

# Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Handloom Textile Industry in Fulia and Shantipur Belt of Nadia District, West Bengal

Jolly Chatterjee\*

**Abstract :** *The handloom textile industry is the tradition of West Bengal. The industry manufactures high-quality handwoven saris and other dress materials. Shantipur of Nadia District earned its fame since ancient period but gradually lost its glory whereas handloom weaving activity in its neighbouring town Fulia started emerging and gained impetus soon after the independence and became a handloom textile hub with the immigrant weavers from erstwhile East Pakistan. Recently, the handloom textile industry in both these places has faced severe storms due to various politico-economic crises and finally the coronavirus outbreak. The main objective of this research is to examine the changing state of handloom textile industry since last few decades. The industry, at present, is extremely vulnerable owing to economic and social backlashes which pose strong challenges to its survival. Individual weavers and co-operative societies have failed to leave any mark amid the slowdown of domestic and international market. Government needs to play an essential role through strong policy framing to revitalize it from morbid state. The paper attempts to find out the suggestive ways for the handloom textile-industry to regain its lost glory.*

**Key words:** *Immigrant weavers, Handloom, Co-operative societies, Morbid state*

## Introduction

West Bengal's rural economy thrives mainly on agriculture and cottage industries. Amongst all forms of cottage industries, handloom textile industry is worth mentioning. There are various kinds of saris woven in the districts of Nadia, Bardhaman, Hooghly, Bankura and Murshidabad. Of them Nadia district is famous for *Shantipuri* saris, *Tangail* saris, *Jamdani* saris, *Dhakai* saris etc. which are mainly woven in two distinct places viz. Shantipur and Fulia. Since cotton textile industry is footloose by nature, sari weaving in Shantipur got its early start and earned its fame by importing cotton threads from distant western and southern parts of India. Following India's independence (1947) and liberation war of East Pakistan (1971) scenarios got changed. Fulia, as a newer textile hub, emerged with the influx of weaver communities from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan). Now, the handloom textile industry of Nadia district is problem stricken like many other places of West Bengal and in India. Even today a sizeable number of people still find their employment in handloom weaving sector. This paper will throw light up on the various socio-

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\* Assistant Professor in Geography, Dwijendralal College, Krishnagar, Kalyani University.  
Email ID: jollyatcal@gmail.com

economic and political aspects which existed since the last quarter of last century till the most recent time.

Many studies have been conducted on the origin and historical growth of handloom textile industry in Fulia- Shantipur belt of Nadia District and other districts of West Bengal and their crises in the recent period. A handful of research work have been done up on various socio-economic problems of handloom textile weavers in Shantipur and Fulia region and Nadia district in general. Bala (2018) in his book wrote a historical account of handloom textile industry of Nadia district and it also throws light up on the present socio-economic conditions of weavers and crisis of this industry in Nadia amidst the current political set up of West Bengal. Mukherjee (2021) has discussed the historical evolution of handloom textile industry in West Bengal with special emphasis on textile hubs of Shantipur and Fulia. Study by Das (2015) has examined the role of co-operative societies in reviving the handwoven Tangail sari industry in Fulia of Nadia district. With this the author has also studied the socio-cultural changes and the then economic status of the handloom weavers due to the introduction of cooperative based handloom sari production in Fulia. Basak and Pal (2016) focused on the origin and evolution of handloom textile industry, its status and the problems faced by the industry in the pre-covid years of second decade. Roy (2017) has briefly elaborated the historical perspective of handloom clusters and made a situational analysis of the current problems of handloom weavers of Shantipur and Fulia region of Nadia district Several works have been done on the impacts of partition of Bengal on the handloom textile industries of West Bengal and co-operative based economic growth of Shantipur and Fulia. Debnath (2022) in his two articles mainly discussed the historical and political background of waving industry in Nadia, Purba Bardhaman and other places of West Bengal. Swadeshi Movement in the pre-independence era of British India, its impact on weaving industry and later the impacts of post-independence refugee influx (from erstwhile east Pakistan to India) on the growth of handloom weaving activity have been discussed by him. In another work Debnath (2022) he focused on the social aspects like, education levels of the male and female weavers of Nadia district (Shantipur and Nabadwip). Islam et al. (2023) have attempted to work up on the post-covid situations of handloom weaver communities of West Bengal. They tried to outline the present situation of the tant sari industry. Mishra and Bhattacharjee (2023) gave a complete picture of the handloom value chain and analysed the sustainability of this value chain. They studied the challenges faced by the Fulia and Shantipur handloom weavers. Sasikala M S and Venkatesan (2020) have focused on the socio-economic plight of handloom weavers of India during the Covid pandemic. Different newer editions of *Tanaporen Patrika* (2021, 2022 and 2023) a local magazine, edited by Niloy Kumar Basak, gave valuable insights into the contemporary and real-life situations faced by the poverty-stricken weaver families since their arrival into this place and their daily struggles to earn bread and butter. Pandit (2020) in his article The Times of India has criticised the policy of the government and moves of Handloom Textile Board of India in order to save it from the aggression of powerlooms. Niranjana (2004) has made a deeper inspection on Chirala belt of Andhra Pradesh which is a different story of industrialisation,

