

‘Rehwa’ Nesting Legacy: A Study on Handloom Weavers of Maheshwar, Indore

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Abstract—

Handloom Weaving has been a well thought out now days as a striking pillar to uplift due to its newly recognized potential. From recent past years, it succeeded in gauging the required attention which was long due and if taken care of in yesteryears it would have been one of the corner stone in enhancing a major portion of our society. Being a niche producing industry it always marks a reflection of inherited asset of our country and steadily it is on the way to capture the marts around the globe. Undoubtedly the art as a profession has been labeled as the occupation for those who are unable to shift to other growing professions, and the evidence for this lies in current situation where many of the entities in the society is in the process of making remarkable attempts to conserve and cultivate the art. The study deals with making a descriptive research of one of that similar entity who aims to sustain the hand weaving tradition of Maheshwar. The investigation will foster to probe about the contributions it made for the weavers and the current situation specifying their satisfaction level of working under this society. The schedules were used to collect the primary data. Sample of 50 weavers has been drawn to construct a pilot study.

Keywords—weavers, niche, art, handloom, silk

I. INTRODUCTION

Handloom industry can be better referred as the collection of processing series that makes fabric using hand operated looms, which is interestingly capturing on employment front for a volume of over 10 million people in our nation. It would not be an err to believe that government played a key role to sustain this industry till now, apart from the fact that it succeeded more or less but somehow it managed well. Meanwhile in the time of emergence of the industry, entities, in the form of NGO made a way to produce social results by cultivating the art of weavers.

The handloom Industry traces the mark in the history with the evolution of Mohenjodaro and Harrappa Civilization. It has got the roots in our culture so deepened as the growth outputs of those roots are visible today in the form of contributions which are taking place today to continue that heritage.

Being a Niche producer, the unparalleled work speaks the value, and efforts are on to make the patrons identify this novel segment.

1.1 Prevue- Evolution

Indus Valley Civilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•With the excavation work underwent at harappa in 1921, spindles and whorls were found resulting to indicate the spinning of cotton was common practice at that time
Vedic period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The rigvedic period witnessed spinning, weaving and embroidery as an advanced occupation.•Woolen thread called Varna Sutra was mentioned in later samhitis
Mauryan period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Before Christian era, popularity of Indian Printed cotton fabrics had spread all over the world.•Stabilization of costumes design in india.
Mughal period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•By 711 A.D. Ancient Indian Fabrics included- Mulmul Khas, Jamdani, Morgala, Kasaba or sheet, jamawal and makmal.•Arab Countries- Abe- Hayat, Greece- ganjetica.•Rage in Rome Fashion.
British era	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•18-13-1830, Traditional art stood the test of time, by proving the possession of inherent Vitality and potential.

1.2 Handloom Production India:

Year	Cloth production	Exports
2007-08	6947	n/a
2008-09	6677	n/a
2009-10	6806	1252
2010-11	6907	1575
2011-12	6901	2624
2012-13	6952	2812
2013-14	7104	2233
2014-15	7203	2246

1.3 Handloom in Some Recent Yesteryears:

1.3.1 On 30th September 2013

1.3.1.1 The MSME notified the Khadi Mark Regulations 2013 in the Gazette of India on 22 July 2013 to ensure the genuineness of Khadi i.e. hand spun and hand woven, containing natural fibers (cotton/wool/silk), produced in India. KVIC is the Nodal Agency to monitor, verify and enforce the genuineness of products being sold as KHADI.

1.3.1.2 With the introduction of Khadi Mark, no textile can be sold or otherwise traded by any person or institution as Khadi or Khadi product in any form or manner without it bearing a Khadi Mark tag, sticker or label.

1.3.2 Khadi Village Industry Commission on 16th December 2015

1.3.2.1 Shall cover five lakh weavers in MUDRA Scheme in next 3 years and also to take up 300 more block level clusters for development.

1.3.2.2 Aiming to enhance handloom exports from about Rs. 2,500 crore to Rs. 4,500 crore in next three years

1.3.3 On 26th December 2015- The Government has decided to organize regular exhibitions/sale festivals in large cities across the country in order to provide regular marketing facilities for promotion of handlooms and handicrafts.

1.3.3.1 On 16th December 2015, The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is pulling out the stops to push khadi as upmarket clothing by roping in apparel chains to market the product in its quest to reach a sales figure of Rs 1500 crore. Raymond Fabric and Fabindia will dedicate a section to khadi outfits in 600 of their outlets.

