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6. A Comparative Study of the Three Handloom Censuses of India

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Abstract

Indian Handloom Sector of the Textile Industry is one of the second largest unorganized economic activities after agriculture sector contributing about 20.81% of the total household income as per census report 2009-10. The total weaver household units recorded a decline from the first handloom census (1887-88) 29.9 lakh weaver households to 25.6 lakh in the second handloom census (1995-96) to 22.6 lakh in the third handloom census (2009-10). As per the 2nd Handloom Census, the total number of weavers was 65 lakh which declined to 43.32 lakh in the 3rd Handloom Census. The decline can be attributed to factors like low productivity, low wages, low literacy levels, lack of market information, lack of quality standardization, insufficient promotion and advertisement, lack of finance, tough competition from power loom and mill sector, etc. Despite a decline in the overall numbers, it is seen that there is an increase in the proportion of full time weavers from 44.3% in the second census to 64% in the third census. However, the resilience which handloom weavers continue to show in terms of survival and ability to innovate indicates that the handloom sector still can be revived.

Keywords: Handloom industry, Handloom Census, Looms, Unorganized sector, Weavers.

Introduction

The first Handloom Census was conducted in the year 1987-88 and it covered 27 States/Union Territories. The first census was entirely conducted by the Central Government and it covered only handloom units, with the data collection being organized by the Department of Textiles. The Second Handloom Census was conducted in the year 1995-96 and it included both handlooms and power looms. On behalf of the Central Government, The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) was appointed as the nodal consultant. The responsibility of data collection was vested to the State Government through their own enumerators and supervisors who were mainly from the Education Department. The Third Handloom Census was conducted in the Year 2009-10 by the Development Commissioner for Handlooms through the NCAER again and it covered all the 30 States/Union Territories, across both rural and urban areas.

- Non household units owned a total of 2 lakh out of which 1.5 lakh were working and the rest 0.5 lakh were idle looms. Again Assam, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were the three states with highest concentration of looms.
- On average weaver households were found to work about 197 days in a year.
- The average monthly consumption of yarn by household units was 2.42 crore kgs. and non household units consumed an average of 0.5 crore kgs.
- The average monthly production of all types of handloom fabrics by weaver households was 21.6 cr linear metres and non household units was 4.88 crore linear metres.

Summary of the major findings from the 3rd Handloom census (2009-10)

- As per third Handloom Census, a total of 22.68 lakh weaver households were engaged in handloom activities, of these 19.85 lakh were in rural areas and 2.82 lakh were in urban areas. There were 3.91 lakh allied worker households in the country.
- There were 29.09 lakh handloom weavers and 9.83 lakh allied workers in the country. Of these 24.7 lakh were full time weavers and 13.75 lakh were part time weavers.
- 23.51 lakh handloom weavers and allied workers worked independently, 12.96 lakh worked under master weavers and 1.96 lakh worked under co-operative fold.
- There were a total of 23.77 lakh handlooms out of which 21.46 lakh were in order and 2.31 lakh were idle.
- 8.27 lakh weavers produce less than 1 metre of cloth per day.
- 8.93 lakh handlooms were for domestic use, 6.94 lakh for commercial use and 7.90 lakh were both use as domestic and for commercial purpose.
- 21.60 lakh handloom workers are from N.E states which constitute about 49.4% of handloom workers.
- On an average weaver household is found to work about 234 days in a year.
- During the year 2009-10, 5.31 billion days of employment were generated.
- 65,053 number of handloom workers are graduates and above by education.
- Average annual earning per weaver is Rs 37, 707; weavers of Nagaland earn Rs 50,000 annually which is highest in the country.
- 15.19 lakh weavers live in kutcha house, 8.55 lakh live in semi-kutcha house and 9.04 lakh live in pucca house.
- Only 26% of weaver households are interested to take up handloom activities for future generation.

