

Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weavers in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The handloom industry in India has become very popular because of the availability of different designs of fabrics and the manufacture of garments and dresses, which serve as the livelihood of millions of weavers employed in the handloom segment in India. The Andhra Pradesh handloom sector consists of around 1,76,996 handloom households, 6,32,663 handloom workers, and 1,81,506 handloom weavers. In this paper, the socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers have been presented as per the handloom framework conditions. The data has been analysed on the basis of handloom households, handloom workers, handloom weavers, religion of handloom weavers, community of handloom weavers, and male and female handloom weavers.

Keywords: Socio-economic conditions, handloom workers, households, weavers, religion

INTRODUCTION

The handloom sector has a unique place in the Indian economy and plays a vital role in the economic development of the rural poor. This industry, after agriculture, is the largest sector in India as it creates massive opportunities for employment, especially for the working class. Over a period of time, it has developed a lot with a rich cultural heritage that has created a dominant role in the Indian textile industry. It has widely spread all over the country. This shows the dexterity and artistic ability of weavers to produce attractive products. It has a major role in developing the livelihoods of rural people and eradicating poverty as most of the weavers live in rural areas. It is symbolic of Indian culture, forming part of the great heritage of art. These Indian cotton fabrics enjoyed worldwide patronage. The handloom sector forms both the warp and weft of the cultural fabric of India. It is one of the largest economic activities, providing direct employment to over 65 lakh people engaged in weaving out of this, more than 40 percent are women, and the vast majority are low caste and extremely poor, working in small family units. This sector accounts for nearly 19 percent of total cloth production in the country and contributes significantly to export earnings.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of the handloom weavers in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To study the distribution of handloom weavers in Andhra Pradesh.
3. To study the social conditions prevailing among the handloom weavers with the objective of finding out their place in society.

Analysis of weavers' position

The handloom sector is a major employment-generating sector, as is also noted as per the latest fourth handloom census of 2019–20 and the third handloom census of 2009–10 presented in Table-1. As could be seen from the table in census 2019-20, there are 1,22,644 handloom households in the country, providing employment to 177447 handloom workers, both weavers and allied workers, compared to 109776 workers in rural areas and 67671 workers in urban areas. Handloom worker per household total is 1.45, with 1.42 workers per household in rural areas and 1.48 workers per household in urban areas. The total number of handloom female workers is 86398 (48.69 percent) out of 177447 total workers. This includes 49.11 percent in rural areas and 48.01 percent in urban areas. The number of female workers per household is 0.70, with 0.70 female workers per household in rural areas and 0.71 female workers per household in urban areas. The total number of handloom male workers has been 91030 (51.30 percent) out of 177447 total workers. It includes 50.89 percent in rural areas and 51.96 percent in urban areas. The male worker per household total has been 0.51, with 0.51 male workers per household in rural areas and 0.52 male workers per household in urban areas.

As per the census 2019-20, 127662 handloom households have weaver workers (71.94 percent), of which 71.03 percent in rural areas and 73.42 percent in urban areas, and 49785 handloom households have allied workers (28.06 percent), while 28.97 percent in rural areas and 26.58 percent in urban areas are engaged in weaving and allied activities. The majority (71.94 percent) of handloom working households are weaver households, while handloom weavers per household average 1.04, while 1.01 per household in rural areas and 1.09 per household in urban areas, which means that at least one member of every such household is engaged in the weaving activity. A small proportion of 49,785 allied worker households (28.06percent) while handloom allied workers per household average 0.41 in rural areas and 0.39 in urban areas, implying that at least one member of each such household is not engaged in weaving activity.