1.3.3.2 The designs would have a Khadi mark on them and sold with a new label.

1.3.3.3 KVIC had taken the initiative for the registration of Khadi as a brand under World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

2.1 To study the contributions Rehwa Society made for the weavers

2.2 To study the satisfaction level of weavers on working under this society

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design has been adopted to obtain information concerning the current status

3.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Both Type of Data Has Been Collected

3.1.1 Qualitative

Current state of the society prevailing has been noted by opinions of the society administrators and weavers, and through observations also.

Weaver's opinion in terms of their working condition facilities provided, and difference in terms of their standard of living before and after being associated with society has been collected.

3.1.2 Quantitative

Demographic profile of weavers like age, gender, income level has been drawn as quantitative data.

Primary: Observation functional perspective of weaving, Non participant, structured, Controlled- value chain of weaving has been noted through observation method. Schedules were used to extract the information

Secondary Data was collected from Society publications and their website, MSME website and documents.

3.2 Sampling Design

3.2.1 Sample size

50 weavers response has been collected.

3.2.2 Sampling Method:

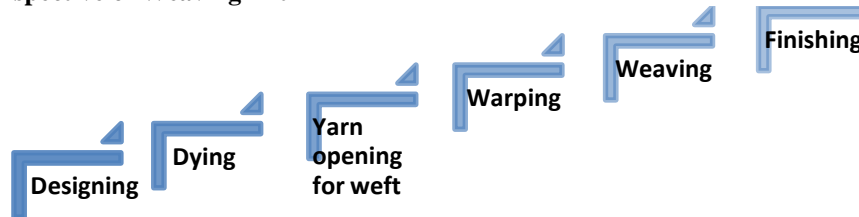
Simple Random Sampling has been done.

IV. REHWA SOCIETY

Handloom weaving dates the ancient history of some 1500 years back. Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar are said to be the one who contributed to a great extent for the rebirth of this art, she ruled at that time from 1765 to 1795, the former state Indore. By the time of India's partition in 1947, the local families who use to promote this elite art work earlier began declining and as a result quality of work and income of weavers both diminished. To cope up with the issue Holkar dynasty took initiative to establish Rehwa Society in 1978, the main founders were Richard Holkar and Sally Holkar. Central Welfare Board provided the fund grants to set up this society.

The beginning of this formal society had only eight handlooms at that time, but the concrete objectives of Rehwa made what it is today. The society had their goal to provide sustainability of Handwoven tradition of Maheshwar district. The distortion and exploitation of women class made them consider this women gender section by enlisting the aim to empower the females by providing employment and hence income to improve standard of living, lastly they made their focus to provide essential amenities to weavers' family free education, healthcare facilities and an accommodation.

4.1 Functional Perspective of Weaving Art



4.1.1 Designing

4.1.1.1 Usually Master weavers undertakes the designing of the saree by constructing the layout on a graph paper, the exquisite booty, motifs placement is the main aspect they design. color combinations are also decided by the master weavers or Mahajans.

4.1.1.2 if the cluster receives the order from outside clients then weavers are instructed by these mahajans only after finalizing the design

4.1.2 Dying

4.1.2.1 The process of making color threads is the most significant task in this value chain because this is what when knitted makes the final art piece. The remuneration is comparatively low with the designing but special dying technicians are employed for making the dying process done.

4.1.2.2 The whole process starts by dissolving the dye in warm water, the cotton threads are soaked for 30 to 35 minutes. After checking the intensity of the hue if required it is again dipped and left for another 20 minutes approximately. The hanks are then needs to be washed with tepid water and left to remain soaked in detergent soda and water. Finally after 20 more minutes they are washed again and air dried on huge bamboo poles

4.1.3 Yarn opening

4.1.3.1 Once the bundles of threads are received they are required to be detangled and stretched to make it more stiff and tight. To make the strands tighter it is transferred to charkha, this process is known as reeling, through which these threads are converted into small rolls, they are called as Bobbin

4.1.4 Warping

4.1.4.1 The bobbins which are reels of that thread is opened again and stretched in a way to adjust that onto two iron hooks which are into the ground.

4.1.4.2 To keep the strands detangled they are made to pass through two very fine and thin bamboo sticks, they are as long as the warp roll is. It is actually coiled with the roll to keep the strand away from each other. The ends of the roll are tied at 4 inches intervals. This way the thread is spread evenly on tanna.

4.1.5 Weaving

4.1.5.1 This task begins by placing the warp roll prepared in warping at the extreme end of the handloom, the exact position opposite to the weaver.

4.1.5.2 The three simultaneous activities begin on the loom now- right hand controls the string which is for providing the motion to shuttle carrying the bobbin of the weft across the warp threads. The left hand does the up down motion of the wood frame that falls on warp and weft threads to make desired designs so left hand controls where the frame has to fall to make instructed design. Both the legs presses the rutch which knits the warp threads to the weft ones.

