reducing, although there is demand in the domestic market for handloom products. Weaving on an indigenous handloom is time consuming and thus adds immense value to the products. The contemporary handloom products are presently using dyed polyester filaments yarn and blended yarns in many cases. Though cotton and silk yarns are used in these districts, but their use are decreasing day by day. The use of such yarns instead of natural fiber and use of power-looms to weave a staggering variety of clothes and the handloom products has played confusion with regional identities. This has significantly affected the continued existence of many auxiliary activities and is a significant contributing factor for the downfall of the handloom industry. Mechanized yarn winding machines are used for winding and thus starching of yarn by homemade rice starch, spinning on barrels and bobbins are becoming obsolate. Modernisation of the process and use of substitutes is beneficial for the weaver in terms of production but has extremely affected the rich heritage of handloom products of the cluster.

Older weavers want their children to have nothing to do with the crafts and handloom weaving appears to be largely an occupation of senior citizens with several old weavers continuing with the tradition with no younger apprentices in sight to continue with the same. The entry of standardized mill manufactured yarn altered the unique identity of handloom fabrics irrevocably. Competition from lower cost power loom imitations has diluted the handloom identities. In addition, sometime the dyes used are of poor quality having poor light and wash-fastness and quickly fades (interview of weavers and allied workers).

Pattern of Seasonal Migration: The handloom weavers have been pushed into a corner by power looms and declining incomes. Many of them are economically backward, abandoned their looms and migrated in search of other livelihoods in other states. Uneven development is the main cause of migration. To earn a better living, the skilled workforce emigrates to work in similar industries in nearby districts or other states, like textile mills. It is a fact that the migration is a need-based movement and workers migrate from a less developed region to developed region (interview of weavers and allied workers).

For the *Basak* community, weaving has been the prime source of livelihood, with their youngsters already acquainted with it since childhood. The younger generation is more educated and has been reluctant to take up weaving as a profession, but after the cluster intervention programme, this scenario is changing. Through various awareness programmes over the last few years, they have been somewhat motivated by the government initiatives. They are beginning to realize the significance of the industry in playing a major role in employment generation. At present 47% of the youth has been inspired to join the profession, as against the earlier 30% before the intervention. If the birds go homing, it is a good sign for the possibility of revival of the Burdwan cluster and the future of tangail and jamdanji handloom shari and for the livelihood of handloom weavers (Datta 2018: 4-5).

The district central co-operative bank plays an important role for supporting to the PWCS. Tiny weaver/master weavers / private entrepreneur are not getting any support from them. With the result, these class of weavers are not getting any institutional credit facility which affecting their working capital in regard to procurement of raw material and other activities. In this regard MCGF formation to facilitate appropriate financing will be a major intervention. To get intuitional credit weavers are forming different Clusters, SHGs and PWCs.

The Bardhaman cluster is enriched with eight National Awardees weavers, large number of skilled weavers, designers, good number of efficient PWCS as well as support Institutions like WSC, NIFT, Textile Committee, NHDC and Handloom Development Office. So there is great scope for intervention in all the major areas like design development for value addition, market research, upgradation of technique, product diversification, establishment of CFC, common marketing facility obtaining of GI number and brand equity. By proper intervention in all the mentioned areas, the Bardhaman cluster may achieve the targeted turnover both in domestic and exportable product with the increase of weavers' earning as well as their standard of livelihood.

Attachment of Weaving With Other Aspect of Life: In fact, in the wake of the rural social economy, the weavers of Nadia district have chosen weaving as their field of work in their daily life. Many families in the district have attached themselves to the weaving industry as a comfortable profession, surrendering silently to the harsh realities of life, and losing the war of life because of poverty. Again, this gentle scholarship spreads not only in this weaving industry, but also in education, art culture, sports, and physical education. However, in the socio-economic context of these districts, a large number of people are only involved in weaving. The weavers and their family members are always engaged in weaving. Their happiness, sorrow, joy, exhilaration - all are related to this weaving industry. Weaving is their only hope of sustaining the ultimate existence of life. The nights keep themselves connected, and in these works of art lays the vibrancy of their true sense of life, as evidenced by the folklore created in Nadia district. According to Kalikrishna Bhattacharya, weavers of Shantipur are originators of *Kheru* folk songs (Chakraborty 2014: 44- 45).

The contribution of the community in the culture of Shantipur is undeniable in the creation of *'Kheru'* song. In that sense, this song can be identified as work music. Weavers used to compose and sing this song while weaving cloth. Everything in action life was highlighted through this song. The song can still be heard in the weaving center of the theoretical workers. There is a clear indication of this in a song composed in modern times based on ancient traditions. This song was sung as the inaugural song at the 62nd General Meeting (1999) of Shantipur Tantubai Sangha. That Kheru song is described below in bengali

"*Bolta tanti sancoch ki vai !*
Mora kapar buna khai, mora gaya khata khai,
Shantipuri tant bashra
Dasher garba tai-ra
Desher garba-vai.
Mora kirtan bandhi monar tara,
Monar ful futai para ra,
Moder garba kharba kara,
Eman kaho nai re
Eman kaho-nai.

Prabhu Adityar shisha mora,
Khati moder desh jora;
Prem dharma vasia Shantipur
Monar kali Karachi dur;
Shilpopriyo jiban moder
Vascha dariyay-
Tora sab sangha pataka tala ai.
Moder garbo kharbo kara,
aman kaho nai ra, Aman kaho nai" (Chakraborty 2014:52).

"What a weaver shy brother.
We earn our livelihood by weaving,
We earn our livelihood by physical labour,
Cloth of Shantipur
Is the pride of the country- oh brother.
We create kirtan song in the strings of the mind,
Flowers of the mind are blossomed in the side of Shari,
There is no one like that'
Who can diminish our pride of fashion;
We are disciple of Lord Advaitya,
Our fame spreads all over the country;
Floating Shantipur in the religion of love
We remove the sin of mind;
Art-loving life of Shantipur is floating in the sea-
All of you come under the Union flag.
There is no one who can reduce the pride of fashion,
There is no such thing" (Chakraborty 2014:52).

Through this song, the sense of patriotism of the living community, the idea of national prosperity has been awakened. At the same time, all the informants are urged to come under one umbrella to retain this national pride. In other words, the real life of weaving artists has also been highlighted. They have taken weaving from the heart as an act of pride.

In the socio-economic situation of these districts, the way in which weaving industry is still prevalent, about 50% of the farmers in the district depend on weaving. At present, there are not many employment opportunities in other states, especially after COVID-19. So many people rejoin weaving industry after returning from other states or other countries. COVID -19 has created a fear even among large part of the new generation. They are also being directly or indirectly involved with it. The life style crisis of the weavers is beautifully identified in the poem 'Dignity of Art' or '*Shilper Maryada'* written by Bhudev Chandra Biswas, a poet of weaver community in bengali.

With hares sound of crow, opens his eyelids
Bacons him,
The morning mist is broken red.
In the pursuit of life,
Duty to survive
Have to sit in the loom room:
Unknown to the mind.
In the pursuit of art
Who has as much experience
His cloth is so much more sculptural.
On demand
The demand of the industry increases.
Less sweat is the point of worry in the blood
How many beautiful beauties are created by creating new designs.
But alas!
Whose hand-made designs,
He can never touch her hand, Nakshi kantha of color (Chakraborty 2014:55).

So the weavers and their families succumb to the realities of life. In order to hold on to the last stage of life, his family members have to be involved with it. The children of weavers have also joined the weaving of cloth in the pursuit of survival. The joy of children's life, the needs are also incomplete. As children are also involved in weaving from an early age, the potential hopes and aspirations of their adolescence and youth are deprived of the opportunity to be satisfied. Even in many cases their educational aspiration remains unfulfilled.

The full picture of that imperfection is found in the poem, *'Swapno'* by the poet Kakli Bhattacharya.

The little boy had some noli (a finger like instrument to roll yarn) in his hand
I think age is twelve or thirteen.
The experience of adolescence that suddenly stopped
He could not spread like petals
Maybe even the son of the weaver's house-
He dreamed to know the real experience
Add, subtract, a, a, a, b, or within addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
Within the hearing
The omnivorous desire to know his adolescence
By wiping his hands, his guardian of the society.
His every morning is passing away
In the dream groove of various colored yarns.
One day's wages are three rupees
His small-mindedness has shaken the freedom of earning.
He is a working man, the boundary of small dreams
Tile has developed real experience.

But his childhood education, his growing
In the case of youth
The colorful dream of growing up has been exhausted.

So the little child is a weaver today
Even today I see a blind person on the path of darkness
One bag *noli*, the towel tied around the waist
On the way to earning.
Long before his first education was completed
The first day is hidden
Beneath the beautiful design under the shari (Tanaporen, 1394 bengali year: 5).

For primary and detailed analysis of the handloom textile industry, I have surveyed 320 weavers and 240 allied worker of these two districts. To represent the overall scenario, I have chosen Shantipur Municipal area and Nabadwip block in Nadia district. In Purba Bardhaman district I have taken Purbasthali- 1 block and Katwa -2 blocks. The reasons behind choosing these areas within these two districts are, these areas have highest concentration of handloom on the one hand. On the other, weavers of these areas also produce diversified products.

Table 1.1

Nadia district: male female weavers

Area	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of male	Percentage of female
Shantipur	45	35	80	56.25	43.75
Nabadwip	41	39	80	51.25	48.75
Percentage of Nadia district				**53.75**	**46.25**

Figure 2.1

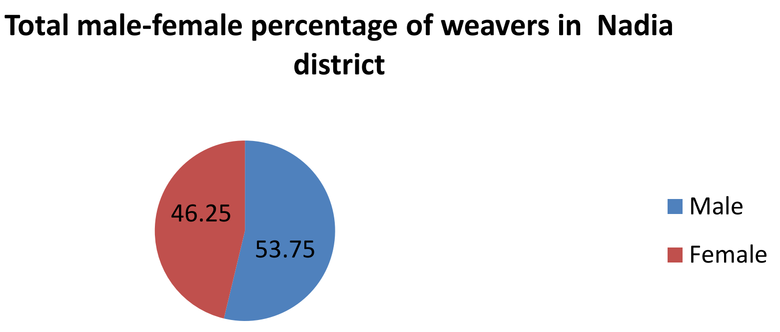


Figure 2.1 shows male-female percentage of weavers surveyed is 53.75 and 46.25 respectively. I select numbers of male and female weavers in accordance with the

percentage of 4th Handloom Census, 2019-20. There are more male weavers in Nadia than female weavers.

Table 1.2
Nadia district: male-female allied workers' percentage

Area	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of male	Percentage of female
Shantipur	**24**	**36**	**60**	**40**	**60**
Nabadwip	**25**	**35**	**60**	**41.66**	**58.33**
Total male-female percentage of allied workers in Nadia district				**40.83**	**59.16**

Figure 2.2

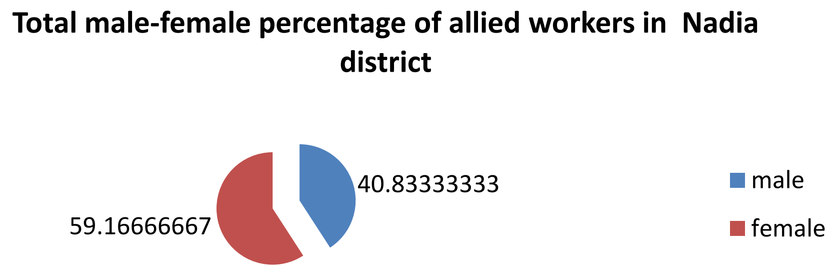


Table 1.3
Male-female allied workers of Purba Bardhaman district: percentage

Area	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of male	Percentage of female
Purbasthali-1	23	37	60	38.33	61.66
Katwa-2	26	34	60	43.33	56.66
Total male-female percentage of allied workers				40.833	59.166

Figure 2.3

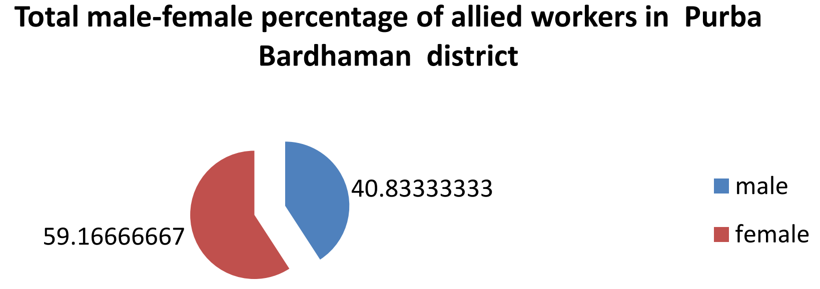


Figure 2.2 and 2.3 show that in case of allied workers, more female are engaged in pre-weaving and post-weaving activities. The reasons is that most of the allied activities are done in the house of allied workers.

Table 1.4
Purba Bardhaman District: Male-Female Weavers

Area	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of Male	Percentage of Female
Purbasthali-1	39	41	80	48.75	51.25
Katwa-2	38	42	80	47.5	52.5
Total	77	83	160	96.25	103.75
Total percentage of male-female				48.125	51.875

Figure 2.4
Purba Bardhaman District: Male-Female Weavers' Percentage

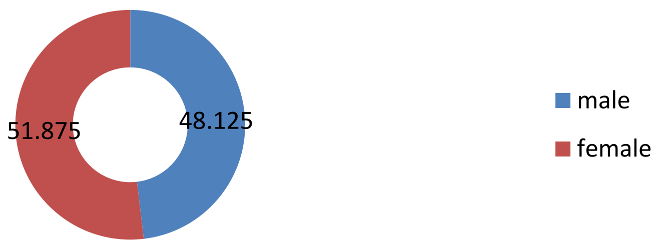


Figure 2.4 shows that in case of Purba Bardhaman district more male weavers are engaged in handloom weaving.

Table 1.5
Nadia district: level of education among weavers

Level of Education	Number of weavers	Percentage
Never attended School	11	6.875
primary	82	51.25
Secondary/ H.S	56	35
Graduate & above	11	6.85
Total	160	100

Figure 2.5
Nadia district: level of education among weavers

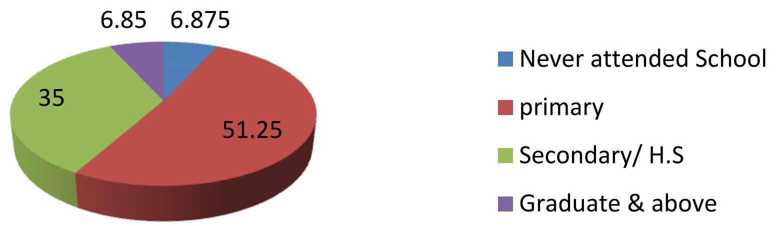


Figure 2.5 shoes that more than half of the weavers in Nadia are educated up to primary level and 35 per cent are educated upto secondary or higher secondary level. On the other figure 2.7 shows better condition of education among weavers of Purba Bardhaman district.

Table 1.6

Nadia district: level of education among allied weavers

Level of Education	Number of allied workers	Percentage
Never attended School	11	9.16
primary	59	49.16
Secondary/ H.S	45	37.5
Graduate & above	5	4.16
Total	120	100

Figure 2.6

Nadia district: level of education among allied workers

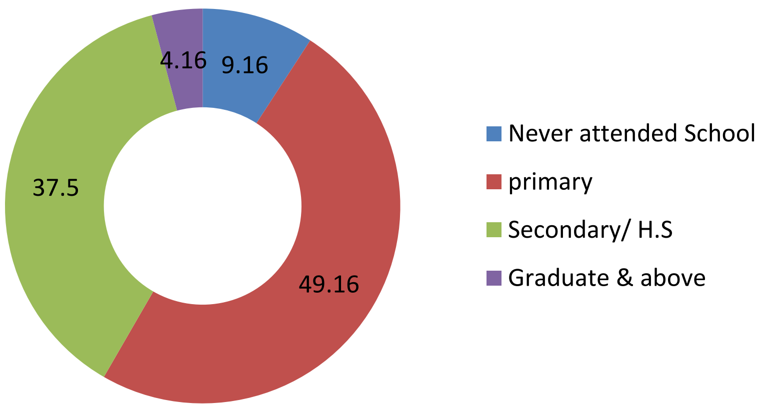


Table 1.7

Purba Bardhaman district: level of education among weavers

Level of Education		Percentage
Never attended School	14	8.75
primary	84	52.5
Secondary/ H.S	54	33.75
Graduate & above	8	5
Total	160	100

Figure 2.7

Purba Bardhaman district: level of education among weavers: percentage

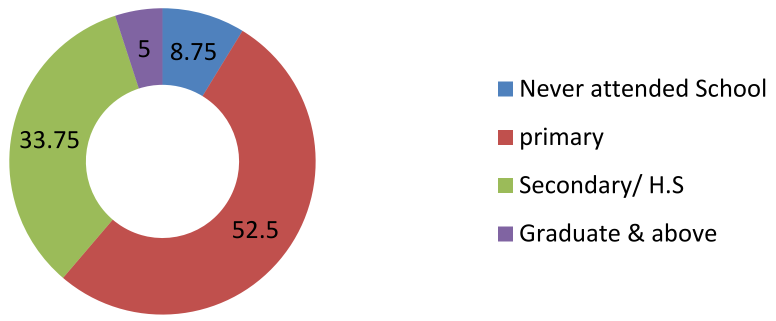
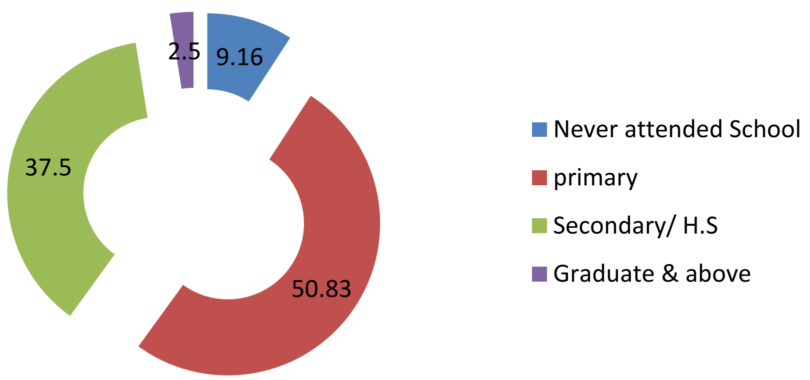


Table 1.8
Purba Bardhaman district: level of education among allied workers

Level of Education		Percentage
Never attended School	11	9.16
primary	61	50.83
Secondary/ H.S	45	37.5
Graduate & above	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Figure 2.8
Purba Bardhaman district: level of education among allied workers: percentage



In case of comparison between figure 2.6 and 2.8, we can find that both district has same education level in secondary or higher secondary education among allied workers. Purba Bardhaman district is little more educational level in primary education.