- There were 38.9 lakh looms in India, of which 36.9 lakh looms were owned by the households and 2 lakh by non-households units. The state of Assam, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal were top three states, where maximum number of looms was found.
- Among the total looms, 36.1 lakh looms were in working order while 2.8 lakh were lying idle.
- Over 22.1 lakh looms are commercial looms and the remaining 16.8 lakh are used only for domestic purpose. In Assam alone, there are 12.3 lakh domestic looms.
- On an average weaver household is found to work about 194 days in a year. The urban weavers work for over 233 days while rural weavers are reported to work for only 188 days in a year.
- The productivity for about 15 lakh households was only up to 1 metre of cloth. This however includes 10 lakh households in Assam alone where most of the weaving is for domestic purpose.
- Total monthly consumption of yarn in handloom sector is reported to be 1.52 lakh tones.
- Total monthly production of all types of handloom fabrics is reported at nearly 30 cr linear metres.

Summary of the major findings from the 2nd Handloom Census (1995-96)

- As per Joint Census of Handloom and Power loom 1995-96, there were 25.2 lakh weaver households were involved in weaving activity in the country, of which 21.91 lakh household were from rural areas, while 3.30 were from urban areas.
- There were 34.7 lakh handloom weavers in the country of these 16.5 lakh were full time weavers and 18.2 lakh were part time weavers.
- 9.9 lakh weavers worked independently, while 2.4 lakh worked under co-operative fold and 2.9 lakh under master weavers.
- 17.3 lakh persons were engaged in preparatory works of which 5.4 lakh worked on full time basis.
- Household units owned a total of 32.9 lakh looms. Of these, 29.9 lakh were in working order, while 3 lakh were idle looms.
- Commercial looms formed 38.5% of total looms while 61.4% of the total looms were domestic looms.

Conclusion

The Handloom Industry in India is an ancient cottage industry with a decentralized set up and is an old source of livelihood for millions of people in the country. Thus, this industry is not only our past glory but it also plays a vital role even in the context of present Indian Economy. Over 25 countries are now buying handloom products from India. For the development and promotion of handloom industry, there is a need of the economy to identify the problems, strengths and weaknesses of it to make it profitable. Further, a need has been felt to empower weavers to chart out a sustainable path for growth and diversification in line with the emerging market trends. As a result of effective Government 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.

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locations. For the first time Photo Identity Cards were issued by the Development Commission for Handlooms to the Adult Handloom Weavers and Allied Workers. The coverage of the Handloom Census is larger compared to the previous census exercises conducted in the 1987-88 and 1995-96.

Objectives

1. To make an overview of Handloom Industry of India.
2. To understand the data base of the handloom sector at all India level for better planning and execution of handloom development programmes.
3. To study data on the number and types of looms, number of Weavers engaged directly and indirectly, their status, consumption of yarn, production of clothes, number of working and non-working days, earnings of the weavers etc.

Data Source and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. The main focus of the study is to do a comparative analysis of the key indicators between the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Handloom Census of India.

Secondary Data Sources

- 1) Census of Handlooms in India 1987-88, Ministry of Textiles, GOI.
- 2) Joint Census of Handlooms and Power looms 1995-96, GOI, NCAER.
- 3) Handloom Census of India 2009-10, GOI, NCAER.
- 4) Articles, Books, Journals, Magazines etc.

Analysis and Discussion

Summary of the major findings from the 1st Handloom Census (1987-88):

- As per 1st Handloom Census, there were 30.6 lakh weaver households in the country. Out of these, 26.3 lakh inhabited in the rural areas. The total population of these households was 156.1 lakh.
- There were 43.7 lakh handloom weavers in the country of which 22.4 lakh were full time weavers and the rest were part time weavers.
- 12.1 lakh weavers worked independently while 4.5 lakh weavers worked in cooperative societies and 3.4 lakh weavers work under master weaver. The remaining weavers work under private owners, State Handloom Development Corporation, Khadi & Village Industries Commission/Board.
- 21.6 lakh persons were engaged in preparatory works. Nearly 90% of the preparatory workers were women and children.

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