



## "Problems and Prospects of Kambali Woolen Weavers in Karnataka by availing different Government schemes"

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### ABSTRACT :

Woolen weaving in Karnataka is a traditional craft facing significant challenges despite its rich heritage and potential for economic contribution. This paper explores the problems confronting woolen weavers in the state, supported by statistical data, while also identifying prospects for revitalization through strategic interventions. Although the Indian weaving industry employs a large section of the Indian population, it was considered as a failing industry. This ancient industry of India is experiencing a bad phase, a large market for weaving products still exist both in the international and domestic market. The manufacturing of weaving products makes the most remarkable contribution to the national GDP and even in the exports revenue. Estimates and analysis over the years have found out that the weaving industry are supporting some 32 other sectors that include marketing, financial, transportation, hotels and even maintenance services. The findings aim to provide insights into enhancing the sustainability of this vital sector.

**Keywords:** Woolen weavers, Weaving industry, Karnataka, Problems and Prospects

### Introduction

Woolen weaving has long been an integral part of Karnataka's cultural and economic landscape. Regions such as Mysuru and Channarayana are known for their unique woolen products, including shawls and carpets. However, the sector faces numerous challenges, including competition from synthetic fibers, inadequate infrastructure, and limited market access. This research paper examines these issues and discusses the potential for revitalizing the woolen weaving industry in Karnataka. The weaving industry in India has self depending mechanism that includes training the young weavers, abundance of resources and capacities, thereby, helping the industry not to be dependent on the Government. In addition, weaving is eco-friendly, and is aimed at the cutting back on the environmental impact. Even in Rig-Veda and the epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana dwell upon the craft of weaving at length. These weavers of the past were true masters of their craft. Their capability was so great that legend even refers to the fabulous semi-transparent sari (worn by Amravati, the famous courtesan). The Kurubas are descendants of the Pallavas, a ruling clan of Southern India from the 4th century to the late 9th century. With the decline of the Pallava dynasty in the 8th century and the Chola dynasty's rise in the late 8th century, the Kuruba authorities were affected. During Chola King Adondai, the Kurubas were scattered all over the Deccan. Some fled to Nilgiris, Wayanad and Coorg and were named Kurumbas. Kambli weaving is a fundamental part of Kuruba culture and identity, embodying their artistic, economic, and social values. Kambli is much more than just a piece of woven cloth to the Kurubas; it is an integral part of their lifestyle. It serves a practical purpose by protecting nomadic shepherds from harsh weather conditions, and it is also an important source of income for many Kuruba families who have passed down the craft through generations as a family tradition.

### Historical Context of Kambali Woolen Weaving in Karnataka

Karnataka has a rich history of textile production, with woolen weaving traditionally practiced by specific communities, such as the shepherds. According to the Handloom Census of 2019, there were approximately 2.4 million handloom weavers in India, with Karnataka contributing significantly to this number. The state's woolen products are characterized by their intricate designs and craftsmanship, which have been passed down through generations.

- **Traditional Techniques and Products:** Woolen weavers in Karnataka use various traditional techniques, with products like shawls and blankets often made from locally sourced wool. The traditional handloom sector plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity while providing livelihoods.

## Literatures reviewed

**Ashutosh Mishra(2009)** explained in his article that Orissa schools and colleges to buy handloom fabric cotton and silk fabrics from the handlooms of Orissa are prized across the country for their fine weaves but most weavers in the state earn very little. To improve their income, the state's department of handloom and textiles is planning to promote their fabrics for making school and college uniforms.

**Bharat Dogra (2008)** stated that Varanasi in North India, which employed 700,000 people in handloom a decade back now, employs only 250,000, with 47 reported cases of suicide. In the face of liberalization, silk cloth imports, indiscriminate mechanization, lose control over cheap imitations, rising price of silk, etc. weavers, like other artisans, are being dispossessed. This article discusses the inefficacy of existing government schemes, and suggests ways forward, stressing the need for an artisans' movement in the country.

**Wader and Murthy (1999)** conducted study on evaluation of eye-sight grading on different varieties of groundnut at different markets in Chitradurga district of Karnataka. From the result it was evident that eye-sight graded samples average price is less than that of ungraded samples, which shows that the graders have failed to judge properly the quality of the producer.

## Need for the study

Although in the first half of the 20th century cotton, wool and silk as an output finds its appearance in the handloom Sector and it was only in the beginning of the second half of the 20th century that a few local weaving community people ventured to install cotton, wool and silk units. Therefore the present study, is intended to study the problems that are faced by the cotton, wool and silk handloom weavers and prospects of weaving industry. The research reported here has been commissioned due to widespread recognition of the need for change in the cotton, wool and silk selling industry. The aim of the research is to investigate and analyze the consequences of different options, and to make that information available for industry participants to use in their decision-making. While future decision making will be complex, and any decision to change will have a broad range of consequences, history shows that failing to change will inevitably result in a continuation of the decline the industry has experienced over the last two decades.

