

ROLE OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA- WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BALARAMAPURAM HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

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DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2026.v11i06.001 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2026.v11i06.001>

Received: 20 May 2025 / Accepted: 13 June 2026 / Published: 22 June 2026

ABSTRACT

The handloom industry is the largest traditional industry in India, next to agriculture sector. The handloom sector provides more employment opportunities for a large scale which earns foreign exchange to our country. It is also a cherished skill handed down from generation to generation. The Balaramapuram textile industry in Thiruvananthapuram district is one of the most historically important places for fine cotton handloom fabrics in Kerala. This sector also provides more employment opportunities to women also. These job opportunities and more earnings for workers helps for rural development. The study of Balaramapuram textile industry analyses job opportunities for people who lived in rural places and it helps to increase the rural development. The present study will focus on the significance of Handloom industry in Kerala especially Balaramapuram in rural development.

Keywords: rural development, handloom industry,

1. INTRODUCTION

Handloom industry forms an important part of Indian economy, contributing a large share of employment, textile production and exports. Among the traditional industries in Kerala handloom sector is the second largest employment provider after coir sector. Kerala's textile industrial sector consists of Traditional Handloom sector, Power loom and Spinning. In this state mainly located Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur Districts, some parts of Kozhikode, Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam Kollam and Kasaragod Districts are developed for handlooms also. In Thiruvananthapuram district the only one area to look about handloom is Balaramapuram which come under fine cotton handloom weaving along with its historical background in Kerala . These weavers were migrated from Nagarcovil and Thirunelveli which is present Tamilnadu were

jugglers (Saliya) by community. These job opportunities and additional earning of workers helps rural development. The current study reveals that people who lived in rural places gets employment in handloom industry as such it contributes for increase in rural development.

Land reforms, education and health are areas where Kerala has registered remarkable progress. In the circumstances it is really paradoxical to note that industrial sector in Kerala is not advanced. One of the most salient features of the State's economy is that it does not have a very large manufacturing base. In view of these facts, one can easily conclude that there are very little job opportunities in the manufacturing sector, threats to agricultural & traditional sectors are acute and micro enterprises have good scope for development in the state. This sector is regarded as a ray of hope and engine of growth among small and tiny industries . These enterprises are capable to initiate on their own significant changes in a new direction by providing full support to overall economy structures. There was never a single occasion when they had come to an abrupt halt irrespective of how severe economic downturns had been; rather, they kept moving forward briskly all along. As a result of more employment opportunities being created for both men and women folk, who were hitherto unemployed or under-employed . Consequently, poverty level comes down noticeably; small-scale industries contribute significantly towards offering required economic sustainability at grassroots levels where no other type of organizations could operate effectively . However, this does happen due to these industries forming basis for generation greater number local employment positions wealth accumulation amenities innovations products processes . Hence if invested any amount start-up ventures becomes responsible increasing number individuals engaged productive activities entire State those men women get equal opportunity practically some extent offer job guarantee gender fairness . Handloom industry is a lifeline for rural development in Kerala since it provides the means for economic growth, employment, cultural promotion and environmental conservation. Handloom industries is important because it help in increasing employment and economics development of Kerala. Handloom industries play a very important role of the economic development of India. More job opportunities help the rural development of a society. So, through this study we can analyse how a micro enterprise helps for the rural development. Hence the study assures greater importance.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the significance of handloom sector in attaining rural development in Kerala.
2. To analyse the socio-economic background of weavers in Balaramapuram handloom sector

3. DATA SOURCE AND METHOD

For the present study both secondary and primary data were used. Primary data were collected from 30 respondents in Balaramapuram textile industry. For the collection of primary data, a structured interview schedule was prepared and administrated among the respondents. Direct interview also made for collecting data from various respondents. Secondary data are collected from authentic books, periodicals, research papers and articles and official website of relevant journal etc.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The handloom industry plays a vital role in rural development in Kerala by promoting economic growth, employment, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. The handloom sector provides direct and indirect employment to thousands of weavers, especially in rural areas like Balaramapuram. It supports weaving communities, including skilled artisans, dyers, and traders, ensuring stable income. Many women in rural Kerala engage in handloom weaving, promoting women's empowerment and economic independence. .