4.1.6 Finishing

4.1.6.1 After the weaving is completed, the fabric is taken off the loom and sent for cutting. The normal length of a sari is about 5-5.5 yards

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To probe into the matter of issues generally faced by weavers certain studies were referred

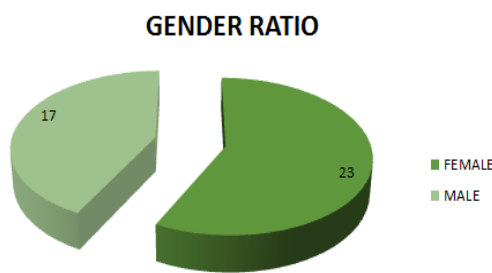
B. Prem Sundar (2013) attempts to familiarize with the current status and livelihood problems of unorganized women handloom workers and argued on the importance of social security. The author pinpointed the condition of women for weaving and the reasons why they diverted to weaving in a much generalized form, He also took up the issue relating to health a women weaver faces. The study lacks the specific points which can be noted alongside the data comprises Pan

India. It details the numbers of female weavers state wise. There are many other small aspects in a wide variety which prevails in different clusters. So we can't conclude their generalized points as the problems of women weavers. Suggestions were also emphasized in the study by the author who claims that women weaver soul have the facility to indulge in specific developme t programs, initiatives should be considered to uplift the literacy rates, free of cost medical facilities must be provided, and most importantly the entrepreneurship aspect must be introduced to them. **R. Raveendra** discussed about significant of handloom sector by emphasizing the market assessment need, problems faced by handloom sector, marketing strategy and suggestions and discovered marketing mix if Handloom segment with respect to six clusters; West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Manipur. Author shed the light on the complex nature of handloom industry which he believes is quite unorganized needs to have a detail assessment to know about several other players in the market. Due to a large number of agencies which share the same aim for the development of handloom like NIFT, NHPS, Ministry of textiles, they al lack the coordination which is much needed. The long value chain between raw material supplier and end user makes the margin differ widely for each player involved. Market tapping is also what is required to strengthen the handloom sector. Author also classified the Quality Standardization, improper management of logistics, mill looms as major competitions. Proper organization, well planned pricing strategy according to the target segment, working on brand segment were suggested as the remedial measures for the problems mentioned. **G. Savithri** undertook an exploratory study to understand Pochampally silk cluster. Pochampally silk comprises the ikat style of dying and weaving which is remark and possess uniqueness in markets. IKAT - is a type of weaving where the warp or weft or both are tie-dyed before weaving to create designs on the finished fabric. Author discovered the entire value chain of this art by looking at all the processes that makes the fina; ikatsaree. The cluster mainly deals with saree making but have few more product lines like towels, gamchhas pillow covers etc. The cluster also have a Handloom park which is a Govt Initiative basically for providing facility to weavers like accommodating around 500 looms comprising designing, tying and dyeing, weaving units etc, all under a single roof with a focus to sustain the unique Ikat technique on textiles. United Nations Development program and Minitry of tourism contributed to have alkat museum also for the handloom where the art of ikat weaving is promoted, it has got the amphitheater to showcase the process for the weavers. The famous Pochampallysaree has won Intellectual Property Rights protection or Geographical Indication Certification in 2005. It is the first traditional Indian craft to receive this status of geographical branding. The entire study provide a glimpse of pochampally cluster still much dimensions are left to be discovered in terms of weavers, other cluster actors, the facilities they receive and what exactly is required to uplift the art. **A. Mondal(2015)** examined the Indian Handloom in context of Globalization, It has been believed by the author that design process help weavers to identify opportunities hence the design program has been conducted in 6 handloom clusters of Assam. The paper aims at producing a sustainable business plan which comprises mainly the marketing plan to assist the competitiveness of cluster in the ever challenging market. It describes the evolution, geographic location, cluster structure. Various designers were made to visit the actual units and stayed there for 10 to 12 days to analyze the present work routine and then 5 day workshop by them followed for the weavers. The paper aims at producing a sustainable business plan which comprises mainly the marketing plan to assist the competitiveness of cluster in the ever challenging market. It describes the evolution, geographic location, cluster structure. Dhamdhama Handloom Cluster 17 units, GoreswarBodo Handloom Cluster 18 units, Poiranga Handloom Cluster 22 units, Palashbari Handloom Cluster 22 units, SipajharHandlowhichom Cluster42 units and Kaziranga Handloom Cluster/ 19 units were experimented. it was observed by the designer, that these micro and tiny level handloom units were situated at their home only run by the individual or family members, majorly women. The opportunity areas like- workstation, tools &equipment's, ergonomic issue, production process, products, branding and communication, short term and long term intervention etc., were identified during survey. After this 5 day interactive hands on workshop was followed wherein participants were made to develop some of the sample products, learn different finishing techniques, which can fit into their existing process. Designing intervention are required and the areas were identified as- Raw material, Eri cultivation faces a backdrop due to lack of food supplement, the eri yields less of raw material for weaving now as compared to earlier. Product designing with diversification needs to be taken care of will happen only when market trends will be tapped. Obsolete tools, ergonomic issues for theweavers, and branding aspects were found as the scope for the interventions. Still there is a way forward to press on the loopholes like providing the cluster weavers a centralized management and merging them with some know marketing units so as to make the cluster competitive, various NGO can be considered for this purpose,

