

Handicrafts and Handlooms

PART - I

Basket Maker of Andugula

Polaiah is a basket maker from Shankavaram village in Kanigiri Mandal, Prakasam district. He is about 35 years old. He belongs to Yerukala, a tribal community. His family has been weaving baskets for generations. Bagyamma, his wife, also works as a basket maker. Moreover, they have three children. Polaiah's father along with other 25 families came to Kandukuru and Ongole about 30 years ago as the demand for baskets had declined in their native village. He sells baskets on road side are near by villages.



Polaiah uses the spines of wild date palm (*eatha chettu*) leaves. Using a knife, he shaves off the leaves and keeps them in hot sunshine to dry them. The raw material, wild date palm leaves, are brought in bundles from Shankavaram, their native village. His relatives in Shankavaram collect the spines from bushes around their villages and sell to basket makers like Polaiah. Shankavaram is about 80 km from Ongole.

- ♦ What do you understand about raw material in the context of basket making? Who collects them?

- ♦ What are the tools used by the basket makers?

Each bundle of date palm spines costs Rs.120. Polaiah and other basket makers usually bring 10 bundles for two months. Polaiah's family makes 25 baskets from one bundle. Ten bundles of spines would give them about 250 baskets. It takes 30 minutes to make a basket. He weaves baskets from 10 am to 5 pm with a few breaks to eat and rest.



Fig 7.1 Basket shop with bamboo products

Polaiah sells each basket for Rs. 20. Sometimes, customers ask for a bigger basket for family rituals. These are sold at a higher price depending on the amount of raw material used. He sells baskets throughout the year. In two months he can



Fig 7.2 Basket weaving

sell Rs.5000 worth of baskets. The cost price is Rs. 1200 excluding the transportation charges of Rs.100 for every visit to his village. So, the income of his family is Rs.3700 for 2 months. He does not earn sufficient income to meet his family expenditure. To supplement his income Polaiah buys and sells bamboo products like trays and stands.

Basket making is a craft work that involves the use of wild date palm leaves, cane and bamboo, which are found in forests. There has been depletion of

forests due to their extensive exploitation for big industries. This affects the livelihoods of people who have traditionally depended on forest. Further, the demand for such products has reduced considerably. This forces them to move out of rural areas and migrate to urban areas for survival. This

is true for many involved in traditional activities. However, they often have to live in urban areas without basic amenities.

Urban Slum

Polaiah lives in a slum, which does not have proper drainage, so it emits foul smell, and breeds mosquitoes and flies. There is no electric connection or safe drinking water. Polaiah's hut is made of bamboo, mats and recycled plastic bags and tarpaulin. During the rainy season, their roofs often leak and the huts are flooded. Sometimes the Municipal Corporation officials evict Polaiah and other basket maker families.

Despite struggling hard, people like Polaiah have been denied voting rights in the city. In fact, they have been denied ration cards, as they don't have any proof of identity or proof of residence. Thus, they cannot either participate in the democratic processes of the city or avail the facilities for the poor.

Basket Makers

People of *Yerukula* tribe are usually involved in basket making and live in different parts of Andhra Pradesh. They are called '*Yerukula*' after their women's



Fig 7.3 Basket weaving

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traditional profession of fortune telling 'Eruka chepputa' (Sodhi). People of this tribe speak 'Yerukula basha'. Words from Telugu, Tamil and Kannada languages are used in this language.

Choose the correct option:

- a. Forests are depleted largely because of the usage by (basket weavers / big industries).
 - b. Polaiah buys bamboo items from (a trader in mandi/a village in Andugula).
- ◆ Make a table showing expenditure for raw material and income from the produce.

- ◆ Do you think people like Polaiah should be given ration card and allowed to vote in Hyderabad?

By now, you have learnt that goods such as baskets made of bamboo and *etha chettu* require simple production – using very few materials mostly made of natural resources. There are many other goods which require raw materials to be processed in a more complex way with complex tools. Cloth materials made of cotton and silk are examples of such goods. Cloth can be manufactured today either in hand-operated looms or by power looms or in large mills. We will study here how it is produced by handloom weavers.

PART - II

Handloom Weavers in Dharmavaram

Dharmavaram is located in Anantapur district in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Dharmavaram Sarees are traditionally woven in the interlocked-weft technique. Dharmavaram silk sarees are a benchmark in traditional craft industry. They are very famous for their striking colour combinations with contrast pallu and border woven with exquisite brocade gold patterns. It caters to the needs of the customers. The designs are decided by the designer according to the market demand. The additional design can be added to silk saree using kundans, chamkies, and stones and also opposite colours. Depending on the elaboration of the saree design, the cost varies. Recently Dharmavaram sarees received the patent right. (Please refer Animal Fibre lesson in your Science Free Distribution by Govt. of A.P.)



(Textbook for more details of sericulture and reeling processes.)

The weavers would not produce the raw material required for manufacturing sarees such as silk yarn, colours and zari. They purchase from market. Farmers grow silk worms to produce cocoons on mulberry leaves from which silk yarn is made. Silk yarn is obtained from cocoon in reeling centers. This silk yarn is locally called "Katcha Pattu". Some of the merchants from Surat sale Zari to the weavers of Dharmavaram.

