

Handloom Cluster of India: A Case Study Santipur Handloom Cluster

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Abstract: Handloom industry is the largest cottage industry providing widest avenues for employment opportunities, next to agriculture, prime thrust has been given to implementation of schemes for promotion and development of handloom & Khadi sectors. From the beginning 'co-operative' has been considered to be the ideal infrastructural institution for implementation of various schemes for development of decentralised cottage industry like handlooms. Almost all schemes are therefore formulated co-operative oriented. Emphasis has also been laid upon formation of co-operatives with handloom weavers. Handlooms are a key element of the West Bengal economy. The Handloom Census of 1987-88 indicated West Bengal population of handloom weavers at 1246005, with 3,38,499 looms. Of this, almost 23% were members of the poorer and relatively disadvantaged Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Class(OBC). Amongst the population of weavers almost 80% worked on a full-time basis as weavers, and the industry provided direct employment to 304845 persons. As per census conducted by the Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India in 1995-96, in West Bengal there are 3,50,994 handlooms providing direct and indirect employment to about 6,66,514 persons. Here the study focused on the emergence of the Santipur Handloom Cluster and how it works, production process, Status of Weavers & Income level are analyzed critically.

Key Words: Structure, Weaving Pattern, Problem & Prospect

I. Introduction

India has a rich cultural heritage and the art of hand weaving formed its integral part. History has it that hand weaving was in existence In India for over five thousand and eight hundred years now. The very early Indian religious texts contain umpteen references to the glory that was handloom. In the annals of history the travel accounts of Fasiyan, Huan Tsang, Warthima, Bernier, Garriri, Tavernier, General Ormi and Marcopolo spelt out the glory of the handloom industry in the by-gone days. There are many instances that show that Indian handloom cloths in those days was patronised by many abroad in the East and West. Herodotus of Greece, and scholars like Magasthanese and Pliny had spoken on Indian cloth. Among the hundreds of small scale and cottage arts and crafts that have survived in present day India, the handloom weaving is, perhaps, the most important. It is the largest cottage industry with more than 30.22 lack looms spread throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The weaving activity was initiated in 1409, during the regime of Gaur Ganesh Danu Mardhandev. Saree weaving was practiced during 1683 - 1694 during the ruling of Nadia king Rudra Roy. The production got systematized and was well organized leading to good recognition during the period of Mughal empire. Saree was exported to Afghanistan, Iran, Arab Greece & Turkey. The healthy trend continued till the early twentieth century. The British controlled the industry through their East India Company. Those who opposed were severely punished. Finally the control of East India Company came to an end with the intervention of Governor General Kolkata, for the Common representation of grief of the united weavers. The product had its unique specific proposition in the market for its quality of yarn used in weaving. Hand Spun Yarn of 250 – 300s, which is beyond the scope of mill, was used for weaving, which could counterfeit even the imported cotton yarn of Manchester. Shri Darga Das Kastha subsequently introduced barrel Dobby during 1920 – 1925, facilitating the conversion of the throw shuttle to Fly Shuttle. Later Shri Debbendra Nath Mukherjee introduced the Jacquard Machine, and this facilitated a broader cross section of new designs in the Market. It is learnt that 100 hook capacity Jacquard was first installed by Shri Jatindra Nath Lohori for producing varieties during the third decade of twenty century. During the same time sectional warping and sizing was introduced by Shri Hazari to produce a warp of 350 yards in length. The Santipur sarees in the past were very popular for the fine & uniform texture. The sarees are termed as per the design used in the extra warp meant for side border. The Bengal Small Scale Aids Industry Act during the early eighties (1980 –83), was instrumental support of the government for the growth of the Handloom industry. As per the act financial aid to a maximum of Rs 10,000/- in shape of 50% grant & 50 % Loan was provided to the individual weavers for purchase of looms. During the mid eighties and later in the mid nineties 1995, there were weaver movements for the wage hikes but were unsuccessful for the suppression by Mahajans.