Handloom industry is a lifeline for rural development in Kerala since it provides the means for economic growth, employment, cultural promotion and environmental conservation. Handicraft sector especially handloom weaving holds both direct and indirect employment opportunities for a huge number of weavers particularly in the villages e.g. Balaramapuram. It takes care of weaving communities who involves craftsmen, dyers, traders etc by giving a regular job so that they can have stable life. Most of women in rural Kerala are engaged in handloom weaving which becomes a strategy for promoting women's empowerment and economic independence. The sector forms the backbone of the rural self sufficiency through supporting small scale handloom units and cooperatives. The two-handloom cooperatives HANTEX-Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society- and HANTVEEV- Kerala State Handloom Development Corporation given financial support as well as provide marketing facilities to the rural weavers from Kerala. Traditional weaving clusters located in Kerala also draw attention of tourists and buyers thus adding value to local economy. Handloom industry plays a major role in sustainable development because it encourages eco-friendly processes and embodies the principles of decent work providing inclusive job opportunities for men and women as well as safeguarding cultural heritage. Implementing policies that helps to boost this sector, promoting fair trade movement and creating awareness among consumers will go a long way in supporting sustainability goals. The vertical of handloom industry is closely woven with the concept of sustainable development covering environmental, economic and social aspects. Being labor-oriented it creates jobs for millions particularly in rural areas bringing down poverty level. It supports weavers with fair

wages and uninterrupted employment thus providing stability in their lives. It provides an opportunity for small scale enterprises as well as women to partake in economic activities.

The beauty and variety of Indian handloom was what made it distinguished among other textile art. Most people are captivated by the texture and color of the most intricate weaves and embroideries. The origins of handloom in the Indian subcontinent may be dated back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Weavers drew attention of royalty with onset of Mughal empire which resulted into creation of new fabrics like ‘Mulmul,’ ‘Benarsi Brocade,’ and ‘Jamawar’ etc. With time, when world noticed Indian weavers, there was a huge spike in demand for Indian textiles across globe. In 17th century India accounted for a quarter of world’s cloth production, Bengal alone contributed more than half of textiles and 80% silks were imported by Dutch from Asia. They were following Aryan immigrants in the area who learned weaving cotton and wool as well as dyeing and embroidering these materials over generations. They domesticated spinning, weaving, dyeing, embroidery along with other textile related crafts as cottage industry. However, this was followed by England invading through East India Company which marked end to golden era of Indian textile industry. The weavers were compelled to sell only to British at throwaway prices, which turned out to be ruinous for them. In the process of decolonization, the Indian handloom industry found a new life, the leader of which was Mahatma Gandhi who started Swadeshi movement. Nowhere else in the world have garments or an everyday activity like cotton spinning been more integrated into a national movement as it has been in America. The humble charka (spinning wheel) and khadi were instrumental in giving a massive impetus to self-reliance, independence and national pride. Post independence period saw several steps initiated by the government to revive the handloom industry. In 1953, Khadi and Other Handloom Industries Development Act was passed by India’s Parliament. Aiming at promoting marketing of fabrics produced by handloom cooperatives all over India, All India Handloom Fabrics Marketing Cooperative Society came into existence in 1955. Leaders such as Suraiya Hasan Bose, Pupul Jayakar, Laila Tyabji also played a major role in renaissance of handlooms in India. The Indian handloom sector now employs over 4.5 million people, both directly and indirectly, and is the country’s second-largest employment after agriculture. There are around 2.4 million looms of various types. In the fiscal year 2019, India’s handloom exports were US\$ 343.69 million. With an anticipated purchase of US\$ 93.94 million in FY19, the US was the largest importer of Indian handloom items, followed by the UK, Italy, and Germany with US\$ 17.77 million, US\$ 16.47 million, and US\$ 14.65 million, respectively. Handloom production accounts for around 15% of total fabric output in India. India produces 95 per cent of all handwoven cloth in the world.

The regional branding has been envisaged with the entire handloom clothing of Kerala under one brand called Kerala Handlooms through products of each regions is branded separately. Such as

Balaramapuram saree,Chendamangalam dothi,Kuthampully saree,Palakkad Settum Mundu,Kannur furnishing and shirting, and Kasaragod saree Each state of India has its own indigenous art and culture.Handloom industry gives due important to the products by taking into account the regional taste. Kerala State has been demarcated into six regions and they are Kasaragod, Kannur, Palakkad, Kuthampully (Thrissur),Chendamangalam (Ernakulam), and Balaramapuram (Thiruvananthapuram). By bringing the products of different region into a single brand with a view to revive the ancient hidden treasures as well as present this unique product to Global fashion clothing lovers.

Balaramapuram is a major small town of Thiruvananthapuram is famous for hand woven fine cotton and kasavu(Zeri yarn) fabric that is woven in and around Balaramapuram. This region is renowned for its high quality fine handlooms. The handloom that is special to this region is made of cotton and silk intertwined.

Historical records indicate that it was Maharaja Balarama Varma encouraged handloom industry in this region during the 1778-1810 AD periods. For the production of clothing, weavers were welcomed from neighboring regions like Nagarcoil of the Saliya community who were encouraged to reside at Balaramapuram and were given all basic facilities. They were promised continuous employment and other facilities which helped Balaramapuram become a renowned centre for Handloom. Traditional handloom products of Balaramapuram were Saree, set mundus, body cloth, dothi woven with 100% cotton threads (80s, 100s, 120 s)number and so on) along with silk gold zari. Also produced were lunges, towels, bed sheets, shirting, furnishing is made in this sector which was traditionally renowned. Balaramapuram saree deliverquality and special design features that cannot be witnessed in any regions of India. This includes saree with boota, pallu with intricate designs without using doobby, jacuard machines.

