

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY - ROLE OF SAMBALPURI HANDLOOM WEAVERS.**Dr Rewa Singh,**

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ABSTRACT

Sambalpuri handloom is a traditional weaving craft practiced from generation to generation by artisans to attractive textile designs. It is the second largest employment provider for rural and urban India. This study investigates the socioeconomic condition of Sambalpuri handloom weavers in western Odisha.

For the motive of the present study, the descriptive research design was adopted to conduct the research process. This study was taken forward by a random sampling method for the selection of the respondents. A household was selected and from there further study was carried out. The research was carried out in two districts namely Nuapada and Balangir for the purpose of this study and from each district one tehsil was taken. The sample size for the study has five households in each district. In Nuapada district bhuliasikhwa tehsil was taken and from Balangir district bhalumuda tehsil was taken.

More so, western districts of Odisha are having significantly more handloom weavers. The majority of weavers are struggling hard to survive. There is a huge gap in income and expenditure, and the handloom weavers' socio-economic conditions are despicable. Earlier these sambalpuri handlooms were in glorious production in these western Odisha districts but now with changing times their production has reduced because of the worsening condition of the weavers. Some of the conditions that the weavers are suffering from are competition from the mill and power loom sectors and inconsistency of government policies.

Keywords: *sambalpuri handloom, textile, Odisha, weavers*

INTRODUCTION

The Indian textile industry has a complex structure, on one hand, it is marked by the presence of large-scale organized players, while on the other hand, numerous small-scale independent units are there. The Handloom industry plays a dynamic role in the economic development of our country India. This sector provides direct employment to 43 lakh people. The Handloom industry is concentrated on the many made art and traditions. There are a total of 30 lakh handlooms in the world out of which 85% are located in India. The Handloom industry is the oldest industry in the country, it has a glorious past.

NEED TO IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Earlier the weaving tradition was done by family-based work but with LPG (liberalization, privatization, and globalization) and the decline of sambalpuri handloom, this is no more a family-run tradition.

The condition of sambalpuri weavers in Odisha especially in western Odisha is not favorable due to a variety of reasons. This study represents the socio-economic conditions of the sambalpuri handloom weavers, especially in focus on western Odisha. There are many factors that have led to the decline of the handloom industry and the problems associated with the marketing strategies of handlooms.

During the pandemic, the weavers' households suffered a lot. Their amount of unsecured loans increased that numbered to various suicides. The majority of the weavers are not financially strong and their only occupation is weaving. With the gap between income and expenditure, the cooperative society is deteriorating which needs to be addressed and strictness should be followed to extend a helping hand to the weaver's community.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH STUDY

The study is planned to focus on the socio-economic conditions of Sambalpuri handloom weavers living in western Odisha. It is assumed that the problems of the weavers irrespective of their domicile are similar. More so, western districts of Odisha are having significantly more handloom weavers. The majority of weavers are struggling hard to survive. There is a huge gap in income and expenditure and the socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers are despicable. The rapid expansion of handlooms has doubled their problems. Some of the conditions that the weavers are suffering from are competition from the mill and power loom sectors and inconsistency of the government policies, the same could not be highlighted to the extent required.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The objective of this research problem is to elucidate the problems that the weaver's community of western Odisha faces on a daily basis and why is this particular sambalpuri handloom industry declining. The following objectives are framed to answer the research questions:

1. To explain that, as the handloom industry is the second largest employment provider next to agriculture, the government should take strong initiatives to strengthen the socio-economic conditions of the weavers.
2. To explain the handloom sector of India.
3. To interpret the present condition of the weaver's community from that of the time when this profession started.

4. To explain that sambalpuri handlooms are not just a mere piece of garment but a symbol of our cultural heritage.
5. To explain how this profession is coming to an end.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kar and Bhuyan, (2012) have conducted a study named, “Integrated Handloom Cluster Development in Odisha: A case analysis of Bargarh cluster”, explaining the value chain, the structure and composition, system and practices, operations and economy, and socio-cultural attributes of the cluster. It also briefs the Indian scenario and Odisha scenario of the handloom industry, the description and competitive advantage of the Bargarh cluster, and its SWOT analysis.

Mohapatra, (2014) has penned down a paper named, “A Management Approach to Sambalpuri Sari with a sign of Cultural Facets '. The paper culminates with the findings and suggests that to keep the Sambalpuri saree art intact we have to find out the possible ways how the weavers will get fair wages.

Tripathy, (2009) prepared a report on “Odisha handloom: Problems and Perspective”, to find out the problems and perspectives of Odisha handloom. Handloom being a decentralized sector there are a number of problems, due to inadequate finance, illiteracy of weavers, and lack of interest of entities that are responsible for the development of the handloom sector. There are a number of obstacles and problems in measuring the effectiveness of planning and controlling activities. The problems of handlooms and their link with the problems of growth and development are not yet acute enough to crystallize in positive remedial measures.

Naga Raju, G., and Rao, K. V. (2014) conducted a study on the socio-economic conditions of the handloom community in Andhra Pradesh. The study has been highlighted across Guntur district and also discusses the health conditions of the weavers. It is known from the study that the economic status of the weavers is not up to the mark due to their low income from their profession. In addition to the above issues, the study presents the perception of the youth of the community members and their attitudes towards their traditional profession. The findings of the study reveal that the majority of the youth from the weaving community is reluctant to continue in the profession and they want to prefer or change to other professions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design

1. Source of data - Primary and secondary data

2. Sampling method - Random sampling method and snowballing.
3. Tools for data collection - Unstructured interview Questions and observation method
4. Sample size 10 households

Findings

State Scenario of handloom Sectors

Weavers population	192339
Total Household	40683
Total no. of looms	43652



Source: Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts Department, Govt. of Odisha

Research Design

For the motive of the present study, the descriptive research design was adopted to conduct the research process.