During the handloom census of 2009–10, the handloom workers of 6,32,663 weavers were employed by 1,76,996 handloom households, with 3,81,576 working in rural areas and 2,51,087 working in urban areas. The number of handloom workers per household is 3.57, with 3.53 per household in rural areas and 3.65 per household in urban areas. The total number of handloom female workers was 2,35,370 (37.20 percent) out of 6,32,663 total workers. It includes 37.39 percent in rural areas and 36.93 percent in urban areas. The number of female workers per household was 1.33 per household, with 1.32 female workers per household in rural areas and 1.35 female workers per household in urban areas. Handloom male workers accounted for 2,44,403 (38.63percent) of the total workforce of 1,77,447. It includes 38.72 percent in rural areas and 38.50 percent in urban areas. The number of male workers per household to total has 0.39 per household, while the same in rural and urban areas also.

In Census 2009-10, there were 181,506 handloom households with weavers (28.69 percent), of which 27.91 percent in rural areas and 29.88 percent in urban areas, and 124,959 handloom households with allied workers (19.75 percent), while 21.74 percent in rural areas and 16.73 percent in urban areas are engaged in weaving and allied activities. The majority (28.69 percent) of handloom working households are weaver households, while handloom weavers per household average 1.03, while 0.98 per household in rural areas and 1.09 per household in urban areas, which means that at least one member of every such household is engaged in the weaving activity. The small part of 124,959 allied worker households (19.75 percent) while handloom allied workers per household average 0.71, 0.77 per household in rural areas and 0.61 per household in urban areas, which means that at least one member of every such household is not engaged in the weaving activity.

Basically, the handloom sector (weaving and activities allied to weaving) is concentrated in rural areas. It may provide more employment in rural areas as well as in urban areas. Overall, a higher number of male weavers are a slight difference than the number of female weavers involved in handloom activities. In fact, employment increased between the third and fourth censuses. The data shows that the female workers' percentage to total workers was 48.69 percent, an increase over the 37.20 percent in the third census of 2009–10 and the male workers' percentage to total workers was 51.30 percent, also an increase over the 38.63 percent in the third census of 2009–10. Weaver workers' percentage and allied workers' percentage also increased between the third and fourth census. This trend is true for both urban and rural areas.

Table-1: Distribution of handloom households and handloom workers of Andhra Pradesh

Handloom	2019-20			2009-10		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Total households (Weavers and Allied workers)	77065	45579	122644	108,114	68,882	176,996
Total handloom workers	109776	67671	177447	381,576	251,087	632,663
Total handloom weavers	77978	49684	127662	106,491	75,015	181,506
Total handloom allied workers	31798	17987	49785	82,943	42,016	124,959
Total handloom female workers	53911	32487	86398	142,656	92,714	235,370
Total handloom male workers	55865	35165	91030	147,733	96,670	244,403
Handloom workers per household	1.42	1.48	1.45	3.53	3.65	3.57
Handloom weavers per household	1.01	1.09	1.04	0.98	1.09	1.03
Handloom allied workers per household	0.41	0.39	0.41	0.77	0.61	0.71
Female workers per households	0.70	0.71	0.70	1.32	1.35	1.33
Male workers per households	0.51	0.52	0.51	0.39	0.39	0.39
Female worker percentage to total workers	49.11	48.01	48.69	37.39	36.93	37.20
Male worker percentage to total workers	50.89	51.96	51.30	38.72	38.50	38.63
Weavers percentage to total workers	71.03	73.42	71.94	27.91	29.88	28.69
Allied workers percentage to total workers	28.97	26.58	28.06	21.74	16.73	19.75

Source: Fourth all India handloom census 2019-20 and third all India handloom census 2009-10.

- Note: 1. 2009-10 handloom census differences handloom household children less than 14 years. i.e., 91,187 rural, 61,703 urban, 152,890 total
2. 2019-20 census male and female differences are transgender

The gender-wise distribution of the workforce of handloom workers in Andhra Pradesh is presented in Table-2. In total, male handloom weavers out of 76,812 weavers made 60.17 percent, whereas 60.90 percent of weavers living in rural areas and 39.10 percent of weavers living in urban areas, and out of 14,218 allied workers, 28.56 percent, while 63.90 percent living in rural areas and 36.10 percent living in urban areas, to total handloom male workers.

