

## Role of Handloom Industry in India



\* Dr. Usha N. Patil

\* Head, Department of Economics, G.S. Gwande College, Umarched



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### Introduction:

The Handloom sector plays a very important role in the country's economy. It is one of the largest economic activities providing direct employment to over 65 lakh people engaged in weaving and allied activities. Handlooms have been known to India right from the historic ages. The use of fabrics, techniques created to make designer art pieces and expressing ethnicity through them has been an integral part of India's base. Its power is such that Handloom industry constitutes around 14 percent of total preindustrial production and 30 percent of the total export business. Well, that's not all; it is also the second largest industry in India with important segments, such as independent power looms, modern textile mills, handlooms and garments. This made the handlooms popular in foreign markets also and raised their demand.

### Current Scenario in Indian Handloom Industry:

In India, there are many workers who are engaged in handloom sector, close to four-fifths of the workforce, is in the rural sector. Only 16% of these are in the urban sector.

Rather than the rural-urban divide, a more significant attribute of the industry is the highly skewed geographical distribution of the workforce in a few major states. In fact, more than half the workforce is concentrated in just two states. One state alone, namely Assam in the north-east, account for 38.6% of the total workforce. The second heaviest concentration is in West Bengal in eastern region. This has 17.3% of the

total. The next two important handloom hubs are in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh; each has a little more than 8% of the biggest concentration of handloom workers is Uttar Pradesh in the north with 5.6% of the total. These five States account for almost four-fifths of the workforce or 77.8% of the total. One consequence of the concentration of the handloom workers in five states is that it severely restricted the employment potential of the industry to these few areas and reduced the significance of the industry in large parts of the country. However, the geographic spread of the industry in the rural and urban sectors differs substantially. In the rural sector, the workforce in the handloom industry is concentrated in Assam 45.1%, West Bengal 16.8%, and Andhra Pradesh 5.9%, Tamil Nadu 5.7%, and Manipur 5.3% and the five states account for 78.9% of the handloom workforce nationwide.



Fig-01 Distribution of handloom workers by employment status (% share of total)

State	Independent workers	Under master weavers	Under SHDC society	Under KVIC owners	Under Co-operative	Under Private owners
Assam	96.2	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	2.4
West Bengal	14.0	59.5	0.1	0.2	1.4	24.7
Tamil Nadu	31.6	38.5	1.0	0.2	21.1	7.6
Andhra Pradesh	16.8	73.9	0.2	0.1	7.8	1.2
Uttar Pradesh	25.5	73.4	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.4
Manipur	96.9	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1
Tripura	98.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Orissa	54.8	27.3	0.0	0.1	13.1	4.8
Karnataka	45.4	15.9	15.0	3.2	12.2	8.3
Nagaland	93.4	1.5	0.0	0.1	0.1	5.0
Mizoram	96.8	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
India	61.1	27.0	0.5	0.7	3.9	6.8

The highest concentration of the urban handloom workforce is in Tamil Nadu 21.65%, followed by West Bengal 19.9%, Andhra Pradesh 19%, Uttar Pradesh 16.6% and Manipur 8.2%. These five States account for a marginally higher 82.4% of the total urban workforce in the handloom industry.

The skewed nature of the handloom industry is not just reflected in its location but also in terms of employment patterns. The industry is broadly dominated by independent weavers, who themselves procure the raw material and market the finished products. They constitute almost 61% of the employment and point to the predominantly craft nature of the industry.

#### **Handloom Products in India:**

Saris, suits, Kutras, shawls, skirts, lehngacholi, dhotis, sherwanis, kurta pajamas, jackets, caps, slippers, bed linens, table linen, cushion covers, curtain, bags and purses, carpets, mats, file covers.etc.

#### **Handloom Printing Styles in India:**

- \* Block printing
- \* Resist printing
- \* Tie and Dye printing
- \* Batik Printing
- \* Spray Printing

#### **Conclusion:**

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Handloom Industry in India is an ancient cottage industry with a decentralized set up. The industry is an age old source of livelihood for millions of people in the country. The Handloom Textiles constitute a timeless part of the rich cultural Heritage of India. The element of art and craft present in Indian handlooms makes it a potential sector for the upper segments of market domestic as well as global. However, the sector is beset with manifold problems such as obsolete technologies, unorganized production system, low productivity, inadequate working capital, conventional product range, weak marketing link, overall stagnation of production and sales and, above all, competition from power loom and mill sector. As a result of effective Government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes, the handloom sector, to some extent, has been able to tide over these disadvantages. Thus, Handloom forms a precious part of the generational legacy and exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of the weavers.