II. Methodology and Data Source

The pre-field has been done covering Literature to be acquainted with the study area since similar types of report, articles will be very helpful to evaluate the changing pattern. We have prepared a list from collected data and maps, and other relevant documents etc. This process relates to primary data collection methods for example questionnaire as a set of questions used mainly in direct interview, Focused Group Discussion and Participatory Rural Appraisal to gather data from a respondent. The subject of research mainly being on change in economy, education, weaving pattern and problem and prospect of handloom, A well defined methodology is followed. Investigations are carried out to assess the socio economic condition of Santipur using a standard questionnaire and a primary data is collected randomly. Various secondary data's are collected from District Statistical Handbook, Gram Panchayet Office, Santipur Municipality, and Department Of Handloom (State & Central Govt), Articles and E Sources. The methodology can be considered to include multiple methods, each as applied to various facets of the part of the whole scope of methods. The study is divided between two parts qualitative and quantitative. This involved obtaining background information of the area with the help of secondary data sources, fixing up the venue and time of survey, etc. Post- field work is basically depending on the analysis of the collected data, tables and report writing.

III. The Study Area

Santipur Handloom Cluster is located under the Ranaghat Sub-Division in the District of Nadia in West Bengal is a place of ancient culture, religion, tradition and it has glory of its own. Its geographical coordinates are 23°15'N & 88°26'E which is about 90 km from Kolkata.

