

## **An Overview of Silk Handloom Weavers' Co-Operative Societies**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In India, co-operative movement was introduced by passing a separate legislation known as co-operative credit societies Act of 1904. It permitted the formation of credit society and not the non-credit societies and central societies. These major deficiencies in this Act were rectified by passing another legislation known as co-operative societies Act of 1912. This Act of 1912 permitted the formation of credit as well as non-credit societies and local Governments were entrusted with the task of administering the Act. The importance of sericulture was recognized even in the pre-independence period and steps were taken to check the declining trend in silk industry in 1914 by constituting a two-man committee with Mr. H.MaxwellLefroy and Mr. E.C.Ansorge to study the problems of the silk industry and suggest the steps to be taken for revival. The Committee traced the declining trend of Indian silk industry primarily with a view for the reason of the lack of organization, in proved technology and capital. According to the report, the silk industry was largely in the hands of the dealers whose interest appeared only to 'get rich quick' at the cost of the poor craftsman, quality of the end product and the production itself. Lefroy observed that "The worker, ground down continuously by pressure of circumstances and want of capital through generations of struggle had never enjoyed proper understanding with the dealer and both do not see eye to eye on the interests of the industry as a whole".

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Government of India appointed Royal Commission on agriculture in 1928; it felt the need for the development of village industries on co-operative lines which was so essential for their survival in the face of increasing competition from the organized industry. The silk industry faced the slump of 1930's. Added to this the Indian silk industry faced severe competition from China and Japan during 1931-32 which crippled the silk industry. The Tariff Board conducted an enquiry of silk industry for the first time in 1933 and concluded that the industry could not exist by itself without protection. The Tariff protection was granted to the silk industry in 1934. In 1941 the Government of India appointed a Fact Finding Committee and recommended the formation of an All India Handloom Board to look after the raw materials, marketing and administration of grants in aid.

The Second World War gave a boost to the silk industry. To cope with the demand, a Silk Conference was called for by the Government of India in January 1942 and a drive was initiated to increase the output of raw silk under the 'Filature Expansion Scheme'. The boom enjoyed by the silk industry during the period of the war came to an abrupt end with the end of the war in 1945. To revive the silk industry from the slump, Government of India constituted an expert panel in 1945 to give recommendations for the development of silk industry. The panel gave its recommendation in 1946 and recommended the setting up of an efficient and capable

organization for implementing the policy calculated to develop the Indian silk industry to the limits of its natural scope. The organization to be devised was to combine an intimate knowledge of the industry on both technical and commercial sides with official authority to give effect to its findings. The panel recommended the setting up of a Central Silk Board so as to bring together the knowledge and interests of all silk producing parts of the country by giving reasonable participation to them in deliberations on matters of policy. Based on the recommendations of the silk panel.

All India Handloom Board was constituted in 1945 which functioned till 1947. The Central Silk Board was constituted by enacting the CSB Act in 1948. The Central Silk Board (CSB) was created as a statutory body under the administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, under an Act of Parliament in April 1949. The Board was entrusted with the over-all responsibility of developing silk industry covering the full gamut of sericulture activities in the country. The non-credit co-operatives also are linked up with the State Co-operative Bank in the matter of finance. In the case of many such societies, attempts have been made to set up federal organization for giving the necessary guidance. In some cases, these organizations provide finance also.

## **2. SILK HANDLOOM WEAVERS CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN TAMIL NADU**

Tamil Nadu has weavers who have migrated from other states. Many of these migrants are from Saurashtra and Andhrapradesh. Some of the Saurashtrians migrated more than 700 years ago. The Tamil Nadu weavers belong to the mudaliar. The Government of Madras took keen interest in the development of handloom industry only at the beginning of the present century. Fly shuttle looms were introduced in 1901.

The first Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society was formed in 1905 in TamilNadu after the co-operative societies Act had come into existence. From that time onwards, the number of weavers' co-operative societies has been increased. Later, weaving factories were started and a Textile institute was opened in 1922 to provide training and technical assistance to weavers and co-operative forms of organizations.