Table 1.9
Nadia district: profile of social groups of weavers

Social group	Number	Percentage
SC	31	19.375
ST	9	5.625
OBC	87	54.375

Others	**33**	**20.625**
Total	**160**	**100**

Figure 2.9
Nadia district: profile of social groups of weavers

Table 1.10
Purba Bardhaman district: profile of social groups of weavers

Social group	Number	Percentage
SC	26	16.25
ST	10	6.25
OBC	93	58.125
Others	31	19.375
Total	160	100

Figure 2.10
Purba Bardhaman district: profile of social groups of weavers' percentage

Comparison between figure 2.9 and figure 2.10 shoows that in Purba Bardhaman district has more weavers belongs to OBC than Nadia. They are mainly people of *Yogi* and *Basak* communities

Table 1.11
Nadia district: allied workers social groups

Social group	Number	Percentage
SC	32	26.66
ST	8	6.66
OBC	52	43.33
Others	28	23.33
Total	120	100

Figure 2.11
Nadia district: allied workers social groups percentage

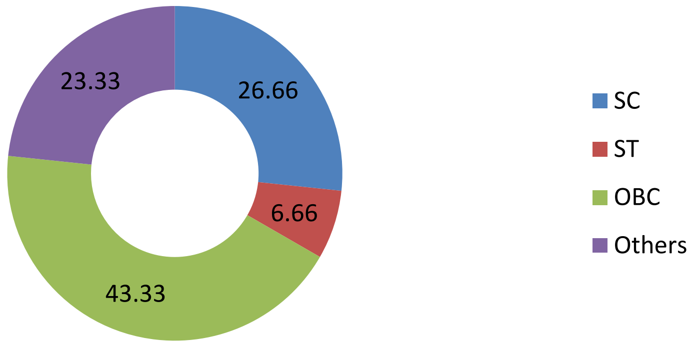
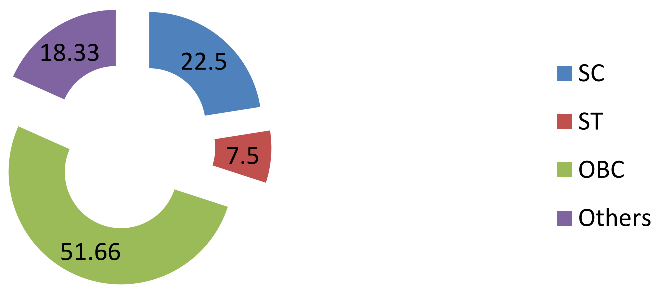


Table 1.12
Purba Bardhaman district: allied workers social groups

Social group	Number	Percentage
SC	27	22.5
ST	9	7.5
OBC	62	51.66
Others	22	18.33
Total	120	100

Figure 2.12
Purba Bardhaman district: allied workers social groups percentage



Comparison between figure 2.11 and 2.12 shows that among allied workers more people belong to OBC in Purba Bardhaman than Nadia, like weavers.

Table 1.13
Types of ownership of dwelling unit of weavers in Nadia

ownership of house	Number	Percentage
Own	125	78.125
Rented	35	21.875
Total	160	100

Figure 2.13
Types of ownership of dwelling unit of weavers in Nadia:percentage

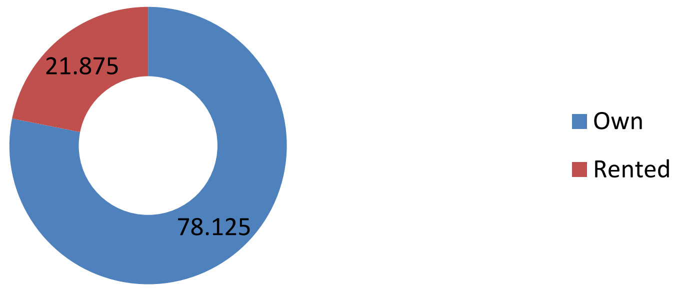


Table 1.14

Types of ownership of dwelling unit of weavers in Purba Bardhaman District

ownership of house	Number	Percentage
Own	124	77.5
Rented	36	22.5
Total	160	100

Figure 2.14

Types of ownership of dwelling unit of weavers in Purba Bardhaman district: percentage

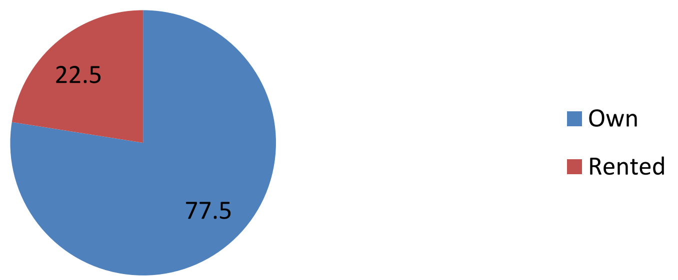


Table1.15

Types of ownership of dwelling unit of allied workers in Purba Bardhaman District

ownership of house	Number	Percentage
Own	92	76.66
Rented	28	23.3
Total	120	100

Figure 2.15
Types of ownership of dwelling unit of allied workers in Purba Bardhaman district: percentage

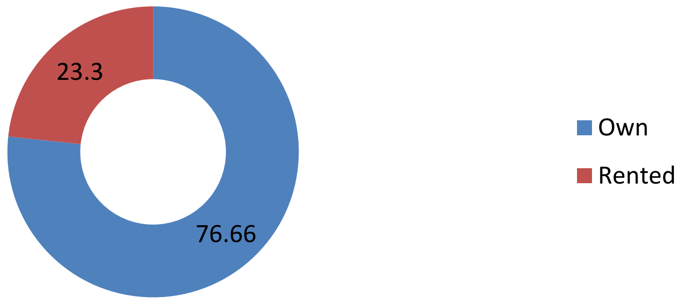


Table 1.16
Types of ownership of dwelling unit of allied workers in Nadia

ownership of house	Number	Percentage
Own	87	72.5
Rented	33	27.5
Total	120	100

Figure 2.16
Types of ownership of dwelling unit of allied workers in Nadia: percentage

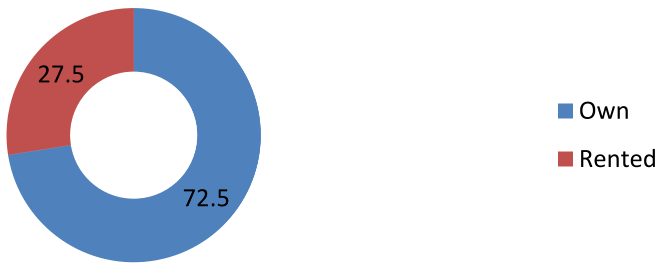


Table 1.17
Type of dwelling unit of weavers in Nadia

Type of dwelling unit	Number	percentage
kachha	33	20.625
semi-pucca	108	67.5
pucca	19	11.875
Total	160	100

Figure 2.17
Type of dwelling unit of weavers in Nadia: percentage

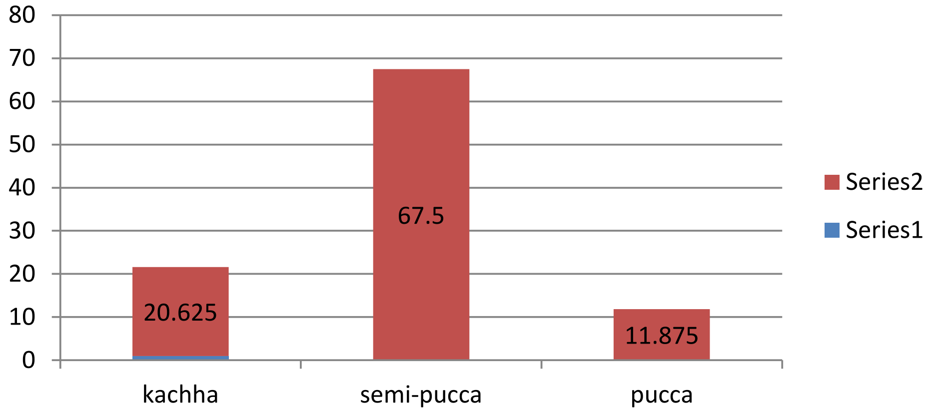


Table 1.18
Type of dwelling unit of weavers in Purba Bardhaman

Type of dwelling unit	Number	percentage
kachha	32	20
semi-pucca	107	66.875
pucca	21	13.125
Total	160	100

Figure 2.18
Type of dwelling unit of weavers in Purba Bardhaman:percentage

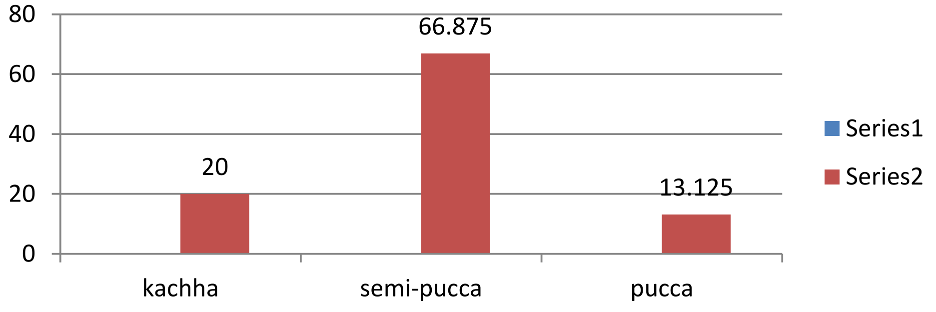


Table 1.19
Type of dwelling unit of allied workers in Nadia

Type of dwelling unit	Number	percentage
kachha	21	17.5
semi-pucca	86	71.66
pucca	13	10.83
Total	120	100

Figure 2.19
Type of dwelling unit of allied workers in Nadia: percentage

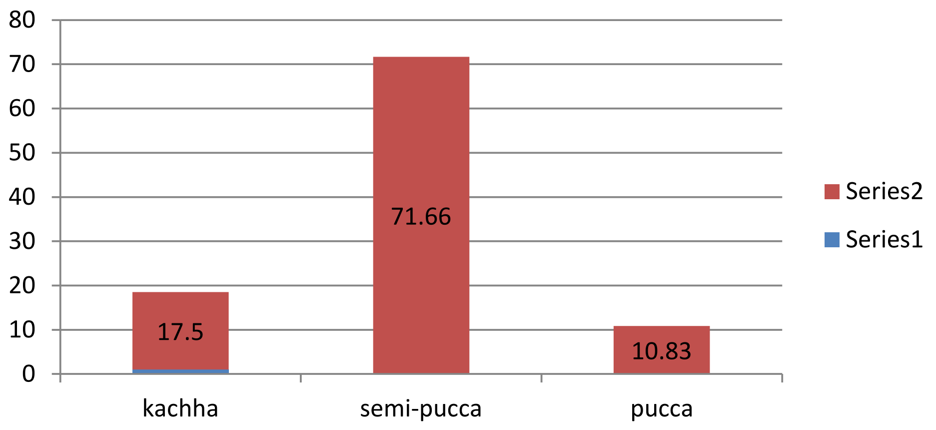


Table 1.20
Type of dwelling unit of allied workers in Purba Bardhaman

Type of dwelling unit	Number	percentage
kachha	18	15
semi-pucca	87	72.5
pucca	15	12.5
Total	120	100

Figure 2.20
Type of dwelling unit of allied workers in Purba Bardhaman:percentage

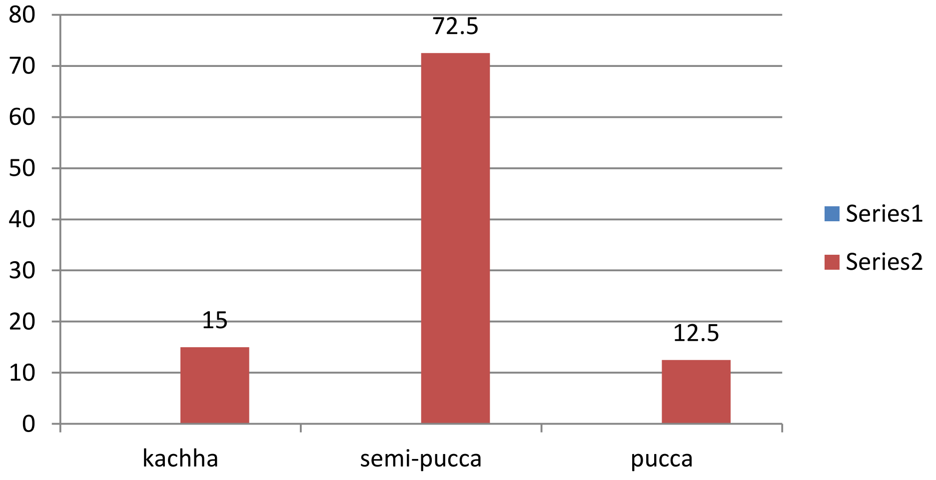


Table 1.21
Monthly income of weavers in Nadia

Monthly income	Numbers	Percentage
below Rs. 5000	78	48.75
Rs. 5000-10000	38	23.75
above 10000	44	27.5
total	160	100

Figure 2.21

Monthly income of weavers in Nadia: percentage

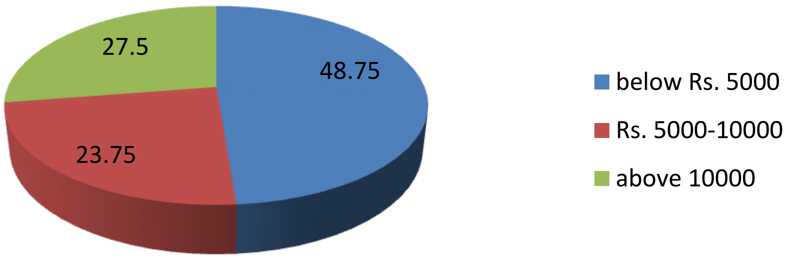


Table 2.22

Monthly income of weavers in Purba Bardhaman

Monthly income	number	Percentage
below Rs. 5000	77	48.125
Rs. 5000-10000	46	28.75
above 10000	37	23.125
total	160	100

Figure 2.22

Monthly income of weavers in Purba Bardhaman: percentage

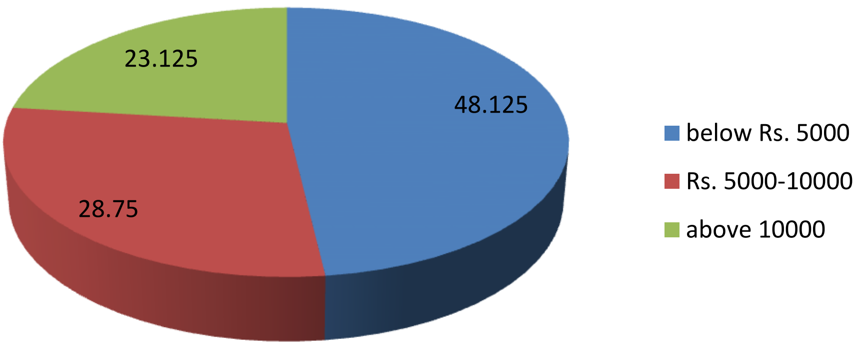


Table 1.23

Monthly income of allied workers in Nadia

Monthly income	number	percentage
below Rs. 5000	62	51.66
Rs. 5000-10000	35	29.16
Above Rs. 10000	23	19.166
total	120	100

Figure 2.23
Monthly income of allied workers in Nadia: percentage

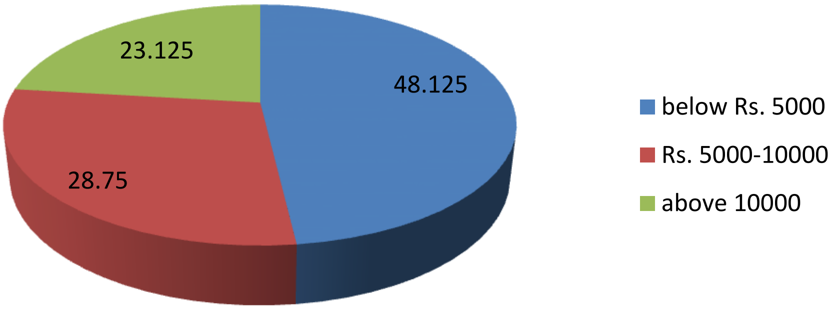
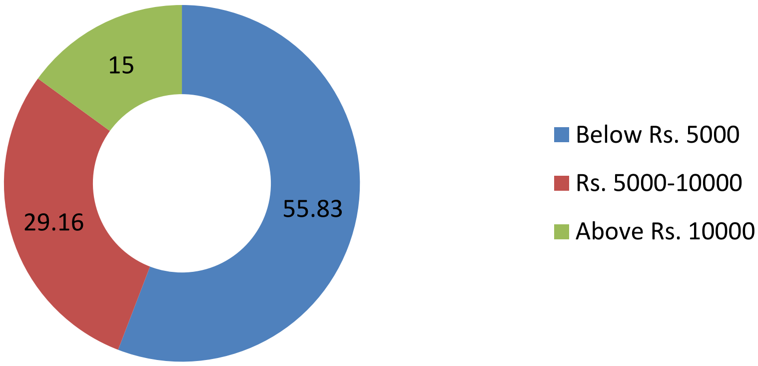


Table 1.24
Monthly income of allied workers in Purba Bardhaman

Monthly income	number	percentage
Below rs. 5000	67	55.83
Rs. 5000-10000	35	29.16
Above Rs. 10000	18	15
total	120	100

Figure 2.24
Monthly income of allied workers in Purba Bardhaman: percentage



This Chapter describes the origin and developments of handloom in different parts of two districts. Variations of production in different areas are also described. Various socio-economic issues related with handloom like, profile of production process, health related issues; issues related with marketing, collection of working capital, nature of trade union, attachment of weavers with weaving are also described. Reports of survey regarding socio economic conditions of weavers are placed. The next chapter will try to identify various areas of problems and prospects of handloom of these districts, with some specific case studies. There is also comparative analysis in different aspects between these districts. There is also comparative analysis between two districts on different issues.