renowned for its handloom textile production and stood on itself by its dynamic character. This article is a micro level study which shows how an altogether different organisational setup can lead to successful industrial goal.

### **Objectives**

The prime objective of the research paper is to examine the changing socio-economic states of handloom weaving industry in Fulia and Shantipur belt since the last quarter of last century when the immigrant labourers were forced to settle down in this belt. In this process, the study aims to investigate the social changes like, changing tastes, habits, lifestyles, present shifts in both domestic and international market demands and how such things have influenced handloom weaving industry of this region vis a vis some states of southern India. The study also reviews the government policies and measures implemented during pre-pandemic, pandemic, and present post-pandemic periods. This paper tries to focus on comparative socio-economic positions of the weavers within this belt and across other places in India as well as present day market trends of hand-woven textile items.

### **Methodology**

Research methodology applied here is both qualitative and quantitative in nature involving a mixed approach. Literature survey from various offline and online sources including books, magazines, journals and research papers, newspaper articles, periodicals, and government reports has been the first step towards writing this research paper. So far the preparation of location map of the study area is concerned QGIS software has been applied. Primary field survey of minimum hundred sample size (individual weavers) fifty each from Shantipur and Fulia by stratified random sampling technique has been applied. Prominent handloom co-operatives in Shantipur and Fulia have been approached for collecting primary information as well as some secondary data from their annual audit reports. Government handloom textile offices provided relevant annual data. All these data have been used to represent suitable cartographic techniques of bar diagrams. Statistical analyses of time series analysis and Lorenz curve have been followed. All the primary and secondary data gathered have been tabulated, analysed and interpreted. At the end, a brief comparative study has been made with a similar kind of industrial activity in Andhra Pradesh to understand the spatial differences.

### **The Study Area**

The area under study lies within Shantipur Community Development (C.D) block (Fig. 1) which forms an administrative division in Ranaghat sub-division of Nadia district in the state of West Bengal, India. Shantipur municipal town is in the southern portion of the block and Fulia township, in the south-eastern portion. The shortest road distance between Shantipur and Fulia is about 9.2 kms. Birth of Fulia dates back to the year of independence in the Bengal Division in 1947, when a large number of displaced weavers from erstwhile east Pakistan flocked in here to

settle down. Another wave of migrants from Tangail district arrived here in 1971, after the liberation war of Bangladesh.

