



2021-22

**Volume : I**

**Special Issue : Global Pandemic**

# **SPECTRUM**

**PEER REVIEWED  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
BILINGUAL JOURNAL**

**PRASANTA CHANDRA MAHALANOBIS MAHAVIDYALAYA  
111/3 B.T. Road, Kolkata - 700 108**

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## SMART VILLAGE AND SECOND EMPLOYMENT GENERATING SECTOR IN WEST BENGAL

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**Abstract :**  
Handloom Sector constitutes the second employment generating section in rural economy in West Bengal. The sector or main employment generating sector or rural economy is agriculture in West Bengal, as well as in India. The concept of 'Smart India' directly touched the life of urban as well as rural dwellers of India. The concept of smart city and smart village bring a new dream to us. The step was taken in September 2015 in a bid to transform rural areas to economically, socially and physically sustainable space. In order to convert villages into smart village, the desirable components have been suggested as: Agro processing, Digital literacy, Sanitation, solid liquid waste management, street lights, fully equipped mobile health benefit, upgrading schools, Aadhar cards for all, rural-urban road connectivity, L.P.G. Gas services. Here our objective is to see, whether similar facilities are provided in rural industries, as well as in handloom sector? For this the present study is conducted to find out the answers.

**Key Words :** Smart village Handlooms, Digital village, Employment Generating Sector

### 1. Introduction :

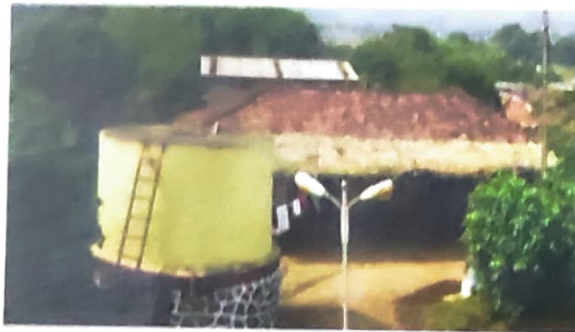
A majority of Indian population are still living in villages. The scenario is more or less same in West Bengal. West Bengal handlooms attract the attention of the millions of people throughout the world. According the list of handlooms having G.I. registered products, April, 2017, West Bengal occupies a significant place. Baluchari saree of Bishnupur, Murshidabad Silk, Dhanekhali Sarees and Santipur Sarees are proud of Bengal and famous all over to world. Agriculture constitute the main source of income of rural economy, while handlooms is the second source of rural employment. Migration from rural to urban areas is a common feature of India, but there is a question, how the opposite type of migration that is from urban to rural areas can be done?

Most Indian villages require basic necessities like health care, drinking water, electricity, sanitation with proper supply of water, road infrastructure etc. It must be mentioned in this concept that empowering village was started in 1992. In 2002, these were and urge to every rural parents to provide opportunities for education to their child. The right to education was passed in 2009 making education compulsory for children between the ages 6 to 14 years.





Source: <http://www.shutterstock.com/search/handloom?saqee> (visited on 23.02.2020 at 10 AM)



Source: <https://https://www.dremstime.com/photos-images/smart-village.html> (visited on 25.02.2020 at 12.15 PM)

## 2. Smart India : Smart Village

Technology plays an important role in bringing about significant changes in the area of education, skill, health and other public services. 'Smart village' means to transform the rural areas to economically, socially and physically sustainable spaces. In order to make smart village, the Union Govt. launched Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Missions. The Rurban Missions, developed a cluster of smart villages, the ministry of Rural development adopted a scientific process of cluster selection, involving the objective analysis of distinctly sub district and village level.

Union Government launched Several Schemes to address the components of Smart-Village.

The Schemes are:

### i) The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikash Yojana

This aims to enable a large number of rural youth to take up industry related skill training.

- Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharata Abhiyan
- This emphasized on Digital Wallets, Mobile Banking, Aadhar enable payment System (AePS) etc.
- The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Gramin)
- This aims at encouraging rural house holds to build toilets.
- The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojona
- This aims at providing good road connectivity in rural India.