CHAPTER - V

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY OF NADIA AND PURBA BARDHAMAN DISTRICTS

There are descriptions of the origin and developments of handloom in different parts of two districts in the previous chapter. Variations of production in different areas are also described. Various socio-economic issues related with handloom, like production marketing, health related issues, issue of gender, issue of child labour, issue of decline of handloom are also described. The present chapter will describe various areas of problems and prospects of handloom of these districts, with some specific case studies. There is also comparative analysis in different aspects between average situation of the state and these districts. There is also statistical analysis of different aspects of problems and prospects of these two districts.

Problems of Handloom Textile Industry of Nadia and Purba Bardhaman

The knocking sound of handlooms can be heard almost everywhere in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts. Weaving is the second field of employment, so the weaving process is no longer only in the hands of hereditary weavers. Other class of people is more or less directly or indirectly involved in the weaving process. The weaving is spreading to other areas where the expansion of other occupations has been stepped. Unlike other districts, not for part time, not even for partial livelihood, most of the weavers in these districts are full time weavers.

The handloom industry has made tremendous progress in recent times in terms of the economy of the whole country. If we go to any big clothing store, you will find a variety of products made of yarn, silk and wool. Bed sheets, towels, handkerchiefs, blankets or shawl, *shari*, costumes, curtains or carpets — everything has a wonderful combination of tradition and modernisation with the latest fashion designs and colors. The handloom weaving industry meets about 30 percent of the total textile demand of the country. But those who are associated with this industry, their conditions are not good at all. The financial condition of the weavers is deplorable. They are deprived of all the facilities that are required to run handloom.

Most of the people in this country still use local clothes and a large part of it comes from handloom weaving. But for those who are engaged in weaving, since it is not possible for them to deliver their products at all levels or to communicate directly with the buyers, they face market stagnation and fall into an artificial recession. Forever, country's market of handloom products are dominated by big merchants and *mahajan* .The ups and downs of the market, depend on their whims and fancies in control. In many cases these ups and downs are artificial. The goods that could have been sold immediately after production, as a result of the recession created by the traders, began to accumulate in the houses of the producers. The financial crisis escalates when capital sucks. It is sold once or twice a year. Some of it was sold on credit again, and it took a year for the money to come out. As a result, the capital of the producers is strained and the looms are about to close. At that situation they are forced to sell cloth without profit or loss. Traders wait for this opportunity (Interview of weavers and allied workers).Author has identified some areas of problems, which are impeding the development and sustainability of handloom of these districts. These are as follows:

Poor Socio-economic Condition of Weavers and Disruption in Occupation Caused by Partition of India: The age-old tradition of the handloom industry of India suffered severe oppression and setback during the British rule. Even after the independence, the concerned industry had to face the sufferings of partition of India. For example, during partition, the tradition of weaving of shari, which was shared between east and west sectors of Bengal, was extremely disturbed and the division of the state for administrative purpose proved fatal for handloom. Most of the weavers were displaced and were homeless. Even after they were able to manage shelters for themselves for survival, they were plagued with problems like unemployment, poor economic condition, crisis of migration and consequent rehabilitation in an unfamiliar environment, social alienation and cultural differences (Dogra 2012:12).

Even today, more than 65 per cent of the weavers who were surveyed by the author claim to be migrants from erstwhile East Bengal. They have carried their skills along with them and are engaged in the current production process but have failed to recognize themselves at par with the population of West Bengal. These people are mostly illiterate or are educated only up to a very basic level. Thus, the lack of unity among the weavers coupled with their ignorance of the benefits of organized production acts as major causes for the dispersed nature of the handloom industry and exploitation of the poor weavers by the wealthy master weavers and the *mahajan.* The living conditions of the weavers continue to be dismal and they are sometimes even denied of essential social infrastructural facilities (Interview of weavers and allied workers of Shantippur, Nadia District on 12.3.2022).

Failure of Cooperatives: The cooperatives are absolutely essential tools for the sustenance and development of the handloom industrial sector. The cooperative experiment has left its own mark on the industry, succeeding in some places and failing in others. The PWCs of Nadia District, besides their limited areal extent and insufficient number of members, are suffered by many other problems such as problems of human resource, production, marketing etc.

Problem of Human Resource: The cooperatives are mainly situated in rural areas they are financially weak and thus it is not possible for them to appoint trained personnel to look after the management. They have to manage with unskilled and inefficient staff, which leads to deterioration in the quality of production and performance of the societies.

Problem of Production: Co-operatives face major production problem due to unstable and inadequate supply of raw materials. They get the least preference when it comes to raw materials supply, thus hindering the constant nature of production. These fluctuations lead to increase in the prices of the products.

Problem of Marketing: Some cooperatives are extremely weak in marketing and sales promotion. They lack the finance and the capability to undertake aggressive marketing activities, due to which they are unable to increase sales (Biswas 2003:43-45).

Lack of Education among Members: Members lack the knowledge and required education about working in co-operatives. They are unable to understand the principles and methodology of the co-operatives which affect the performance of the societies adversely.

Lack of Support from Higher Institution: The cooperatives of the study area mostly lack adequate support from the higher institutions and are unable to render much help and guidance to the primary and grass roots level organizations and the poor weavers. After the establishment of Indian Institute of Handloom Technology at Phulia, Nadia, training of handloom technology started there. The institute is for diploma and graduate degree for students. There also need the training of existing weavers for upgradation of handloom (Interview of weavers and allied workers).

Lack of Loyalty of Members and Intervention of the *Mahajan* and Master Weavers: Many cooperatives have failed mainly due to the selfish objectives of the members, who use the society for meeting their own needs rather than satisfying the objectives of the existence of such organizations. In many cases, the policies adopted by the cooperative are guided mainly by the gains of the master weavers and *mahajan*, who control the working of the societies. Illegal and unwanted political interventions also hamper the smooth working of the cooperatives. Other problems that need mention are inadequate supervision and inspection, lack of proper planning, lack of audit controls, problem of finance and so on (Nambiar 2013: 46-47).

Traders also have an oligopoly on the market for raw materials, used in the weaving industry. When the price of finished products increases due to increase in price of yarn, weavers do not get higher price at par. In order to protect the weaving industry from extinction, some government initiatives, especially in the field of co-operative weavers, have been initiated with the intention of expediting the marketing of handloom. On top of these existing primary societies are the apex societies, whose main function is to properly market the cloth produced by the primary societies. According to the basic arrangement, instead of the scarcity of working capital of PWCs, the system was running smoothly (Kumar and Ganesh 2014: 90-91).

The clothes of apex societies and some other government organizations spread all over the country. They are trying to sell through their own sales center. Attempts have also been made to create market through exhibitions, fairs, advertisements etc. But its benefits did not reach to the weaver. This is because the efforts of the apex societies are small compared to the total number of handlooms in these districts. The top societies could not only meet the needs of the co-operative sector, they were not able to buy even half of the total production of the co-operative societies. Throughout the year, these apex societies do not collect textiles in a balanced manner, depending on their needs (Nambiar 2013: 49-52).

According to P.K. Chakraborty, this arrangement was started to meet the scarcity of working capital of the primary societies. Problem in this system started after various experiments on the economy at the state level. The huge sums of money of the primary societies remain unpaid to the apex society. As the collection of clothes continues without paying the previous dues completely, the amount of dues is increasing rapidly. This problem has almost weakened many PWCs. The official responsibility in this regard was till 1992-93. Since then, the apex societies have not been able to pay the money of the PWCs for two years. *Tantuja* paid 50 per cent of the price of the goods taken from the PWCS, the rest being paid at the time of procurement the following year. For a long time, PWCs of Nadia district owed crores of rupees to the apex society. Thus, in most cases, a large portion of the capital of the district's primary societies is stuck with the government-run apex societies. However, the co-operative societies have to pay regular interest on this part of the capital borrowed from the bank (Chakroborty 1983: 49).

It is to be noted that for the development of weaving industry, the central government has given funds to states in different sectors. The money that is given to the governments is stuck in this state for a long time in many cases. The first installment of the approved project was paid to the State Government in November 1996.The money went to the loom associations in March 1999.Much has changed during this time. If dues were paid regularly, PWCs has the power to run on its own. As a result of the stagnation of capital, many PWCs are therefore in an extreme financial crisis (Kumar 2010: 115).

Mr. Harish Kar, former chairman of West Bengal Handloom and Power loom Development Corporation Limited, said that the arrears of the primary association had been settled in large numbers (about 80%) and for this a loan of about Rs. 30 crore had to be taken from the bank. The focus is on making the sales counters more active. Since 2004, Tnatuja has adopted a policy that the PWCs will be represented at the sales counter of Tantuja, and if the collected goods are not sold, it is the responsibility of the PWCs. In addition to increasing the number of sale in the bengali month of *Chaitra*, efforts have also been made to do interior decoration work. In other words, attempts were made to start stalls at various government offices, fairs or exhibitions, but they were not successful, up to satisfaction (Chakraborty 2014: 115-116).

Apex body Tantuja has changed their clothing procurement policy .In the name of buying cloth, they are actually collecting clothes from a class of unscrupulous moneylenders. In that sense, it is possible to directly affect the procurement and pricing process. The rationale behind this change in procurement policy is that the primary societies have higher prices. It is also responsible for overburdened administration, rising operating costs, and outflows of capital in various ways. It is easy to guess why the burden of losses is increasing year after year, despite the fact that clothes are being sold at an average price of forty per cent more than the price paid to PWCs or weavers (Basak and Basak 133-136).

On the other hand, the co-operative societies, which are swayed by various problems, are also entangled in the web of vested interests. The weavers were once hopeful to see the cooperative movement, but today they are in despair. In addition to the miserable condition of the apex societies, new PWCs are springing up and gaining government approval. More or less government grants are being given, generosity. There are many PWCs where there are only one or two weavers. In many places the Panchayat Samiti has handloom cooperatives as part of a sub-committee. In the case of co-operatives, the Panchayat Samiti is not doing anything other than approving or not approving the new PWCs. Panchayat Samiti is being kept away from the PWCs. various efforts are being made to reduce this gap. But, for some unseen reason, it is not being implemented at all. Creation and management of cooperatives, if all these issues cannot be discussed in the sub-committee, then the existence of the sub-committee is meaningless.

Again, there is a saying in the cooperatives called 'pocket society'. In other words, there is no weaver in the cooperative, there is no office but there are bills, there is exchange of money, there is a circus for making cloth. There is even an office for depositing and receiving clothes. As a result, all the PWCs that want to trade with the goods produced by the weavers fall into the problems. Even after this, if after six-seven months PWCs get the money for the deposited cloth, how the co-operative will survive - it is easily conceivable. If there is proper production system, it is impossible for the cooperative to leave money for six or seven months. In this way, educated and unprincipled opportunistic people have been deliberately creating harmful system of cooperative society.

Like other districts in the state, Nadia and Purba Bardhaman also have Central Cooperative Banks. As usual, it has several branches in different parts of these districts. They provide funds to various primary cooperative societies in rural areas mainly for doing business. They are considered as the pioneers of the cooperative movement in the district. Agriculture is more important in this country. But in case of Nadia handloom is important. Naturally, the bank's focus is on agricultural co-operative societies. Although weaving is second largest employment generator, but sadly, weaving cooperatives did not get much importance from Cooperative Bank. Their negligence or indifference towards weaving cooperatives is well known today (Chakraborty 2014: 67).

The bank's negligence towards the loom co-operatives has been debated and pressure is mounting on both sides. In the meanwhile, the weaving department of the state government did not have much success in trying to solve the problem. In general, the lobby of PWCs want to rely on the government loom department to do as much as possible. The bank ignores, the reason being that at one time the bank had to face difficulties to collect loan repayment from many PWCs. According to opinion of many experienced weavers, the bank has sunk by investing without caring rules and regulations in the beginning. In many cases the bank has not been able to recover its investment and has not been able to take any legal action to recover it. Many PWCs exist only on paper, not in reality. The weaving co-operatives that once flourished could not be utilized properly with the help of bank and government funds. The list of the societies which have squandered the money of the bank and the names of their then officers should be in the bank account. But the bank did not create any pressure to return the money. Many PWCs have sprung up and disappeared, and so the banks have not shown any interest in recovering the money. All the needs of the bank now depend on surviving PWCs, how to control them (interview with experienced and old weavers).

The trend of lending in the field of agriculture and the way of collecting the loan has become difficult, in case of weaving industry. In the case of seasonal farming in agriculture, loans are sanctioned on the basis of stereo type. There is no seasonal production here. As long as there is business, as long as the business is going on, it is necessary to provide required capital. If the business grows, this capital will also increase, if it decreases, it will decrease. That, of course, should be checked by the Banking and Weaving Department. The bank is not only responsible for sanctioning loan and collect repayment, but also for monitoring financial activities. If these works are not done quickly and efficiently by the banks, the concerned business associations will be in trouble and will face financial losses (Interview with experienced and old weavers).

Nadia District central co-operative Bank issued a decree to PWCs, stating that cooperative societies which would take loans from the bank would not be allowed to sell clothes on credit to any non-government organization or individual. This is because, after inspecting and investigating some of the PWCs, the bank has noticed that many private parties have not paid their dues on time by coming to do business with the PWCs. There is no possibility of recovery in all cases. If this continues, the PWCs will lose money. And the bank thinks it will eventually collapse. In fact, co-operative societies are forced to deal with non-governmental organizations or individuals. In many cases there is almost no written agreement. It is no less difficult to keep an account of all that. This problem became clear during the presentation of accounts at the Annual General Meeting of PWCs. The bank encourages rather sell goods to the apex societies. Again, this information is not unknown to the bank that, for a long time, crores of rupees of co-operative societies were owed to the apex societies.

However, following the instructions of the bank, if the PWCs supply goods only to the apex societies or if they leave the private sector or traders and rely only on the top societies, then the marketing of weaving textiles will come to a halt. The lender thinks that the bank will be able to collect the debt of the government agency or the apex society as a right. This is a pressure of the bank. As the huge capital of these co-operative societies is stuck in the domestic market, their financial capacity is declining and the capital required for the foreign market is also declining.

The way the PWCs were formed earlier, its size was very small. The association could be formed with only fifteen members. But in most of the cases, it was a family business of two or three or one person. In the name of co-operatives, government facilities would have been availed, business would have been more or less, but the purpose of co-operatives would not have been achieved. The association became a privately owned company. Moreover, no small organization can be financially supportive. Therefore, according to the order of the concerned department to start PWCs with a fairly modest size, the minimum number of members was decided to be 100 members. But in order to get more than a hundred members, weavers, non-weavers everyone became a member. Even a couple of politicians got into it. At the initial stage, it was seen that, with the help of the government fund and the bank loan, not more than a dozen members could be given jobs. Only those people got jobs they were satisfied, the rest were dissatisfied. On the other hand, they lost the fund of the money lenders due to writing their name in the register of the PWCs. The general meeting of the association was in turmoil, there was a stalemate in the management of the association. The rate at which bank loans increase year by year should take at least six to seven years to employ all the members. Due to this problem, many associations have become defunct.

