

RESEARCH NOTE

An insight of handloom silk weavers of Molakalmuru

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Molakalmuru is a taluk place which is situated in Chitradurga district about 250 Km away from the capital city of Bangalore. The Molakalmuru handloom silk sarees are famous for unique traditional motifs (which are also symbolic in nature), design, colour and colour combination, beautiful fine geometry work and durability. Presently silk saree weavers of Molakalmuru are facing social, economical and marketing problems. Majority of the weavers were belonged to middle age and young age group, educated up to secondary level of education and cent per cent of the weavers belonged to Hindu community. Majority of the weavers' belonged to nuclear with medium size family of 4-5 members and middle income group and weavers selected weaving as a profession inherited from their forefathers. Further, the weavers worked under master weavers and all the weavers owned weaver's health card, yashaswini health card and BPL cards. Low returns and less profit were the major constraints as expressed by weaver, followed by lack of publicity and advertisement.

Key words: Handloom, Health, Silk sarees

India has a number of distinct handloom silk weaving clusters that are known for unique designs, weaves, colours, patterns, traditional knowledge and processes which are specific to a geographical region and are guarded from centuries. The handloom industry survives mainly on its aesthetics, unique craftsmanship, fascinating motifs and symbolic designs of the fabric assigned special importance to handloom sector. Over a period, these products have become an ambassador by themselves and recognized by their place of origin. Many Indian handloom textiles were received Geographical Indication *viz.*, Kota Doria silk saree, Paithani saree, Ilkal saree, Molakalmuru saree, Mysore silk saree, Guledgudda khana, Kancheepuram silk saree, Gadwal saree, Pochampally Ikat and Uppada Jamdani saree, Bomkai saree, Baluchari saree, Banarasi brocade saree *etc.*, presents the handloom tradition across India (Abhijit Das 2015). Despite a strong competition from mill made textiles, handloom fabrics are still in demand and principally become the popular patronage of our women folk (Mohapatra 2014).

The handloom sector of India is an important part of the country's economy as well as socio-cultural tradition. Weaving is the basic process among the various manufacturing stages

of handloom clothes. The sound of the handloom is the music of rural home and the process of weaving achieves harmony of motion and rhythms among the weavers. It has been sustained by transferring skills from one generation to another. According to Third National Handloom Census (2009-10) there are 43.31 lakh weavers in India engaged in handloom weaving and there are about 40,486 handlooms out of which 34,606 are working in Karnataka state (Goswami and Jain, 2014). In Karnataka there are 613 registered Handloom co-operative societies of which 453 handloom co-operative societies are working.

The Molakalmuru handloom silk sarees are famous for unique traditional motifs, design, colour and colour combination and interlaced with fine silk and glittering zari received GI tag in the year 2006. This town as population of about 16,000 and majority of them are involved in traditional silk saree weaving. The town has shared 1,362 handlooms which are working with the weavers population of 3,800. However the major percentage of looms are shared between padmasalis or swakulsalis and the ancestors of these two major communities are believed to migrated from 'Agrahara' of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra respectively about 200 years ago. And rest of the communities like Nayakas, Yadavas and muslims who are actively engaged in one or the other activities related to pre and post looms processes (Sannapapamma, 2000). The study is focused on an insight of handloom silk weavers of Molakalmuru which includes demographic and socio economic characteristic, selling constrains and health problems.

In the present study, a survey was carried out to elicit the information from the randomly selected weavers of Molakalmuru town, Chitradurga district of Karnataka state.

Samples of 30 handloom weavers were randomly selected from the Molakalmuru city to elicit the information on demographics, socio economic characteristics and health problems of Molakalmuru weavers. A self structured schedule was administrated to elicit the required information from the weavers by personal interview method. The schedule consists of general information regarding demographic, socio economic characteristics of weavers, constraints with selling products and health problems. Variables included for the survey were age, education, family type and size, annual income based on the concepts of normal distribution $MEAN \pm 0.425 * SD$.

From the Table 1 it is observed that, majority of the Molakalmuru weavers (43.33 %) belonged to middle age group (40-49 years), followed by younger age group (below 30 to 40 years) and older age group (26.66, above 49 years) respectively. This indicates that the large number of middle age group is capable of taking risk in the profession, provides ample of prospects and incentives particularly for handloom weavers make the weaving more attractive. Younger generation of the

weaver's community preferred to take up employment other than handloom weaving after their higher education and few of them still involved in handloom weaving after their education. However, involvement of older people is less due to their poor physical health, vision and strength problem. The findings of the present study are in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Bhavya (2014) and Sannapapamma (2000) who reported that majority of the weavers of Tumkur district and Molakalmuru belonged to middle age group.