Source: <https://www.dremstime.com/photos-images/smart-village.html> (visited on 23.02.2020 at 12.15 PM)

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojona
- This aims at providing LPG Gas connection to BPL family in the name of adult women.
- With these schemes, supply of drinking water to every rural household, improvement of street light condition, hand pumps are provided in rural dwellings.
- Rural Education and Rural Employment:



Source: <https://www.dremstime.com/photos-images/smart-village.html> (visited on 24.02.2020 at 11.21AM)

A large proportion of India population reside in rural areas. The scenario is more or less same in West Bengal. The youth constitute a major part of total population. The census report highlights the fact that the proportion of youth population increases steadily from 16.5% in 1971 to 19.2% in 2011. It is important to discuss that the rural youth are facing the problems of lack of education,

health care facilities, and access in modernity. According to education report of the NSSO (Jan-June 2014, 71st Record) in rural areas 71.2% women studied just up to the primary level. The proportion of rural population completed graduation and post graduation is very small. Women in rural areas are primarily engaged in handlooms, handicrafts and micro food processing, (such as papad and pickle making etc) participation in large scale industries and labour market are strictly limited.

The problems that the rural youth are facing mainly lack of education, health care facilities and access to modern amenities. Although, some measures are taken to solve the problems in the areas like health care, skill development, wage employment and capacity building. The development schemes have been adopted by Government on health sector and for women and adolescent girls. Such as 'Rastriya Kishore Swasth Karyakram' (RKSK), financial relief like 'Jan Dhan Jojana', Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act etc. With these handlooms sector shows a new way to the young people.

The Govt of India launched 'Digital India' programme in 2014. Its aim is to digitally empowered society with digital identity. The concept of becoming 'digital' focuses on high speed internet, e-banking, mobile health care facilities, universal digital literacy and so on.

India's handloom industry is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural tradition with a rich heritage of skills and talent that needs to be preserved and promoted.

Now let us discuss the present condition of handloom products and handloom weavers in the context of smart village.

Handloom products belong to the tradition of highly skilled activities that require long hours of painstaking manual labour. Handlooms, a labour intensive sector Today there is a challenge to create a market demand and wider reach for these products. In order to ensure dignity of labour and economic viability of handwoven products, the number of working hours of every stage of production increase their cost. For example in Khadi, the level of skill and labour required to spin on 'Charka' is higher than its' mechanized version.

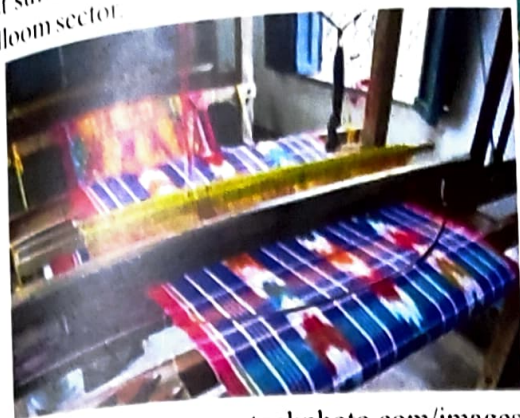
There must be a balance between systematic calculation of labour costs and affordable pricing.

### 3. Handlooms versus power loom

There is a demand in market for the demand of both handlooms and power loom Handloom weaves can not fulfill the demand of the entire population. The power loom products some time destroys the market of the handloom products. The handloom weaves cannot get the actual price, and they can not sell their products, directly to the market, because some times, the presence of middle man hampers their business. So their condition is very poor. In the context of smart village they are



worst sufferers. They work at a meager wage. So the young people are not agreeing to work in handloom sector



Source: <https://www.canstockphoto.com/images-photos/handloom.html> (visited on 03.03.2020 at 1.05 PM)

#### 4. Handlooms are declining : Present Scenario

According to the report of News Letter, Wednesday, 28, Dec 2016 some people say that the handlooms in India are dying and the main reason is the emergence of power loom and MNREGA. But power loom and MNREGA are just the alternatives of handlooms. The main reason is economic when the weaves are switching to power loom, he finds, it is not so much different or better from the point of view of the returns of his family. Then he will switch to alternatives like any rational human being. Though in order to protect the handlooms the weaves are offered twice than their actual wages.

Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India [13] in their office Memorandum provided some facilities to the handloom weavers. Such as:

- i) The weavers weave smart on line service and will make priority display of handloom products through a banner on its home page.
- ii) As per e-commerce policy, there is a sale price provision for all services including photography. Cataloguing, courier and others are not more than 8%.
- iii) The service provider will ensure that amount of sale proceeds is promptly transferred to the bank account of the handloom weavers.

