

Chapter - VI

Problems of Survival : Role of the Co-operative Society

At the time of Charka Revolution under the leadership of Gandhiji in the 3rd decade of the 19th century, import of yarns from foreign countries had declined. The import of foreign yarns had dropped to meagre even before the Second World War. It is known from a survey report in 1940 that the number of looms ranged to 43000 in the state then.¹ It is no way less in comparison to the number of looms present in other states of the country at that time. But where would one get thread? Decline in import of thread supplemented by scarce supply of native ones though a smaller bulk of the same could be procured from other states yet the supply was fewer than the demand putting weavers in horns of dilemma.

From the anecdotal evidences of the past it is apparent that the weavers of Nadia had faced crisis and struggled to overcome it many a time before. Only the technique keeps changing. The situation became grave due to the migration of many weavers and others from East Pakistan (then Bangladesh) after the partition of India. It is to be mentioned here that during the 14th end 15th Centuries Phulia was mentioned as a populated and a developed area. But it is quite surprising that Phulia remained silent losing much of its earlier glory for several decades. We did not get any proper evidence behind this silence. Phulia again came into the limelight after the partition of India. Post partitioned migrated people came and settled at Phulia. They had also settled down in places like Nabadwip, Chakdaha, Sikarpur, Karimpur (2), Dumurdaha and Samudragarh (adjacent to Nabadwip within Burdwan). The thread crisis was always there and it became critical.

With thousands of weavers settling in Nadia the exploitation of the moneylenders

became worse. It is true that moneylenders' atrocities had caused much disturbance to the weavers but it had never exceeded limit though 70 % of the weavers were at their disposition. The weavers were even exploited during the Swadeshi movement yet they had survived comfortably. But now with the growing population of migrating weavers strained the relationship with the moneylenders. Some of the opportunistic and greedy moneylenders took advantage of the hapless weavers and trapped them. Vast number of weavers came under the clutch of the moneylenders in order to sustain. The moneylenders started settling the weavers within their house initially later bought lands and settled them in quarters there. Huge volume of textiles was produced and the moneylenders' pocket grew fat whereas weavers were exploited to the maximum. The weavers, without finding any way began to protest. There was no adequate Government aid for this huge number of weavers. The number of employees in the Indian registered factories was in the range of 47lakhs whereas workers associated with loom was in the range of 1 crore which was actually equal to or rather exceeded the sum of all employees under central government, state government both military and paramilitary and those under municipal corporations (1967 report-97 lakhs).²

The immense importance and widespread popularity of handloom is thus proved once again. Ironically in this condition the weavers of Phulia were at the stark face of utter misery and distress. They were living in hapless condition and the support from any corner was insignificant.

In 1972 the refugee congested Nadia had about 40000 looms against 1 lakh 75000 looms all over West Bengal. The numbers are ever increasing driven by needs of earning livelihood as sitting at home anybody can take up this independent occupation. For instance in 1948-49, 7 crore yards of textile was produced, in 1961 it was 19 crores of yards and the 3rd Five year Plan had set

the target of 28 crores of yards. West Bengal has registered factories engaging about 8 lakh and 50000 employees. Other cottage industries have employed about 15 lakhs of people. Handloom itself has engaged about 6 lakh employees.³

It is evident from this statistics that post 1948 the number of weavers at Nadia and in West Bengal have increased progressively which was further obvious at Phulia. Government report states there are about 3,66,540 people engaged in handloom operation against 3,38,499 looms. Nadia has 70000 looms though unofficially it is supposed to be much more. In 1971-72 this figure was 8131 according to official report.⁴

The weavers who had migrated into Phulia were primarily from Tangail with immaculate and wonderful style and technique. Moneylenders were keen to hold them back. The state government had built a refugee colony for them rehabilitating 125 families along with financial aid for setting loom and buying threads.⁵ But the way there was streaming flow of homeless refugees the aid was insignificant compared to the need. Hence hapless homeless migrants took shelter with the moneylenders. The latter understanding the prospective commercial benefits bought lands at cheap rates adjacent to their residents and settled the weavers. Thus centering Phulia the weaver settlements grew up at Buicha, Mathpara, Chotkatola, Bahanno Bigha, Taltola etc.⁶