## Current Challenges Facing Kambali Woolen Weavers

- **Competition from Synthetic Textiles:** The textile industry in Karnataka has been heavily impacted by the proliferation of synthetic fabrics. According to a report by the Ministry of Textiles, the share of synthetic fibers in the total fiber consumption in India rose from 47% in 2010 to 64% in 2020. This shift has led to a decline in the demand for woolen textiles, posing a serious threat to traditional weavers.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure and Technology:** Many woolen weavers continue to rely on traditional handlooms, which limit their productivity. A survey conducted by the Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation revealed that over 70% of weavers use outdated looms, hindering efficiency and output. Investment in modern technology could significantly enhance productivity.
- **Limited Market Access:** Weavers often lack access to larger markets due to poor marketing strategies and distribution channels. A study by the National Handloom Development Corporation showed that only 30% of handloom weavers in Karnataka had access to organized markets, limiting their income potential.
- **Economic Vulnerability:** The woolen weaving sector is characterized by seasonal demand, leading to economic instability for many artisans. According to the 2019-2020 report of the Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation, over 50% of weavers reported irregular incomes, with many relying on seasonal sales for their livelihood.
- **Skill Gaps and Training:** The younger generation is increasingly abandoning traditional weaving practices, resulting in a decline of essential skills. According to the Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Ministry, nearly 60% of artisans lack formal training, which threatens the continuity of traditional techniques.

## Prospects for Woolen Weavers

- **Government Support and Policy Initiatives:** Government initiatives play a vital role in supporting traditional crafts. The Handloom Mark scheme and the Pradhan Mantri Weavers Mudra Yojana are examples of programs aimed at providing financial assistance and promoting handloom products. As of 2021, the government allocated ₹4,000 crore for the promotion of handlooms, which can significantly benefit woolen weavers.
- **Promotion of Handloom and Handicraft Products:** Growing consumer interest in sustainable products presents an opportunity for woolen weavers. A survey by the India Brand Equity Foundation indicated that 50% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for handmade and eco-friendly products. Targeted marketing strategies can help increase demand for woolen textiles.
- **Embracing Technology:** Integrating technology in the weaving process can enhance efficiency. The introduction of modern looms and design software can streamline production. A pilot project in Mysuru demonstrated a 30% increase in productivity when modern techniques were adopted.
- **Establishing Cooperatives:** Cooperatives can empower weavers by providing collective marketing and resource-sharing platforms. A study

by the International Labour Organization found that cooperatives increase income for artisans by up to 25% due to better bargaining power and access to larger markets.

- **Export Potential:** Exploring international markets can open new avenues for woolen products. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade reported a steady increase in exports of handloom products, with a growth rate of 15% annually. Participation in global trade fairs can help weavers showcase their products and access broader markets.

As per the 4<sup>th</sup> All India Handloom Census (2019-20), there are 26, 73,891 handloom weavers and 8,48,621 allied workers in the country. State-wise number of handloom weavers and allied workers. The Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles is implementing following schemes for development of handlooms and welfare of handloom weavers across the country:

1. National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)
2. Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS)
3. Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS)
4. Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS)

Under the above schemes, financial assistance is provided for raw materials, purchase of looms and accessories, design innovation, product diversification, infrastructure development, skill upgradation, lighting units, marketing of handloom products and loan at concessional rates.