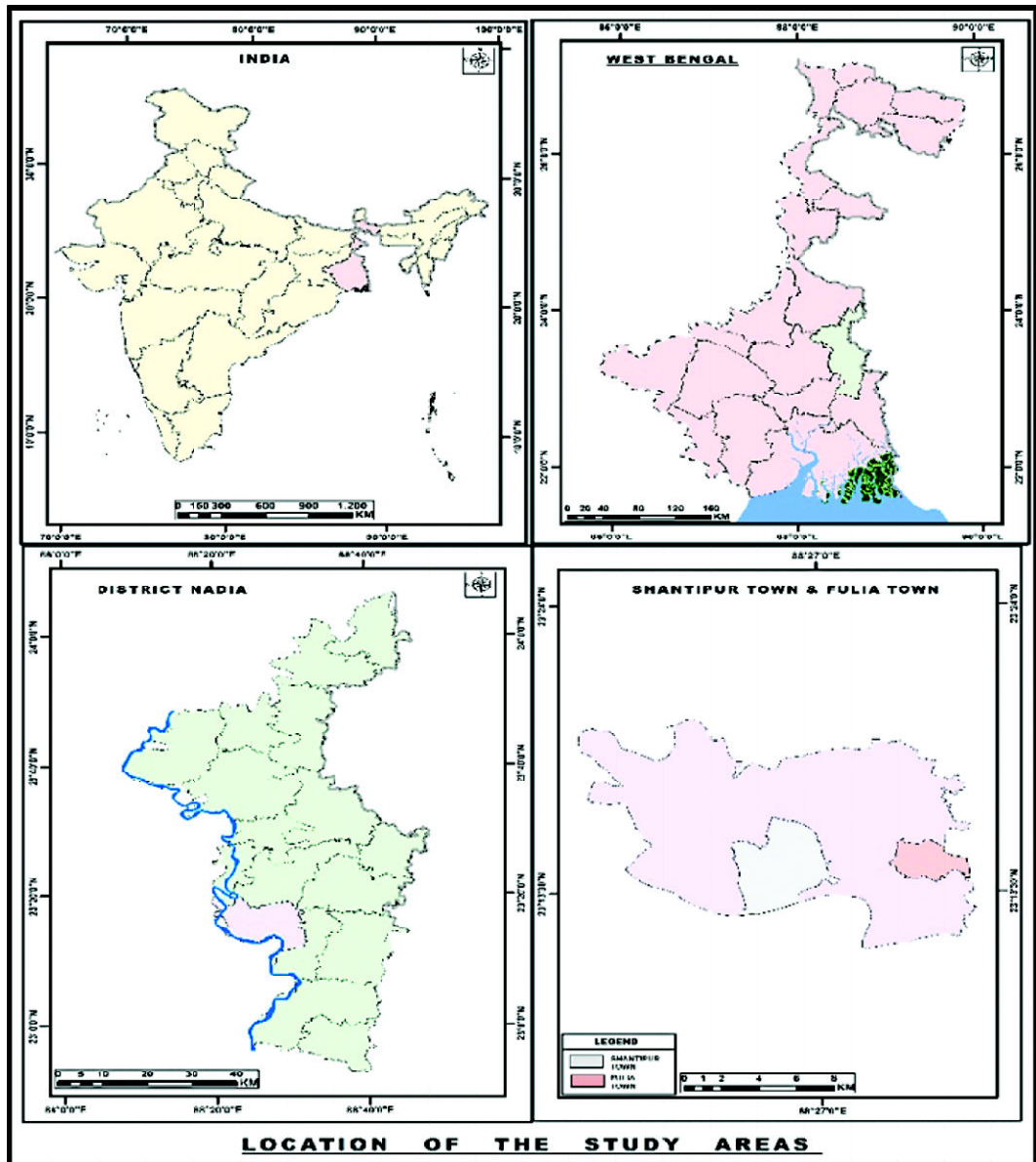


Fig. 1: Location of Study Area

Nadia is one of the few districts where repercussions of partition have largely affected. Maximum concentration of evacuees has been found in three districts of West Bengal viz. 24 Parganas, Dinajpur and Nadia. Large number of refugees entered in Nadia district during 1950s after the partition of Bengal and independence of India (1947) followed by the liberation war (in 1971) of erstwhile East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh). The rehabilitation arrangements gave rise to proliferation of refugee colonies in these border districts. Such refugees had helped to establish the town of Fulia (*Phulia*) (1950) by engulfing three mouzas of Bouincha, Shukpukuria and Udaipur. It is presently the handloom textile hub of Nadia district where weavers from Tangail district of Bangladesh laid the foundation stone of handloom weaving activity and got engaged themselves in making *Tangail* saris. Not only this, such Hindu refugees of mainly Basak and Debnath communities also started weaving *Tangail* and *Jamdani* saris in the town of Nabadweep in Nadia too. (Biswas, 2021) Shantipur town in Nadia was an exception in this regard. It earned its first recognition as early as sultan dynasty but its fame dated back to the reign of Lakshmana Sena (1178 – 1207 CE) when a few skilled weavers from Dhamrai of Dhaka arrived at Shantipur to weave famous *Muslin* sari which lately modified with local touch into *Shantipuri* sari. Later, Shantipur emerged as a significant producer of *Shantipuri* saris during the Mughal reign and started exporting their saris to Afganistan, Arabia and other countries to the far west. This flourishing trend of sari export continued up to 1830, after the British people through their East India Company controlled this textile industry and slowly started exploiting the local artisans.