As the loom co-operative societies became so dry, the moneylenders took advantage of it to influence the textile production process. But the government emphasized on the formation of cooperatives to save them from the moneylenders. As 80% of the weavers of Nadia district are outside the co-operative system, their dependence is on private market, *gadiwala,dardandar*. The moneylenders are just as active in the payment of money, providing unprocessed yarn and collecting finished goods as the Apex society.

Credit Needs and Overdependence on *Mahajans*: The current credit facilities available to the weavers are not satisfactory. The banks and similar financial institutions are less in number and have lengthy and complicated procedures of availing loans. Even those loans made available through cooperatives rarely reach the section that is in real need. The total scenario is dominated by the master weavers and the *mahajans* who also tend to control a number of cooperative societies and corner a substantial amount of institutional credit. Most of the weavers are found outside the cooperative fold engaging themselves for the master weavers and the *mahajans*. In the existing scenario, the local master weavers or the *mahajans* provide consumption loans and advances, which, over time, render the weavers totally indebted

Moneylenders, like co-operatives, have been forced to come closer to co-operative weavers in terms of wages and other benefits by reducing their own profits. On the other hand, co-operative societies have to hire people for various responsibilities related to bank loans, such as preventing the unavoidable vigilance of the bank and the labor required to prepare returns, reports, etc. The moneylenders do not have this problem. Many PWCs have been drowned out by the whimsical decision of the lender bank. And so the weavers are being subjugated by the moneylenders for a slightly higher wage than the co-operatives, without any government facilities in order to survive. Apex societies have some additional burden like, entertaining, giving presents, gifts, at least more discounts, which cost a lot of money. And there are donations from local clubs, organizations and political parties. As the moneylenders are freer from these issues, moneylender system has become more popular. Another major reason for the crisis in the weaving industry is the poor management of the primary societies. Because of the unholy nexus of the director, local political leadership and government bureaucrats, the money for many government projects did not reach the weavers' houses. Again, an exceptional District Magistrate like Vivek Bharadwaj (has set up a computer controlled design center (CAD Center) at Tanti Para (Shantipur), far away from Kolkata. Cooperative leader like Haripada Basak are using the internet to help increase the demand for weavers' cloth in foreign markets (Chakraborty 2014: 120).

In a class-divided society like India, the reactionary group is still active and powerful. They are also the initiator of Durga, Kali or Satyanarayana Puja Committee. They also led the procession of puja, arrange entertainment during the puja and accelerated the path of progress as a responsible leader. In this way, the hand of *Mahajani* system spread deep in the society. The profits of the moneylenders have increased many fold in comparison to current market income of the handloom workers. The amount of their property is also increasing day by day. The income tax is being levied to protect the rules - but it is on the lower middle class, it does not matter to the rich money lenders (Interview with old weavers).

As per the interview of experienced senior weavers, the problem of capital is nothing new in the handloom weaving industry. Occasionally there is a terrible recession in this industry. Textiles continue to be made but not sold in the market, or even if sold, should be much less than the actual price. The repayment of loan money was also stopped at one time. That's when the suffocation began in this industry. The big trouble is for ordinary weavers and small traders. They cannot hold the stored goods. As a result, they are forced to sell the goods at very low prices to the moneylenders who are looking for opportunities. In this situation, some people lose their capital and disappear. The problem of capital is a major problem in any industry. The weaving industry is no exception. All the big and small traders and moneylenders have to accept it as the wrong time. These loans bring in very high rates from the interest traders. These interest rates range from 3 per cent to 6 per cent per month (i.e. 36% to 62% per annum). This borrowing has to be done by mortgaging deed papers of house or other valuable assets. The amount borrowed is never more than half of the total value of the goods mortgaged. Mortgages have to be recovered by repaying the loan, including interest, when the demand returns to the market. Solvent can do it, but it is no longer possible to rescue those who are left helpless by the effects of the recession. And the moneylender is giving his share to the weaver keeping the profit of 100 per cent of his investment. Although there is a system of government loan, it is also time consuming. In this case, commercial banks and other banks have failed to provide the required capital to the weavers (Interview of weavers and allied workers).

Problem of Procurement of Yarn: Non-availability of sufficient yarn in the form of hanks has been one of the major problems of the contemporary handloom industry of the Nadia district. Though the mills are supposed to supply about 50 per cent of their total yarn production in the form of hanks to handlooms, it has always been around 20-24 per cent. In addition, there has been gross mismatch between the figures of cloth produced by the handloom sector and the hank yarn received by it. This occurs due to the marketing of power loom cloth as handloom cloth which is very widespread and takes place with official connivance. Besides, a large amount of yarn in the 20s and 40s count is exported without taking into consideration of the requirement of the domestic market. There is a complaint among the weavers that the N.H.D.C. provides yarn to the weavers only after an advance of 25% of the total amount is provided, which, most of the weavers are incapable to afford (Basak and Paul 2016: 133-34).

The yarn business is an important factor in the flourishing of the weaving industry. Although coarse yarn is made in the state, weavers in Nadia district have to look to southern India for fine yarn. There is no difference. Sometimes the supply of yarn becomes inconsistent. Yarn is not available even with high price. The supply of all the yarn in the weaving industry is hindered by a few moneylenders. As a result, they looted profits during the yarn crisis. Though price of yarn remains same, weavers have to pay high price. The price of weaver’s cloth remains same but it does not fluctuate. Despite the state government's announcement of subsidy on coarse yarn, thousands of looms that use thin yarn or fine yarn and sell it in urban areas of the country and in some cases even abroad are now shutting down.

In post-independence period many measures were taken to encourage handloom weaving industry in India. From the designation of certain areas of production to weaving, the provision of market incentives, affordable credit, etc., helped in the rapid development of the weaving industry at that time. In fact, until some time ago, weaving had a certain, peculiar pull, in which many people of different professions joined the loom in rural areas. All these are signs of the dynamism of the weaving industry. Much of these systems associated with the old economy have now changed, and the line of production between the handloom and large-scale textile industries has almost disappeared. The liberal system of discounting the sale price that has been in place for so long has generally been accompanied by a policy of reducing subsidies for handloom in general. The alternative system that is currently in place, called Market Development Assistance or MDA, is tied to the red tape. Making is difficult for ordinary weavers. On the other hand, the price of yarn has also started rising rapidly as the previous system of price control has been relaxed. That is why there is a shortage of livelihood for the weavers to keep the weaving going in the conventional system. Once the loom is closed for any reason, there is no way to weave it again. Powerful policymakers will say that no government-supported industry can survive forever. There is debate as to how arguable this argument is in the case of the handloom weaver or the artisan class in rural areas.

To get out of the crisis, the country is not emphasizing on cotton production and yarn production. Although there is a cotton development board, its benefits have not yet reached the handloom weaving industry. The government's new textile policy shows that restrictions on production at mills run by large industrialists have been lifted. The aim is to force the textile mill owners to cooperate with the loom workers for more profit. The entire eastern part of the country is suffering because cotton or yarn does not come under the tariff equation. In addition, the government's 'cotton exports' and the rise in yarn prices and supply in the region are creating a crisis. Not only this, the price of yarn is also increasing three to five times. In such a situation, some *mahajans* are trying to make huge profits. A class of moneylenders and yarn traders of Shantipur, are making cloth of raw dye and less quantity of yarn and releasing it in the market for several years, for which the reputation of Shantipuri cloth is being tarnished. At the same time, the market of Shantipuri cloth is also shrinking.

Failure of the Marketing Organisations: There is a significant mismatch between production and marketing of handloom cloth in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts. The decline of local markets for handlooms is a reality in present time. The separation of producers from the market has given rise to middlemen who dominate the existing marketing system. They know the market well and thus are able to make maximum profits out of handloom products.

The centralized marketing bodies of weaver cooperatives are also malfunctioning. Inspite of constant efforts from the state and the central government, the marketing organizations have failed badly to attain their goals. Many of the organizations like *Bangasree* and *Manjusha* are running on loss and the outlets are closing down. *Tantuja* and *Tantusree* are performing better in comparison to others. They are also plagued with various problems like absence of proper planning, ineffective budgeting and financial crisis. Other problems include indiscriminate procurement of non-moving stock, overstuffing and shutting down of outlets, limited sales in festive season, ineffective marketing and poor sales performance. Money is used on canvassing, rebates and putting up stalls at handloom fairs. Sometimes the products are outdated and overpriced. Some products are plagued with rural bias. There is also little access to modern designs and technical inputs (Poddar 2015: 132).

Most of the *shari* merchants have trade in yarn at Bara Bazar. They pay a part of the price of the *shari* by paying yarn compulsorily, while the rest are paid in cash. There are various excuses (donations, subscriptions, commission, etc.) to deduct money. Despite the reluctance of the traders to accept all that, otherwise the Shari traders and finished weavers will lose the opportunity to sell the products. Recently, the big merchants have made another trick, deducting commission at the rate of two per cent for the whole year before Durga Pujo. They have introduced the practice of deducting commissions while paying off debts for the whole year before Pujo and the Shari traders are being forced to accept it. In the case of general business, there is a practice called 'cash discount' (Basak 1404 bangabda). If it is bought in cash, the buyer is given an additional commission or discount. But the merchants iof the Bara Bazar can't call this discount a cash discount, because they never buy in cash. They buy in credit and repay once in a year, even in half yarn, half in cash. Even if the commission goes out of the pockets of the traders initially, it is later recovered from wages of the weavers. In other words, the stealing that is being carried out in the name of the commission in the Bara Bazar are cutting from the wages of poor, ordinary weavers (interview of shari traders at Shantipur).

Problems of climate and flood: The name of the district Nadia is derived from the Bengali word nadi, means river. Nadia is surrounding by many reveres. The district's topography is low. So flood is a common feature in the district. The main problem is that generally flood occurs between August to October months, just before or during *Durga Puja*, when the demand of handloom is highest. During monsoon production also hamper. Common weavers do not have the capacity to store products of summer, winter, autumn. Mahajans take these opportunities and collect product in dry seasons with low price and sell them during pick seasons. Nabadwip, Shantipur, Ranaghat are old localities and very congested. Drainage system is not there in all areas. Even during monsoon water of river come through drain in many areas, instead of passing through drains. The paddles of loom are situated beneath the floor, if water come there from the surrounding, production becomes stand still. Most of the weavers live in narrow bi lens, so they are unable to make their home high poring soil there with tractors. Price of per tractor soil is around Rs 2000 now a days.

As part of natural calamities, floods are affecting the weaving industry of Nadia and its adjoining Purba Bardhaman districts in various ways. Almost every year more or less floods inundate looms of Ranaghat, Phulia, Shantipur and Navadwip areas. The floods destroyed the traditional weaving and pottery industries in the district. Weavers try to quickly lift the *natas* filled with *tana* from the looms during flood to save them from the water. During the catastrophic flood in the year 2000 almost all loom of these districts sank under flood water. Weavers have resorted to money lenders to resume the weaving process.

Competition From the Powerloom Sector: Despite all regulations, there is a phenomenal growth in the number of powerlooms especially in the last three decades. Powerlooms are also decreasing after the spread of COVID 19 pandemic. In addition to the new powerlooms, in many instances, handlooms are being converted to powerlooms to gain immediate benefits. These are easy to operate and do not require particular skills of weaving. Their production capacity is more than the handlooms and the technology is not labour intensive. Thus, the conversions sometimes render the weavers, especially the hired weavers, jobless. The typical handloom designs are easily replicated by the powerlooms and the products are then sold in the market at lesser price. The common people fail to realize the differences in between the two products and prefer the cheaper cloths. The demand and sale of the handloom products are thus adversely affected and the poor weavers suffer the consequences more.

Unorganized Sale of Products with Limited Export Activities: Except for the weavers under the cooperative fold, majority of them are uneducated and poor. They work as hired labourers for the master weavers and are only paid limited wages for their products. They have no control over the sales. The main market for the products of the handloom industry of Nadia district is Bara Bazar in Kolkata, from where, the products are sent to other national and even international market. *This* market is mainly dominated by the master weavers and *mahajans*. The small scale weavers sell their products at the local *haat* at a very cheap rate and are thus unable to realize more profits which are otherwise available in the urban centers. Some sell from their homes while a few have their own shops and others sell their products to the local shops instead of direct selling to wholesale market. In all these instances, prices are again comparatively low. These unorganized weavers fail to channel their products to proper markets and collect high profits. Not only that, most of them, to meet immediate financial crisis and clear debts of *mahajans*, sell their products to the latter even at losses in dry seasons.

Contrary to this, the cooperative societies support export activities. They have proper infrastructure support, trained weavers, stable financial conditions and constant export orders from other states and abroad. The cooperatives are run by educated people and the poor illiterate weavers are unable to participate in this profitable affair.

Problems for Commercialization of Electric Connection of Weavers Household: The unethical pressure of The West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (WBSEDCL) on the weavers creates problems. Domestic electricity connection of the weavers' homes is being converted into a commercial connection under the direction of the State Electricity Authority. Despite the instructions to commercialize the power connection, long before, it was implemented from 2008-09 (interview of weavers of Phulia). In general, if the business is connected with trade or the electricity used in the work is supposed to be marked as 'commercial'. The handloom weaving industry has been a weak cottage industry since time immemorial and has never been able to stand on its own two feet after independence. They never saw the face of prosperity. It is completely unethical to try to increase the revenue of the state power sector by associating the word trade or commerce with the weaving industry. The looms belong to the moneylenders. In many cases the house in the weavers are also mortgaged to the moneylenders. If there are more than two handloom in a house, these houses are treated as commercial electric connection. It is increasing the electric bill of poor weavers many fold.

If there are five to seven people in a weaver family, there may be more than two looms. And if the family is a little bigger, 3/4 of the looms are not enough at all to support livelihood. *Tantipara* in Phulia region still has a large number of joint families. The weaving process is done with the cooperation of all the members of the house. A joint family may have 8/10 looms. Most of the weavers, however, have to depend on moneylenders for yarn and wages. Weavers cannot work without the payment of moneylenders. The entire weaving industry is run by a handful of moneylenders and a few cooperatives. In the morning and in the evening, the moneylenders are trading all that the weavers produce.

If the weaving process has to be called 'commercial', then that is a few. Moreover, most of the time weavers produce weaving cloth in daylight, not more than one or two hours at night. Due to technical reasons, it is not possible to operate the electric fan on the loom while weaving. However, in some cases the electric light has to be turned on in the loom room because some members of the family have to sleep in the loom room, the children who go to school have to study at night sitting in the loom room to save electric consumption in other room. The weaver has to stay in the loom room to guard the moneylender's belongings including yarn and weaving equipment. When the family comes home and those who come from outside as employees, they have to stay in the corner of the loom room to do the weaving work. Again, there is no such thing as a loom house. Cooking, eating, sleeping, sitting, spinning, weaving — all are done in one house, i.e. loom house.

The number of weaver families in the greater Phulia is not less than fifteen thousand. From generation to generation, weavers are forever and innocent. Later those who came to this industry from other professions, from the corner of the state, they too have become very simple people. They don't understand politics; they can't be vocal against injustice. They think that it is destiny to endure everything. But behind the identification of WBSEDCL, weavers as commercial customers are their cruel mentality. Despite the order of WBSEDCL to implement it, for fear, the lower level officials have not taken any initiative to implement it in any of the weaving industries in the state. The weavers, however, joined the mass protest against it in Nadia. Recently with the initiation of incentive scheme for weavers, the subsidy on electric consumption has been implemented by the state government (Chakraborty 2014: 120)

Absence of Reliable Data: Most of the weavers engaged in the handloom sector of Nadia district are uneducated. They lack the knowledge of the importance of providing correct information and data when the government surveys are conducted. Sometimes they also provide incorrect information which creates misconceptions in the minds of the policy makers. Paucity of reliable data with respect to number of looms or number of weavers and related productivity is a major shortcoming of the handloom industry of the district.

Ineffective Policy of Reservation for Handloom Sector: Since independence, different types of regulations were imposed both on mills and powerlooms to protect the handloom sector from their unequal competition. Following this, in 1950, 8 items of production were reserved both for handlooms and small powerloom units However, by 1974, almost 90% of the powerloom units were categorized as small units since they had less than 5 looms. The reservation thus, then, actually benefitted the small powerloom sector than the handlooms. To correct this, in 1985, the Handloom Reservation Act was proposed, reserving 22 items exclusively for the handloom sector. However, this could not be properly implemented till 1993 due to the legal disputes posed by the mill and the powerloom sections. To deal with such situation, the Abid Hussain Committee recommended the inclusion of the Act under the Ninth Schedule of Constitution but this was never considered till date. Following this, the Mira Seth Committee recommended the reduction of the number of reserved items from 22 to 11 and the act was then implemented. This act came into effect in 1993, but there were gross violations of reservation policy for handloom. Therefore, in spite of serious requirements, the reservation acts to protect the handloom sector were never been implemented efficiently. Infact, current reports suggest that the reservation policies are uneconomical in the era of liberalization and globalization, thus have to be phased out gradually (Poddar: 2015: 119-20).