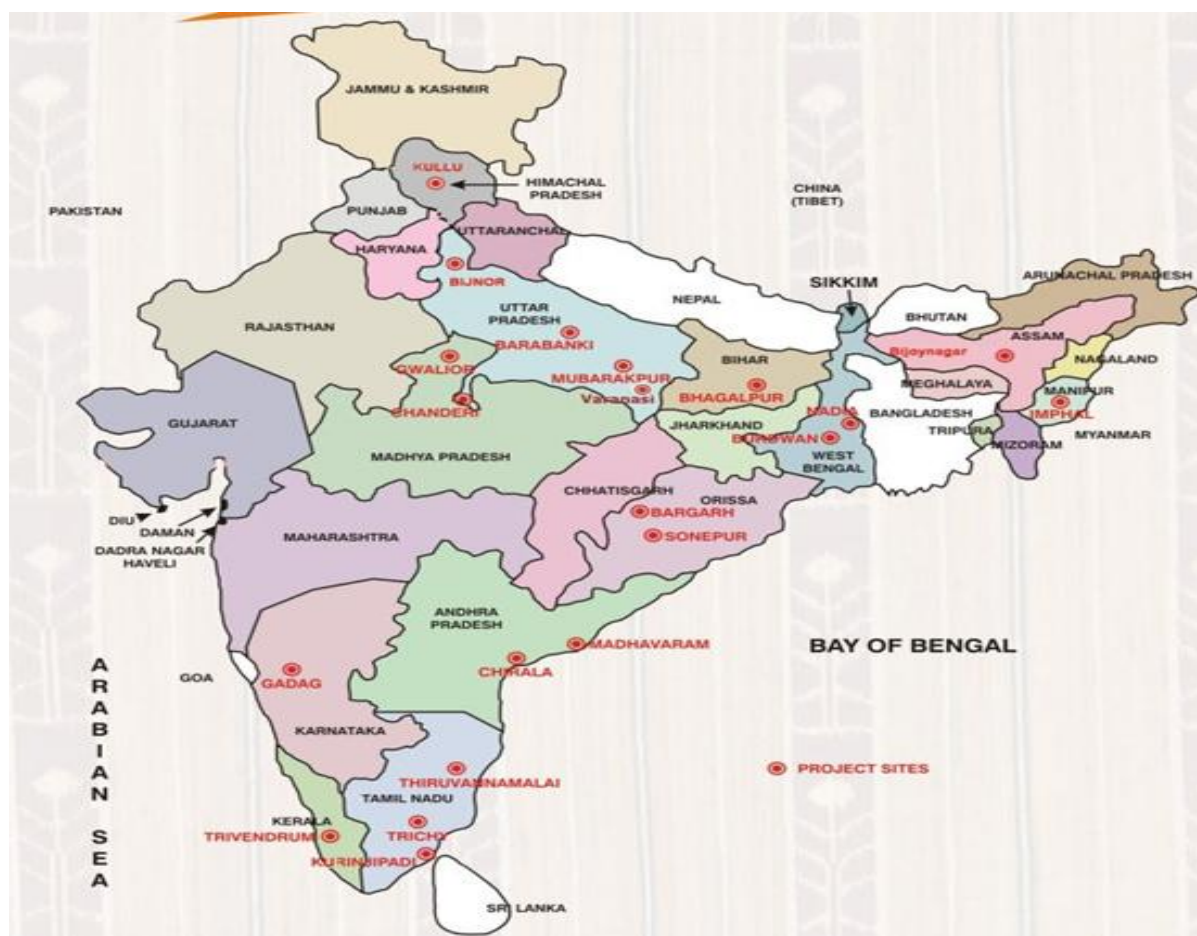
Objectives

- ❖ To find out the Structure of Santipur Handloom Cluster.
- ❖ To analyze the Weaving Pattern of the Cluster.
- ❖ To Study the Income level of the Weavers.
- ❖ To Study the Co-operative Based Development pattern.
- ❖ To find out the Problem and Prospect of the Cluster.

IV. Handloom Cluster of India

A **cluster** is a group of something but here it denotes that a group of handloom makes handloom cluster. In India we see different types of handloom cluster like that of.1)Small handloom cluster 2)Medium handloom cluster 3)Mega handloom cluster. There are 470 handloom clusters, out of which 240 clusters have less than 1000 handlooms and 230 clusters have more than 1000 handlooms. Out of these 230 clusters, there are 41 clusters, which have over 25,000 handlooms. Some of these clusters have very poor infrastructure and common facilities, causing hardships to the weavers. Since these clusters are very large, they would not be covered under the Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme, which caters to the small clusters in the range of 300-500 looms. These clusters will require massive investment to galvanize them to higher production. To overcome these constraints faced by the weavers within the cooperative sector and outside; including those attached to Self Help Groups, NGOs, Small and Medium Enterprises, Master Weavers and unattached weavers, Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme was introduced in 2008-09 for development of 2 Mega Handloom Clusters i.e. Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) & Sivasagar (Assam). The handloom weavers shall be the focus for assistance under the new scheme. While there are several schemes existing for taking care of specific requirements of the weavers, the main thrust of this scheme would be on need based approach for integrated & holistic development of handloom concentrated areas that will encompass several traditional, ethnic and languishing weaving crafts capable of diversification and meet the requirements of the present day market demands both within the country and abroad. The Comprehensive Handlooms Cluster Development Scheme will be implemented for development of 2 Mega Handloom Clusters, one each in the State of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Each cluster will cover over 25,000 handlooms at upper Central of Rs.70.00 Crore. The scheme will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme.

Major Handloom Cluster of India



Scale: 1cm to 300Kms

Source: Dept. of Textile & Handicraft, Govt. of India

Santipur Handloom Cluster

Nadia is basically the name of one of the districts in West Bengal. As such there is no place called Nadia. Handloom activities are spread up in many parts of the district. The Clustering Phenomena of Handlooms can be noted at Ranaghat I & II, Phulia, Santipur, Nabadeep & Nakshipara/ Rajapur. The loom position availability of weavers and the product profile of the places are as under:

Sr. No.	Handloom clusters of Nadia	Product	Estimated number of Looms	Present Trend
1	Ranaghat I & II	Coarser Saree, Lungi, Gamcha, Furnishing, Fabric	2000	Decline
2	Phulia & Adjoining	Tangile Saree, Jamdani Saree, Dress Material, Exportable Fabrics	12000	More Prospering
3	Santipur	Santipuri Saree, Exportable Fabrics	20000	Prospering but not like Fulia
4	Nabadeep	Coarser Saree, Lungi, Gamcha, Jamdani, Shirting	2000	Decline
5	Nakshipara/ Rajapur	Jamdani Exportable Fabrics	1000	Decline

