

# **Annual Report**

**April, 2004 – March, 2005**

**Chetana Society**

**H. No. 5-111/1, Chinthal-Shivanagar, HMT Road, Hyderabad**

# **Main Report**

## **Introduction**

Handloom sector is a very traditional rural profession in India. Over decades, this sector has undergone enormous changes. Some are discernible, and some are not. Some are tangible and some others are intangible. Changes in types of cloth production in each of the major handloom centers have received some attention – for example, Chirala has completely abandoned the RMHK. However, there have been no efforts to map these changes and relate them to the factors which necessitated such changes. Establishing these linkages and subsequent communication of the same to the weavers would help them in understanding their profession in retrospection. Such a project would help the weavers in mobilising themselves towards further change in order to protect their livelihoods and also preserve their skills and art for years to come.

Further, some of the changes such as migration of other castes in and out of this profession, and out migration of traditional communities require closer attention.

As the social development concepts are evolving, it is no longer comfortable to say that tradition has to be continued come what may. The choice of choosing one's own livelihood lies with the individual families and their peer group. Elitist cultural views and the arguments of lovers of Indian traditions lose their ground (conservation of rich Indian heritage and art forms) when one witnesses the misery and poverty of handloom weavers. Rich designs, exotic weaving and colourful clothes do not help these hapless people to come out of their problems. Modern societies have done nothing in helping them, though sympathetic to an extent in certain sections. Handloom weavers are still continuing with this profession because that is the only way they know to earn their livelihood. Should the larger society allow these people to continue to live in poverty and further poverty? Does the government and Indian

patriots (who hail India when it wins its cricket matches) have no responsibility towards those professions which declare and dazzle the Indianness in the way we live?

Handloom sector like any rural sector is also riddled with rigid customs, inequity and dogmatic cultural values. When a student of social development comes across these problems, the response immediately would be to reform or educate or create awareness or restructure the whole sector. But does the sector withstand such changes? Or, to rephrase the question, are these dogmatic traditions the pillars of strength of the sector? Yes and no, depending on how one sees it. Yes, because some the relations of production are based on such traditions such as wages. No, because the sector is popular because of its rich art form and freedom from 'assembly line' of production. An important question is, if there is an agreement on the need to bring in some positive social changes, how do we do that and in what form?

Presently, as there is change in perception of the people in what they see as development for themselves (families/ individuals), there is an emphasis on moving beyond this profession. This is an assumption, unsubstantiated by any scientific survey, but based on assessment done at the field level. Fair enough, but this is where the inequity comes in. Most families, which can afford, encourage their children for modern education and seek better employment prospects. There is priority here – boys get the priority over girls. Girls do continue in this family profession. Further, though there are aspirations, invariably boys end up studying upto Tenth class or whereabouts. Thus, they become redundant for the jobs - traditional family profession and modern employment. It is the girls who often supplement or sustain the income of the family. It is their work, which helps in saving for their marriages and sustains the family livelihood. Thus, today handloom profession at the production level is mostly dependent on women and girls in most areas.

Within the sector, relatively, there is 'neglect' of certain sections – women, children, SCs, STs, rural weavers, unorganized in this unorganized sector, regional variations, pre-loom process workers, independent weavers, old, physically challenged and the youth. Women and

girls face enormous problems in terms of health, and wages. Further, some 'skilled' works have been relegated to 'old' people who are paid very low wages. People and the sector do not care for their old, who might have had skills, knowledge and the zeal to work.

Towards this, Chethana Society has taken up a project with the support for Oxfam (GB) India, titled "Information Dissemination and Policy Advocacy on Handloom Sector". Objectives of this programme include:

- Documentation of information on handloom sector.
- Collection of primary and secondary information on handloom people and their situation.
- Dissemination of information on the sector among the handloom weavers, and the policy makers.
- Develop information to be accessed by handloom weavers, journalists, students, teachers, NGOs and policy makers.
- Facilitate the formation of a network.

### **Activity Report**

In this reporting period, the following has been achieved, in line with the objectives of project:

1. Widened the network through KHC, surveys and workshops
2. More visibility for the work
3. Gained experience in production group formation and market access
4. Improvement in knowledge of the team through practical and field learning
5. Dissemination of information and ideas through workshops, meetings and publications
6. Continuous collection of information

## **Information documentation and analysis**

Primary survey work was done in Anantapur and East Godavari districts. These surveys were also done with the aid of a prepared questionnaire. Reports are under preparation based on the primary and secondary information collected.

Methodology followed for the surveys:

1. Pre-survey visit to map the areas
2. Preparation of questionnaire
3. Survey
4. Parallel collection of secondary information
5. Information collation and analysis
6. Preparation of report

These surveys have served the following purposes:

- i. Learning for the team
- ii. Establishment of contacts and networks with handloom weavers directly and also with their representatives
- iii. Mutual sharing of information
- iv. More importantly, development of primary information on the conditions, and aspirations of the handloom weavers

### ***Studies – Handloom information and statistics***

1. Central and State Budgets for Handloom sector, March, 2005
2. Handloom situation in Anantapur district, December- , 2005
3. Handloom situation in East Godavari district, March- , 2005

## **Information Dissemination**

A district-level workshop was organized for a day. The aim of this workshop was to share information with them and also learn from them. Information shared with them included international happenings (Agreement on Textiles and Clothing, and its implications), national policy changes, scenario in Indian textile sector, problems before handloom sector and options available for handloom weavers. This included sharing of myths and assumptions on handloom sector by the policy makers, especially officials.