Failure of Welfare Schemes: Numerous schemes were introduced both at the state and the central government levels. Most of them failed to perform satisfactorily. In 1993, it was attempted to provide looms to loomless weavers but it was a delayed effort. Again when the immediate concern for the weavers was the procurement of sufficient yarn for current production, policies then were directed towards setting up of CAD/CAM Centers and market complexes. There are market Complex at Srirampur Panchayat of Kalna Sub Division. Added to this multiplicity of schemes (the Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana and the Project Package Scheme are conceptually the same) and duplication of efforts by different agencies have been a major problem for the handloom industry of the districts. No serious efforts have been made for the proper rehabilitation of the poor and the migrant weavers. The workers of this sector, when in need, fail to avail alternative jobs in related sectors.

Weak Trade Union Movement: The weavers of tangail shari from East Bengal belong to the Basak community and they still claim to belong to the Basak community. These weavers started coming to this country after the partition of the country. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of refugee weavers in Fulia stood at about four thousand. All of them fall into the clutches of the moneylenders and *mahajans*. They continued to be exploited and deprived of their just dues. By 1981-82, this *mahajani* exploitation and oppression reached its climax. During this time the shortage of yarn also became acute which caused crisis in the weaving industry. The loom workers joined the protest with the people. The co-operative movement was started from this extreme condition of the weavers. When the *mahajani* tyranny was at its peak, the weavers who had to drive out o from East Bengal after independence were forced to return to East Bengal for the second time. And the other started thinking of leaving the profession of weaving and moving to another profession and desperately jumped into the fight for survival. Shri Prabhat Kumar Basak came forward to lead the Trade Union movement of weavers (Banerjee: 1388 bangabda:

13). Local B.D. Office was strike by the weavers. They even marched to Raj Bhavan to prostate against *mahajani* exploitation.

According to Subhasis Chakraborty, The United Bank of India, Shantipur branch, came forward with an offer of financial assistance to the distressed weavers of Phulia, Shantipur and its adjoining areas in such turbulent times. On that day the UBI encouraged the weavers to unite and form an association which would be the weavers' own organization. The Cooperative will provide them the necessary raw materials and arrange marketing of their finished products. United Bank of India will be responsible for the necessary financing. Employes of UBI spent a lot of time with the leaders of the movement and went to the head office of United Bank in Kolkata. And there they came in contact with compassionate officers like TR Shah, Nirmal Sengupta, who promised to help the bank with full sympathy. Their contribution to the success of the trade union movement of handloom weavers in Nadia is unforgettable (Chakraborty 2014:65)

After much thought and discussion, according to Shah's plan, in 1983, *'Fulia Tangail Shari Bayan Shilpa Samabay Samity*' was formed. It was this institution that gave hope to the desperate weavers of that day, showed them the best way to survive, gave them respect and prosperity. But at first the common people did not dare to rely on it. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the members of this first PWCs. Former Minister for Cottage Industries of the Government of West Bengal Shri Atish Kumar Singh was present on the auspicious occasion of the formation of the first PWCs. Mr. Pranagopal Basak, who is still closely associated with the work of the PWCs, was elected president at the first executive meeting. And the secretary was Shri Prabhat Kumar Basak, a pioneer of the weavers' movement of Phulia is still well known today. Initially, the society was formed with only 40 members, but as the number of members gradually increased, the second association was formed in 1974 –'Tangail Tantujibi Unnayan Samiti' (Chakraborty 2014: 65).

Since the formation of the two associations, weaving has been going on at an uninterrupted pace. Weavers did not have a smooth path despite the increase in the number of members year by year. There was increase in bank loan disbursement, progress in business growth. Still all weaversof Phulia, Shantipur could be included in the cooperative society. Again, those who were affected by the formation of the cooperatives, who were dragged into the low of profit, searching for opportunities and sometimes made various problems for weavers under cooperative.They used to conspire to cause misery to the workers and officials of the society. The reason for their resentment was that the formation of the PWCs did not only benefit the members at Phulia but alsoopened the eyes of all weavers. Those weavers who did not belog to society, they remained under the moneylenders. As a result, along with the formation of society , exploitation of moneylenders continued. Although the co-operative movement has been officially welcomed, at present 80 per cent of weavers in these districts are outside the co-operatives. They are fully under the moneylender system. The life of weavers was so oppressed by the exploitation of the moneylenders that on January 17, 1974, about a thousand weavers of the Phulia Regional Weavers 'Union, led by Prabhat Basak, staged a mass demonstration in front of the moneylenders' houses. Later, in a public meeting, the insidious story of exploitation of profiteering moneylenders towards the miserable and oppressed weavers was presented to the public. The extent of *mahajani* exploitation can be understood from the allegations made by the union. The allegation of the union was that during the last Durga Puja, the moneylenders signed an agreement to increase the price of cloth for the weavers at the rate of two rupees per cloth, but since the month of December, they have been violating this agreement and increasing the price of cloth at one rupees per cloth. Even the weavers of this region are known to be physically abused at that time. A 60-year-old weaver was detained and tortured by Surendranath Basak, a textile trader of Phulia , from morning till 9 pm. He was later rescued with the help of police. Many weavers in the region moved away overnight at this critical time and changed their livelihood (Chakraborty 2014: 66).

Table 3.1
Purpose of loan or debt of weavers in Nadia

Purpose	Number	Percentage
Handloon	21	13.12
Non- handloon	135	84.37
Both	4	2.5
Total	160	100

Figure 4.1
Purpose of loan or debt of weavers in Nadia: percentage

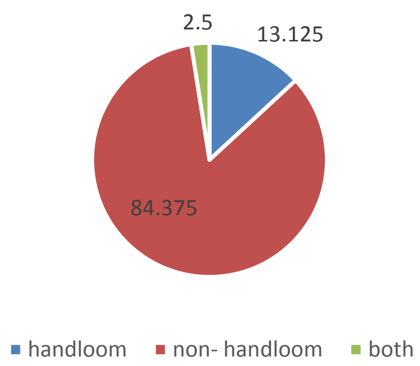


Table 3.2
Purpose of loan or debt of weavers in Purba Bardhaman

Purpose	Number	Percentage
Handloom	20	12.5
Non- handloom	131	81.875
Both	9	5.625
Total	160	100

Figure 4.2
Purpose of loan or debt of weavers in Purba Bardhaman : percentage

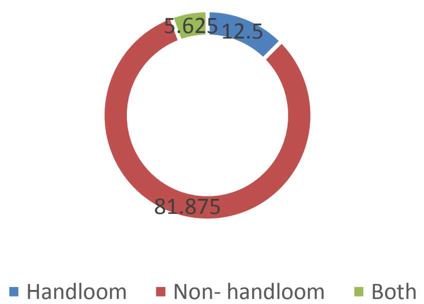


Table 3.3
Major sources of loan or debt in Nadia

Purpose	Number	Percentage
Govt.	15	9.375
Money Lander	46	28.75
Master Weaver	10	6.25
Friend or Relatives	10	6.25
Corporate sector	25	15.625
Commercial Bank	15	9.375
SHG	15	9.375
Others	24	15
Total	160	100

Figure 4.3
Major sources of loan or debt in Nadia: percentage

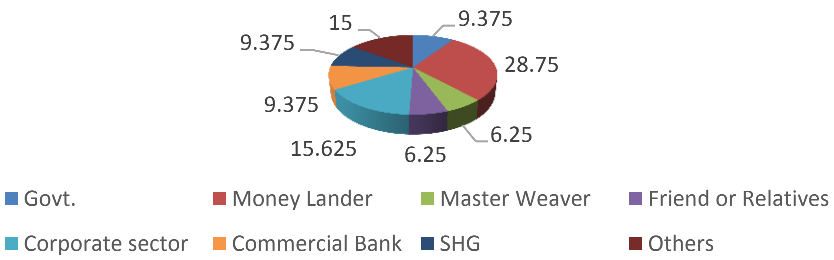


Table 3.4
Major sources of loan or debt in Purba Bardhaman

Purpose	Number	Percentage
Govt.	13	8.125
Money Lander	43	26.875
Master Weaver	7	4.375
Friend or Relatives	5	3.125
Corporate sector	31	19.375
Commercial Bank	14	8.75
SHG	25	15.625
Others	22	13.75
Total	160	100

Figure 4.4
Major sources of loan or debt in Purba Bardhaman: percentage

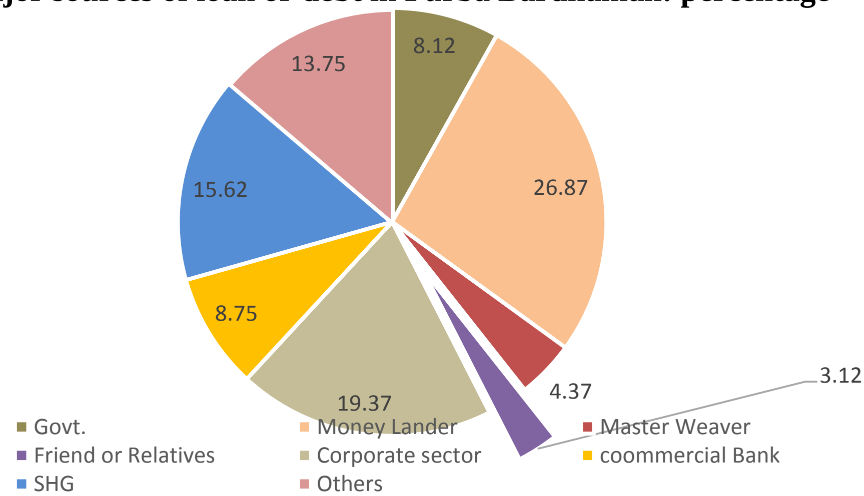


Table 3.5
Major source of input of weaving in Nadia

Source	Number	percentage
Open market	43	26.875
Master weaver	98	61.25
Co operative	7	4.375
Others	12	7.5
Total	160	100

Figure 4.5
Major source of input of weaving in Nadia: percentage

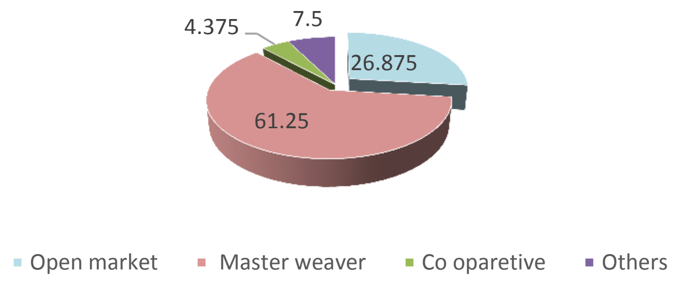


Table 3.6
Major source of input of weaving in Purba Bardhaman

Source	Number	percentage
Open market	45	28.12
Master weaver	91	56.87
Co operative	5	3.12
Others	19	11.87
Total	160	100

Figure 4.6
Major source of input of weaving in Purba Bardhaman: percentage

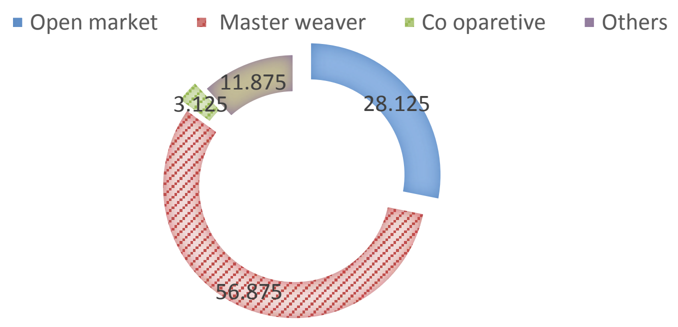


Table 3.7
Selling of product in Nadia

Seal	Number	Percentage
Local Market	52	32.5
Master weaver	85	53.12
Co-operative	9	5.62
Foreign export	5	3.12
Others	9	5.62
Total	160	100

Figure 4.7
Selling of product in Nadia: Percentage

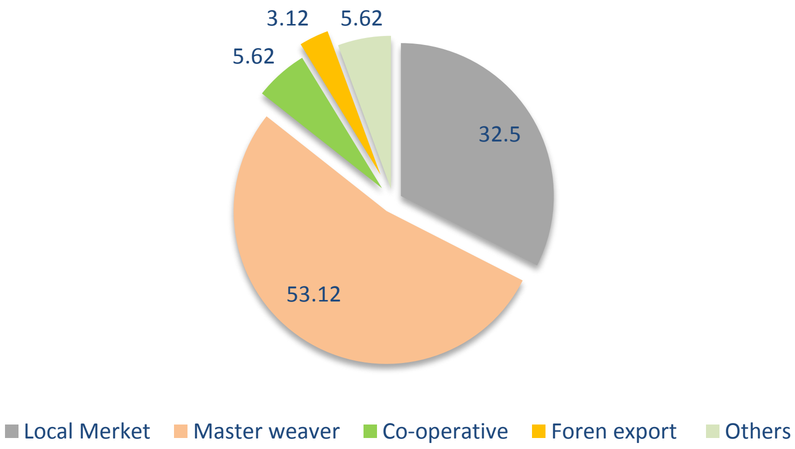


Table 3.8
Selling of product in Purba Bardhaman

Seal	Number	Percentage
Local Market	46	28.75
Master weaver	94	58.75
Co-operative	9	5.62
Foreign export	3	1.87
Others	8	5
Total	160	100

Figure 4.8
Selling of product in Purba Bardhaman: Percentage

Figure 4.9
Nature of support requirement by weavers in Nadia

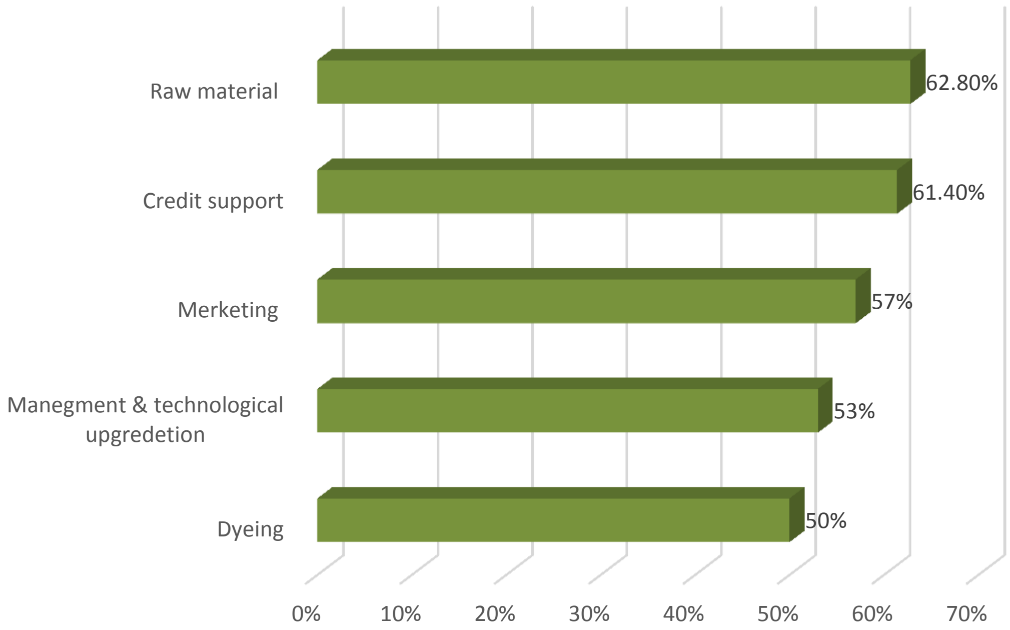


Figure 4.10
Nature of support requirement by weavers in Purba Bardhaman

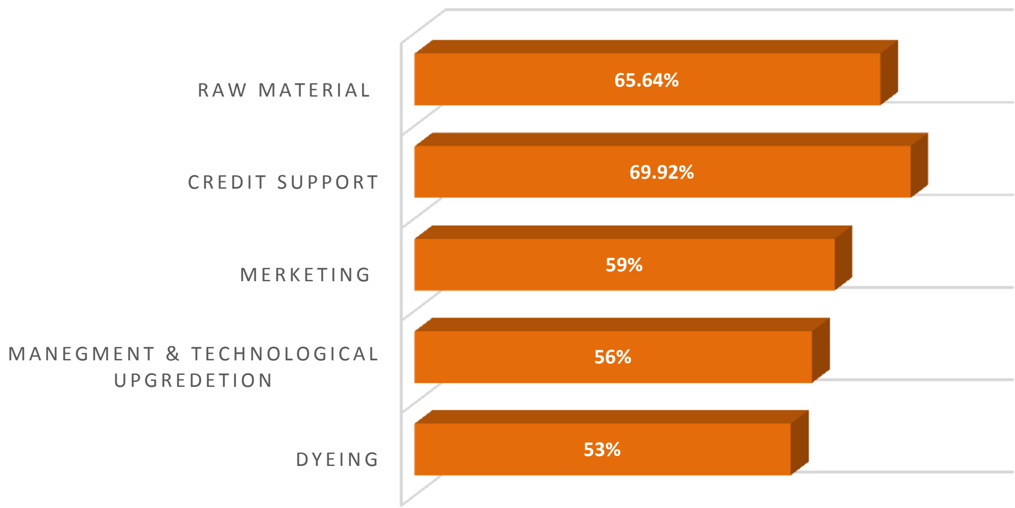


Table 3.9
Reason of idle loom in Nadia

Reason	Number	Percentage
Lack of Development	50	31.25
Lack of credit	80	50
Lack of weavers	30	18.75
Total	160	100