Source:- Focused Group Discussion with WSC, HDO & Cluster Actors

V. Condition of Santipur Handloom Cluster

❖ Types of Weavers

All the weavers who are joined in the weaving programme they are all not the member of the cooperatives some weaver works through Mahajans and some are individual workers but who are joined with cooperative societies, they are much richer than the others. I have seen that in my study area consists of **63%** of the weaver joined with cooperatives but in the other side only **30%** are joined with Local Mahajans because Mahajans are producing low price sharee but the cooperative produced high price making sharee, if cooperative found any dispute in the making sharee, the weaver should refund the whole money, so all the time it should not be liable and also **7%** are individual weavers who weaved themselves and sell the product in the local market but they are poor. I have to know one thing that after year **2000** a migration is seen in Phulia where other side people like from North Dinajpur, Cooch Bihar seen where we see some very small handloom cluster in West Bengal but the weavers migrate in Phulia because here they could get much money from other place of the India and also in West Bengal and a migration seen here from other parts of Santipur handloom cluster. total percentage of migrated workers here are **47%** and **53%** are local and adjoining areas. Another thing is to be noted that all the workers are works here they are mostly young people. we find **65%** of weavers are belongs to **20-40** years and only **20%** of people belongs to **40-60** years and another **15%** provide **>60** years people. But only male weavers are migrated here from other place. The gross profit of the cooperative is not increase rapidly through 2009.

- **Type I (Entrepreneur weavers):** buy raw material on their own, work on their own designs and then market their products through a variety of local channels, traders etc.
- **Type II (Labourer weavers) - Weavers linked to master weavers:** who receive the raw material and design brief from the master weaver and pass on the final product to them and receive their weaving wages in return
- **Type III (Cooperative fold weavers):** Weavers linked to the primary cooperative societies which procure raw material, pass it on to the attached weavers, pay them wages

❖ Co-operatives Formation

In this context, I like to inform that Santipur-Phulia region is a weaver-concentrated area and approximate 42,000 looms are operated in the area and about 95,000 people are engaged in allied work of weaving. An individual weaver cannot create those units properly and he/she should depend on the cooperatives. So, cooperative based development is seen in the region out of the total major **65** handloom cooperative is registered in **2002-03** in West Bengal under this there are only **11** cooperatives active now in Nadia District and **6** Cooperatives are seen in Phulia of which **4** handloom cooperatives are active now in Phulia. Handloom Cooperatives are:

- 1) Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society: It is established at the 1st registered handloom cooperative society of Phulia township.
- 2) Fulia Tangail Shari Bayan Silpa Samabay Samity Ltd: Fulia progotisil tatubay samity
- 3) Nutan Fulia Tantubay Samabay Samity Ltd.
- 4) Tangail Tantujibi Unnayan Samabay Samity Ltd.

Female handloom cooperatives in Phulia are:

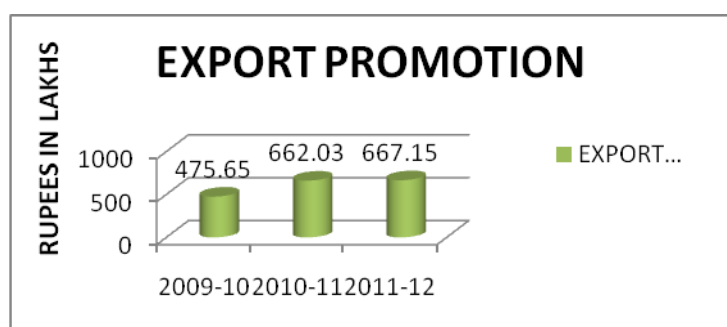
1. Ashanandapura Mahila cooperative society (1980)
2. Sutragarh Narimukti samity
3. Dhakapura Mahila samabai samity limited.
4. Santipur Garhpara Narimukti Tantubai samity(1984)

❖ Household Income Level

The **house hold income** of Santipur changed widely after generating various source of income which are created by the development of handloom cooperative .Earlier in the area the household income of the people of was relatively low. On the basis of the data collected in the primary survey the income level of the people is divided into five classes ranging from less than less than 2000, 2000 to 4000, 4000 to 6000, 6000 to 8000 and above 8000 rupees. The maximum share of people had income level in between 4000 to 6000 and next highest portion of people fall in the income level 2000 to 4000 . The number of people in the two income level that is more than 8000 and less than 2000 is very less in number .This comparison reflects the improvement of economic standard of maximum respondents in Santipur. Thus, maximum people who were low income group in earlier become middle income group according to income level. Thus there is need of job generation by Government Organisation and also providing financial aid to the needy people to more development of the area.