The weavers gradually got trapped within the Dadni system. They rose to protest entrapped in debt when the number of loom at Phulia had exceeded 10000. Every household in Nadia engaged in handloom experienced similar despair. Santipur faced similar situation in the face of problems regarding refugees and scarcity of yarns. According to statistics in 1989 Santipur required 4112 bails of yarns with about 40000 handlooms operating there.⁷ Bengal lacked in quality thread then. Imported threads would cost more. Working independently the weaver was subjected to thread crisis. On the other hand if he would take help

from moneylender for yarn, jari and colour, the weaver would have to be under his grip. The weaver was claustrophobic and soon rose to protest and struggle for existence began once more. Another remarkable characteristic is that the weavers were never ready to give up their occupation at the loom. Tradition and familiarity could be a reason but the main reason was their deep commitment for the profession that is unparalleled. We have seen at times that weavers (Santipur) had given up the profession only to come back again. Weavers at Phulia, Santipur and the entire weaver community share this persistence and unwavering attitude. Meetings, protest, blockades and protest procession followed consequently. Government ultimately came forward to support, bank supported with loan. The weavers comprehended the fact that samity or collective body would be the ray of hope hence they formed samity to facilitate united struggle for existence and sustenance.

The co-operative movement at Santipur had started much before independence. In 1944 Kuthirpara Samabay was formed which is running successfully till date. To boost handloom industry, the West Bengal government has founded 750 co-operative societies and about 19 dyeing units that embraced 60000 looms. For selling handloom products 176 outlets and 4 central marketing units have been formed. But none of the co-operatives could not be established and developed due to corruption and allied problems.⁸ The weavers therefore collectively continued their struggle and protest to sustain and survive.

The struggle for existence that the Santipur weavers had started once has now become the plea of the weavers at Phulia. In this regard it is worth discussing how the co-operatives were formed at Phulia.

We can go back to the year 1844 A.D. the Rochdelle co-operative was formed in Britain and some of the weavers of that co-operative had formed a buyers co-operative out of their small capital. This introduced a new trait in the economy

especially for the poor sellers and weavers. Now that concept of buyer co-operative have grown huge to touch many aspects of life and expanded to a greater extent. Thus Rochdelle co-operative was considered a pioneer in the field that had inspired many co-operatives in many places.⁹

As there is no similarity between the co-operatives at Phulia with that of the one of Rochdelle hence doubts may arise to the relevance of the reference drawn. The similarity lies in the fact that in both cases we find that the weavers formed co-operatives, weavers who took pride in their profession and earned respect through love and commitment for their work. They had profound faith in the effectiveness of forming a co-operative. The members of Rochdelle were weavers too for generations together.¹⁰

The beginning of co-operatives was always packed with hurdles especially for the poor hardworking weavers. The weavers still had dilemmas about the efficacy of co-operatives and whether it could truly free them from the moneylenders. Though the possibilities and efficacy of co-operatives are far better in India than any other country yet the extensiveness of such concept is more popular with countries like Japan, Germany, Russia, Israel. Agricultural co-operatives have shown much progress in Maharashtra and Punjab, handloom co-operatives are advanced in Tamilnadu, Andhrapradesh but Bengal took long time to come around with the concept and formation.¹¹

The evolution of Phulia as a handloom centre does not have a long history. About three decades back the weavers who had migrated from Tangail of East Pakistan had started weaving the tangail textile here. In 1951 Kanti Basak from Tangail had come followed by Bhupathi Basak, Kanai Basak and others. Gosai das Basak had arrived here from Dacca for a while but even weavers from Dacca started weaving the tangail variety exclusively.¹²

Initially the weavers stayed under thatched roof huts and later tin roof was

built. The buildings of Phulia polytechnic were almost complete. In the big hall of the polytechnic building several looms were set up. 'Phulia Textile Workers Co-operative Society' was set up to take care of yarn, wages, running the loom, market linkage and all other operational expenses. This was the first of its kind among the weavers of Phulia. The members were all weavers with secretary Gopal Basak, assistant secretary Naresh Chandra Basak who were the pioneers to inspire the weavers. The society had successfully worked for two years with more than 100 members.¹³

In 1953 during recession in the state scarcity of yarns and lack of marketing of products caused to shut down the society. All other industries at Phulia had suffered then like sheet metal, soap, hosiery etc. Corruption charges were brought against the authorities of the society and investigation was conducted under the then West Bengal Co-operative Registrar Mahendra Chowdhury and audit was performed and charges were proved wrong. The first endeavour for co-operative was thus destroyed.¹⁴

For many years the weavers were again under the clutch of the moneylenders. Meanwhile, a few co-operatives were set up with members, collected capital fund and with fresh courage they begun to run the Co-operatives but soon they turned into proprietor's business losing the true meaning of a co-operative. Weavers were exploited and losing faith contemptuously they left the co-operatives only to fall prey to the moneylenders and utter exploitation of the helpless weavers continued. In 1972 the number of weavers in and around Phulia stood at about 10000.¹⁵ The situation became worse, wages were minimal and many weavers went back to Bangladesh and many took to job in the agricultural fields and handloom industry was at stake.