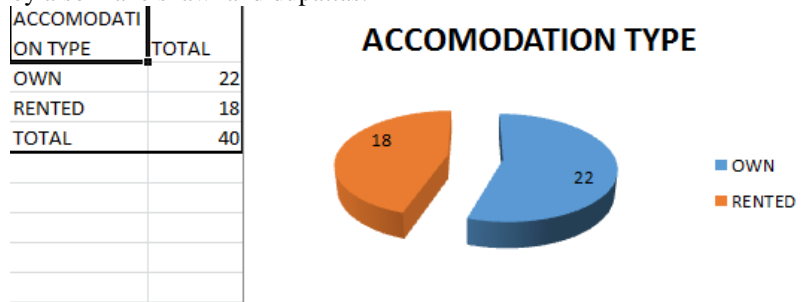
VI. ANALYSIS

With a sample set of 40 weavers the frequency distribution of the demographic profile has been drawn to shed light on the current status of weavers.

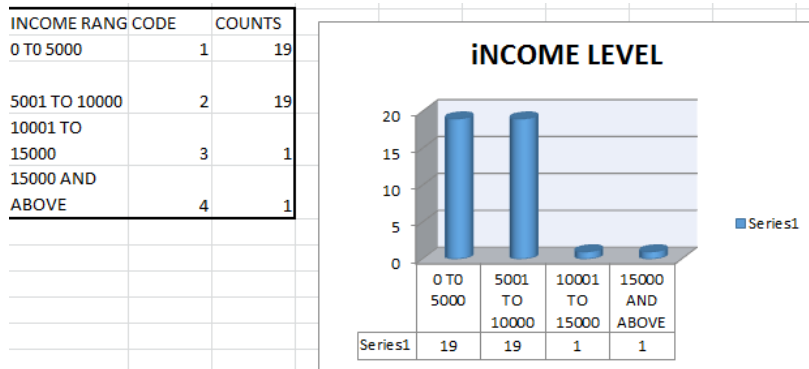
FEMALE	MALE	GENDER
23	17	40



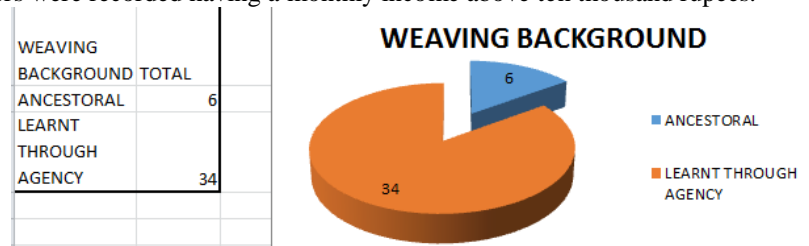
There were 17 male weavers recorded in the data set and 23 female weavers. Majority of them were engaged in making Sarees primarily, but they also make shawl and dupattas.