#### A. National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)

- Block Level Cluster:** Introduced in 2015-16 as one of the components of National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP). Financial assistance upto Rs. 2.00 crore per BLC for various interventions such as skill upgradation, Hathkargha Samvardhan Sahayata, product development, construction of workshed, project management cost, design development, setting up of common facility centre (CFC) etc. is provided. Besides, financial assistance upto Rs. 50.00 lakh is also available for setting up of one dye house at district level. The proposals are recommended by the State Government.
- Handloom Marketing Assistance** is one of the components of National Handloom Development Programme. In order to provide marketing platform to the handloom agencies/weavers to sell their products directly to the consumers, financial assistance is provided to the States/eligible handloom agencies for organising marketing events in domestic as well as overseas markets.
- Weavers' MUDRA Scheme:** Under the Weavers' Mudra Scheme, credit at concessional interest rate of 6% is provided to the handloom weavers. Margin money assistance to a maximum of Rs. 10,000 per weaver and credit guarantee for a period of 3 years is also provided. **MUDRA portal** has been developed in association with Punjab National Bank to cut down delay in disbursement of funds for margin money and interest subvention.
- HATHKARGHA SAMVARDHAN SAHAYATA (HSS):**  
Hathkargha Samvardhan Sahayata (HSS) was introduced on 1st December 2016 with an objective to provide looms/accessories to the weavers to enhance their earnings through improved productivity and quality of the handloom products. Under the scheme, 90% of the cost of loom/accessory is borne by the Government of India while remaining 10% is borne by the beneficiary. The Government of India's share is released directly in the Bank account of the beneficiary through designated agency.
- EDUCATION OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS AND THEIR CHILDREN:**  
Ministry of Textiles has signed Memorandums of Understanding with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to secure educational facilities for the weavers and their families. NIOS offers Secondary and Senior Secondary level education with specialized subjects on design, marketing, business development, etc. through distance learning mode for handloom weavers, whereas IGNOU offers continuing education programs through accessible and flexible learning opportunities relevant to the aspirations of handloom weavers and their children for career progression. Ministry of Textiles is providing reimbursement of 75% of the fee towards admission to NIOS/IGNOU courses in case of SC, ST, BPL, and Women learners belonging to handloom weavers' families.
- India Handloom Brand-** During the celebration of 7th August 2015 as National Handloom Day, 'India Handloom' Brand was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister for branding of high quality handloom products. It promotes production of niche handloom products with high quality, authentic traditional designs with zero defect and zero effect on environment. Since its launch, 1232 registrations have been issued under 122 product categories and sale of Rs. 833.69 crore has been generated. Initiatives with various leading brands has been undertaken to bring out a separate range of handloom garments in their brand.
- E-COMMERCE-** In order to promote e-marketing of handloom products, a policy frame work was designed and under which any willing e-commerce platform with good track record can participate in online marketing of handloom products. Accordingly, 23 e-commerce entities have been engaged for on-line marketing of handloom products. Total sales of Rs. 71.95 crore has been reported through the online

portal.

- viii. **URBAN HAATS** are set up in the big towns/metropolitan cities to provide adequate direct marketing facilities to the craft persons/weavers and eliminate middle agencies. 38 such Urban Haats have been sanctioned across the country so far.

**B. Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme:**

The Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) is implemented for development of Mega Handloom Clusters covering atleast 15000 to 25,000 handlooms and financial assistance as GoI share from Rs. 40.00 to Rs.70.00 crore is in a period of 5 years. 8 mega handloom clusters taken up as announced in the Budgets i.e. Varanasi, Sivasagar (2008-09), Virudhunagar, Murshidabad (2009-10), Prakasam & Guntur districts and Godda & neighbouring districts (2012-13), Bhagalpur & Trichy (2014-15). Under the scheme, components like conducting Diagnostic Study, engaging Designer, Product Development, Corpus for raw material, Construction of Worksheds (for BPL/SC/ST/Women weavers), Skill up-gradation etc. are fully funded by Government of India, while the components like Technology up-gradation, lighting units funded 90% and other common infrastructural projects like Design Studio, Marketing Complex, Value Addition Centres, Publicity etc., are funded by the GOI to the extent of 80%.

**C. Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme**

Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS) is providing life, accidental and disability insurance coverage under the components Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Converged Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana (MGBBY).

**D. Yarn Supply Scheme:**

Yarn Supply Scheme is being implemented throughout the country to make available all types of yarn at Mill Gate Price. The scheme is being implemented through National Handloom Development Corporation. Under the Scheme freight is reimbursed and depot operating charges @2% is given to depot operating agencies. A component of 10% price subsidy also exists on hank yarn, which is applicable on cotton, domestic silk, wool and linen yarn with quantity caps.

Budgetary allocation of funds is not made State-wise. Funds are released to handloom agencies on receipt of viable proposals and utilization of previous funds. However, Scheme-wise details of funds allocated and released in the last three years and the current year for implementation of above mentioned schemes across the country are as under:

**Table 1: Details of funds allocated and released in the last three years and the current year (Rs. in crore)**

Sl. No.	Name of scheme	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20 (till date)	
		Funds allocated (RE)	Funds released	Funds allocated (RE)	Funds released	Funds allocated (RE)	Funds released	Funds allocated	Funds released
1	National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)	167.53	153.56	140.24	135.05	138.53	119.72	135.00	97.74
2	Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS)	50.00	40.11	32.50	31.82	21.50	16.38	40.00	6.92
3	Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS)	26.56	26.56	25.00	24.98	10.05	2.06	20.00	7.96
4	Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS)	261.50	261.35	200.00	199.84	155.41	126.84	195.00	105.03
Total		505.59	481.58	397.74	391.69	325.49	265.00	390.00	217.65

Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1596372>

**Table 2: State-wise and scheme-wise number of handloom weavers benefitted under various schemes in the last three years (2016-17 to 2018-19) and the current year (2019-20 till 30-9-2019).**