It is very interesting to know that 90% of worlds' handloom come from India. According to Gupta [9], this industry employs 10 millions of assistants and is considered the second largest income generating activity offer agriculture is rural India. Gupta [9] has mentioned that handlooms have some large benefits. Such as :

- a) Large premium design choice

Handlooms enable more varieties of design to be spawn out. This enables consumers to literally own an apparel that is unique in the world.

b) A great return on investment  
There is a huge returns on investment in handloom sector. A weaver can produce at least 30,000-50,000 worth Rs. Product per month. No other sector can give the same amount like handloom.

c) Employment generating Sector:  
In India when rural youth migrate to urban areas in search of jobs, handloom sector provides a golden opportunity to them to earn handsomely.

d) Independent Industry:  
In rural India where getting electricity is a great problem, handloom is well suited in those area, because it does not depend upon electricity. It is a time example of Green Technology.

e) Women empowerment:  
Handloom industry employs 83% women which opens a way to women empowerment. Weavers are enjoying their products. Those working in handloom industry rejoice in the activity. It is a hidden treasure of India. Digital India will give the sector a new look.

#### 5. Socio-economic status handloom weavers : A field survey

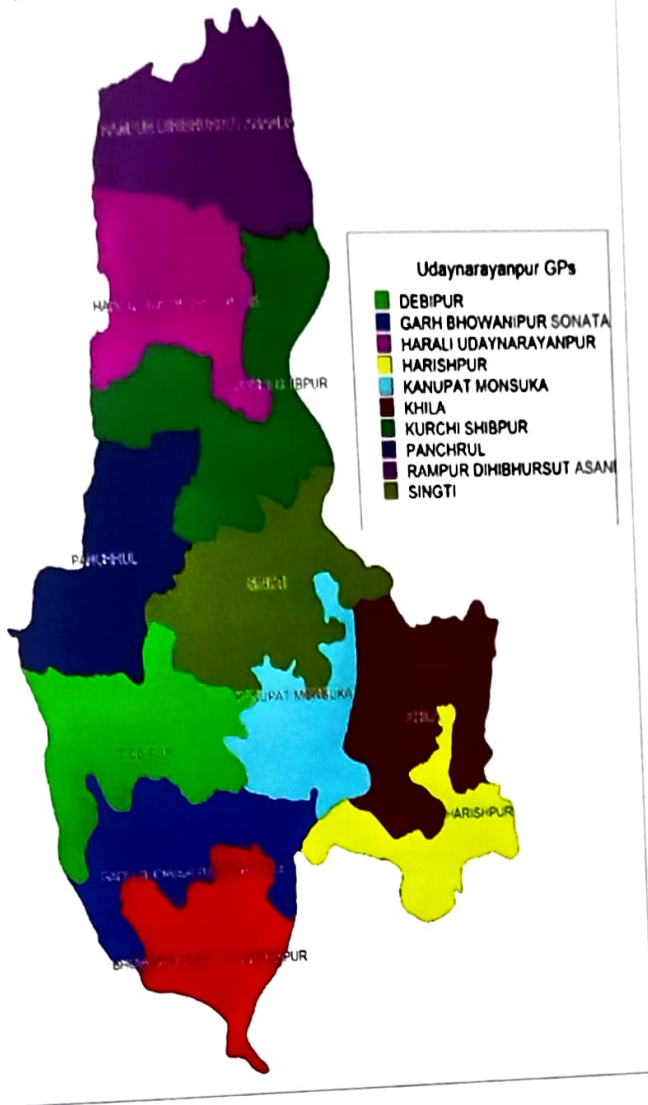
For the purpose of preparing this study a field survey is conducted on 'socio-economic status of handloom weavers'. The study is conducted by Uday Narayanpur. Uluberia sub division, Howrah district. This places is an important handloom weaving centre. Local people said that handloom industry of Uday Narayanpur is 300 years old. Bengali Tant Saree of Uday Narayanpur attracts the attention of large numbers of people of West Bengal. More than 3500 weavers of Tant Sarees are spread across several villages of six Gram Panchayets of Howrah District are struggling for survival. 100 people are interviewed for the study.