Some of the leaders in this field took initiatives and guided the weavers to revive the cottage industry. Provat Kumar Basak played a key role in the

mobement that took forms of siege, procession, slogan, petitions at handloom, B.D.O. offices etc.¹⁶

Tarakanta Bagchi, then agent of United Bank of India, came forward with financial assistance through his bank so that the weavers can form samity where they will be the owner and labourer.¹⁷

In 1973 weavers found their samity as "**Fulia Tangail Shari Bayan Silpa Samity**" and started functioning under the direct guidance of Sri Bagchi.¹⁸ The response was spontaneous and initially it had 75 members and many more were willing to join in. This inspired to form another samity called "**Tangail Tantujibi Unnoyon Samity**" (1974). The samity could actually revive tangail handloom industry from devastation that was quite certain at a point of time. The samity duo continued working despite all stumbling blocks to the dissatisfaction of the moneylenders. There were about 125 members with 300 looms under the samity duo. Bank had made an investment of about 7 lakhs.¹⁹ In 1977 the tangail industry faced a crisis due to shortage of raw materials.²⁰ The samity needed government intervention and financial support along with marketing support. Hence they were disintegrated to form three co-operative societies named as "**Fulia Tangail Shari Bayan Silpa Samabay Samity Ltd.**", "**Tangail Tantujibi Unnoyon Samabay Samity Ltd.**", and "**Notun Fulia Tantubai Samabay Samity Ltd.**" All this stabilized the co-operative societies with added marketing advantage, supply of adequate yarns assured by "**Paschimbanga Rajya Tantubai Samabay Samity**" (head of all co-operative societies), financial intervention by government and bank loan helped them to perform and progress better. The wages of the weavers increased with other enhanced benefits. So the fragile handloom industry of 1973 entered another glorified phase in 1977 and progressively boosted the economy of Phulia to a significant extent.²¹

There were about 6000 looms in 1983 with 2000 weaver families with 15000 members were entirely dependent upon this cottage industry for their living.²²

The incessant effort of the co-operatives has taken tangail sari to an epitome of finer design, elegant texture, exquisite colour combination such that it can outsmart or level any other finer variety of textile in the country or abroad. The market has expanded and tangail is currently at par with any form of modern trend in fashion.

“**Paschimbanga Rajya Tantubai Samabay Samity**” ensured to buy back 60% of the total production and other government and co-operatives purchase from the above three co-operatives. Introduction of new instruments, share issue, bank loan heightened the performances and bank invested about 30 lakhs in the co-operatives trio in 1983.²³

The young leaders of the samity conveyed message through their work to the moneylenders and public that handloom itself can be self sufficient for their successful sustenance. Though the samity could accommodate only about 300 weavers out of 12-14000 weavers but still the good was done. The current success of the co-operative overwhelmed all earlier failures of the co-operatives. Despite all efforts the moneylenders could not hinder the progress of the co-operative movement and finally were compelled to reduce their profits and provide benefits to weavers and increased rates of wages at par with the co-operative.²⁴ Not only for Phulia but also for Nadia as a whole, 1977 was a determinant year. Many other areas started following the footsteps of the weavers at Phulia.

There is need for many more co-operative societies as suggested by the weavers' keenness to come under the cover of the co-operative mode. 1983 figures reveal that the co-operative trio could only accommodate 616 weavers under their wing that was only 10% of the total weaver community. In 1982 “**Fulia**

Tantshilpo Samabay Samity” was formed and it had started to carry on the primary functions. There was another samity registered for the loom less weavers. At present many co-operatives are operating at Phulia and all around Nadia for the upliftment of the weaver community.