## Discussions

### *Reservations in the Handloom Sector*

The economic policy of the Government of India and politico-economic situations of West Bengal put enormous pressure on the industrial survival and progression and from time to time. The Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 (dt. 29.03.1985) was enacted by the Govt. of India with a view to protect the livelihood of millions of handloom weavers and to protect the rich cultural heritage of Indian handloom industry from encroachment of power-loom and/or mill sectors. Under this Act, initially 22 textile items were reserved for exclusive production by handloom. Subsequently, on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and by further amendments of the policy the central government reduced these numbers to half (11) by a separate notification (dt. 03.09.2008) with elaborate definitions. Presently, the list of items under Handloom Reservation Order are: 1) Sari, 2) Dhoti, 3) Towel, Gamchha, Angavastram, 4) Lungi, 5) Khesh, Bed-sheet, Bedcover, Counterpane, furnishing (including Tapestry) 6) Jamakkalam including Durey or Duret, 7) Dress Materials, 8) Barrack Blankets and Kambal or Kamblies, 9) Shawl, Loi, Muffler, Panki etc. 10) Woolen Tweed, 11) Chaddar, Mekhla/Phanek". This Act came into force on 31 March, 1986 but was challenged in the Supreme Court by the powerloom owners' association across the country. (Basak, 2021, in *Tanaporen*) The threat from powerloom sector was ever continuing. Government took steps for the handloom products to be made under specific brand names and

to be marketed separately for the sake of reservation under the Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 (Siddharh, 2016)

### ***Booms and Stress of Co-Operative Societies and Weavers through Pre-Covid and Covid Periods***

Handloom co-operative societies of Shantipur had an early start during pre-independence period in order to unite against the exploitation by moneylenders. The weavers of Sutragarh in Shantipur gathered the courage and spirit to unite together for selling their textile goods directly to the consumers and ultimately prospered their business and inspired other co-operatives. The *Kutirpara Samabay Samity* of Shantipur and other co-operatives had received government intervention. Similar to the co-operatives of Shantipur, those of Fulia were fortunate enough in receiving much financial assistance from the state government as well as central government by the opening up and expansion of the Fulia textile co-operative societies. Financial intervention by the government and bank loan helped the societies to perform and progress better. United bank and central co-operative bank provided capital to the co-operative societies. Hence, the fragile condition of handloom industry of 1973 stepped into a glorious phase by the last two decades of twentieth century and progressively boosted the local economy of Fulia to a great extent. The societies not only supported the homeless people but also involved the women into work. Government took several schemes and plans for the betterment of co-operatives, including, insurance (*Mahatma Gandhi Boonkar Bima Yojna*) and allowances for the weavers such as, health package scheme, mediclaim facility, contributory provident fund scheme, old age pension scheme, education allowances etc. These developmental schemes, were mainly implemented by the Central Government. (Mukherjee, 2011) The handloom co-operatives had gradually started getting entangled into several problems. Though the production had considerably increased but the revenue did not increase enough. The main reason for that was that the over dependence of co-operatives upon *Tantuja*, *Tantusree*, *Manjusha* who were initially doing good but gradually lacking initiatives. Due to lack of market, the co-operatives started supplying textiles to the wholesalers to sell at Kolkata and *mahajans* (moneylenders) around. The moneylenders gradually started taking the advantages of the situation and blocked the money by delaying the payments. Other problems that all the co-operative societies of Shantipur and Fulia dealt with, were the underpayment of weavers, shortage of good quality cotton yarns, lack of skilful management and trained workforce, lack of new innovative designs and product diversification since much of their textile products were exported abroad. (Bala, 2018)

Shantipur-Fulia belt of Nadia district has suffered from economic setback since the beginning of twenty first century. The wage rate of the textile workers started escalating along with the procurement cost of raw materials. Later on, the bank interest rate on credit had jumped by 4% along with the withdrawal of subsidy by the government. Despite many hurdles and problems, the co-operative societies' incessant effort did not really go into vain. Amid all such upheavals, everything went more or less well for the co-operatives up to 2008. The beneficiaries of the government schemes were not sufficient in comparison to the total number of weavers employed

and these schemes did not properly reach to the needy people. Despite this fact, large number of weavers (about 55,000) were already engaged with co-operative societies. The Nadia District Central Co-operative Bank provides loans at minimum interest to the co-operatives. (Siddharth, 2016)