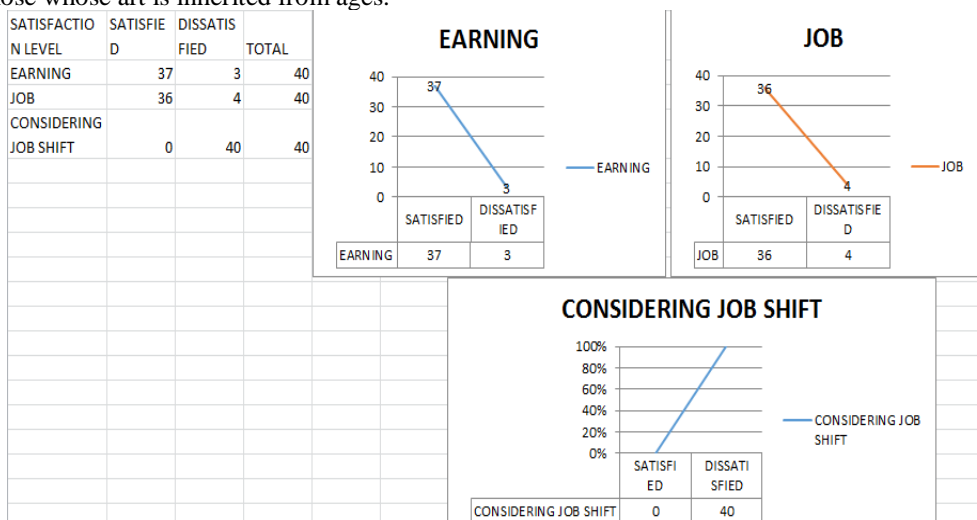
Though the housing facility has been provided by the society itself, there are many small flat accommodation built for facilitating shelter to weavers. The distribution above shows the weavers who reside in the rented flats by rehwa or if they own their own house in Maheshwar.



A major portion of the respondent set was found earning below 10000, on an average per saree the weaver ears 200 INR. Only two of the weavers were recorded having a monthly income above ten thousand rupees.



The weavers usually have another occupation running parallel to support the earning and they have engagement as a part time, or in some cases it was witnessed that they have their own looms at home by which they weave the maheshwar silk fabric and sell them in market. The art is encouraged by the society so there are a number of weavers who got the skill set of weaving developed by Rehwa, and however there are also major cases whose families from past generations were well seasoned in weaving silk. This distribution gave an insight of number of weavers who learnt the skill through society's support and those whose art is inherited from ages.



The satisfaction level of the weavers were asked through schedule on income parameter, the type of job they are engaged in and if they considering to shift to some other profession for livelihood to get a fair idea about their satisfaction.

VII. FINDINGS

Total Weavers- 180

Available weavers- 147

Interviewed- 30

1. Income of Maheshwari Silk weavers ranges Rs. 160 to 200 per piece.
2. They weave majorly silk sarees, shawls and dress material.
3. Exposer to fairs and Haat is very low, only 5% of the total weavers got the opportunity to exhibit.
4. Awareness about KVIC Schemes was found very low, only 13 weavers out of 30 were aware about KVIC Schemes.
5. Out of those 13 people who are aware about KVIC schemes, only 3 applied for KVIC Scheme and there application is under process, none has yet availed the scheme.
6. 94 percent of weavers were found satisfied working under Rehwa Society which took over Maheshwar Cluster.
7. Society also made them aware about CPF contribution, weavers contribute 12 percent of their earning into CPF, 28 weavers revealed they do contribute.
8. Some of them also have looms at their home and they earn in between 12000 to 15000, they work part time in society or one member of that family is engaged in society and others weave the silk at home.
9. The sarees, shawls and dress material ; all products are sold by society to wholesalers, those who produces at home with their own looms sell directly in market or engage dealer sometimes in between.
10. Most of the weavers were not aware about at what cost the saares and shawls are finally sold in market. The actual price for their saree in the market was enquired and it was in between 1000 INR to 50000 INR.
11. The weavers who weave silk at home and engage dealers to sell their sarees have linkages with good online brands to – showcase their products- Fabindia and Crafisan.
12. Around 3 weavers made the remarks regarding desire to have more pay per piece.
13. For housing facility Rehwa Society made 50 apartments to accommodate these weavers, 500 INR is the rent per month. The remaining weavers are located in either slums or have own houses or some other rented accommodation.
14. For their children education, they incur no expenses, Ahilyabaijyoti school run by this society only enrolls their children and bear all expenses on their own.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

There was number of reasons observed for the success of clustering the weavers under a group which facilitates amenities along with providing livelihood, and in return it is not taking anything but the credit in terms of good name and ownership of bein g a strong pillar to enhance the potential of weaving group. Following points can be suggested however there was not much loopholes observed;

- Such NGO or social entity shoul be encourages in more numbers so that maximum number of artisans can be located and covered.
- There should be a more exposure visits for weavers to make them more aware about the market trends, upcoming designs and preferences of customers groups.
- Awareness should be there for the initiatives taken by Government, there are number of schemes enforced each year to enhance weavers' productivity
- There must be some scope of innovation from the weavers side to boggle around to create novel designs.

As discussed there are not much loopholes found in the physical findings of this cluster under Rehwa Society, still the areas of improvements may arise time to time as the society will progress in future. Researches will definitely lead to new results pointing towards the success of such social players.

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