It is true that all problems did not dissolve with the establishment of the co-operative society. Detail discussion would reveal wherefrom the society has come up to this developed stage and why this grew up as a role model for all. Like the co-operatives at Santipur the ones at Phulia are also fortunate in receiving much financial support from the state as well as central government which is further revealed by the expansion of the Phulia co-operative. At present United Bank along with Central co-operative bank is providing capital to the co-operative society. With the financial help from state government and National Co-operative society Development Corporation the society could build 3 buildings (1990) named Samabai Sadan along with garden, the dyeing workshops are also run within the building premises. It is remarkable that the society not only supported the homeless people but also involved the women into work. Though the society could not accommodate many, yet it paved way for the others to derive extra benefits from the moneylenders. The consciousness and instance of the society compelled the moneylenders to render benefits at par with the society.

The yarn crisis was also solved to an extent with the coming up of cotton mill at Kalyani in Nadia, and cotton cultivation at Medinipur and Sunderbans that were quite fine.

The progressive history of the co-operative society is evident from the statistics. The samabai sadan was awarded 3 gold and silver medals and special prize in 1993-94 for its remarkable contribution in the development of weavers' co-operative.²⁵ The statistics of progress and regress between 2000-2007 are discussed later. At present many of the co-operatives are facing troubles that

needs discussion. But despite hurdles and problems the co-operatives are making advances. There is no problem of unemployment at Phulia. There are about 35000 looms making tangail variety of textile. Though all are not members of the co-operative yet they get opportunities at par with the co-operatives and the moneylenders are compelled to provide them so. The weavers of Samudragarh, Nabadwip, Dumurdaha, Karimpur, Chakdah are following the footsteps of the weavers of Phulia. It goes without saying that 1977 marks the new era in weaving Industry characterized by struggle for progress overcoming any occasion of trailing behind.

Currently the annual production of tangail of Phulia amounts to more than Rs 1 crore. Phulia produces cotton, silk, and tussar; polyester and other export varieties of textile. The market has expanded all across the country. The primary buyers are from Calcutta and wholesalers of burrabazar. Outside Bengal in the southern part of India the demand for Phulia tangail is increasing progressively. It is exported to countries like Japan, Germany, France, Afganisthan and Middle East.²⁶

While discussing the increasing demand for tangail saris of Phulia in the market across the world it would be relevant to discuss the origin and history of such breed of textile. It had originated at a place called Tangail in Bangladesh (East Bengal then). It was a township then, which is currently the district headquarter. Centering the township weavers' settlements had come up in 22 villages around it.²⁷ In undivided India and after the entry of the East India Company and for establishing the Manchester Cotton Industry the increasing atrocities of the British over the weavers at Dacca many of them had settled in nearby Dhamrai and Chouhatti villages. Later on the invitation of the jamindars (landlords) of Deshduar, Santosh, Kharindar many weavers from Dhamrai and Chouhatti had settled in Tangail. They were basically all basak breeds of weavers. These

(Basak) weavers had migrated and settled at Phulia later. Weaving tangail sari was their sole occupation. Partition in 1947 had made the weavers homeless. We have seen how weavers (Basak) from East Bengal (from Tangail) had settled at Phulia. Apart from Phulia some had also settled at Samudragarh (Burdwan), Dhatrigram (Burdwan), Nabadwip (Nadia).²²⁸ Samudragarh has already found a special place in handloom industry. The immigrant weavers elsewhere have taken up different styles of weaving but those at Phulia have specially focused on tangail variety and revived its glory and have flourished. Despite all hardships they have not given it up and continued with dexterity, finer designs, artistic finesse to take tangail variety to a different dimension that is acclaimed all over the world. Tangail variety is completely different from one that is called Jamdani.²⁹ At present the co-operatives are getting entangled in several problems. Though the production was increasing yet the income was not augmented in commensurate to the sale. The primary reason was that the co-operatives were dependent upon Tantuja, Tantusree, Manjusha who were initially doing good work but gradually became devoid of initiatives. Due to want of market the co-operatives started selling textiles to the wholesalers at Calcutta and moneylenders around. The latter comprehending the problem started taking advantage of the situation and delayed payment blocking the money for long periods and sometimes refused to return the stock on demand thus harassing the co-operatives. The latter started exporting tangail textile and achieved quite a success in the effort. This had adversely affected tangail weaving curbing its production. As the overseas market had little demand for tangail sari, it was ready to accept cotton lengths, stole and allied varieties.³⁰ Consequently there was lack of innovation in designs/varieties. While exploring overseas market the problems at the home ground stood as obstacles.