It can observed from the educational status of handloom weavers that, majority of the weavers had (23.33 %), secondary school education (VIII-X) and cent per cent of the weavers belong to illiterate group followed by (23.33 %) of the weavers from middle school (V-VII). On the other hand equal number of weavers about (10.00 %) each had primary school (I-IV), degree and above education. This may be due to the family constraints, ignorance about importance of education and career, lack of encouragement and support from the family members and financial problems. These results are in line with the findings of Singh (2008) who stated 1/5 of the handloom weavers had education up to primary level. Cent per cent of the weavers belonged to Hindu religion and none of the weavers fell under Muslim religion. This is due to reason that, the people of Padmsales and Swakulasales community of Hindu religion are pioneers of weaving the Molakalmuru silk sarees from generation to generation. Dalai (2016) who stated that all the weavers of Odisha were Hindu belong to Bhulia community. Among the weavers, majority of them were belonged to nuclear family (76.66 %) followed by joint family (23.33%) may be because of lack of facilities and opportunities, less comfort in terms of food, clothing, shelter and problem of adjusting with the family members.

Majority of the weavers belonged to nuclear family system and middle income group. They opted for medium size family which lessens the risk, provide opportunities and comfort, food and shelter. Similar research findings are observed in the studies conducted by Shejwadkar (2000) who recorded that (60.00 %) weavers belong to medium size family. The annual family income of weavers reveals that, nearly half of the weavers (56.66 %) fall under middle income group with annual income of ₹ 38,000 to 44,652 followed by low income group (36.66 %) with annual income less than ₹ 38,000.

Most of the time handloom silk sarees demand is set back because of variety of power loom sarees, labour problem, time consuming and high price fluctuation in raw materials which indirectly affected their socioeconomic conditions. The silk saree weaving has been acquired either through hereditary or for other reasons. The results depicted that, majority of the weavers (86.66 %) inherited weaving from their forefathers and thus continued the profession. On the other hand 13.33% of them selected weaving for their lively hood. Only 10.00% of

Table 1. Demographic information of hand loom weavers of Molakalmuru N= 30

Sl. No.	Demographic variables	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
(a) Age			
1	Younger (≤ 40)	9	30.00
2	Middle Age (40 To 49)	13	43.33
3	Old Age (≥ 49)	8	26.66
(b) Educational level			
1	Primary school (I-IV Std)	3	10.00
2	Middle School (V-VII Std)	7	23.33
3	Secondary School (VIII-X Std)	8	26.66
4	Senior Secondary (XI-XII Std)	1	3.33
5	Degree and Above	3	10.00
6	Illiterate	8	26.66
(c) Religion			
1	Hindu	30	100.00
2	Muslim	-	-
(d) Family type			
1	Nuclear	23	76.66
2	Joint	7	23.33
(e) Family size			
1	Small (≤ 4)	7	23.33
2	Medium (4 To 5)	17	56.66
3	Large (≥ 5)	6	20.00
(f) Annual income			
1	Low Income ($\leq 38,000$)	11	36.66
2	Middle Income (38,000 to 45,000)	17	56.66
3	High Income ($\geq 45,000$)	2	6.66
(g) Reason to choose weaving profession			
1	Hereditary	23	76.66
2	Job Opportunity	4	13.33
3	Migration	-	-
4	Interest	3	10.00
5	Training	-	-
6	Any Other	-	-
(h) Category			
1	Master Weaver	4	13.33
2	Working With Master Weaver	26	86.66
3	Working With Cooperative Societies	-	-

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

them learnt the skill of fascinating silk saree weaving because of interest, which is a source of lively hood. This is mainly because of hereditary and to keep their traditional craft alive. These findings are similar to the study conducted by Dalai (2016) where cent per cent of the Odisha weavers continued weaving profession because it was inherited.

Majority of the weavers (86.66 %) are working with master weavers, only 13.33 per cent of the weavers were master weavers (04 family) in the Molakalmuru town. In other words, Molakalmuru handloom silk saree weaving was predominated with wage weavers. This may be due to their weak financial situation. The results are in line with the results of diagnostic study of Varanasi (2005) by ministry of textiles, where 95 per cent of the Banaras weavers are wage weavers.