Total female handloom weavers out of 50,832 handloom workers made up 39.82 percent of these weavers (61.38 percent living in rural areas and 38.62 percent living in urban areas) and out of 35,566 handloom allied workers made up 71.44 percent of those workers (63.86 percent living in rural areas and 36.14 percent staying in urban areas).

Next, the total transgender handloom weavers out of 18 handloom weavers made up 0.01 percent, while the total 100 percent of weavers stayed in urban areas, and one handloom allied worker marked (100 percent) in urban areas.

The total number of handloom weavers was 1,77,447, with 76812 male weavers and 14218 allied weavers and 49,785 allied workers (63.87 percent in rural areas and 36.13 percent in urban areas) and 50,832 female weavers and 35,566 allied female workers (61.08 percent in rural areas and 38.92 percent in urban areas). Overall, the majority of handloom workers are male, with 60.17 percent being male and 39.82 percent being female. The analysis reveals that the small variance between the male and female workers, along with weaving and allied workers,

Overall, we conclude that male and female handloom weavers weave more than urban area weavers. The majority of allied workers live in rural areas, which is predominant among allied households also situated in rural areas.

Table-2: Gender wise total workforce of handloom workers in Andhra Pradesh

Gender	Type of handloom workers	Rural handloom workers	Urban handloom workers	Total handloom workers
Male	Weavers	46779	30033	76812
	Percentage to total	60.90	39.10	60.17
	Allied workers	9086	5132	14218
	Percentage to total	63.90	36.10	28.56
Female	Weavers	31199	19633	50832
	Percentage to total	61.38	38.62	39.82
	Allied workers	22712	12854	35566
	Percentage to total	63.86	36.14	71.44
Transgender	Weavers	--	18	18
	Percentage to total	--	100.00	0.01
	Allied workers	--	1	1
	Percentage to total	--	100.00	0.002
Grand total	Weavers	77978	49684	127662
	Percentage to total	61.08	38.92	71.94
	Allied workers	31798	17987	49785
	Percentage to total	63.87	36.13	28.06
Total		109776	67671	177447
Percentage to total		61.86	38.14	100.00

Source: Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019–20.

Note: Figures in total indicate percentages to weavers and allied workers total.

The Religion wise handloom households, handloom workers, and handloom weavers of Andhra Pradesh are presented in Table-3. It can be seen from the table that the majority of handloom households follow the Hindu religion. 1,19,198 households (97.19 percent) out of 1,22,644 total households provided to 1,72,658 handloom workers (97.30 percent) out of 1,77,447 total household workers, of whom 1,23,933 handloom weavers (97.08 percent) out of 1,27,662 total handloom weavers doing weaving work only.

Out of 1,19,198 handloom households (44.67 percent in rural areas and 55.33 percent in urban areas), the majority of Hindu religion provided 1,72,658 handloom workers (62.40 percent in rural areas and 37.60 percent in urban areas), of whom 1,23,933 handloom weavers (61.56 percent in rural areas and 38.44 percent in urban areas) did only weaving work. The average worker per household was 1.45, the average weaver per worker was 0.72, and the average weaver per household was 1.04.

The next highest religion of Muslims out of 3,342 handloom households (63.34 percent in rural areas and 36.66 percent in urban areas) supplied 4,645 handloom workers (41.85 percent workers in rural areas and 58.15 percent workers in urban areas), of which 3,608 handloom weavers (44.46 percent workers in rural areas and 55.54 percent workers in urban areas) were doing weaving work only. The average worker per household was 1.39, the average weaver per worker was 0.78, and the average weaver per household was 1.08.

The religion of Christians out of 60 handloom households (71.67 percent in rural areas and 28.33 percent in urban areas) contributed to 88 handloom workers (70.45 percent workers in rural areas and 29.55 percent workers in urban areas), of which 75 handloom weavers (72.00 percent workers in rural areas and 28.00 percent workers in urban areas) were doing weaving work only. The average worker per household was 1.47, the average weaver per worker was 0.85, and the average weaver per household was 1.25.