The statements given by the heads of different co-operatives are relevant here.

We shall henceforth demarcate them as Samabay (co-operative) 1 & 2 respectively. The statement of the head of the co-operative.³¹ Reveals that all the co-operatives are focusing more on the production of stoles than any other variety of textiles as the overseas market has huge demand for such stoles. The wage rate for stole is also high. Thus a labourer can earn as much as Rs 40 by making the ball or pompom across the stole- border as the wage rate at co-operatives are higher than outside. The head of co-operative stated that during 2008, they had given away wages amounting to Rs 1.5 lakh for making balls or pompoms along the stole- border alone. The head of co-operative revealed that in order to procure overseas orders they are participating in the Indian Industrial Trade Fair at New Delhi by expending an amount of Rs 70000. But the profits were overwhelming as they earned orders from Denmark, Greece, Afganistan, U.K., and U.S.A. and he hopes for more. He asserted that if the work were pursued diligently there would be more scope for work and earnings for further.³²

But there are some troubleshooter issues that are creating obstacles against the progress. The co-operatives no longer are willing to depend upon tantuja, Manjusha rather they are keen upon exploring the export market directly. This is because the foreign market is flourishing with upper-end prices; payment is smooth against stacked stocks, blocked / delayed payment at the domestic market. So long their products were exported through intermediaries now they want to do it directly earning higher margin. The problem arises when they receive cheques / drafts that they deposit at the co-operative bank which takes about 10-12 days to clear and without the facility of ATMs the weavers are often at a loss when in urgent need of money for investment. Again they cannot transact with any other bank as the co-operative banks have given them credits. So it is essential that the government should take some steps that the service at

co-operative banks improve or provide opportunities to the co-operative societies that they can deal with other banks as well for transactions in this regard or else the co-operatives may lose the overseas market.³³

The dilemma between the eagerness to capture overseas market and reluctance to produce for the domestic market (in the context of the current scenario) the handloom industry at Phulia was distressed for a while. There is another important factor in export is maintaining the quality of the product and delivering within the scheduled time. But there are lots of discrepancies in this regard and negligence towards the customers' demand can further deteriorate the relationship between the buyers and sellers. This is actually hampering the orders and market reputation is getting affected thus constricting the market. One needs to be more careful and particular about the marketing etiquettes, timely production, delivery, and market reputation and customer service. Or else in front of tough competition these co-operatives will soon lose ground.³⁴

Another problem has come to arrive due to drastic rise in the rate of interest on loan from 8.5% to 12.5%. This 4% increase has created an excessive burden on the samity leading to loss in business. The government has also withdrawn the subsidy on loan-interest for reasons unknown to the members of the samity. Immediate remedy can come through reverting the situation by the government with reduced rate of interest and introducing subsidy once more. Else the veil of gloom seems to darken the future prospective of the co-operatives.³⁵

Despite all hardships the annual production of the co-operatives are progressively increasing (figures given later). The handloom industry of Phulia is making incessant effort to bring back the glory, engaging more artisan members into the co-operatives. The members had made an application for building co-operative houses with government grants and subsidy for themselves in 2000 that has been approved in 2008.

The authority has sanctioned and released subsidy for 20 members.

There is two more Government projects that are on namely MAHATMA GANDHI BUNKAR BIMA YOJANA (MGBBY) and **Swasthya Bima Yojna** (RSBY). The basic objective of the 'Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana' is to provide enhanced insurance cover to the handloom weavers in the case of natural as well as accidental death and also higher sum assured. The objective of RSBY is providing insurance cover for the BPL families with guard against health shocks involving hospitalization. And though all members have not been embraced by it as yet, the co-operative is making attempt to include more members under the umbrella.³⁶

It has been previously discussed that the movement of the weavers at Phulia had inspired all the weavers of Nadia. Currently weavers from Dinajpur, Dinhatra and other places have arrived at Phulia and joined the handloom industry here. Around 12000 labourers from different places outside Phulia have joined the handloom industry. It goes without saying that there is no crisis of employment at Phulia. The work culture at Phulia has encouraged an organisation Usha Gram Loka Sikhsha Niketan (vill:Usha Gram, Post: Birnagar, Dist : Nadia).