The Tamil Nadu Handloom weavers' co-operative society limited popularly known as "Co-optex" was established in 1935 under co-operative societies act with the main objective of organizing and promoting the Handloom industry in Tamil Nadu on a commercial basis. The apex handloom weavers' co-operative society in the state known as 'Co-optex' to which all the primary weavers' co-operative societies have been affiliated, plays a very important role in regard to supply of essential inputs and providing very effective marketing support to the handloom within the co-operative fold.

Tamil Nadu has once again taken the lead. The Tamil Nadu weavers' Society was set up in Madras in 1935. It co-ordinates the activities of all the primary weavers' societies in the State, helps them in the procurement of raw materials and arranges for the marketing of their finished goods. Kancheepuram is the nucleus of silk weaving in Tamil Nadu, there is little wonder then that the weavers of Kancheepuram organized the first primary silk handloom production society in Kancheepuram in 1955 by the name "The Kamakshiamman silk production co-operative society".

The Department of Handlooms and Textiles was bifurcated from the Co-operative Department during 1956 and functioning as a separate department, in order to seek improvement in livelihood of lakhs of weavers in the state. Weaving industry is one of the ancient industries in Tamil Nadu and the silk fabrics produced were exported to foreign countries. Silk Handloom weavers' co-operative societies are mainly concentrated in Kancheepuram, Arani, Dharma Aram, Thirubuvanam and Salem. It opened up the possibility of establishing silk weavers' societies in other areas also. These are Co-operative Societies registered as Handloom Silk Weavers' Co-operative Production and Sales societies, under the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Societies Act 1961.

Since 1970, the Tamil Nadu Government has been taking vigorous steps for the growth of silk weavers' co-operatives. In 1972, the Government of Tamil Nadu appointed an Expert Committee on Handloom Industry under the Chairmanship of ThiruK.Santhanam, to study the various problems. It suggested other type of handloom industry and various measures for the growth of the industry. In 1978, the Tamil Nadu State Silk Producers' Industrial Co-operative Marketing Federation (TANSILK) was organized with a view to provide marketing facilities to its members. The Federation collects silk from its members such as reelers, silk reelers' co-operative societies etc; and sales co-operatives, and industrial co-operatives.

#### **CIRCLE WISE CLASSIFICATION OF SILK HAND LOOM WEAVERS CO - OPERATIVE SOCIETIES**

<b>SL.NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF THE CIRCLE</b>	<b>NO. OF SOCIETIES</b>
1.	Kancheepuram	28
2.	Vellore	05
3.	Karur	01
4.	Cuddalore	02
5.	Kumbakonam	26
6.	Thiruvarur	07
7.	Salem	30
8.	Tiruchengode	11
9.	Coimbatore	04
<b>Total No.of societies</b>		<b>114</b>

Source: Records of the Directorate of Handloom and Textiles

**TABLE NO 1**

The Directorate is responsible for evolving policies, programmes and various schemes in respect of Handlooms, Power looms and Textiles with the support of the Government to achieve the objectives of the Department. The Director of Handlooms and Textiles is the functional Registrar for the weavers' co-operative societies (Handlooms and Power Looms) through the State who has been vested with the powers under the Tamil Nadu Co-operative Societies Acts and Rules. The Commissioner of Handlooms and Textiles is also functioning as the State Textile Authority in respect of implementation of Textile Development and Regulation Act 1993. Handloom Weavers Co-operative Societies are affiliated to the office of Assistant Director of Handlooms and Textiles at the state level for effecting efficient co-ordination, supervision, control and progress. There are 114 (2013) weavers' co-operative

societies exclusively for silk handlooms in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu stands front in the country in the Cooperative movement.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The overall performance of Weavers' Cooperatives including the Cooptex in Tamilnadu was not satisfactory, and it also varied from region to region and society to society. Weak owned-capital base resulting in too much dependence on borrowed capital, non-availability of required raw materials with organised institutions/agencies besides high dependency of PUCSs for production of fabrics especially on the Cooptex had been affecting their performance, and majority of weavers' cooperatives including the Cooptex had mixed fortunes in their working results. However, the primary silk weaving co-operatives were in the forefront in their- over all performance followed by the carpet/made-ups weaving societies and mixed fabrics weaving societies in Tamilnadu.

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