*“In Santipur government ineffectiveness has worsened the weavers’ situation. But at Phulia people work together by forming cooperatives but they cannot achieve up to their potentiality without significant government help. Government is inactive in promoting this Phulian Tangail sari 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 co-operative societies, they are much richer than the others.”* (Das, 2015 p. 137) Thus, the Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 could not really protect this unorganised sector from gradually getting into the morbid state. Not only this crisis prevailed in Shantipur-Fulia belt of Nadia district in West Bengal, but across other districts of West Bengal and different parts of India also. About 615 handloom weavers in Andhra Pradesh and 20 handloom weavers in Varanasi committed suicide in between 2014 and 2017, due to central government policies which were unfavourable for the handloom weaving sector but in favour of mill and powerloom owners as did the Hank Yarn Packing Notification by the central government (1974 and 2003). As a matter of fact, several weavers in Dhatrigram (Purba Bardhaman) committed suicide on account extreme poverty and indebtedness (Shekh, 2023). The central budget allocation for handloom weaving sector was thrashed to about one third from F.Y 2016-17 to F.Y 2018-2019. This was accompanied by the demonetization of bank notes (2016) and introduction of Goods and Services Tax (G.S.T) in July1, 2017. Such events had severe economic backlashes as the 5% GST was levied up on the hank yarn and hand-woven textile items and it had to be borne by the poor individual handloom weavers also along with the businessmen and mill owners. (Basak, 2023)

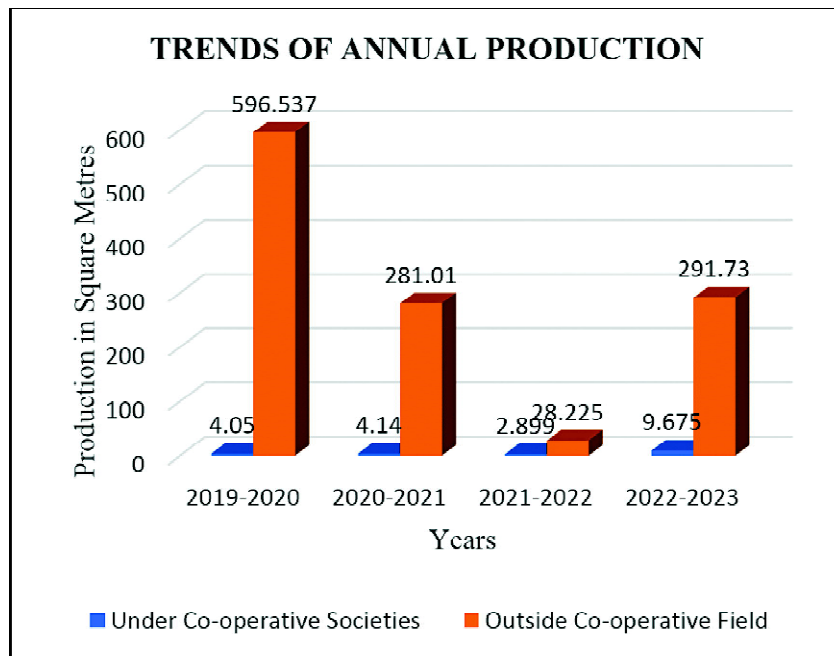
The poor individual weavers, small and micro businessmen were unable to cope with the major thrust of GST, as they had limited financial dealings. Another persistent problem that has put and has still been putting massive stress within the niche of handloom weavers is the infiltration of powerlooms in Shantipur-Fulia belt mostly after 2011-12, as in other parts of West Bengal. It was not merely the existence of powerlooms but ever-increasing numbers of unauthorised powerlooms posed threat to the earning potential of the local handloom owners and weavers. Amidst all these economic turmoils came another blow of coronavirus outbreak and related lockdown. This had a serious impact on the socio-economic lives of handloom textile weavers. (Ubach, 2021) Market for the hand-woven textile items (like, *saris, dhotis*) shrunk locally, within country as well as abroad due to changing dressing habits. But, the practice of ‘Make in India’ and ‘buy local’ habits are more important because every locally-made purchase directly supports indigenous fashion senses and so as the domestic artisans (Islam et.al., 2023). This had compelled

many of the poor weavers in Shantipur and Fulia region to abandon their looms and search alternative means of earning. Many of them engaged themselves into rural agricultural activities locally while others emigrated elsewhere in search of varied labour jobs to earn their livelihood. Those who stayed back in weaving job and survived, endured immense agony. This has been the picture of many handloom weavers across different districts of West Bengal. During lockdown period, there was price escalation of raw materials which had a detrimental effect on handloom weaving industry. During covid pandemic, the central government scrapped the Handloom Board (July 27, 2020) and Handicraft Board (August 4, 2020) with the Centre's "minimum government, maximum governance" principle (Pandit, 2020). These boards used to play a major role to promote and expand the markets of handloom items earlier in India and abroad.