Stages before weaving:

The raw silk extracted from the silk cocoon undergoes some process before it reaches on Loom (Maggam). The strands of Katcha Pattu twisted together to make yarn in twisting centres. The raw silk is made convenient for warp (vertical threads) and weft (horizontal threads). This process

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is called 'Sappuri'. Later silk yarn is dyed with colours. Dyeing is the colouring process by dipping the yarn in boiled colour water at very high temperature. Repeated boiling and cooling of the yarn helps in the uniformity of dye application. After colouring the silk yarn is dried in shade. This process is called 'Tye and Dye'.

Tools and machinery :

Weavers own the wooden loom which is the main tool for weaving. Apart from it they also use small knives, trunks of maize, horns and other tools like huge container for boiling, iron rods for drying, spinning wheel for turning fiber into thread or yarn, fly shuttle, paddle which help in the designing and weft formation, computers and punched Jacquard cards for designing. For weaving a saree, they give priority for designing. If you look at the saree, you will notice that there are very intricate designs on them. Previously they used to plotting the design on graph paper. But now computers are used. They are designing different designs very easily on Jacquard cards. For this purpose there are special designing centres, which facilitate many attractive designs.



Fig 7.4 Jacquard card printing

- ♦ Look at a saree and draw any of the common designs on them in your notebook.

Process of weaving a Saree:

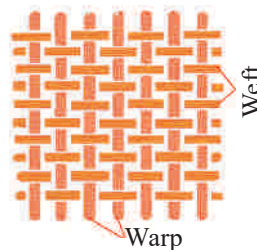
Weavers use warp, weft and zari in this process. First of all weaver put the thread roles on the vertical frame of the warping machine (Dolu) which is octagonal in shape. The warp is nearly 75 meters long which can make 10 sarees at a time.

The most basic process in which two different sets of yarns are entwined to form a fabric or cloth. One of these sets is called a warp which runs from the rear end to the front of the loom lengthwise. The other set of crosswise yarns are the filling, called the weft or the woof. The warp is loaded in to the loom by attaching each strand of warp to the loom. This process is locally called 'achhu'.

After setting the warp the weaver arrange Jacquard cards as per the design and enters into the loom to starts weaving. The pit loom which is locally called 'Maggam'. Zari, Kundans, Stones also used in the weaving where design occurs. The weavers use hands and legs to weave the saree. It requires approximately 4-8 days (depending on the variety of saree) of continuous efforts of two persons for weaving a saree.

Warp and Weft

You will notice that cloth has threads passing from top to bottom and sideways something like this #. Warp is the yarn that goes from top to bottom and weft is the yarn that go from left to right.



Let us look at the account of a visit to a weavers' house in Dharmavaram to know more about making of silk sarees.

Venkatesu is a resident of Dharmavaram. All of his family members – he, his wife, his son and daughter-in-law work as weavers. When we visited his house, we found all members in the family engaged in different tasks. While he was winding yarn, his son Nagendra was engaged in weaving on the *maggam* (pit loom) set up inside the house. Silk sarees are manufactured by following different tasks like dyeing of Katcha Pattu, Spindling of Yarn etc. Since he has become old, Venkatesu spends most of the time winding yarn and his son weaves on the loom.

Venkatesu's wife and daughter-in-law do bobbin winding. There is some work like making saratas for warping done collectively by group of weavers on streets or outside their house.

His son Nagendra brings all the raw material like dyed silk yarn, zari and design from master weaver and sometimes from cooperative society of



Fig 7.5 Katcha Pattu



Fig 7.6 Coloured Pattu



Fig 7.7 Dyeing



Fig 7.8 Weft making



Fig 7.9 Warp making

which he is a member. Venkatesu gets raw materials at a time to weave ten sarees. The whole family has to work for 12-15 hours a day for nearly 40- 50 days to weave 10 sarees. They earn about Rs.1300 per saree for the work.



Fig 7.10 Pitloom

Weaving saree is a hereditary occupation for Venkatesu's family. The income Venkatesu's family gets from weaving silk sarees is insufficient to run his family.

Between March and May, Venkatesu's family is able to weave only for a few hours a day. If there is high temperature, thread

will get cut. The whole family works only till afternoon during these days. Women are distressed a lot as they have to do not only weaving but also the household chores like cooking food, fetching water, preparing children to go to school etc.

Earlier, Venkatesu's family used to weave only for the cooperative society. The cooperative societies provide financial assistance through insurance in case of unexpected illness or death in the weaver's family. They also help in getting loan for construction of houses. Now-a-days the cooperative society is not giving sufficient work, so they had to look for additional sources of income to run their families. Since a master weaver in Dharmavaram agreed to give work and remuneration Presently Venkatesu's family weaving silk sarees for the master weaver. Venkatesu has not given up the membership with the cooperative society with a hope that it will improve its functioning in future. Though they have own loom due to lack of investment, raw materials, new designs, market facilities they have to depend on he master weavers. Recently number of factories started in and around Dharmavaram with more number of looms. In each factory there are about 100-300 looms. Here weavers are provided shelter and salary.