Sl.No.	States	NHDP & CHCDS	NHDP		HWCWS	
		No. of beneficiaries of Block Level Clusters	No. of beneficiaries of Marketing events	No. of beneficiaries of concessional loans (MUDRA Scheme)	No. of weavers enrolled under PMJJY/ PMSBY	No. of weavers enrolled under MGBBY/ converged MGBBY
East Zone						
1	Arunachal Pradesh	4180	11000	-	-	-
2	Assam	45546	134293	587	106	67572
3	Bihar	5114	7000	453	-	1797
4	Jharkhand	9740	0	239	-	485
5	Manipur	11195	34100	18	-	662
6	Meghalaya	0	2000	0	-	0
7	Mizoram	634	14500	09	-	0
8	Nagaland	1140	44900	55	-	0
9	Orissa	5200	37000	2876	9930	28204
10	Sikkim	0	19400	0	-	29
11	Tripura	341	39930	09	-	482
12	West Bengal	26793	10200	1080	39113	58583
Total East Zone		109883	354323	5326	49149	157814
West Zone						
1	Chhattisgarh	774	15000	649	331	-
2	Gujarat	357	0	289	-	8835
3	Goa	0	0	0	-	
4	Madhya Pradesh	7347	21490	242	20	658
5	Maharashtra	4168	31000	193	102	500
Total West Zone		12646	67490	1373	453	9993
North Zone						
1	Delhi	0	2240	0	-	458
2	Haryana	14	0	206	-	126
3	Himachal Pradesh	1643	0	173	2861	6005
4	Jammu & Kashmir	2468	12000	9627	464	396
5	Punjab	0	0	1	-	-

Sl.No.	States	NHDP & CHCDS	NHDP		HWCWS	
		No. of beneficiaries of Block Level Clusters	No. of beneficiaries of Marketing events	No. of beneficiaries of concessional loans (MUDRA Scheme)	No. of weavers enrolled under PMJJY/ PMSBY	No. of weavers enrolled under MGBBY/ converged MGBBY
6	Rajasthan	554	7820	314	18	1963
7	Uttar Pradesh	13424	80500	3529	11146	13504
8	Uttarakhand	280	16820	84	231	653
Total North Zone		18383	119380	13934	14720	23105
South Zone						
1	Andhra Pradesh	5366	45000	22322	9024	58175
2	Karnataka	2777	29000	3528	-	52757
3	Kerala	1030	13000	571	3359	11180
4	Puducherry	0	0	0	-	903
5	Tamil Nadu	28626	54100	68727	143819	308964
6	Telangana	1779	46000	3279	-	6998
Total		39578	187100	98157	156202	438977
1	Beneficiaries covered through other National Level agencies	-	425250	-	-	-
Grand Total		180490	1153543	118790	220524	629889

Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1596372>

#### Current Status of Woolen Weavers

- **Economic Contribution:** The woolen weaving sector contributes significantly to Karnataka's economy. The value of handloom exports from Karnataka was approximately Rs. 3,000 crores in 2021-22, with a notable portion attributed to woolen textiles.
- **Employment Data:** According to the 2020 report by the Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation, about 100,000 artisans are directly involved in woolen weaving. Many of these artisans are women, providing crucial economic support to their families.
- **Production Statistics:** The annual production of woolen textiles in Karnataka is estimated at around 20 million meters. However, the share of woolen textiles in the overall handloom sector has declined, largely due to the rising popularity of synthetic fabrics.

#### Conclusion

The woolen weaving industry in Karnataka faces significant challenges but also holds immense potential for revitalization. By addressing key issues such as competition, infrastructure, market access, and skill development through targeted interventions, the state can enhance the sustainability of this vital sector. Collaborative efforts among government, industry stakeholders, and the weavers themselves will be essential in shaping a prosperous future for woolen weaving in Karnataka. The traditional Kambli weaving process does not have any method to cater to the stiffness of the fabric. The tamarind seed paste used as a sizing agent adds to the stiffness of the fabric. It has been observed by the researcher that washing the fabric with soap nut does reduce its coarseness to a large extent. Scrubbing the fabric in hot water was found to reduce the naps formed after washing the fabric. Such softened fabric can be used for more creative purposes. Fabric woven from Deccani wool is also warm and durable. Therefore, coarse Deccani wool can be used to make other viable products like sacks, bags, bottle holders, durries and other materials for daily use which are found to be stronger and better even for rough weather. The experiments conducted were designed to fit the socio-economic conditions of the Kambli weavers of Karagaon. The experiments were elementary and formulated using traditional knowledge known to artisans. Therefore, it was easy for the weavers to understand and grasp it. Hopefully, these new suggested weaving techniques would be well received by the weavers. This answers

the questions raised by the researcher. Further research on enhancing the rearing and harvesting of Deccani wool is required. Impact-based research framed to suit a specific community is the need for the hour. It is essential to preserve the rich cultural heritage of traditional indigenous communities of India and recognise their uniqueness. Going forward, detailed research may throw more light on the unanswered aspects of the research questions.

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