## Findings

### *Present Situation*

The coronavirus outbreak has caused a major halt in the production and sale of handloom textiles because of drastic drop in market demand almost everywhere in West Bengal just as

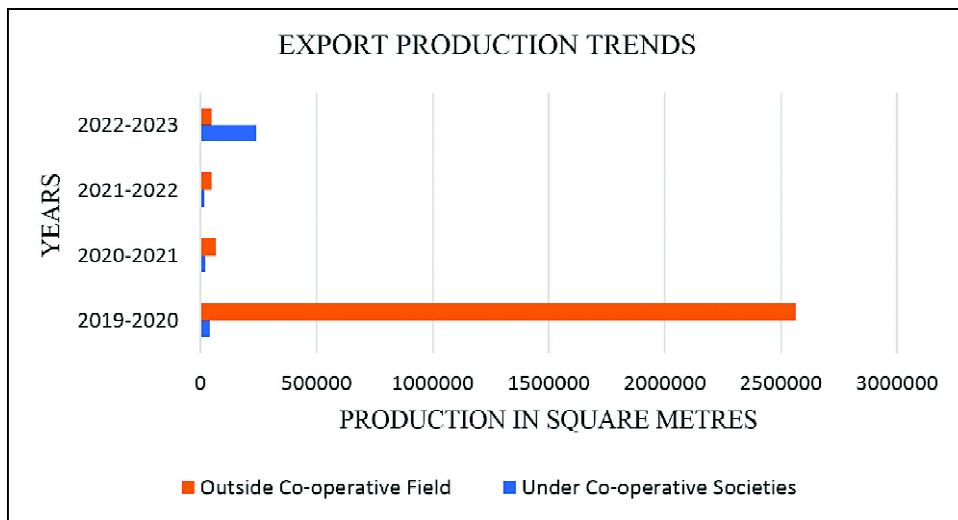


**Fig. 2:** Comparative Trends of Production in Recent Years

*Source: Salient statistical information of handloom industry of West Bengal, Handloom Development Office, Shantipur zone Nadia.*

elsewhere in India. Although central assistance to West Bengal was one of the lowest (Rs. 8.1 Lakhs) in comparison to other leading states of Tamil Nadu (Rs.99.44 lakhs), Uttar Pradesh (Rs.146.86 Lakhs) and Gujarat (Rs.8.95 Lakhs), percentage of *sari* production and handloom weavers have been the highest in West Bengal during that period. Shantipur and Fulia, the handloom textile hub of Nadia district, which manufacture high quality items especially *saris* (like, *Shantipuri*, *Tangail* and *Jamdani* etc.) went through mixed situation. Handloom co-operative clusters performed better than the individual weavers due to the provision of bank loan and export to international market. Individual handloom weavers of Shantipur and Fulia were however exploited by the moneylenders (*Mahajans*) who also acted as middlemen between weavers and consumers (Basak, 2022 in *Tanaporen*). Post-covid situations of handloom textile industry in Shantipur-Fulia belt have been better than lockdown phase as the movement of people and goods have normalised, markets have reopened and all economic activities have resumed. From Figure 2 it has been evident that the annualised production of Shantipur zone outside the co-operative sector, which consists of larger share of the total production, has drastically dropped since the lockdown period of Covid pandemic but after 2022, the situation has been gradually improving. This figure is also marked by a very little share of co-operative societies in the total annual production through the periods.

Production for export prior to the pandemic situation was extremely impressive outside the co-operative sector (Fig. 3) perhaps due to favourable export value chain whereas the role of co-



**Fig. 3.** Comparative Export Production Trends in Recent Years

*Source: salient statistical information of handloom industry of West Bengal, Handloom Development Office, Shantipur zone Nadia.*

operative sector was extremely miserable. Throughout the pandemic situation the situations were worsened for both the sectors. Post covid period has witnessed a major shift in the co-operative sector by a marked improvement in this regard whereas the export production outside co-operative sector have not revived again. (Mishra & Mahapatra. 2021)

There have been reasons for disappointment and discouragement to this cottage industry. On December 21, 2021, Government of West Bengal issued a notification stating - "*The Governor is pleased to sanction the implementation of a new Incentive Scheme for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in West Bengal for promoting growth and development of Powerloom sector in the following manner such enterprises in the State: The scheme may be called Incentive Scheme for MSMEs in Powerloom Sector*" (The Kolkata Gazette, 2021 Govt. of W.B). The duration of such Scheme as has been mentioned for the period of three years (January 01, 2022 to December 31, 2024) if not withdrawn/extended/ amended earlier by a Notification.