The religion of Sikhs out of 22 handloom households (54.55 percent in rural areas and 45.45 percent in urban areas) produced 31 handloom workers (41.94 percent workers in rural areas and 58.06 percent workers in urban areas), of whom 27 handloom weavers (40.74 percent workers in rural areas and 59.26 percent workers in urban areas) were doing weaving work only. The average worker per household was 1.41, the average weaver per worker was 0.87, and the average weaver per household was 1.23.

The Jains had 3 households, 4 handloom workers, and 2 weavers in the entire Andhra Pradesh as per the handloom census. The average worker per household has 1.33, the average weaver per worker is 0.50, and the average weaver per household is 0.67. The religion of the Buddhists had two households, three workers and two weavers, and the average worker per household had 1.50, the average weaver per worker 0.67, and the average weaver per household 1.00. The religion of the Zoroastrian was one each of handloom households, handloom workers, and handloom weavers. The average worker per household has 1.00, the average weaver per worker has 1.00, and the average weaver per household has 1.00.

The majority of Hindu and Muslim handloom households are to be found in all but all districts. The rural share of the Hindu handloom households is higher than the urban Hindu handloom households, and the Muslim religion follows dissimilar trends to the overall handloom households. However, a comparatively higher proportion of Hindus in rural areas and Muslim handloom households are located in urban areas, while a comparatively higher proportion of Christian households are located in rural areas.

It concludes that the weaving community comprises different castes. The major castes of Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists are generally masters at weaving their own varieties of handloom fabric, yet all the castes do weave all varieties of fabrics. So, it is felt necessary to distribute the respondent weavers as per their major costs.

Table-3: Religion wise distribution of handloom households, handloom workers and handloom weavers

Religion	Handloom households			Handloom workers			Handloom weavers		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Hindus	75501 (63.34)	43697 (36.66)	119198	107740 (62.40)	64918 (37.60)	172658 (1.45)	76296 (61.56)	47637 (38.44)	123933 (1.04)
Muslims	1493 (44.67)	1849 (55.33)	3342	1944 (41.85)	2701 (58.15)	4645 (1.39)	1604 (44.46)	2004 (55.54)	3608 (1.08)
Jains	--	3 (100.00)	3	--	4 (100.00)	4 (1.33)	--	2 (100.0)	2 (0.67)
Sikhs	12 (54.55)	10 (45.45)	22	13 (41.94)	18 (58.06)	31 (1.41)	11 (40.74)	16 (59.26)	27 (1.23)
Christians	43 (71.67)	17 (28.13)	60	62 (70.45)	26 (29.55)	88 (1.47)	54 (72.00)	21 (28.00)	75 (1.25)

Buddhists	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)	2	1 (33.33)	2 (66.67)	3 (1.50)	--	2 (100.0)	2 (1.00)
Zoroastrian	1 (100.00)	--	1	1 (100.00)	--	1 (1.00)	1 (100.00)	--	1 (1.00)
Others	14 (87.50)	2 (12.50)	16	15 (88.24)	2 (11.76)	17 (1.06)	12 (85.71)	2 (14.29)	14 (0.88)
Total	77065 (62.84)	45579 (37.16)	122644	109776 (61.86)	67671 (38.14)	177447 (1.45)	77978 (61.08)	49684 (38.92)	127662 (1.04)

Source: Fourth all India handloom census 2019-20

Note: 1. Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to total

2. In total workers per household and weavers per household

The social group-wise classification of handloom households, handloom workers, and handloom weavers in Andhra Pradesh as per the census 2019–20 is presented in Table-4. There are 25961 handloom households at an aggregate level of 21.17 percent of the total households that belong to general caste households. This trend is also found to be similar across both rural (83.73 percent) and urban areas (16.27 percent). The handloom households contributed to handloom workers out of 38519 workers, with 84.50 percent of workers in rural areas and 15.50 percent of workers in urban areas, out of whom 27168 weavers, marking 83.37 percent in rural areas and 16.63 percent in urban areas, are doing weaving work only.