Sampling design and sample size

This study adopted the random sampling method for the selection of the respondents. The random sampling method is a probability sampling option. This first step of the random sampling method is to select a household and from that further study is carried out with the help of the first household other households are selected and this is called snowballing. Both random sampling and snowballing methods are used in this area of study.

The research was carried out in two districts namely Nuapada and Balangir for the purpose of this study and from each district one tehsil was taken. The sample size for the study has five households in each district. In Nuapada district bhulia sikhwa tehsil was taken and from Balangir district bhalumuda tehsil was taken.

Sources of Data and Data Collection Methods

The study uses both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was collected from various sources such as journals, government reports, magazines, newspapers, reports, books, and government and semi-government organizational sites. The primary data is firsthand information that has been collected with the tools of unstructured interviews from sample respondents of the research area from bhulia sikwa and bhalumunda tehsil, participant observation, and photographic documentation.

Tools of Data Analysis

Suitable tools like the observation method and unstructured interview were adopted for the research study. These tools Main focus was on the general information of the weavers, their social conditions in this climate, their income and expenditure, their working conditions, seasonal impact on their production, and finally the government's role in the advancement of the weaver's community.

FIELDWORK PROCESS

This research was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher visited the village and interacted with the village people and the respondent's family to build a rapport among the community, which is one of the important methods of social work interventions.

In the second stage, the researcher consulted and interviewed the respondents who are important in this study, the weavers and their employees.

FINDINGS OF STUDY

SOCIAL FACTORS

Most of the respondent weavers in a household were between 45-50 or 50-60 in age. It is evident that there are rarely any people opting for weaving as their profession below the age group of 18 years. This could be the indication of migration of people from weaving to other activities. The number of people entering the weaving community after they cross 18 years is very doubtful.

Seasons also have an effect on weavers' daily life. Especially during the rainy season due to the rain, the machine in which handlooms are made(natives refer to it as khadi) gets stiff which makes production difficult.

As this occupation is mostly home-based it gives freedom and flexibility in the schedule for work. Although they have the luxury of flexible hours, because of limited resources and working conditions the production of the weavers is very less. As they work in their own home, the condition of these houses is not so good.

The working hours of the weavers are approximately 10 to 11 hours a day assumed in a fixed posture, seven days a week. Because of this dreadful routine the weavers result in severe back pains, constraint in the eyes, and pain all over the body and once again result in low production.

Job satisfaction among weavers is of utmost importance because it becomes a barrier to the growth of the individual.

Because of the lack of education, the weavers are unable to take advantage of the government schemes and the weavers are being exploited because of this.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The actual market price of a traditional hand-woven sambalpuri cotton saree is Rs 3000/-, the replica of the saree with the same design produced at power looms is being sold at a much cheaper price, ranging from Rs 300/- to Rs 400/-.

The wages of the master weavers have drastically reduced by 10- 15 % in the process. The income of the weavers family determines the standard of living and financial condition. This sample of respondents did not have any other source of income other than weaving as their sole income activity. Most households earn less than Rs 5000, which amounts to 60,000 per annum. Whereas some of the weavers earn between Rs 5000- Rs10,000 and some weavers who have more than two machines at home earn Rs 10,000 - Rs 15,000.

The average value of production of saree per household per month shows in a range of Rs 3200/- to Rs 6000/- depending on the design, skill, and labor diversification of the weaving household. It was found that the average number of pieces of saree produced in a month per weavers household is nearly 8- 9 depending on the weaver.

The weavers work under three categories, there are individual weavers, weavers who work under cooperation, and weavers who work under master weavers. But most of the weavers work under master weavers. The issue with this is that the master weaver exploits the weavers with access to credit, an expensive cost of credit. And the reasons why weavers don't work in cooperative societies are that they don't get enough income and are not provided with basic requirements. Individual weavers are the ones who work independently and sell their finished products directly in the market.

It was found that the majority of weavers' households found to be poor and lack access to mainstream financial institutions are not capable of keeping more raw materials and in turn fail in fetching more income. Raw materials being a monopolized item by few traders often affect the income of the weavers. The traditional weaving equipment reduces the output and in turn, affects income. Among the three categories, master weavers and cooperative weavers respondents are in deep indebtedness. The master weavers establish a long-term economic relationship with the weavers by giving large amounts of weavers wages. The prime reasons for indebtedness are home needs, children's education, and marriages

CONCLUSION

The poor socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers are the obstructions to the betterment of the handloom weaving section. The majority of weavers live in the kutchra and

the semi-pucca houses. Most of them lead unsatisfactory lives with inadequate earnings. Moreover, they also become victims of variation in the working days from season to season. To change the socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers we need to strengthen the monitoring mechanism and also need to improve the marketing facilities, through better designs and product diversification, accessing multiple marketing channels, and accessing working capital from the formal institutions, these strategies to some extent can improve the performance of the cooperatives. There is an urgency to develop independent weavers by providing them with modern infrastructure and new designs.

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