Figure 4.11
Reason of idle loom in Nadia: Percentage

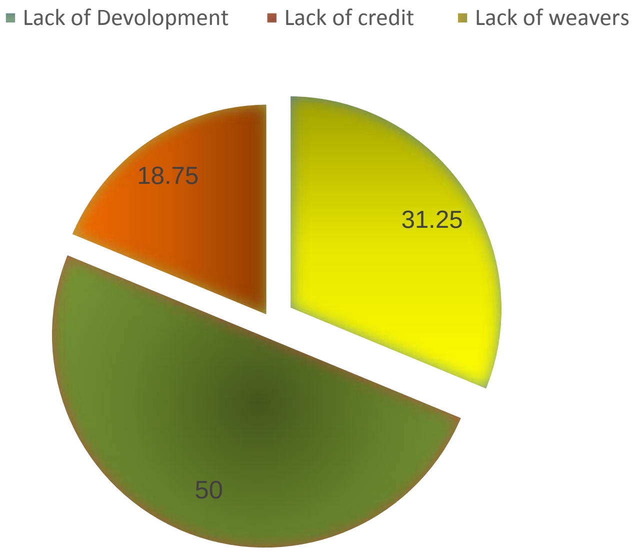
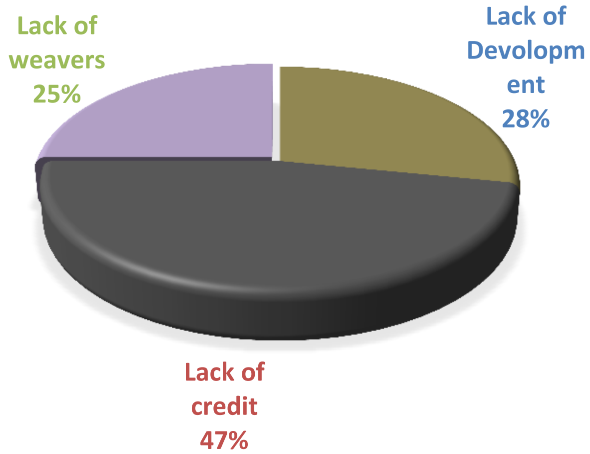


Table 3.10
Reason of idle loom in Purba Bardhamn

Reason	Number	Percentage
Lack of Development	45	28.12
Lack of credit	75	46.87
Lack of weavers	40	25
Total	160	100

Figure 4.12
Reason of idle loom in Purba Bardhamn: Percentage



Prospects of Handloom

Handloom industry still occupies a predominant position in the industrial scenario of Nadia and Purba Bardhaman district. The major concentrations of handloom weavers are in Santipur, Nabadwip, Krishnanagar I and II and Ranaghat I, Srirampur, Samudragarh, Nasaratpur, Dhatrigram, Kalna I, ketugram, Tamaghata, Jahannagar. There are more than 1.5 lakh looms operating in these two district providing employment to about two lakh people in the weaving and associated sectors of this industry. Only about 18 per cent of the weavers are under the cooperative fold, as per handloom census 2019-20. The region's handloom industry has an age old tradition and holds a special place in economy. For the benefit and development of the industry, the district handloom office is putting its best efforts to provide finance through NABARD and Nadia District Central Cooperative Bank Limited (NDCC), Bardhaman District Central Cooperative Bank Limited (BDCC) along with implementation of various welfare schemes, as already discussed. The products of the industry are not only sold in local and national markets but also through government showrooms viz. Tantuja and Manjusha. The handloom products of these districts have good reputation and in recent years, product diversification in the handloom industry has opened new opportunities for their export abroad.

Handloom is a traditional activity of the district and the most renowned of all the industries in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman. This industry, with its environment friendly production trend, requirement of low capital input, demand for human skill and manual labour is extremely suitable for densely populated developing countries like India. In this way, the economy of these districts of West Bengal is immensely dependent on this industry. The impacts of the handloom industry on the economy of the district are as follows:

Employment Generation: The economy of these districts is immensely dependent on its agricultural resources. Purba Bardhaman is the height rice producing district of state and Nadia is famous for jute and vegetable productions. The handloom sector provides employment sources to a large number of people. In fact, the handloom industry accounts for almost 60 per cent of the total industrial workers of two districts. Handloom industry also reduces the disparity in the male-female work participation rate by providing part-time and full-time employment opportunities to a large number of women who are engaged in the preparatory activities for making handloom cloth. But, there is a substantial difference in the income between male and female workers.

It is also noticed that the women rarely hold the status on master weavers or owners of the production units, though they are actively involved in the weaving process in many cases. The labour intensive trend of the handloom industry is also suitable for a district like Nadia and Purba Bardhaman, with dense population and high incidence of poverty and unemployment. Many of the hired labours, who remain unemployed in the agricultural sector for some months in the year, engage themselves in the preparatory works of handloom production during those months. So handloom provides part-time job to workers of others field, especially to agricultural workers.

Low Capital Investment and Large Number of Manual Labour: The handloom industry is an environment friendly industry which requires investment of low capital and simple setup in the workshop to carry on the production. It is thus quite suitable for areas where people, in general, do not have huge capital to start business. The industry thus encourages the skill of entrepreneurship present among the people which would otherwise be lost in the dearth of capital required to start off with a big business. The presence of *mahajans* is still very prominent. Many of the weavers have been successful to come out of the *mahajani* grip and start off their own production unit.

The handloom industry is labour intensive and absorbs a large labour force of the region. The industry also supports age old tradition and skill that attach uniqueness to the handloom cloth. Though the weaving process in particular demands a lot of skill and trained labour, the preparatory processes and the ancillary industries of the handloom sector can be run with semi skilled labour. In fact, the techniques of the other aspects of production, besides weaving, are so simple that people can easily be trained in a short period for the purpose. Even women, old people can also earn some money from ancillary works. Handloom production is domestic in nature, so women can engage themselves side by side with their household activities, sitting in their own house. In our society it is very problematic for women to work out side home. In many cases there is not proper arrangement for women; especially health related issues and hygiene are not maintained. In other cases women are not allowed to work outside the house for different social and family reasons. Labour intensive nature of handloom resolves these issues.

Income Generation: Though the handloom sector provides only a meager income to the weavers, still their monthly income is better than the hired labourers in the agricultural sector of the region. In fact, the average monthly income of a hired weaver is also better than the hired labourer in the other industrial sector of these districts (District statistical handbook Nadia, 2018). The industries related to the handlooms also offer more monthly earning opportunity in comparison to population related with agriculture. Although the industry generally demands skilled labour for weaving purposes, the preparatory works and ancillary industries absorb semi-skilled or unskilled labours, which otherwise remain jobless or create disguised unemployment in the oversaturated agricultural sector of the region. The nature of engagement in the handloom sector provides job security for a longer period than the agricultural sector, as the later is seasonal work.

Revenue Generation and Opportunity Creation for Ancillary Industries: Though the economy of Nadia is primarily dependent on agriculture, still, in recent years, there is a diversion of the rural work force to the non-farm sector. The handloom industry plays a dominant role in the overall industrial scenario of the district, supporting more than two lakh people in its production system. It earns a substantial amount of revenue for the district's economy and also occupies an important niche in the state economy The Temporal pattern of sale of the handloom products in the domestic market during 2003-10 was obtained from the H.D.O. of Santipur. It can be seen that though there was a temporary downward pattern in the sale of the products during 2005-07, yet the sale of tant shari and other handloom products of Nadia in the domestic market industry recovered from 2008 and continued its way successfully, making a prominent contribution in the later years to the district's production.

The handloom industry uses products of different ancillary industries like the cotton yarn processing industry, the dyes and chemicals industry, the looms' spares industry and so on. The handloom sector receives its raw materials from these industries, which are located both within and outside the districts. In recent years, there is a tendency towards the growth of these ancillary industries in areas of production of handloom. These industries also generate revenue for these districts and provide part time and full time employment opportunities to the local population. In Nadia, these ancillary units are mainly small scale ones and generally owned by the master weavers and mahajans, who try to appropriate the profit from these aspects of production along with their profit margin from the handloom sector. Silk is not processed locally but is bought from the wholesale market in Kolkata. The silk yarns reach the capital city from the western Silk hub like Gujarat and Maharashtra. Silk is however consumed in selected aspects of handloom industry, especially in the manufacturing of exportable and expensive products (Poddar 2015: 159-160).

Capability for Production of Value Added Commodities: Since the production in the handloom sector is skill dependent and unique to the locality, the finished commodities can fetch a much higher price and there is high percentage of value addition at every stage of production of designed products. Thus in spite of low capital input, the price of the finished product make the weavers earn a sufficient amount for their skill and expertise work. This is truer in the case of exportable handloom products which can bear high price for its quality, style and uniqueness. There are many nation award winning weavers. *jamdani* silk shari with all body design priced up to 8 lakh per piece.

Production for Export and Generation of Foreign Revenue: The products of the handloom industry are popular even in the international market and a portion of the handloom production is exported. This export activity is concentrated only among selected affluent groups of weavers. It provides a significant stimulus to the production sector and boosts economic performance of these districts.

Linkage Creation: Different types of spatial linkages originate based on the functioning of the handloom industry and play vital role for its sustainability. The types of linkages include:

Human Linkage: Most of the weavers engaged in the production of the handloom sector are migrants from East Bengal and North Bengal districts. They are skilled workers acquainted with the traditional weaving styles, and without them, the production system would not survive. The industry also accounts for a large number of communicators who communicate to the state capital of Kolkata to access the required raw material weekly or daily, and supply them to the local traders. Thus the migrant weavers and the communicator create two different aspects of human linkage (Poddar 2015 :159).

Commodity Linkage: The handloom industry requires raw materials, which are not always found at the sources of production. The industry has developed mainly based on the availability of skilled labours and tradition of weaving. The raw materials are brought to the production centre from Kolkata from different parts of the country. Only a few rich *mahajans* and master weavers trade the raw materials directly from the other states. The finished products are sold locally and also sent to different wholesale and retail markets of the country, creating another type of commodity linkage. Again the commodities produced in the handloom industry of Nadia are sold in different fairs and through government selling organizations all over India. This linkage pattern, however, shows a slightly decreasing trend over the years. A part of the finished products is also exported, forming a type of international commodity linkage (Poddar 2015: 160).

Monetary Linkage: The handloom industry gets monetary support from different state financial organizations. The cooperatives also arrange for loans from different types of government policies and schemes. The entrepreneurs from adjacent districts and Kolkata invest in the handloom industry of the Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts. Added to this, the migrant weavers send a healthy portion of their wages and income to their original residential areas. Thus, different types of monetary linkages are created by the handloom industry of these two districts.

Regional Concentration in Industrial Development: The handloom industry is skill dependent and thus is an extremely localized phenomenon. The available data shows that the handloom cluster in Nadia, which comprises mainly of the blocks of Santipur, Ranaghat I. Nabadwip and Krishnanagar II, engage 106563 industrial workers out of 184411 industrial workers (57.79%) of the district. It can also be seen that above mentioned blocks also account for 77.73 per cent of the total population engaged in the weaving section of the handloom industry of Nadia district (District Statistical Handbook Nadia: 2010).Handloom is the most important of all the industries of Nadia and thus, it controls the distribution of the industrial workforce. However, this concentrated phenomenon of the development of the handloom industrial sector creates inequalities and disparities in the overall development of the district. Same complain of regional disparities also raised in Purba Bardhaman district.

Development of Growth Centers: The handloom industry of Nadia and Purba Bardhaman has influenced the development of some urban growth centers in these districts. These centers have advantages of large skilled and trained labour force, availability of economic facilities, adequate transport and communication, proximity to existing commercial centers and markets, availability of required infrastructure etc. Important growth centers that have developed based on the handloom industry are Ranaghat, Chakdaha. Santipur. Fulia. Nabadwip, Krishnanagar, Samudragarh, Dhartigram, Kalna and Katwa. The economic growth of these areas totally based on the weaving industry, both handloom and powerloom. From last few years market of powerloom products of these areas are very down. These products are not in a position to compete with powerlooms' products of other states. As a result handlooms are facing less challenge from powerloom, to a little extent.

This chapter identifies various areas of problems, like, failure of cooperatives for different reasons, poor living conditions of weavers, problems of marketing, problems of production, lack of training for weavers, lack of loyalty among members to PWCs, problem of procurement of yarn, problem of water logging, problem of flood during pick time, illegal competition from powerloom, failure of Reservation Act for handloom and failure of welfare schemes. Areas of prospects of handloom of these districts are good demand of handloom products of these areas, environment friendly production system, low capital investment, employment generation, contribution in revenue generation of districts, concentration of industrial development and different types of linkage creation. There are statistical analysis of different issues related to problems and prospects of handloom textile, in these districts through tabulation and diagrams. The next chapter will be the summary of whole thesis with some concluding remarks and policy suggestions.

CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Hand weaving is the primary link between agriculture and industry. Primitive men started their first industrial activity by weaving fibers of trees and plage of animals for making cloth for themselves. Hand spinning and weaving is the second important art of human civilization after agriculture. It is perhaps impossible to assign the origin of any of the useful art like weaving, upon which necessities and comforts of mankind depend. The earliest records of the art of weaving are found in the Old Testament, where frequent hints are made to the handloom and its products, of curtains of fine twined linen of blue, purple and scarlet, with depiction of angel by skilled workers.

Various types of textiles were produced in various parts of the world. Linen is produced from the fiber of linseed trees, which are developed in coastal Europe. Wool most probably developed in colder areas of the world. It is believed that woolen fibers were first developed in Middle East, Afghanistan and Kashmir valley. Cotton fibers were most developed in India and Peru, simultaneously. One of the oldest known specimens of spun cotton yarn was found in the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, a city in the Indus Valley civilization, which was deserted around 3000 B.C. The irony is that, the word “Cotton” is derived from the Arabic word *Qutun* or *Kutun*, but Arabian countries were not the place of origin of cotton. It might be because Arab was on the route when Indian cotton textiles were exported to Europe. Silk, is considered as the most precious. All silk textiles were produced in and around China nearly 5000 years back. But this relates only to Mulberry silk. On the other hand it seems all other varieties of silk were developed in India.

A handloom is a loom that is used to weave cloth by hand. In other word handloom is a loom where weaving is done without the use of electric or automatic machine. Hand weaving is done on pit looms; frame looms and stand looms, generally located in weavers’ houses. Weaving is primarily the interlacing of two sets of yarn- the warp (length) and the woof (width). The device that facilitates this interlacing is the handloom. It is important to mention that “handloom” is different from powerloom, which is a type of loom that is powered mechanically by electric instead of using human power to weave thread into cloth. The power loom is an invention that combines yarns to make cloth. Powerloom are assembled in the weaving shed of mill and driven by an electric motor by belts from overhead shafting. Powerloom is a major progress over the handloom.

Here is the historical evolution of handloom textile in India. Spinning and weaving were highly advanced in *Rigved* era. Greek historian Herodotous mentioned the presence of the cotton dresses in 445 B.C. During this period, costumes became regional or zonal in character, Royal people, soldiers, priests and other professionals were given separate costumes. Greeks, *Parthians*, *Kushans*, Shakes and Mughals influenced the Indian dress, as depicted on their coins.

Perhaps India is the country which has maximum contribution in textile, especially in handloom textile to the world. India has the finest textile like muslin, brightest textile like silk, cheapest textile like jute and strongest textile like ramie. Even today Indian handloom and spinning wheel contributes maximum variation of designs and products. India mainly produces cotton textile products. Woolen handloom products are also produced in India.

Different types of handloom products are produced in different regions of India. *Baluchuri Shari* is produced mainly in Murshidabad and Bishnupur areas. *Muslin* was mainly produced in Dhaka district of present Bangladesh. Now some other kind of *muslin* is also produced in Murshidabad and in Nadia districts. Wool is known as *pasham* in India and develops in colder areas like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, hills of West Bengal, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, and few places of Central and Western India. In Karnataka main districts of silk production are Kolar, Bangalore, Mandya, Tumkar, and Mysore. In Tamil Nadu sericulture was originally confined to Dharampuri and Coimbatore districts, but in recent times, spreads to Ramnadhampuram and other districts. In UP the main silk producing areas are Doon Valley, Ganjam, Gajapati and Kalahandi districts. In West Bengal main silk producing districts are Maldah, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Nadia. In Assam Mulberry cocoon rearing was traditionally grown in Shibsagar district. In Manipur silk producing areas are Laimran, Khur, Khul, Sekhmai and Fayang etc. Ikat *shari* is the unique product of Orissa. *Phee* is the classical product of the state of Manipur. *Dua* and *Puna* are handloom textile of Mizoram. Cloths such as *Rini, Basei, Risa, Pandari, Kutai, Rikatu, Baki and Kamchai* are produced in Tripura. There are also other verities of handloom products in different corners of the country.

Handloom weaving enjoyed the patronage of Indian ruler since Maurya regime. With the increase of demand of handloom products in India and abroad, complexities in the methods of organizations and operations were also grown. Royal power extended its help, protection and patronage for the smooth functioning and development of the handloom. During the *Mughal* rule, handloom textiles of India became the main item of foreign trade all over the world. Merchants of west European and Scandinavian countries used to collect these products from the notable manufacturing centers, like Bengal, Varanasi, Andhra, Kashmir, Utkal and Baroda to sell almost every country of the World.