In 1980 a Trust was build for the co-operatives under the guidance of D.R.D.C. currently Smt Sandhya Sarkar is the secretary of the co-operative.³⁷ This is included under TRYSEM scheme of the government primarily for the training of the members of BPL category. At present the Loka Sikhsha Niketan established by Sri Gopal Chandra Chakroborty has become member of (Indian) Fair Trade Forum. There is no child labour involved in this organisation and more than 100 women members primarily and exclusively run it. Inspired by the integrated effort of the Phulia co-operatives D.R.D.C. has taken steps to develop many more instances all over Nadia where women will play the key role.³⁸

The glorious march that had started in 1977 has been successful. Notwithstanding

all hurdles the progress has continued consistently. The objective of the co-operative has consummated though a long way to go. Still many people migrated into Nadia from East Bengal (Bangladesh) and these homeless people try to engage with the handloom industry. Thus strikingly a cottage industry is providing means of livelihood for an enormous populace. There is no want of effort and both government and private support are welcome. The struggle for existence that had started in 1773 has taken a definite sensational shape in 2008. At this time besides Nadia a huge population from different parts of Bengal are involved with this industry. Like many families of Murshidabad and Maldah are into biri making and many are involved with the silk industry. But nowhere could one witness so much of change, ups and down that the handloom industry of Nadia has undergone. The weaver community of Nadia has gladly embraced all crisis and solutions and continues to live and struggle with the glorious tradition of handloom industry.

The time period chosen for my research is between 1773-1977. I have already discussed the reason for choosing 1977 (the landmark year for weavers at Nadia) as the end year. The evidence of the establishment of co-operatives in 1977 and tracing the progress of co-operatives from 2001 to till date is very relevant to the subject hence has been discussed.

DATA - I

1. Name of the Society : FULIA TANGAIL SIIAEI BAYAN SILPA
SAMABAY SAMITY LTD.
2. Regn. No. & Date : 373 dated - 14.05.1977
3. Address : Samabay Sadan, P. O. - Fulia Colony,
Dist-Nadia, Pin-741402, West Bengal.
Phone No. : (03473) - 234222
Website : www.ftsbsssltd.com

Email: ftsbsssltd@bluebottle.com

4. Total No. of Members : 571 + 1 State Govt.

5. Total No. of Looms : 568

6. Total No. of working Looms : Normal - 195,
Export - 360
Total - 555

7. Financial Assistance Received Under Different Scheme :

i) H. D. C. : Rs. 9.175 lakh.

ii) Q. D. U. : Rs. 5.565 lakh.

iii) Project Package Scheme : Rs. 6.60 lakh + Rs. 2.96 lakh
= Rs. 9.56 lakh.iv) D. E. P. M. : Rs. 12.00 lakh. + Rs. 5.60 lakh
= Rs. 17.60 lakhv) D. D. H. P. Y. : Rs. 2.2375 lakh (State) + Rs. 2.63 lakh
(Central) + Rs. 2.655 lakh (Bank Loan)

vi) N. C. D. C. : Rs. 3.85 lakh.

8. NABARD Finance Received :

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
	Rs. 88.00 Lakh	Rs. 90.00 lakh	Rs. 90.00 lakh

9. Production last three years : (Rs. In lakh)

	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	Qty	Value (Rs.)	Qty	Value (Rs.)	Qty	Value (Rs.)
Normal	2.07 lakh mtr.	153.83 lakh	1.72 lakh mtr.	118.12 lakh	1.05 lakh mtr.	72.67 lakh
Export	1.36 lakh mtr.	73.60 lakh	2.20 lakh mtr.	108.04 lakh	2.54 lakh mtr.	125.95 lakh.
	3.43 lakh mtr.	232.43 lakh	3.92 lakh mtr.	226.16 lakh	3.59 lakh mtr.	198.62 lakh

10. Sale Turn Over last three years : (Rs. In lakh)

	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	Qty	Value (Rs.)	Qty	Value (Rs.)	Qty	Value (Rs.)
Normal	1.78 lakh mtr.	155.46 lakh	1.81 lakh mtr.	120.77 lakh	1.28 lakh mtr.	97.01 lakh.
Export	1.13 lakh mtr.	85.50 lakh	2.17 lakh mtr.	117.42 lakh	2.52 lakh mtr.	124.45 lakh.
	2.91 lakh mtr.	240.96 lakh	3.98 lakh mtr.	238.19 lakh	3.80 lakh mtr.	221.46 lakh.