❖ Production to Promotion

- **Production: Traditional Sarees:**This is main production of original gharana which are being changed slowly in design, pattern as per customers' likings i.e. a) on pure basic gharana, b) modernized and ornamented saree on basic gharana, c) newly inclusion of light weight and feather-feeling saree of modern style with antic touch for the customers of good taste – namely, Ambari, Panchali, Gandhari, Nayansukh, Kadambari etc. It's may be called '**Non-Traditional Tangail**'.
- **Production: Exportable Cloth:** Diversified production to keep target to the abroad customers for the betterment of marketing and more wages earning for the weavers. This export oriented weaving started first with the encouragement of HHEC and one their Japanese customer Mr. Yurgen Lahl. a well-known Textile Designer of Japan. Types of exportable cloths are Scarves, stoles, made-ups etc. Dress-materials etc.
- **Sale:**Saree: Direct sale to the customer though retail showroom, exhibitions and to whole-sellers of all over India. B) Exportable Products: The Society doesn't sale direct to the aboard market; they export their production through various merchant exporters to the market of JAPAN, ITALI, USA, UK, AUSTRALIA, GERMANY and Middle East countries.



Source:Tangail Tantujibi Unnyan Samabay Samity Ltd.

- **Raw-materials used:**All yarn of natural fibre like cotton, silk, wool, linen, muga, tussar, matka etc.
- **Dying arrangement:** the society has its own dye-house to dye in both natural and chemical dyeing methods. All the dyes particulars are ensured Eco-friendly according to international standard. Steps are taken in the mean time to modernize the dyeing unite. Installation work of modern Hank-dyeing machines, Boiler and Effluent Treatment Plant started and expected to be completed within few months.
- **Samplng cum Training Centre:** Various types of samples are being made here. Training programme on request of Govt. of Assam. Mainly women handloom artisans of Assam State are having weaving up gradation training batch by batch consisting 20 to 25 trainees in each batch for the period of 25 days. This training begun 3 years before. In 1st year 130 and in 2nd year 259 artisans have got training, this year also training started and will continue during whole year. This programme is sponsored by the State Institute of Rural Development, Guwahaty, Assam.

❖ **Structure of the Cluster**

- **Core Cluster Actors :** The Core actors of the cluster are the weavers, master weavers. The evolution of the weavers into the Master Weavers tells about the organic relation that these core cluster actors enjoy amongst themselves. This further shows how the growth of the cluster has provided opportunities to a weaver to develop into a master weaver.
- **Master Weavers:** Previously this category of weavers were engaged in weaving only, but today they undertake the overall responsibility of supplying the raw material to the weavers, provide the design and pay wages to the grass root level weavers; and then supply the sarees to Mahajans. Mahajans provide design and colour information and a better price realisation for the saree, but on the other hand make the transactions on credit. There are around 700 master weavers actively involved in production activities of the cluster. It is estimated that in total, these master weavers have **16,050** working looms, and equal number of weavers working as labours. A part of the production of master weavers is also sold in the local haat of Santipur. The modal unit size of the master weavers is 4 looms. There are few master weavers having **10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60** looms under one shed. The master weavers apart from the weaving earning of one loom earn profit margins from the products weaved on the loom engaged by the labour.
- **Weavers:** There are about **20,000** working looms and **60,000** persons involved directly / indirectly in the weaving and preparatory activities. The women basically undertake the preparatory works like separation of hanks, sizing, pirn winding. There are around 111 different weaving communities namely the “Pramanik” , “Kastha” , “Dalal” , “Khan” etc. etc. Majority of the weavers belong to Tantuvay community. All the weavers have good weaving skills for weaving saree on Jacquard looms. The average earning of the weaver family is in the range of **Rs. 1500 – Rs. 2000** per month.
- **Dyers:** Dyeing is basically carried out in the dyeing unit. There are about **90** units doing dyeing as a commercial activity. These units, based on the quantity of yarn dyed are categorized into large, medium and small units. **60%** of the total yarn sales are in the coloured yarn form, and the remaining **40%** is in the grey form. The yarn traders employ the large and medium scale for dyeing where as the small-scale unit does the job work for the master weavers.
- **Designers:** There are about **100** small designers in the cluster, who do designing work on their own creativity and imagination. They neither have a formal education nor a mechanism to update their knowledge skills. For Lack exposure their skill are traditional based. Their main role in the cluster is to do costing for the master weaver, and supply them the punch cards for the Jacquard.