As British Government took charge of Indian administration, royal patronage abolished for handloom textile industries. Weavers became independent. To mediate between European traders and weavers, *mahajani* system was emerged. British Parliament passed an Act in 1700 which prohibited the import of Indian Silk and printed calicos in Britain. The cotton fibers of India were so beautiful and cheap, that nearly all the governments of Europe thought it necessary to prohibit them, or to load them with heavy duties, in order to protect their own manufacturers. The demands for the fascinating textile items of Indian origin were remained unaffected in the countries of Europe, even after the imposition of prohibitive barriers against them in those countries till the mid eighteenth century.

The development of cotton textile industry of England was occurred through a biased and selfish commercial policy, designed to cripple its main competitor, i.e. Indian handloom textile industry. This task of destruction of Indian handloom textile was done with the help of royal political power. It was aimed at making Indian textile industry subordinate to the textile industry of Britain and mere supplier of raw materials (cotton) of the textile industries of England.

Since the First World War Indian handloom industry started to increase its dependence on Indian mill made yarn. On the other hand the bulk of the requirement for higher counts cotton continued to flow from the foreign countries, especially from America and England. As a result of the increasing dependence of handloom on mill spun yarn, the system of hand spanning almost ceased to exist. There was a drastic fall in overall employment power of handloom weaving sector in India. The market for handloom textiles continued to decrease because of the growing supply of cheap mill-made products. It is also important to note that Indian mill made products has little share of the market after the introduction of mill made yarn. Indian mill made products faced discriminations of additional burden of excise duty upon them by the British government.

After independence Central Government formed different commissions, and committees to know the conditions of handloom textile industry. These commissions made different recommendations and government took various policies. The most important policy is National Textile Policy 1985, which recommended for the reservation of handloom products. After the Spread of COVID-19 handloom textile industry faces unprecedented challenges. To meet the challenges, new policy for handloom is required for its survival and sustainability. The main reasons of survival of handloom were specialization in production, designs of different occasions and different tests. The absence of systematic and organized marketing facilities and scarcity of yarn compelled independent weavers to get into the traps of *mahajans* and money lenders.

Handloom weaving of West Bengal had received a great impetus after independence due to immigration of weavers in large numbers from erstwhile East Pakistan. They settled in different parts of the state. At the same time, age-old tradition of the handloom weaving of India suffered severe oppression and discrimination during the colonial ruler. Even after the independence, the concerned industry had to face the sufferings of partition of India as well as Bengal.

Now a days, the structure of the GST is affecting the handloom sector in the following manners. There is 5 per cent GST on cotton fiber in the form of hank yarn, previously it was nil, 18 per cent on dyes and chemicals, and 5 per cent on finished products of up to Rs 1,000 and 12 per cent on finished products priced over Rs 1,000. It was 7 per cent on finished products under the pre- GST regime. All fibers are treated as equal under GST be it natural fiber or synthetic fiber. Now weavers have to pay GST at every stage from procuring yarn to dyeing the cloth, or any other processes the product passes to become marketable. The price of the finished product would therefore be considerably higher, bringing down the competitiveness of the handloom products in the market. As a result, GST is negatively impacting weavers, master weavers, cooperatives, retailers, suppliers and ancillary workers. Earlier weavers used to get yarn on credit from traders, *mahajans* and master weavers. However, to pay GST on yarn, the weavers will have to buy yarn against payment. This is very problematic for maximum poor weavers.

Other problems are the conservative attitude of the weavers and their lack of proper training and knowledge about the current fashion and trend of the market. These lead to insufficient and inappropriate diversification of the products. States like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu successfully adopted policy of diversification of products. Acceding to the handloom Census 2019-20, 5.6 per cent weavers are under cooperative societies and 5.24 per cent weavers have taken loan from Cooperative societies in the state. This is the proof of very low success rate of cooperatives in West Bengal. Failure of the reservation policy for handloom is also a major problem for the industry. Numerous schemes were introduced both at the state and the central levels, but most of them failed to perform satisfactorily. With liberalization of country's economy, the modern textile industry has posed serious threat to the traditional handloom industry all over the country and West Bengal is no exception. Since the years 1997-98 budgetary allocations shows that the handloom sector funding is not at par with the increase of cost of production and inflation.

There are areas of prospects of handloom, if proper actions are taken for the development of handloom. Provision of rebate is not the solution of handloom textile. In order to get rid of the corrupted policy, the marketing policy should aim at encouraging only the production of those items which can sell without rebate, although able to make profits. To bring more weavers under the umbrella of co-operative societies, those working at present with *mahajans* and master weavers, shall have to be approached. As the products of utility and high artistic value, handloom textiles of West Bengal are looked upon by people throughout the world. In order to popularize the products of handloom weavers, systematic advertisement through electronic media, website, social media and expositions should be resorted. Side by side with the private traders, the government agencies may also collect orders for exploring the foreign markets, which will help survival and development of handloom textile industry of the state.

Through incentive scheme for MSMEs, Central Government and State Governments are trying to eradicate poverty. Micro small and medium scale industries are contributing more than 40 per cent of the total industrial output. Liberalization of economy and globalization are putting various challenges in front of small and medium industries. To overcome these challenges Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO) and NABARD are taking various steps. MSMEs are trying for employment generation of economically backward and unskilled sections of the population.

SHGs in West Bengal are mainly formed under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) and NABARD helps in collection of capital for the development of economic and health conditions of people using micro-credit and financial services. The State Government has launched Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) which was further expanded and developed. State government also launched Swayansiddha-Intigrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP). Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY) and Rural Employment Generation Programme are merged and new scheme named as Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), was launched. It delivers financial assistance in the form of subsidy of Rs. 25000 for setting up small projects. The scheme has been proposed to be implemented through Khadi and Villege Industries Commission (KVIC), State/UT Khadi and Villege Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres (DIC) of State Government. Government of West Bengal launched Bangla Swanirvar Karma Sansthan Prakalpa (BSKP) for individual entrepreneurs (18-45 years of age) or groups (SHGs) preferably registered with Employment Bank and having monthly family income not more than Rs. 15000. The main purpose of this scheme is to generate employment by setting up of any unit of industry, trade or services etc. or getting loan for existing unit. Another scheme, jointly sponsored by Centre and State is Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY), where the share of Centre and State Governments respectively is 75:25 per cent. The main objective of this scheme is to provide gainful employment to urban unemployed and poor people through encouraging the setting up of small employment ventures or provision for wage generations.

Through West Bengal incentive scheme-2013 for MSME in Textile sector, 6 per cent interest rebate on working capital loan can be availed from commercial banks, nationalized banks, cooperative banks and other financial institutions by the SHGs, Primary Weavers Co-operative Society (PWCS)/Handloom Clusters, to ensure maximum capacity utilization of handloom in the state. One important scheme in handloom is Cluster Development Programme under Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme (CHDS). The aim of the scheme is to facilitate sustainable development of weavers in or outside the handloom clusters into cohesive and competitive socio-economic units with self management. The main components of the scheme concentrate on skill up gradation training on weaving and dyeing technology, design development and product development, purchase of Computer Aided Textile Design system etc. Tanti Sathi is a front line initiative of Government of West Bengal, where new pit looms and accessories are supplied to the weavers and SHGs. Khadi weavers who have no looms or obsolete looms can be benefited with backup support for skill development from West Bengal Handloom Circuit Scheme - 2014. State Design Centre for design development has a marketing tie up with Tantuja and Biswa Bangla. MUDRA scheme for weavers is a scheme introduced by Government of India on July, 2016. The ministry is providing subsidized fund directly to the banks as loan up to Rs. 5 Lakh over working capital to potential weavers. MUDRA- Rupay Card with a limit of Rs. 50000 has been issued to the borrower for withdrawing money from ATM as and when required. Success rate of incentive scheme for MSMEs in handloom textile of West Bengal is lower in comparison to national average.

The weaving industry of Nadia district has been divided into two zones - Nabadwip and Shantipur. In Purba Bardhaman district, Kalna and Katwa sub-divisions are mainly handloom concentrated zones. *Baluchari, matha* and *jamdani* shari or dhoti weaving process of Shantipur, has some uniqueness. *Tangail* and cotton *shari* weaving of samudragarh has also some uniqueness. These two districts have its own handloom production in the context of Bengal's handloom production system. Weavers’ happiness, sorrow, joy and exhilaration - all are related to this weaving industry. Weaving is their only hope of sustaining the ultimate existence of life. Shantipur is the originators of *Kheru* folk songs. Many weavers in these districts are living below the poverty line. Most of these families live in houses surrounded by mulberry fences and tin sheets and made of tile sheds or tin sheds.

According to survey, in these two districts most of the weavers are from refugees families of East Bengal. Investigative data from various locations in these districts show that maximum weavers are local people. The head of the household (in most cases the eldest of the family) leads the whole process of handloom production and the other adult members of the family, including children collectively carry forward the whole production process.

The occupational structure of the handloom community consists of three categories:

- The *mahajans* enjoying maximum profit,
- Some independent master weavers are in the middle position,
- A large number of weavers, depending on piece rate system for their wages, posited at the bottom level with minimal profit.

The *mahajan* and the independent master weavers practically have a similar controlling position in the handloom production. The striking difference is that master weavers generally have their own looms and engage weavers by paying wages to work for them. *Mahajan* generally like the capitalist system, do not run looms and supply yarns to the weavers and also do marketing of the finished products. The weavers are mostly simple, lack formal education and negotiation skill and hence left with no other option other than depending on *mahajans*. They know that the *mahajans* are exploiting them and get the products done at low rates and sell them at considerably higher rates to consumers but are unable to confront the existing system. The district central co-operative bank plays an important role for supporting to the PWCS. Tiny weaver/master weavers / private entrepreneur are not getting substantive supports from them. As per the record of Nadia District Central Cooperative Bank, Only 84 PWCs get Rs. 10crore 50 lakh loan in 2021-22 financial year.

In many cases women workers are being paid less than the male workers, despite the fact that the cloth produced by women workers are being sold at good prices in the market. It is pertinent to note that there is no presence of strong union of workers in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts for handloom weavers. However, the cooperatives and SHGs have the support for women workers. Older weavers expressed that their children have nothing to do with the crafts and art of weaving. It is not sufficient income generator to live life with dignity. Handloom weaving appears to be largely an occupation of senior citizens.

Barring these economic issues, there are common health problems which came forward during a discussion with the weavers. The issue that needs attention is the prevalence of work related stress, problem of spine, back pain, eyestrain, headache, and hearing loss among the weavers of these areas. There is lack of proper medical amenities to address these health problems. Workplaces are congested with non favorable conditions of high temperatures and humidity, poor illumination, and high noise levels. However, many weavers are involved in the process of handloom production and as well as rural labor. The wage of a weaver was 300-400 rupees per ordinary *shari* before COVID-19. Now it is 200-300 rupees per shari. At present, there are not many employment opportunities in other states, especially after COVID. So many people rejoin weaving industry after returning from other states or other countries. COVID -19 has created a fear even among large part of the new generation.

More than 65 per cent of the weavers who were surveyed by the researcher claim to be migrants from erstwhile East Bengal. They have carried their skills along with them and are engaged in the current production process but have failed to recognise themselves at par with the population of West Bengal. The living conditions of the weavers continue to be dismal and they are sometimes even denied of essential social infrastructural facilities. Other problems of handloom of these areas are: the cooperatives are mainly situated in rural areas and these are financially weak and thus, it is not possible for them to appoint trained personnel to look after the management. Cooperatives face major production problem due to unstable and inadequate supply of raw materials. Maximum cooperatives are extremely weak in marketing and sales promotion. There is no provision for training of weavers in Indian Institute of Handloom Technology situated at Phulia. Only Diploma and degree courses are studied here for fresher students. Lake of loyalty among members of cooperatives to the PWCs is another problem. Leaders of cooperatives, in many cases want to gain personal benefit from PWCs. District cooperative Bank provides loan to PWCs, not to individual weavers. Political intervention in cooperative formation and functioning are major problems. Mainly weavers have to depend on *mahajans* for working capital.

There are significant mismatch between production and marketing of handloom cloth in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts. The decline of local markets for handlooms is a reality in present time. As part of natural calamities, floods are affecting the weaving industry of Nadia and its adjoining Purba Bardhaman districts in various ways. Almost every year more or less floods inundate the looms in Ranaghat, Phulia, Shantipur and Nabadwip areas, especially before *Durga Puja*, when the demands are highest. In monsoon handloom production also gets affected. In rainy days weaving becomes difficult. Weavers cannot move warp and woof smoothly. These areas are mainly situated in Gangetic plain and low land. Areas like Shantipur, Nabadwip, Ranaghat do not have proper drainage system. Water stagnation is a common problem in these congested areas. As a result water logging in the pit of loom paddles is quite common. Poor weavers do not have the capacity to make their loom room high by filling soil from outside. The price of per tractor soil is around Rs.2000. There is not enough space for entry of tractors, as maximum weavers live by the side of narrow bi lanes. As a result cost of soil is more for them for manual carrying.

Despite all regulations, there is a phenomenal growth in the number of powerlooms especially in the last three decades. In many instances, handlooms are being converted to powerlooms to gain immediate benefits. In many instances powerloom products are sold as handloom products violating Reservation Act of handloom. Domestic electricity connection of the weavers' homes is being converted into a commercial connection under the direction of the State Electricity Authority in many cases. The argument of WBSEDCL behind it is that weaving is a commercial activity, so domestic electric connection cannot be used for commercial purposes. Most of the weavers have common rooms for living and weaving. Numerous schemes were introduced both at the state and the central levels. Most of them failed to perform satisfactorily in these districts.

The areas of prospects are as follows: the handloom products of these districts have good reputation and in recent years, product diversification in the handloom industry has opened new opportunities for their export abroad. This industry, with its environment friendly production trend, requirement of low capital input, demand for human skill and manual labour is extremely suitable for densely populated districts. Especially after partition of the country as far as employment of people are concerned handloom proved most important. Though the handloom sector provides only a meager income to the weavers, still their monthly income is better than the hired labours in the agricultural sector of the region. Handloom has a large share in revenue generation and regional concentration in industrial development. Handloom industry creates different types of linkage, like human linkage, commodity linkage and monetary linkage in these districts. Government should take proper policies for the development and sustainability of handloom, not as subsidy, but as investment for profit generations.

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Questionnaire

1. Name of the Respondent ………………………………………………
2. Gender □ Male □ Female □ Transgender
3. Level of education [ ]Never attended school [ ]primary
   [ ]secondary/H.S [ ]Gradate& above
4. District …………………………………………………
5. Social group □ SC □ ST □ OBC □ Others
6. Ownership of dwelling [ ]Own []Rented []Others
7. Type of dwelling []kachha []semi-pucca [] pucca
8. Monthly income [] Below Rs.5000 [] Rs.5000-10000
   [] Above 10000
9. Purpose of loan/debt []Government []Money lander []Master Weaver
   []Friend or Relatives []Corporate sector []SHG
   []Others
10. Reason of idle looms []Lack of development []Lack of credit
    [] lack 0f weavers
11. Major source of input []Open market []Master weaver
    [] Master weaver [] Other
12. Where do you sell your Major products?
    [] Local market [] Master weaver []Co- operative
    [] Foren export []others
13. Nature of support requirement by weavers
    [] Raw material [] credit support [] Marketing
    [] Management & technological upgredetion
    [] Dyeing [] Don't know


2022/7/13 12:50


2022/7/16 13:44

SYNOPSIS

Hand weaving is the primary link between agriculture and industry. Primitive men started their first industrial activity by weaving fibers of trees and plage of animals for making cloth for themselves. Hand spinning and weaving is the second important art of human civilization after agriculture. It is perhaps impossible to assign the origin of any of the useful art like weaving, upon which necessities and comforts of mankind depend. The earliest records of the art of weaving are found in the Old Testament, where frequent hints are made to the handloom and its products, of curtains of fine twined linen of blue, purple and scarlet, with depiction of angel by skilled workers.

Various types of textiles were produced in various parts of the world. Linen is produced from the fiber of linseed trees, which are developed in coastal Europe. Wool most probably developed in colder areas of the world. It is believed that woolen fibers were first developed in Middle East, Afghanistan and Kashmir valley. Cotton fibers were most developed in India and Peru, simultaneously. One of the oldest known specimens of spun cotton yarn was found in the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, a city in the Indus Valley civilization, which was deserted around 3000 B.C. The irony is that, the word "Cotton" is derived from the Arabic word *Qutun* or *Kutun*, but Arabian countries were not the place of origin of cotton. It might be because Arab was on the route when Indian cotton textiles were exported to Europe. Silk, is considered as the most precious. All silk textiles were produced in and around China nearly 5000 years back. But this relates only to Mulberry silk. On the other hand it seems all other varieties of silk were developed in India.