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**Weaver's Problems and
Cooperative Societies**

Andhra Pradesh has the second largest number of handlooms in the country, next only to West Bengal. Handloom weavers are facing a serious problem. They face a stiff competition from power loom and mill made cloth -these are cheaper as they are produced on machines and also because they use synthetic yarn which is cheaper than cotton or silk. Even though it is popular due to its high quality and unique beauty, the Dharmavaram saree seems to be expensive. But the weavers do not get good rate due to middle men's involvement.

The sarees that are manufactured on powerlooms are entered in the Dharmavaram market by the middle men. There is a degrees in the demand for the sarees woven by the handloom weavers. Due to these reasons the living conditions of the weavers fall in danger. lack of investment and ill wealth weavers faced many problems.

The buyers are spread all over the world and weavers do not have any direct contact with them. Fashions in the cities change fast and it is difficult for the weavers to know what kind of designs are in demand. Therefore, they have to rely on middlemen and master



Fig 7.11 Weaving



Fig 7.12 Powerloom



Fig 7.13 Jacquard centre

weavers to know about the designs in vogue and change their designs accordingly. They have to depend up on middlemen for getting raw materials and investment. Middlemen playing key role in handloom sector and getting huge profits from consumers.

In order to overcome these problems the weavers are encouraged to form cooperative societies. The cooperative societies are meant to help the weavers in buying raw materials at low price and to arrange for marketing of their cloth. This reduces their dependence upon middlemen and traders. The cooperative societies should setup training centers to help the weavers by training in new designs.

However, now-a-days, a large section of weavers in many parts of Andhra Pradesh do not get sufficient work from cooperative societies. In some cooperative societies, weavers are not given any role in making decisions regarding the



Fig 7.14 Saree before packing

procurement of raw materials and the sale of cloth and dress materials. They do not provide opportunities for weavers to produce sarees to suit the changing preferences of consumers. This has once again pushed the weavers into the clutches of the middlemen and traders.

A large amount of handloom cloth materials in Andhra Pradesh are produced and marketed by master weavers and merchants. The master weavers and merchants procure all the raw materials, supply them to weavers and collect the woven cloth. Then they sell these materials to wholesale cloth merchants.. They pay a stipulated amount as wages for the weaving work. Many master weavers also provide loan to weavers to set up loom, to buy other tools and thus restrict them not to weave sarees for other master weavers. They also decide the wages for the work done by the weavers. Since they are interested in raising their incomes, it is natural for them to look for ways to pay less to the weavers. So, the cooperative societies should provide work and save the distressed weaving families from the master weavers. Along with Dharmavaram there are many amazing weavers in Andhra Pradesh at Uppada (East Godavari), Mangalagiri (Krishna), Ponduru (Srikakulam), Venkatagiri (Nellore), Chirala (Guntur) and Srikalahasti (Chittoor).

- ♦ Prepare a table showing raw materials and tools used to makeing Dharmavaram Silk sarees.
- ♦ Why Venkatesu's family has begun to weave for a master weaver?

1. Raw materials 2. Jacquard Cards 3. *Sappuri* 4. Katcha Pattu
5. Patent 6. Warp - Weft 7. Tie & Dye 8. Co-operative Societies



Improve your learning

1. Do you think people have enough earnings from work like basket making and weaving? AS₁
2. Prepare a list of goods which could have substituted the basket. Discuss with your parents before preparing the list. AS₃
3. Many new products have replaced handicrafts – identify them and find out where they are produced. Discuss how this could affect the lives of handicrafts persons. AS₄
4. Why did Polaiah's family come to Kandukuru? Why does he have no right to vote in Kandukuru? AS₁
5. You may find crafts persons like Polaiah producing goods other than baskets. Meet two such persons, collect the following details and discuss them in the class. One sample is given for you. AS₃

Sl. No.	Name of the crafts person	Goods produced	One or two important raw materials used	Source of raw materials
1	Polaiah	Baskets	Spokes of date palm leaves	Shankavaram – native village
2				
3				

6. Why do you think patenting Dharmavaram silk saree weaving would help weavers in and around Dharmavaram? AS₁
7. Should weavers procure raw materials, weave Silk sarees and sell them directly to the people? What are the challenges in it? AS₁
8. Prepare the flow diagram depicting the organisation of production in basket making and handloom textile weaving. AS₃
9. Compare the similarities and differences between basket making and Ikkat saree weaving and fill in the following table: AS₁

Work	Raw materials used	Tools used	How goods are sold
Basket making			
Handloom weaving			

10. List various handicrafts with location in Andhra Pradesh and prepare a chart. AS₃

Project :

1. Invite a craftsperson to your classroom or visit their work place. Make a wallpaper showing different processes of their production.
2. Meet different artisans in your village/locality fill in the following table and discuss in the classroom.

Sl. No.	Name of the artisan	Profession	Continuing/ Discontinuing	If discontinued reasons	If continued whether they are satisfied