Participants shared their personal problems related to wages, health, working conditions, production relations, and their perception of the future. It was apparent that most of them were unaware of sectoral issues at the larger level. There was appreciation for providing information and opportunity to discuss their issues.

These forays into the people have enabled the assessment of the status of civil society within handloom sector, especially the weaver-related fronts of political parties and their role.

One Fact sheet on allocations to handloom sector in Central and State budgets' was brought. This included information on various schemes, ten years of central budget and five years of State budget.

## **Formation and training of Market Access for Production Groups**

Under this programme, 5 self-help groups in Nalgonda district and 6 groups in Prakasam district were formed. However, each of the groups are in different stages of formation in terms of networking, understanding among members, records and books, capacities and preparedness to respond to the market needs.

There have been efforts to negotiate with the banks and government departments to enable financial support. In addition to the above, the socio-economic, cultural situation of

handloom weavers in Nalgonda and Prakasam districts brings in different challenges for the programme. Handloom weavers have been used to three kinds of production relations: master weaver, cooperatives and independent. SHG-based production is new to them and the ethos of handloom production. Further, the dormant issues of gender, equity, wages, production relations, empowerment, etc. need also to be addressed in the SHG group formation.

Given the crisis in handloom sector (drying up of work and wages), weavers are reluctant to change to another mode of production without any model. Development of a model is crucial here, before something can be scaled up to more number of groups.

### **Know Handloom Campaign**

“Know Handloom Campaign” was taken up in a bid to gather wider support for handloom sector and its issues from the larger society as well. It was thought by getting support from writers, including story-writers, poets, song writers, would help in wider and deeper dissemination of information and subsequent discussion of handloom issues.

Awareness campaigns were taken up in colleges. These campaigns were planned to enthuse the students to participate and learn. Three types of competitions were held – essay writing, elocution and drawing. Prizes were announced for the best three in each event. A presentation was also made. For essay writing, students were provided with handloom publications, two days prior to the competition, since there is no published information to refer. Girls and faculty members of these colleges responded quite enthusiastically.

### **Events**

Date	Event	Place	Number	Resource persons
8 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2005	KHC (College)	Sir C.R. Reddy Women’s College, Eluru	300 Students	1. Mrs. N. Aruna, Principal
4-5 <sup>th</sup> March,	KHC (College)	Kadapa Govt. Polytechnic	100 Students	1. Ramachandraiah, Asst. Director, Dist. H&T

2005		College for Women		2. P. Peeraiah, D.O. 3. Lakshmi Kantharao, Principal
21-22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2005	KHC (College)	Swami Ramananda Tirtha Institute of Science & Technology, Nalgonda	60 Students	1. K.B. Tilak, (Freedom Fighter) 2. T. Venkata Reddy, Principal 3. Arunakar Reddy, Vice Principal 4. Katta Anantha Reddy, Chairman 5. Punna Anjaiah, Journalist
19 <sup>th</sup> March, 2005	KHC Workshop (Lawyers)	Vijayawada	126 advocates	1. Ch. Divakar Babu, Consumer Guidance Society 2. Krishna Rao, President, Vijayawada Bar Association
3 <sup>rd</sup> April, 2005	KHC Doctors	Warangal	145 doctors	1. P. Damodar, Sarvodaya Youth Organisation
17 <sup>th</sup> April, 2005	KHC (Writers)	Ananthapur	150 Writers and Handloom Weavers	1. Shanthi Narayana, Writer 2. Sasikala, Lecturer 3. Premchand, Writer 4. Dr. Balakumari 5. Dr. Veerabadrudu 6. P. Govindu, CPI
7 <sup>th</sup> March, 2005	District level Workshop	Krishna Kalamandir, Ananthapur	125 Handloom weavers	1. Prof. Seshaiyah, SKD University Law 2. Ramakrishna, Ex-MLA (CPI) 3. Konda Reddy, Ex-MLA (CPM)

### ***Staff Training***

Gender Training, 9-11 March, 2005, MANAGE, Hyderabad, organized by Oxfam (GB) India

### ***Participation in Meetings and workshops***

1. Staff participated and talked to handloom weavers who came for the Mega Medical Camp, on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2005, organized by a coalition of private individuals and organizations, at the Government Hospital, Chirala.
2. Cluster development meeting, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2005, at Chirala, organized by Dasthakar Andhra
3. Meeting on Dalith Handloom weaver problems, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2005

### ***Other meetings***

Round Table meeting on budget, in Chirala, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2005

Press Conference and Report release, at NSS, Hyderabad, on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2005.

**Know Handloom Campaigns – Other sections**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Organized with</b>	<b>Target Sections</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> March, 05	Vijayawada	Consumer Guidance Society, Vijayawada and Bar Association	Lawyers	Globalization and handloom sector	126

**Know Handloom Campaigns (Colleges)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>			
			<b>Essay Writing</b>	<b>Elocution</b>	<b>Drawing</b>	<b>Total</b>
18-02-05	Eluru	Sir C.R. Reddy Women's College	55	14	8	77
4-5 March'05	Kadapa	Govt. Polytechnic for women	13	7	-	20
21-22 March'05	Nalgonda	SRT Institute of Science & Technology	15	6	4	25