Source: Field Survey

❖ Major Problems

- **Production:** 11 items of cloths are reserved only for handloom industry in our country. As per rules, it is punishable offence to weave these 11 items in power loom and mill. But of these reserved items are being weaving very openly and plenty in number in power loom. So many power looms are illegally running in Aishtala, Birnagar, Ranaghat, Swarupgonj and Nabadwip in Nadia district and easily producing ditto copy of Tangail and Santipuri saree in very large quantity and flooded our handloom market by these cheaper-price cloths. Our handloom are failed to complete with them. There is a Govt. department to protect this illegal weaving, but they do nothing at all.
- **Marketing:** For marketing of their products most of the weavers and cooperative societies depend on private traders and do not able to get responsible price of their products. There are no large sized Central whole sales Organizations for boldly marketing of handloom goods. Direct retail and exhibition sales are not all only solution of marketing problems of handloom industry.
- **Wages:** The present weaving wages is so low that weavers are not being able to maintain their living and as a result a large number of handloom workers are going outside the state in search of other jobs.
- Our handloom industry has no way to abstain them from sad outgoing of the expert artisans of renowned weaving places like Fulia, Santipur etc.
- **Finance:** The commercial Banks are less interested to give finance to the weavers. Unorganized artisans cannot think, even in dream, to have bank loans. The master weavers are also refused by the banks, when they badly call for of capital, having no means they are bound to take loan from the village money lenders at the highest rate of interest which resulting badly on the whole industry.
- **Export Import:** At the time of last September (2011) an undesirable deal has been signed and started its execution officially between India and Bangladesh through the announcement by our Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh during his Dhaka visit. As per deal 47 types of cotton cloths are being importing from Bangladesh which, in the mean time, make cloth-flood in our market. Most of the Master weavers of Fulia and Gaddiwala of Kolkata are selling those adulterate fabrics made by power-loom designating the as handloom cloths of Fulia and Santipur.

VI. Protection and Promotion of Handloom

❖ Protection

The first and final point to protect the handloom weavers from leaving off their traditional occupation are to assure reasonable earnings for maintains their livelihood. This may be possible by:

- (a) Forming and strengthening the Apex or Central Marketing Organizations to reduce/avoid avaricious middleman between the weavers and consumers.
- (b) The Central organization/ Apex should to protect from corruption and policies and also from aggressions of powerful and malicious Private Traders (*Mahajans*).
- (c) Linking directly with the retail business of Multi National Companies so as the weavers can get actual price of their products.
- (d) Direct Bank loan to the weavers as working capital at minimum rate of interest. The policy and Proforma application should be simple so that the applicant himself can complete formalities to get loan without any help of broker or commission agent.
- (e) Easy availability of raw materials at every handloom centres at reasonable price.
- (f) Steps to be taken strictly to protect handloom industry from the aggression of power looms.
- (g) Aware the weavers about fastness of colours and eco-friendly dye-stuff ect.
- (h) Awareness to diversify the production, especially for export market to earn better income.
- (i) Assure them all types of social security and peaceful environment in their working and living place.

❖ Promotion

- a) Infrastructure should be well developed of the place of work like House, Work shade with link road, light & water supply, sanitation etc.
- b) Proper health facilities like hospital treatment, life & medical insurance. All the welfare scheme of Govt. should be implemented properly and honestly.
- c) Alternate occupation like Garment Industry is to established in every main handloom centres so that the women members of weavers families can get jobs by this handloom based industry. The local made

handloom cloths are to be used easily in comparatively cheaper price which also increase the diversified products for fulfill the requirement of local garment industry.