Source: <http://howrah.gov.in/adminunits/Unpur.html> (visited on 02. 0.3 2020 at 2:10 PM)



## MAP OF UDAYNARAYANPUR BLOCK



Source: <http://howrah.gov.in/adminunits/Unpur.html> (visited on 04.03.2020 at 3 PM)

### 6. Location : History and Geography

The district Howrah has gained its importance with opening of railways from Howrah in 1854. The district is covered under presidency division and occupies 9<sup>th</sup> position in the state in respect of its size with an area of 1467 sq. km. There is a large industrial population in the Howrah district. Howrah city is much older than Kolkata city and is connected with Howrah Bridge, which is known as Rabindra Setu and very recently connected by another bridge called Vidyasagar Setu. Uday Narayanpur is under Uluberia sub division and under Bauria Police station. According to weavers' view, the handloom of Uday Narayanpur is 300 years old. Handloom weaving is the main source of income of majority of people. Floods during the monsoon destroyed

then paddy fields while scarcity of water during the rest of the season they could not grow vegetables or any other crops.

There are fine co-operative societies and cluster for weavers. The weavers can spin high quality of Tant Sarees, but can't get actual price of their products, because the market is controlled by the middle man. At cluster the weavers get only Rs. 180 - 200 for a medium quality saree. In most cases they have to sell their products to the middle man either forcefully or willingly. According to some weavers, the middle man are very helpful. They help them by giving money whenever is needed. But at the cluster they can get the order for 15-20 days in a month.

They could not get order throughout the month. Some weaves said they are selling the products to the whole seller at the Rajbalhut, Hooghly at instant price. They said about a co-operative society named 'Harah' Handloom cluster.

100 people are interviewed of which 60 are male and 40 are female weavers.

Some tables are drawn on the basis of their interview.

**Table I**  
Having Looms of the respondents on the basis of Gender.

| Gender | Having own looms | Working in other looms | Total     |
|--------|------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| Male   | 25 (41.67%)      | 35 (58.33%)            | 60 (100%) |
| Female | 10 (25%)         | 30 (75%)               | 40 (100%) |

Source: Primary Field Data

From the Table it is found that out of 60 male weavers 25 (41.67%) have own looms and 35 (58.33%) are working in other looms.

Among 40 female weavers 10 (25%) have their own looms and 30 (75%) are working in others looms.

**Table II**  
Distribution of Respondents on the basis of their source of income.

| Gender | Agriculture only | Only handlooms | Others with handloom | Total     |
|--------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Male   | 20 (33.33%)      | 35 (58.33%)    | 05 (8.33%)           | 60 (100%) |
| Female | 02 (5%)          | 35 (87.5%)     | 03 (7.5%)            | 40 (100%) |

Source: Primary Field Data

From the Table it is found that out of 60 male respondents 20 (33.33%) are engaged in agriculture. 35 (58.33%) have handlooms, is the only source of income. 05 (8.33%) with handlooms have other source of income (except agriculture).

Of 40 female respondents 02 (5%) are engaged in agricultural activities, 35 (87.5%) have handlooms as only source of income and 03 (7.5%) have other source of income (except Agriculture)

**Table III**  
Distribution of registered and unregistered respondents of cluster.

| Gender | Registered  | Unregistered | Total     |
|--------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Male   | 20 (33.33%) | 40 (66.67%)  | 60 (100%) |
| Female | 12 (30%)    | 28 (70%)     | 40 (100%) |

Source: Primary Field Data



This table show that out of 60 male respondents 20 (33.33%) are registered at cluster and 40 (66.67%) are unregistered. Out of 40 female respondents, 12 (30%) are registered and 28 (70%) are not registered.