The existence of handloom sector in Shantipur-Fulia belt has been at stake due to undesired illegal proliferation of powerlooms which constantly pose threat to the handloom weavers by selling their manufactured saris under the disguise of handloom saris at a cheaper rate. In reply of my personal interview in Kutirpara area in Shantipur town, "How has the challenges escalated in Fulia with the advent of powerlooms?" one of the respondents answered that, the powerlooms, now-a-days create higher decibel noise in every lane and by lane of Shantipur and also predominate the vast market of lower-middle class indigenous consumers (J. Chatterjee, personal communication, October 24, 2024). Price escalation of the basic raw materials has also made them suffer. Even though the Individual weavers are majority, they are unable to obtain any bank loan since they are unorganised. Hence, they are bound to depend on unscrupulous moneylenders for carrying out their weaving practice and life sustenance. These weavers have largely been deprived of the benefits of different Government schemes and programmes which are enjoyed by only 5%-10% organised weavers under co-operative societies. Fig. 2 (a) shows increasing percentage of active looms in Shantipur-Fulia belt after the covid situation is over in moving averages whereas (b) shows the declining percentage of active looms after the covid pandemic in Nabadwip belt of Nadia.

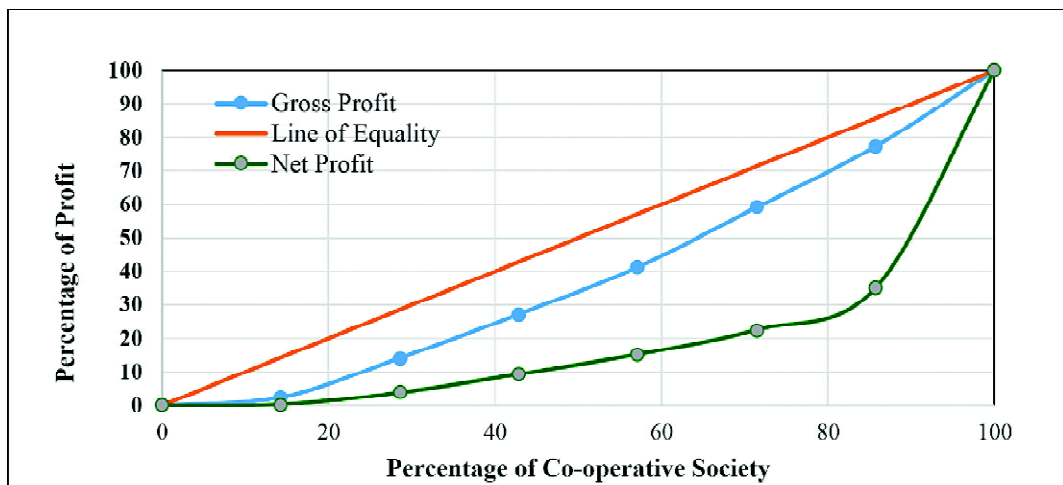
Shantipur-Fulia belt has been slowly recovering its crisis. A primary field survey has been conducted with total fifty number of individual handloom weavers in Shantipur and Fulia region. Almost all the weavers are the sufferers both due to illegal powerloom production and consequent economic deprivation. Individual weavers, therefore, live in extremely impoverished socio-economic environment and their earnings are meagre. (Dey. 2022 in *Tanaporen*) Most of the weavers in Shantipur-Fulia belt literally struggle to earn their basic livelihood with insignificant income, social insecurity and uncertain future that they never want their future generations to fall prey into this vicious circle of poverty.

**Table:1 Income Distribution of Individual Weavers**

Monthly income (Rs) of individual handloom weavers	Percentage of weavers in Shantipur	Percentage of weavers in Fulia
Less than 5000	30	20
5000 - 7000	46	43
7000 - 9000	24	32
More than 9000	0	5

Source: Primary Field Survey (sample size Total 100 Weaver families).