The handloom industry in Kerala is a pillar of rural development, providing livelihoods, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainability. Strengthening government policies, encouraging fair trade, and increasing consumer awareness can revitalize the sector and ensure the prosperity of rural weavers.

4.1 THE ROLE OF HANDLOOM SECTOR IN ATTAINING RURAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1.1 Employment Generation & Livelihoods

The handloom sector provides direct and indirect employment to thousands of weavers, especially in rural areas like Balaramapuram, Kannur, and Chendamangalam.

Table 1. Contribution of India's Handloom Sector to Various Economic Indicators

Year	Employment (Million)	Share in Textile Production (%)	Contribution to GDP (%)	Share in Exports (%)
2010	4.3	20	5	15
2015	3.8	18	4.5	14
2020	3.5	15	4	13
2023	3.6	19	4	13

The number of weavers has been gradually decreasing, with a 38% decline from 1995 to 2020. The sector continues to contribute significantly to textile production. The handloom industry contributes around 4% to India's GDP. The handloom sector's share in total textile exports has slightly declined over time. In India, the handloom industry provides employment to over 3.6 million people, with approximately 72% being rural women. The sector contributes about 19% to India's total textile production. Gross Domestic Product (GDP): The textile industry, encompassing handloom, contributes nearly 2% to India's GDP. Exports: The industry accounts for 8.21% of India's overall exports.

In Kerala, the handloom industry is a significant traditional sector, second only to the coir industry in providing employment. The industry is predominantly organized under cooperative societies, which manage 96% of the total looms in the state. While specific data on the handloom sector's contribution to Kerala's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is not readily available, the textile industry, which includes handloom, plays a crucial role in the state's economy. The handloom sector is particularly concentrated in districts like Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Kollam, and Kasaragod.

Despite its cultural and economic significance, the handloom industry in Kerala faces challenges such as competition from power looms, changing consumer preferences, and limited modernization. Addressing these issues is essential for the sustainable growth of the sector. In summary, the handloom sector contributes notably to India's GDP and exports, with Kerala playing a significant role in this traditional industry.

4.1.2 Economic Growth & Self-Sufficiency

The industry contributes to rural self-reliance by supporting small-scale weaving units and co-operatives. Kerala's handloom cooperatives, like the Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society (HANTEX) and Kerala State Handloom Development Corporation (HANVEEV), provide

financial support and market access to rural weavers. Traditional weaving hubs in Kerala also attract tourists and buyers, boosting the local economy.

4.1.3. Cultural Heritage & Craftsmanship

Kerala is known for its Balaramapuram handloom, Kasavu sarees, and Kannur handloom fabrics, which are deeply rooted in local tradition. The handloom industry helps preserve indigenous weaving techniques, ensuring the survival of Kerala's rich textile heritage. Government initiatives and exhibitions help promote handloom products, keeping traditional skills alive.

4.1.4 Environmental Sustainability

Handloom weaving is eco-friendly, requiring minimal electricity and using natural fibers like cotton and silk. Many weavers use natural dyes, reducing chemical pollution and promoting sustainable textile production. The handloom industry supports slow fashion, discouraging mass-produced, synthetic fabrics that harm the environment. The handloom industry in Kerala is a pillar of rural development, providing livelihoods, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainability. Strengthening government policies, encouraging fair trade, and increasing consumer awareness can revitalize the sector and ensure the prosperity of rural weavers. Handloom weaving relies on minimal energy consumption compared to mechanized textile production, reducing carbon emissions. Handloom fabrics are often made from organic cotton, silk, wool, or jute, which are biodegradable and have a lower environmental footprint.

4.1.5. Social and Cultural Sustainability

IT Preserve cultural heritage. Handloom weaving supports traditional craftsmanship, keeping indigenous art forms alive. A significant portion of the workforce in the handloom sector consists of women, promoting gender equality and economic independence. Strengthening rural communities. By offering sustainable livelihoods, the industry reduces rural-to-urban migration and strengthens local economies.

4.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNND OF THE SAMPLE STUDY

The handloom sector plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of the rural population by promoting entrepreneurship through self-employment opportunities to generate income and increasing the standard of living.

4.2.1 SEX WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1 shows that out of the 30 sample surveyed for the study, majority 80% of respondent belong to female category and only 20% belong to male category.