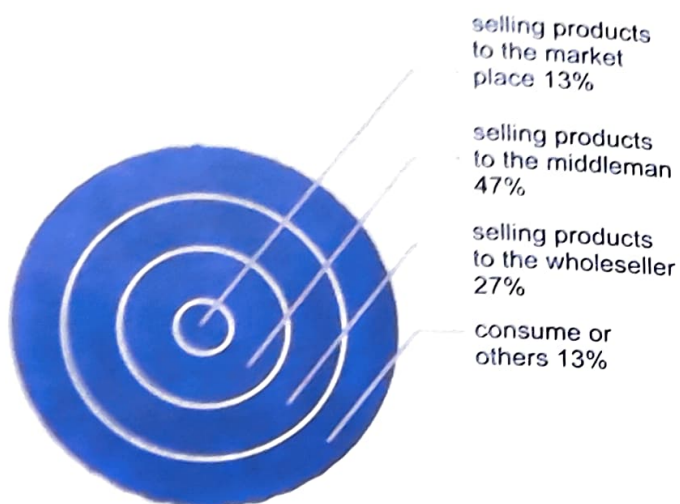


**Table IV**

*(Distribution of respondents on the basis of selling their products.)*

|   | Selling products    | Male        | Female     | Total |
|---|---------------------|-------------|------------|-------|
| 1 | At the market place | 10 (16.67%) | 3 (7.5%)   | 13    |
| 2 | To the middle man   | 20 (33.33%) | 27 (67.5%) |       |
| 3 | To the wholesaler   | 20 (33.33%) | 7 (17.5%)  | 47    |
| 4 | Consume or others   | 10 (16.67%) | 3 (7.5%)   | 27    |
|   | Total               | 60          | 40         | 13    |
|   |                     |             |            | 100   |

Source: Primary Field Data



The table shows that out of 60 male respondents 10 (16.67%) sell their products at market place. 20 (33.33%) sell products to the middle man, 20 (33.33%) sell their products to the wholesaler and 10 (16.67%) consume or keep it for other purpose.

Of 40 female weavers 3 (7.5%) sell their products at market place, 27 (67.5%) sell to the middle man. 7 (17.5%) sell to the wholesaler and 3 (7.5%) consume it or keep it for other purpose.

**Table V**

*Distribution of registered and unregistered respondents of cluster.*

| Gender | Having awareness about smart Village | No awareness | Total     |
|--------|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Male   | 20 (33.33%)                          | 40 (66.67%)  | 60 (100%) |
| Female | 05 (12.5%)                           | 35 (87.5%)   | 40 (100%) |

Source: Primary Field Data

This table shows that out of 60 male weavers 20 (33.33%) are aware of 'smart village' but 40 (66.67%) have no awareness about to concept smart village.  
 Out of 40 female respondents 05 (12.5%) are aware of 'smart village' but 35 (87.5%) do not have awareness.

**Table VI**  
 Distribution of respondents on the basis of their attitude towards handloom weaving

| Gender | Attitude      |                       |           |                   | Total     |
|--------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|        | Bright future | High demand in market | Declining | Govt. help needed |           |
| Male   | 20 (33.33%)   | 10 (16.67%)           | 30 (50%)  | 10 (16.67%)       | 60 (100%) |
| Female | 15 (37.5%)    | 10 (25%)              | 8 (20%)   | 7 (20%)           | 40 (100%) |
| Total  | 25            | 20                    | 38        | 17                |           |

Source: Primary Field Data

The table shows that out of all male weavers (60), 10 (16.67%) said handlooms have high demands in market, 30 (50%) said handloom weaving is declining and 10 (16.67%) said handlooms need Govt. support.

Of all female (40) weavers, 15 (37.5%) said handlooms have bright future, 10 (25%) said it has high demand in market, 8 (20%) said the sector is declining and 7 (17.5%) said handlooms need Govt. support.

### 7. Handlooms and smart village

'What is meant by 'smart village', we may say that the term indicates rural prosperity. It is a mental picture of developed village or model village. Where, there are basic health facilities, good communication system, educational facilities rationing system and Aadhar cards for all.

In order to make a village developed, special attention is given to reduce unemployment among the rural youth by providing employment generating sector. Handloom occupies an important role in rural economy. Due to seasonal nature of agriculture handloom occupies an important place in rural economy.

### 8. Necessary steps should be taken for survival of handloom industry

- 1) A moral and financial support is needed for handloom communities. Allotment of official or financial team is needed which look after the activities of handloom weavers. A brand image for handloom like other brands, such as Raymonds is needed to assure its and Indian product.

- 2) Exclusive world -wide e-commerce website is created, through which people can buy handloom products on time.
- 3) The Govt. should take active role and promise co-operative societies in India.
- 4) Weavers' training is necessary for skill development

#### **Conclusion:**

Handlooms constitute as one of the most employment generating sector in rural economy. History of Indian Handloom is very old. Handlooms industries flourished during the period of Hindu kings and Muslim Samrats. Handlooms declined during the British period, but after independence there is slow improvement in the handloom industries. 'Smart village' is a growing concept. In making the village smart special attention is given to grow more handloom industries in India as second employment generating sector in rural India.

**Funding:** This research does not receive any type of funds from public, commercial or non-profitable organizations.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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