The active handloom co-operative societies, in this belt, however, have managed to earn profits. Lorenz curve in Fig. 4 demonstrates the extent of inequality between net and gross profit earned by co-operative societies in Shantipur-Fulia belt. Net profit earned by the co-operatives is much less than gross profit due to various expenditures including paying interests on prepayment of loan. By virtue of being organisational character and capital accumulation, they have allocated sufficient finer raw materials from distant South Indian market, derived the benefits of Government schemes and programmes for their weavers' security. They also get greater proximity to Government assistance in marketing their manufactured items locally, regionally and internationally.

**Fig. 4:** Lorenz Curve to Show the extent of inequality in profit

Source: Computed from audit reports of handloom Co-operative societies

### ***Inter-Spatial Study***

Although time has always been an important factor but, geographical research remains incomplete without spatial studies. A small handloom weaving region covering about 8-10 kilometres in length in coastal Andhra Pradesh named, Chirala belt engulfing several small weaving towns and villages of Ipurupalem, Perala, Chirala, Ramakrishnapuram, Hastinapuram, Jandrapeta, Amodagiripatnam, Dantampeta, Vetapalem, Desaipeta, Ravoopeta and Pandilapa can be taken for a comparative study. It is one of the largest handloom textile-weaving centres of this state where the local economy revolves round cloth production. The most notable distinction between this belt and Shantipur-Fulia belt of West Bengal lies in the structure of organisation of the looms. In Chirala belt there is remarkable presence of mini and master weavers (95%) who provide sheds under which the weavers work with specifies designs, definite yarn supplies etc. Master weavers do the retail and wholesale marketing jobs for their textile goods and pay the weavers. Although the working conditions are very poor but, there is never shortage of work for them (Niranjana, 2004). Large number of immigrant labour force find their employment there. Handloom weaving activity in this small belt is an exemplary paradigm. Shantipur-Fulia belt can attain vitality by following this footprint.

### **Policy Framing and Recommendations**

Since handloom textile generates employment opportunities for women labour it offers a source of women empowerment. This sector is less capital intensive and makes minimum use of power. Now, the question is, could there be any initiative taken to revive the handloom weaving sector by the Government which is already suffering? Today, the handloom textile industry of Shantipur-Fulia belt, and also its neighbourhood face a big crisis. Government of India through its policies and programmes promotes and encourages handloom textile sector, thereby it tries to make the industry more self-reliant and competitive in the domestic and global market. "National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP) has been formulated for its implementation during financial year 2021-22 to 2025-26. The scheme will follow need-based approach for integrated and holistic development of handlooms and welfare of handloom weavers. The scheme will support weavers, both within and outside the cooperative fold including Self Help Groups etc. towards raw material, design inputs, technology up-gradation, marketing support through exhibitions, create permanent infrastructure in the form of Urban Haats, marketing complexes etc." (Final Revised Guidelines NHDP, 2023). This will be implemented through the Central and State government Handloom Organisations and Corporations. The State Government has to ensure the protection of this traditional sector by introducing state-of-the-art facilities like, increasing minimum wage of the handloom weavers, giving more financial benefits to the weavers, establishing exclusive handloom textile malls or markets, improving organisational structure by direct purchase of handloom textile goods from the weavers at a reasonable price to sell and export by removing the predominance of middlemen and *Mahajans*, offering easy bank credits to individual weavers. State government has taken several policy measures which include, Scheme for housing cum work

shed, health insurance for the welfare of weavers and their families, setting up of at least 10 handloom clusters in each district, 6% interest rebate on capital loan taken by handloom clusters, additional 5% marketing incentive on existing 10% incentive for the promotion of marketing of handloom goods, 10% subsidy on the sale value of exportable handloom fabrics, power supply at subsidised rate etc. It is utmost necessary to bring the individual weavers under Government welfare schemes in theory and practice and to modernise their techniques of production with easy supply of superior yarns, dyes and to regularly upgrade their skills by research and training.. The handloom textile weaving is not just an industry, but an art, elegance, emotion and tradition of Bengal as well as our country. Sadly, it is presently the only means of livelihood for poor weavers of Shantipur-Fulia region. (Textile Policy. 2013-2018, Govt. of W.B.) In fact, extreme poverty and indebtedness has compelled many individual weavers to take up alternative means of employment in the post-covid neo-normal situation and also their next generations are desperate to quit their ancestral looms. Weavers and the co-operative societies should focus on more innovations and product diversification just because the lifestyle of rural and urban communities has largely altered over time so has the taste and dressing style. Survival in the competitive economy is the real challenge which has to be won by the weavers.

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