But the largest social category is represented by OBCs, with 89708 (73.15 percent of total handloom households), especially in rural areas (57.14 percent of households) and urban areas (42.86 percent of households). The handloom households contributed to 129098 handloom workers, 55.59 percent in rural areas and 44.41 percent in urban areas. Among handloom workers, 93669 handloom weavers are working in weaving work, 54.73 percent in rural areas and 45.27 percent in urban areas.

Next, the schedule cost social category was represented by 5224 (4.26 percent of total handloom households), particularly 57.52 percent of households in rural areas and 42.48 percent of households in urban areas. Handloom households contributed 7628 handloom workers (4.30 percent of total handloom workers), with 55.15 percent in rural areas and 44.82 percent in urban areas. Among handloom workers, 5157 handloom weavers (4.04 percent of total handloom weavers) work in weaving, with 57.84 percent in rural areas and 42.16 percent in urban areas.

Lastly, the schedule tribes category represented 688 households (1.43 percent of total handloom households), on the whole, 60.71 percent of households in rural areas and 39.29 percent of households in urban areas. The households contributed to 2202 handloom workers (1.24 percent of total handloom workers), while 56.72 percent in rural areas and 43.28 percent in urban areas. Among handloom workers, 1668 handloom weavers (1.31 percent of total handloom weavers) are working in weaving work, while 64.87 percent in rural areas and 35.13 percent in urban areas. However, the share of all the social group categories of handloom households, handloom workers, and handloom weavers in urban areas is relatively low compared with rural areas.

Table-4: Social group-wise classification of Handloom households, workers and weavers in Andhra Pradesh

Social groups	Handloom households			Handloom workers			Handloom weavers		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Scheduled castes (SCs)	3005 (57.52)	2219 (42.48)	5224 (4.26)	4207 (55.15)	3419 (44.82)	7628 (4.30)	2983 (57.84)	2174 (42.16)	5157 (4.04)
Scheduled tribes (STs)	1063 (60.71)	688 (39.29)	1751 (1.43)	1249 (56.72)	953 (43.28)	2202 (1.24)	1082 (64.87)	586 (35.13)	1668 (1.31)
Other backward class (OBCs)	51260 (57.14)	38448 (42.86)	89708 (73.15)	71770 (55.59)	57328 (44.41)	129098 (72.75)	51263 (54.73)	42406 (45.27)	93669 (73.37)
Others	21737 (83.73)	4224 (16.27)	25961 (21.17)	32548 (84.50)	5971 (15.50)	38519 (21.71)	22650 (83.37)	4518 (16.63)	27168 (21.28)
Total	77065 (62.84)	45579 (37.16)	122644 (100.0)	109776 (61.86)	67671 (38.14)	177447 (100.0)	77978 (61.08)	49684 (38.92)	127662 (100.0)

Source: Fourth all India handloom census 2019-20

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to total

CONCLUSION

Handloom weaving provides a large scale of employment for 1.77 lakh weavers and allied workers after the agriculture sector. Therefore, there is a genuine need to promote the handloom sector, which could establish its pride of place on the industrial map of India. Overall, a higher number of male weavers is a slight difference than the number of female weavers involved in handloom activities. In fact, the employment increased between the third and fourth census shows that the female workers' percentage to total workers was 48.69 percent, an increase over the 37.20 percent in the third census 2009–10 and the male workers' percentage to total workers was 51.30 percent, also an increase over the 38.63 percent in the third census 2009–10. Weaver workers' percentage and allied workers' percentage also increased between the third and fourth census. This trend is true for both urban and rural areas.

Fulfilling the basic needs of people for growth and improving the living standards of the weaver and his family. Having studied the socio-economic conditions of weavers' societies, an attempt has been made to offer a few suggestions for improving the plight of handloom weavers' societies.

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