- d) Urban Haat can solve to some extent the marketing problems.
- e) Model weaver's village conception can fruitfully develop the overall Industry and lifestyles of the handloom artisans of the country.

VII. Conclusion

Since ancient times, Santipur and the surrounding region has been famous for handloom sarees. The handloom weaving style unique to this region is famously known as Santipuri Sari. After the partition of India, Bengal was split into two major regions. West Bengal became a part of India and East Bengal became East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Many skilled weavers from Dhaka at present situated in Bangladesh, migrated to West Bengal and settled around the areas of Santipur and Kalna (Ambika Kalna). But now a days condition of handloom industry is very bad and fall under tragic situation. People who live here mostly, are very poor. Middle aged people are unable to sustain a living in this area due to the lack of availability of job resources hence are compelled to migrate to other states in search of better jobs. Mostly old age people and females are engaged in weaving. Though once weaving was their primary occupation, it failed to earn reasonable money for them, so they dropped weaving from their priority list. Now only to conserve their tradition they have stuck to weaving. So now people are not wholly dependent on weaving and many of them have turned to agriculture for a better living. Middle men are one of the problem that local weavers face. They grab major portion of the production's profit and don't let the weavers get what they truly deserve. Middle aged population of Santipur specially the male ones, migrate to other states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bengaluru, Maharashtra for better job opportunities where they are resolved to take such menial works like bell boy in hotels, labourers, masons etc. It is such a pity that despite being well skilled in weaving industry they are disheartened to further pursue a livelihood in this field as it doesn't pay them well. To reduce this migration problem, they should be included as an integral part of the cooperative system. Government inefficiencies is a major problem that the weavers face. Schemes are not executed properly and all of the money and the facilities not reached to the grass root people. They are totally deprived. So that planning execution is essential by which local people could get those facilities properly.

People are enjoying a moderately better condition due to that cooperative system development. But government support and help for the development is very much essential. In Santipur government ineffectiveness has worsened the weavers situation. But at Phulia people work together by forming cooperatives but they can not achieve up to their potentiality without significant government help. Government is inactive in promoting this Phulian Tangail sharee industry. It is also inactive in export promotion. So more government efforts are required to head towards success in Phulia. All the weavers who are joined in the weaving programme they are all not the member of the cooperatives some weaver works through Mahajans and some are individual workers but who are joined with cooperative societies, they are much richer than the others. A migration (inter district as well as intra district) is seen in Phulia where other side people like from North Dinajpur, Cooch Bihar seen, Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad where we see some very small handloom cluster in West Bengal but the weavers migrate in Phulia because here they could get much money from other place of the India and also in West Bengal and a migration seen here from other parts of Santipur handloom cluster. Basically young age people are coming here for more job opportunity and we know that people are migrated from various places of West Bengal and those people are young in age. They engaged in this profession because of attractive income range. One of the important thing is seen in Phulia is that here we see some Handloom Cooperatives. We know that all over the Santipur Handloom cluster contains many Cooperatives but some Cooperatives are closed today and some are active but those cooperatives can not act properly. Export promotion is an important part of Phulian handloom industry and Cooperatives export its products with the help of some foreign market agents or agencies but Government inefficiency is seen in export promotion. The house hold income of Phulia changed widely after generating various source of income which are created by the development of handloom cooperative. Earlier in the area the household income of the people of was relatively low. Now people are enjoying various rural development schemes such as Annapurna yojana, Antadoya Anna Yojana, IAY, Old Age Pension, Health Card, Mahatma Gandhi Boonkar Bima Yojana Card etc but these schemes are not properly reach to the needy people. Medical facility is also good here and peoples of Phulia went to Municipal Hospital for any medical check up and they have to go in Ranaghat Sadar Hospital for any critical case. The occupational structure of the Phulia is composed of workers, non-workers and marginal workers and secondary sector is much higher rather primary or tertiary sector.

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