Table 2. Socio economic characteristics of handloom weavers of Molakalmuru

N=30

Sl. No.	Variables	Categories	Number of respondents
1	Ration card owned	BPL	23 (76.66)
		APL	7 (25.00)
		Weavers card	30 (100.00)
2	Yashaswini health card owned	Yes	30 (100.00)
		No	0.00
3	Association with organization	Village panchayath	0.00
		NGO	0.00
		SHG	0.00
		Molakalmuru town co – operative society	30 (100.00)
		None association	0.00
4	Source of credit to weavers family	Money lender	0.00
		Master weaver	21 (70.00)
		Friends/ relatives	7 (25.00)
		Bank	9 (30.00)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 2 showed that, the weavers associated with Molakalmuru town co-operative society (100.00 %) and the major source of credit get to weavers by master weavers (70.00 %) followed by bank (30.00 %) and friends (25.00 %). All the weavers owned weaver's health card and yashaswini health card (100.00 %) respectively. Majority of the weavers owed BPL (76.66 %) cards and followed by APL cards (25.00 %). This is may be due to, the greater awareness about facilities and benefits of APL and BPL were found among the weavers. All of the weavers possessed Yashaswini health cards (100.00 %) due to greater awareness and facilities received from the state government.

The major constraints experienced in selling practices of finished goods by the weavers is presented in the Table 3. It was observed that low returns and less profit were the major constraints as expressed by weavers (100.00%). The other important constraints were lack of publicity and advertisement (66.66%), lack of demand (33.33 %) and threat from mill sector (16.66 %) respectively. This is mainly attributed to the nature of demand for silk products which often get confined to special occasions such as marriage and festivals and as a result demand is concentrated only for specific period of the year. Based on the returns of the sarees, all the sarees earned less returns due to less profit percentage fixed by the local weavers. The profit percentage margin for all the Molakalmuru sarees ranged between 10-15 % for local market, whereas retailer and shop owner they sell their sarees with profit margin of 30-40 percentages. Hence local weavers earned less profit than the retailer and shop owner.

Majority of the hand loom weavers faced several health related problems. Among them the prime ones were associated with leg pain (100.00 %), followed by eye sight problem (53.33 %) and headache (50.00 %). This is because of weaving profession which involves greater percentage of drudgery in all the weaving operations *i.e.*, pre loom, loom and post loom

operation taken placed by the individuals. Among the weaving operations, more drudgery is involved in loom operation which requires constant physical movement and visual inspection hence leg pain and eye sight problem are the major constraints among the handloom weavers (Table 3) . However leg pain also one of the common problem faced by the weavers due to vigorous peddling for shed creation. Singh. A (2008) expressed that, leg pain and eye sight are the major health problems faced by the handloom weavers.

The marvellous hand woven silk sarees are designed and woven by magic weavers of Molakalmuru. The weavers of Molakalmuru were belonged to middle age and young age group educated up to secondary level of education and cent per cent of the weavers belonged to Hindu community. Majority of the weavers' belonged to nuclear with medium size family of 4-5 members and middle income group and weavers selected weaving as a profession inherited from their forefathers. Further the weavers worked under master weavers and all the weavers owned weaver's health card, yashaswini health card and BPL cards. Low returns and less profit were the major constraints as expressed by weaver, followed by

Table 3. Constraints with selling hand woven silk sarees and health problems faced by the handloom weavers

N=30

Problems	Number of respondents
I. Constraints with selling hand woven silk sarees	
Lack of demand	10 (33.33)
Low return and less profit	30 (100.00)
Hike in transport charges	-
Threat from mill sector	5 (16.66)
Lack of publicity and advertisement	20 (66.66)
II Health problems faced by the handloom weavers	
Headache	15 (50.00)
Leg pain	30 (100.00)
Heart problem	-
Eye sight problem	16 (53.33)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

lack of publicity and advertisement. Molakalmuru weavers faced several health related problems associated with leg pain followed by eye sight problem. Hence there is need to create awareness about yoga and meditation to improve the health status of the weavers. In this aspect Molakalmuru cooperative

societies look forward for organising capacity building programs. The GI received classic hand woven silk sarees slowly fading in the market hence, greater awareness is required for promotion and sustainability of this traditional craft in the country.

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