Table 3. SEX WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

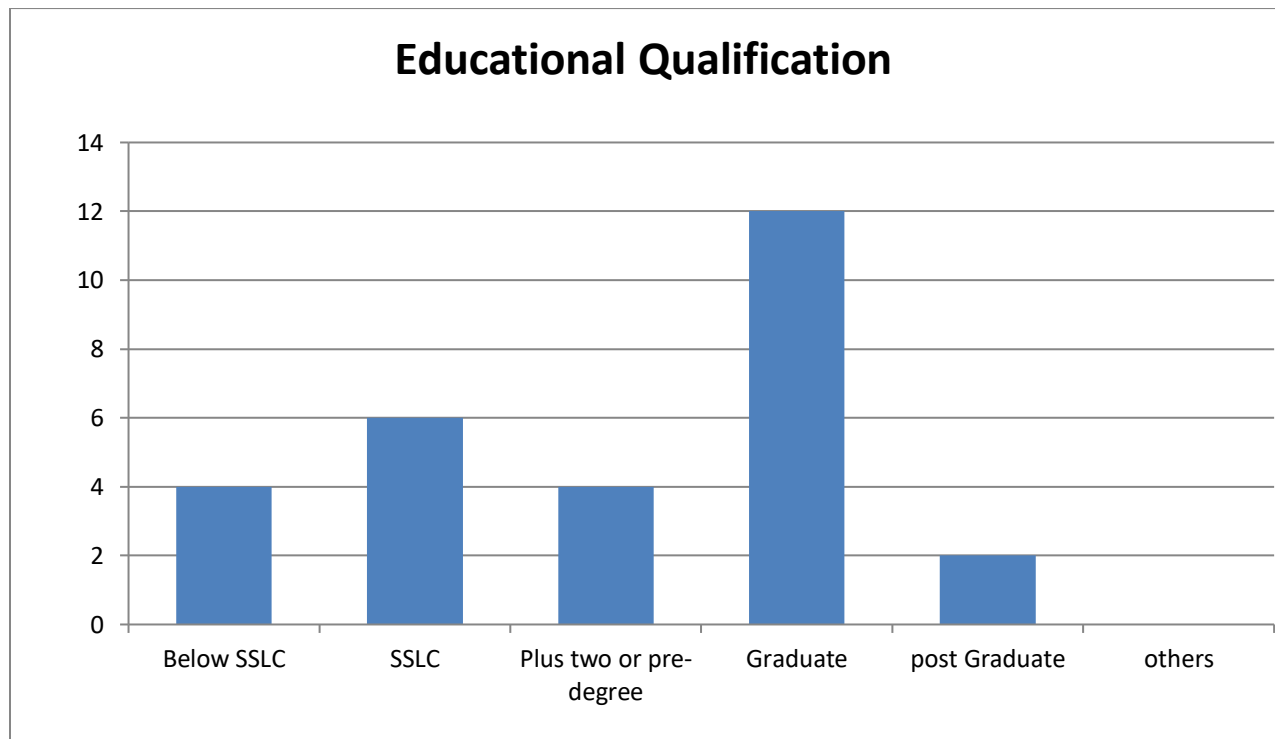
PARTICULARS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
MALE	6	20
FEMALE	24	80
TOTAL	30	100

Primary Survey

4.2.2 EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Education is a significant factor that influence on individual’s status in the society

Table 4. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS



Primary Survey

Majority Respondent are belongs to the education qualification of graduate (40%) and percentage of PG holders are comparatively low (6%). The study revealed that majority of weavers belong to the age group of above 60 (30%). Weavers are getting a daily income of Rs.300. Most of these weavers are well educated but due to unemployment they are forced to do caste work. But today the weavers forced to quit this handloom works because the profit getting from the business doesn't help the entrepreneurs to meet their family needs and they don't get enough money to purchase raw materials for business because of this reason new generation peoples in the weavers society don't study this occupation so this occupation is alienated.

5. CONCLUSION

The handloom industry faces challenges like competition from power looms, rising raw material costs, and the need for modernization and improved marketing. Government initiatives and support are crucial for the sector's sustainability. Future of the handloom sector is bleak. young generation is not coming to this sector. Handloom weaving is not possible without having lots of physical strength and patience to work eight or nine hours continuously by ignoring the health problems like back bone pain and other health issues. But after working this much what they get as wage is not at all sufficient for raising their family into a better standard of living. So the major number of next generation workers of the traditional workers are not engaging and continuing in this sector. According to the weavers they are trying harder to give education to their children as much as they can, so that their children do not have to enter into this profession and end up in a semi poverty condition. So then how can the new generation can find out employment from this sector with a fair wage and accept this as their profession.

In spite of the large number of problems faced by the micro enterprises, there is scope for regional economic development particularly rural development through the implementation of appropriate policy initiatives by the concerted action of the government and other stake holders like industry associations, formal sector, financial institutions, training institutions etc.

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