A handloom is a loom that is used to weave cloth by hand. In other word handloom is a loom where weaving is done without the use of electric or automatic machine. Hand weaving is done on pit looms; frame looms and stand looms, generally located in weavers' houses. Weaving is primarily the interlacing of two sets of yarn- the warp (length) and the woof (width). The device that facilitates this interlacing is the handloom. It is important to mention that "handloom" is different from powerloom, which is a type of loom that is powered mechanically by electric instead of using human power to weave thread into cloth. The power loom is an invention that combines yarns to make cloth. Powerloom are assembled in the weaving shed of mill and driven by an electric motor by belts from overhead shafting. Powerloom is a major progress over the handloom.

Here is the historical evolution of handloom textile in India. Spinning and weaving were highly advanced in *Rigved* era. Greek historian Herodotous mentioned the presence of the cotton dresses in 445 B.C. During this period, costumes became regional or zonal in character, Royal people, soldiers, priests and other professionals were given separate costumes. Greeks, *Parthians*, *Kushans*, Shakes and Mughals influenced the Indian dress, as depicted on their coins.

Perhaps India is the country which has maximum contribution in textile, especially in handloom textile to the world. India has the finest textile like muslin, brightest textile like silk, cheapest textile like jute and strongest textile like ramie. Even today Indian handloom and spinning wheel contributes maximum variation of designs and products. India mainly produces cotton textile products. Woolen handloom products are also produced in India.

Different types of handloom products are produced in different regions of India. *Baluchuri Shari* is produced mainly in Murshidabad and Bishnupur areas. *Muslin* was mainly produced in Dhaka district of present Bangladesh. Now some other kind of *muslin* is also produced in Murshidabad and in Nadia districts. Wool is known as *pasham* in India and develops in colder areas like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, hills of West Bengal, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, and few places of Central and Western India. In Karnataka main districts of silk production are Kolar, Bangalore, Mandya, Tumkar, and Mysore. In Tamil Nadu sericulture was originally confined to Dharampuri and Coimbatore districts, but in recent times, spreads to Ramnadhampuram and other districts. In UP the main silk producing areas are Doon Valley, Ganjam, Gajapati and Kalahandi districts. In West Bengal main silk producing districts are Maldah, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Nadia. In Assam Mulberry cocoon rearing was traditionally grown in Shibsagar district. In Manipur silk producing areas are Laimran, Khur, Khul, Sekhmai and Fayang etc. Ikat *shari* is the unique product of Orissa. *Phee* is the classical product of the state of Manipur. *Dua* and *Puna* are handloom textile of Mizoram. Cloths such as *Rini*, *Basei*, *Risa, Pandari, Kutai, Rikatu, Baki and Kamchai* are produced in Tripura. There are also other verities of handloom products in different corners of the country.

Handloom weaving enjoyed the patronage of Indian ruler since Maurya regime. With the increase of demand of handloom products in India and abroad, complexities in the methods of organizations and operations were also grown. Royal power extended its help, protection and patronage for the smooth functioning and development of the handloom. During the *Mughal* rule, handloom textiles of India became the main item of foreign trade all over the world. Merchants of west European and Scandinavian countries used to collect these products from the notable manufacturing centers, like Bengal, Varanasi, Andhra, Kashmir, Utkal and Baroda to sell almost every country of the World.

As British Government took charge of Indian administration, royal patronage abolished for handloom textile industries. Weavers became independent. To mediate between European traders and weavers, *mahajani* system was emerged. British Parliament passed an Act in 1700 which prohibited the import of Indian Silk and printed calicos in Britain. The cotton fibers of India were so beautiful and cheap, that nearly all the governments of Europe thought it necessary to prohibit them, or to load them with heavy duties, in order to protect their own manufacturers. The demands for the fascinating textile items of Indian origin were remained unaffected in the countries of Europe, even after the imposition of prohibitive barriers against them in those countries till the mid eighteenth century.

The development of cotton textile industry of England was occurred through a biased and selfish commercial policy, designed to cripple its main competitor, i.e. Indian handloom textile industry. This task of destruction of Indian handloom textile was done with the help of royal political power. It was aimed at making Indian textile industry subordinate to the textile industry of Britain and mere supplier of raw materials (cotton) of the textile industries of England.

Since the First World War Indian handloom industry started to increase its dependence on Indian mill made yarn. On the other hand the bulk of the requirement for higher counts cotton continued to flow from the foreign countries, especially from America and England. As a result of the increasing dependence of handloom on mill spun yarn, the system of hand spanning almost ceased to exist. There was a drastic fall in overall employment power of handloom weaving sector in India. The market for handloom textiles continued to decrease because of the growing supply of cheap mill-made products. It is also important to note that Indian mill made products has little share of the market after the introduction of mill made yarn. Indian mill made products faced discriminations of additional burden of excise duty upon them by the British government.

After independence Central Government formed different commissions, and committees to know the conditions of handloom textile industry. These commissions made different recommendations and government took various policies. The most important policy is National Textile Policy 1985, which recommended for the reservation of handloom products. After the Spread of COVID-19 handloom textile industry faces unprecedented challenges. To meet the challenges, new policy for handloom is required for its survival and sustainability. The main reasons of survival of handloom were specialization in production, designs of different occasions and different tests. The absence of systematic and organized marketing facilities and scarcity of yarn compelled independent weavers to get into the traps of *mahajans* and money lenders.

Handloom weaving of West Bengal had received a great impetus after independence due to immigration of weavers in large numbers from erstwhile East Pakistan. They settled in different parts of the state. At the same time, age-old tradition of the handloom weaving of India suffered severe oppression and discrimination during the colonial ruler. Even after the independence, the concerned industry had to face the sufferings of partition of India as well as Bengal.

Now a days, the structure of the GST is affecting the handloom sector in the following manners. There is 5 per cent GST on cotton fiber in the form of hank yarn, previously it was nil, 18 per cent on dyes and chemicals, and 5 per cent on finished products of up to Rs 1,000 and 12 per cent on finished products priced over Rs 1,000. It was 7 per cent on finished products under the pre- GST regime. All fibers are treated as equal under GST be it natural fiber or synthetic fiber. Now weavers have to pay GST at every stage from procuring yarn to dyeing the cloth, or any other processes the product passes to become marketable. The price of the finished product would therefore be considerably higher, bringing down the competitiveness of the handloom products in the market. As a result, GST is negatively impacting weavers, master weavers, cooperatives, retailers, suppliers and ancillary workers. Earlier weavers used to get yarn on credit from traders, *mahajans* and master weavers. However, to pay GST on yarn, the weavers will have to buy yarn against payment. This is very problematic for maximum poor weavers.

Other problems are the conservative attitude of the weavers and their lack of proper training and knowledge about the current fashion and trend of the market. These lead to insufficient and inappropriate diversification of the products. States like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu successfully adopted policy of diversification of products. Acceding to the handloom Census 2019-20, 5.6 per cent weavers are under cooperative societies and 5.24 per cent weavers have taken loan from Cooperative societies in the state. This is the proof of very low success rate of cooperatives in West Bengal. Failure of the reservation policy for handloom is also a major problem for the industry. Numerous schemes were introduced both at the state and the central levels, but most of them failed to perform satisfactorily. With liberalization of country's economy, the modern textile industry has posed serious threat to the traditional handloom industry all over the country and West Bengal is no exception. Since the years 1997-98 budgetary allocations shows that the handloom sector funding is not at par with the increase of cost of production and inflation.

There are areas of prospects of handloom, if proper actions are taken for the development of handloom. Provision of rebate is not the solution of handloom textile. In order to get rid of the corrupted policy, the marketing policy should aim at encouraging only the production of those items which can sell without rebate, although able to make profits. To bring more weavers under the umbrella of co-operative societies, those working at present with *mahajans* and master weavers, shall have to be approached. As the products of utility and high artistic value, handloom textiles of West Bengal are looked upon by people throughout the world. In order to popularize the products of handloom weavers, systematic advertisement through electronic media, website, social media and expositions should be resorted. Side by side with the private traders, the government agencies may also collect orders for exploring the foreign markets, which will help survival and development of handloom textile industry of the state.

Through incentive scheme for MSMEs, Central Government and State Governments are trying to eradicate poverty. Micro small and medium scale industries are contributing more than 40 per cent of the total industrial output. Liberalization of economy and globalization are putting various challenges in front of small and medium industries. To overcome these challenges Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO) and NABARD are taking various steps. MSMEs are trying for employment generation of economically backward and unskilled sections of the population.

SHGs in West Bengal are mainly formed under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) and NABARD helps in collection of capital for the development of economic and health conditions of people using micro-credit and financial services. The State Government has launched Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) which was further expanded and developed. State government also launched Swayansiddha-Intigrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP). Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY) and Rural Employment Generation Programme are merged and new scheme named as Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), was launched. It delivers financial assistance in the form of subsidy of Rs. 25000 for setting up small projects. The scheme has been proposed to be implemented through Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), State/UT Khadi and Villege Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres (DIC) of State Government. Government of West Bengal launched Bangla Swanirvar Karma Sansthan Prakalpa (BSKP) for individual entrepreneurs (18-45 years of age) or groups (SHGs) preferably registered with Employment Bank and having monthly family income not more than Rs. 15000. The main purpose of this scheme is to generate employment by setting up of any unit of industry, trade or services etc. or getting loan for existing unit. Another scheme, jointly sponsored by Centre and State is Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY), where the share of Centre and State Governments respectively is 75:25 per cent. The main objective of this scheme is to provide gainful employment to urban unemployed and poor people through encouraging the setting up of small employment ventures or provision for wage generations.

Through West Bengal incentive scheme-2013 for MSME in Textile sector, 6 per cent interest rebate on working capital loan can be availed from commercial banks, nationalized banks, cooperative banks and other financial institutions by the SHGs, Primary Weavers Co-operative Society (PWCS)/Handloom Clusters, to ensure maximum capacity utilization of handloom in the state. One important scheme in handloom is Cluster Development Programme under Comprehensive Handloom Development Scheme (CHDS). The aim of the scheme is to facilitate sustainable development of weavers in or outside the handloom clusters into cohesive and competitive socio-economic units with self management. The main components of the scheme concentrate on skill up gradation training on weaving and dyeing technology, design development and product development, purchase of Computer Aided Textile Design system etc. Tanti Sathi is a front line initiative of Government of West Bengal, where new pit looms and accessories are supplied to the weavers and SHGs. Khadi weavers who have no looms or obsolete looms can be benefited with backup support for skill development from West Bengal Handloom Circuit Scheme -2014. State Design Centre for design development has a marketing tie up with Tantuja and Biswa Bangla. MUDRA scheme for weavers is a scheme introduced by Government of India on July, 2016. The ministry is providing subsidized fund directly to the banks as loan up to Rs. 5 Lakh over working capital to potential weavers. MUDRA- Rupay Card with a limit of Rs. 50000 has been issued to the borrower for withdrawing money from ATM as and when required. Success rate of incentive scheme for MSMEs in handloom textile of West Bengal is lower in comparison to national average.

The weaving industry of Nadia district has been divided into two zones - Nabadwip and Shantipur. In Purba Bardhaman district, Kalna and Katwa sub-divisions are mainly handloom concentrated zones. *Baluchari*, *matha* and *jamdani* shari or dhoti weaving process of Shantipur, has some uniqueness. *Tangail* and cotton *shari* weaving of samudragarh has also some uniqueness. These two districts have its own handloom production in the context of Bengal's handloom production system. Weavers' happiness, sorrow, joy and exhilaration - all are related to this weaving industry. Weaving is their only hope of sustaining the ultimate existence of life. Shantipur is the originators of *Kheru* folk songs. Many weavers in these districts are living below the poverty line. Most of these families live in houses surrounded by mulberry fences and tin sheets and made of tile sheds or tin sheds.

According to survey, in these two districts most of the weavers are from refugees families of East Bengal. Investigative data from various locations in these districts show that maximum weavers are local people. The head of the household (in most cases the eldest of the family) leads the whole process of handloom production and the other adult members of the family, including children collectively carry forward the whole production process.

The occupational structure of the handloom community consists of three categories:

- The *mahajans* enjoying maximum profit,
- Some independent master weavers are in the middle position,
- A large number of weavers, depending on piece rate system for their wages, posited at the bottom level with minimal profit.

The *mahajan* and the independent master weavers practically have a similar controlling position in the handloom production. The striking difference is that master weavers generally have their own looms and engage weavers by paying wages to work for them. *Mahajan* generally like the capitalist system, do not run looms and supply yarns to the weavers and also do marketing of the finished products. The weavers are mostly simple, lack formal education and negotiation skill and hence left with no other option other than depending on *mahajans*. They know that the *mahajans* are exploiting them and get the products done at low rates and sell them at considerably higher rates to consumers but are unable to confront the existing system. The district central co-operative bank plays an important role for supporting to the PWCS. Tiny weaver/master weavers / private entrepreneur are not getting substantive supports from them. As per the record of Nadia District Central Cooperative Bank, Only 84 PWCs get Rs. 10crore 50 lakh loan in 2021-22 financial year.

In many cases women workers are being paid less than the male workers, despite the fact that the cloth produced by women workers are being sold at good prices in the market. It is pertinent to note that there is no presence of strong union of workers in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts for handloom weavers. However, the cooperatives and SHGs have the support for women workers. Older weavers expressed that their children have nothing to do with the crafts and art of weaving. It is not sufficient income generator to live life with dignity. Handloom weaving appears to be largely an occupation of senior citizens.

Barring these economic issues, there are common health problems which came forward during a discussion with the weavers. The issue that needs attention is the prevalence of work related stress, problem of spine, back pain, eyestrain, headache, and hearing loss among the weavers of these areas. There is lack of proper medical amenities to address these health problems. Workplaces are congested with non favorable conditions of high temperatures and humidity, poor illumination, and high noise levels. However, many weavers are involved in the process of handloom production and as well as rural labor. The wage of a weaver was 300-400 rupees per ordinary *shari* before COVID-19. Now it is 200-300 rupees per shari. At present, there are not many employment opportunities in other states, especially after COVID. So many people rejoin weaving industry after returning from other states or other countries. COVID -19 has created a fear even among large part of the new generation.

More than 65 per cent of the weavers who were surveyed by the researcher claim to be migrants from erstwhile East Bengal. They have carried their skills along with them and are engaged in the current production process but have failed to recognise themselves at par with the population of West Bengal. The living conditions of the weavers continue to be dismal and they are sometimes even denied of essential social infrastructural facilities. Other problems of handloom of these areas are: the cooperatives are mainly situated in rural areas and these are financially weak and thus, it is not possible for them to appoint trained personnel to look after the management. Cooperatives face major production problem due to unstable and inadequate supply of raw materials. Maximum cooperatives are extremely weak in marketing and sales promotion. There is no provision for training of weavers in Indian Institute of Handloom Technology situated at Phulia. Only Diploma and degree courses are studied here for fresher students. Lake of loyalty among members of cooperatives to the PWCs is another problem. Leaders of cooperatives, in many cases want to gain personal benefit from PWCs. District cooperative Bank provides loan to PWCs, not to individual weavers. Political intervention in cooperative formation and functioning are major problems. Mainly weavers have to depend on *mahajans* for working capital.

There are significant mismatch between production and marketing of handloom cloth in Nadia and Purba Bardhaman districts. The decline of local markets for handlooms is a reality in present time. As part of natural calamities, floods are affecting the weaving industry of Nadia and its adjoining Purba Bardhaman districts in various ways. Almost every year more or less floods inundate the looms in Ranaghat, Phulia, Shantipur and Nabadwip areas, especially before *Durga Puja*, when the demands are highest. In monsoon handloom production also gets affected. In rainy days weaving becomes difficult. Weavers cannot move warp and woof smoothly. These areas are mainly situated in Gangetic plain and low land. Areas like Shantipur, Nabadwip, Ranaghat do not have proper drainage system. Water stagnation is a common problem in these congested areas. As a result water logging in the pit of loom paddles is quite common. Poor weavers do not have the capacity to make their loom room high by filling soil from outside. The price of per tractor soil is around Rs.2000. There is not enough space for entry of tractors, as maximum weavers live by the side of narrow bi lanes. As a result cost of soil is more for them for manual carrying.

Despite all regulations, there is a phenomenal growth in the number of powerlooms especially in the last three decades. In many instances, handlooms are being converted to powerlooms to gain immediate benefits. In many instances powerloom products are sold as handloom products violating Reservation Act of handloom. Domestic electricity connection of the weavers' homes is being converted into a commercial connection under the direction of the State Electricity Authority in many cases. The argument of WBSEDCL behind it is that weaving is a commercial activity, so domestic electric connection cannot be used for commercial purposes. Most of the weavers have common rooms for living and weaving. Numerous schemes were introduced both at the state and the central levels. Most of them failed to perform satisfactorily in these districts.

The areas of prospects are as follows: the handloom products of these districts have good reputation and in recent years, product diversification in the handloom industry has opened new opportunities for their export abroad. This industry, with its environment friendly production trend, requirement of low capital input, demand for human skill and manual labour is extremely suitable for densely populated districts. Especially after partition of the country as far as employment of people are concerned handloom proved most important. Though the handloom sector provides only a meager income to the weavers, still their monthly income is better than the hired labours in the agricultural sector of the region. Handloom has a large share in revenue generation and regional concentration in industrial development. Handloom industry creates different types of linkage, like human linkage, commodity linkage and monetary linkage in these districts. Government should take proper policies for the development and sustainability of handloom, not as subsidy, but as investment for profit generations.