11. Export order in hand : Rs. 70.00 lakh.

12. No. of Design Developed Under : 175

D.E.P.M. Scheme

13. M.D.A. Receivable : Rs. 5.41 lakh.

14. Mktg. Incentive Receivable : Rs. 51.20 lakh.

up to 2003-04

15. Name of Export Countries : Japan, Italy, America, Canada, Turkeye,
Westindies, Germany, France, All over
India.

16. Receivable from central : Rs. 71.27 lakh.

Marketing Agencies

17. Averages wages Earned : Normal : Rs. 2,000/- per weaver (per month)

Export : Rs. 3,000/- per weaver (per month)

18. Problems : a) Inordinate Delay for payment of Govt. dues.
b) Inordinate Delay in payment of Bills from central
Marketing Agencies.
c) Inordinate Delay clearance of cheque by District
Central Co-operative Bank Ltd .18. Varieties of products : Tangail Shari, Exportable Scarves,
Running fabrics & Dress Materials etc.

DATA - II

1. Name of the Society : FULIA TANGAIL SHAEI BAYAN SILPA
SAMABAY SAMITY LTD.
2. Regn. No. & Date : 373 dated - 14.05.1977
3. Address : Samabay Sadan, P. O. - Fulia Colony,
Dist-Nadia, Pin-741402, West Bengal.
Phone No. : (03473) - 234222
Website : www.ftsbsssltd.com
Email: ftsbsssltd@bluebottle.com
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- ii) Q. D. U. : Rs. 5.565 lakh.
- iii) Project Package Scheme : Rs. 6.60 lakh + Rs. 2.96 lakh
= Rs. 9.56 lakh.
- iv) D. E. P. M. : Rs. 12.00 lakh. + Rs. 5.60 lakh
= Rs. 17.60 lakh
- v) D. D. H. P. Y. : Rs. 2.2375 lakh (State) + Rs. 2.645 lakh
(Central)
- vi) N. C. D. C. : Rs. 3.85 lakh.
- vii) I. H. T. P. : Rs. 2.135 lakh.

8. NABARD Finance Received :

2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Rs. 91.50 Lakh	Rs. 93.00 lakh	Rs.93.00 lakh

9. Production last three years : (Rs. In lakh)

	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	Qty	Value (Rs.)	Qty.	Value (Rs.)	Qty	Value (Rs.)
Normal	1.63 lakh mtr.	126.41 lakh	1.26 lakh mtr.	101.73 lakh	1.99 lakh mtr.	156.62 lakh
Export	2.30 lakh mtr.	143.80 lakh	4.62 lakh mtr.	263.74 lakh	4.45 lakh mtr.	218.44 lakh.
	3.93 lakh mtr.	270.21 lakh	5.88 lakh mtr.	365.47 lakh	6.44 lakh mtr.	375.06 lakh

10. Sale Turn Over last three years : (Rs. In lakh)

	2004-05		2005-06		2006-07	
	Qty	Value (Rs.)	Qty.	Value (Rs.)	Qty	Value (Rs.)
Normal	1.66 lakh mtr.	154.15 lakh	1.35 lakh mtr.	116.10 lakh	2.07 lakh mtr.	186.59 lakh.
Export	2.22 lakh mtr.	141.73 lakh	3.97 lakh mtr.	199.99 lakh	4.40 lakh mtr.	222.27 lakh.
	3.88 lakh mtr.	295.88 lakh	5.32 lakh mtr.	316.09 lakh	6.47 lakh mtr.	408.86 lakh.

11. Export order in hand : Rs. 75.00 lakh.

12. M.D.A. Receivable : Rs. 5.41 lakh.

13. Mktg. Incentive Receivable : Rs. 27.47 lakh.

up to 2006-07

14. One time Rebate (10%) : Rs. 7.88 Lakh (Updated)

15. Name of Export Countries : Japan, Italy, America, Canada, Turkeye,
Westindies, Germany, France, All over
India.

16. Averages wages Earned : Normal : Rs. 2,000/- per weaver (per month)

Export : Rs. 3,000/- per weaver (per month)

17. Problems : a) Inordinate Delay for payment of Govt. dues.
b) Inordinate Delay clearance of cheque by Nadia District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd .

18. Varieties of products : Tangail Shari, Exportable Scarves,
Running fabrics & Dress Materials etc.

Source of Data No. I & II : Phulia Samabay Sadan

From 2001-2008 the Samity had flourished, figures revealed that the samabai has worked well. It had been trying to secure central and state government support. They had also submitted the Project Package Scheme before the government for augmenting home production and export volume. Government has conceded to it and this has stirred the curve of development upward further. Following the boom in the handloom industry Phulia is inhabited by weavers predominantly with about 22000 looms involving about 55000 people. The co-operative society is held high in the esteem of the natives here. Many people are into weaving and export of handloom products but very few of them could become member of the society. In the future there is scope for many more people to come under the cover of the society.

The society has successfully completed the first part of the Development of Exportable Products and their Marketing D. E. P. M. (Development of Exportable Products and their Marketing) Scheme. The society has made application furnished with details of the first part of accomplishment for another round of support from the authority.

In this regard it would be relevant to point out that countries like Japan and Italy prefer products made with vegetable dyes. Hence the sadan has set up a vegetable-dyeing unit for making export quality stuff to gratify the overseas customers preference. This has definitely boosted the export volume.

The Crisis of Santipur Handloom Industry And Its Solution by the co-operatives

It is evident from the prior discussion that scarcity of thread that persisted and aggravated between the middle of the 18th century and start of the 19th century could not stop the looms at Santipur. The production volume was reduced but was not closed completely. We have witnessed how during and post first world war there was the contrasting developments between empowerment of weavers on one side and thread crisis on another due to decline in imported thread. The rate of participation of weavers in handloom industry was increasing but thread was not available in commensurate to the volume of demand. This led to crisis for the weavers of Nadia. The thread spinners of Chandannagar and others who made fine threads were not keen to produce the thicker or ordinary variety. In this situation the exploitation by the moneylenders also increased. To manage crisis a union of weavers/ labourers called sangha was formed. Comrade Ramanimohon Pramanik and Nirmalchandra Pramanik became the president and secretary respectively. In the general meeting of the sangha issues like thread crisis and increased price of thread, misery of the weavers, use of technology/machines, social and imperialism and disorderliness were discussed. Secretary of another union or sangha Comrade Kanailal Pal, Secretary of 'Santipur Bayan Sramik Sangha', Gopinath Pramanik and Kartik Chandra Ghosh had submitted a written document stating the current miserable state of the weavers at Santipur and the need for protest to improve it. The statement revealed that in 1346 Bangabdo (1939A.D) after durga puja the wages were radically reduced. Even a year and half ago for every 100 dangi the wage after meeting the cost was one rupee and two anas which stood reduced as 12 anas only. As a result the weavers did not earn beyond rupees 7-8 at that time. With this minimal wage of Rs 2 –8anas or rupees 3, thousands of weavers along with

their families (about 12000 people) at Santipur were in the face of starvation. With the start of second world war prices of essential commodities were rising steeply. At this juncture the fate of Santipur handloom industry was at stake. The moneylenders exploited the opportunity and helpless people entirely to make money. A meeting was held at the municipal office then presided over by Dr. Durgacharan Gangopadhyay in respect to "Solving problem of unemployment and seeking economic development".³⁹ But problems were increasing day by day.

In this critical situation many had started migrating to other areas leaving Santipur. Many faced critical turns in life. There was major state of confusion everywhere. At that time under the leadership of 'Santipur Bayan Sramik Sangha', 'Santipur Bayan Sramik Samity' several weavers had united and made mass deputation before the district magistrate of Krishnanagar and laid siege on him. They demanded the restoration of their right to live and revive the handloom industry. The authority was not much moved at this and did not try any harder. Protest continued under the leadership of Kanai Pal, Sambhu Pramanik, Gopinath Pramanik, Promothesh Bhattacharya. Even the ones who used to dye the thread were affected badly and almost ruined at this economic crisis. Dyeing of thread stopped in this region. Inferior quality thread with second-rate dyeing was imported from abroad. This ruined the market for coloured textile.⁴⁰

It was crucial to form co-operative or samity to revive the handloom industry of Santipur much before the independence. Much prior to independence we had seen how the weavers under the direction of 'Santipur Bayan Sramik Sangha' had organised strikes (just not by weavers, strikes by labourers engaged in dyeing, sweepers, drain cleaners, milkmen etc). Then again in 1944 on 16th December the weavers united under 'Kuthirpara Samabay Samity' to fight against the exploitation of the moneylenders. At this time the thread crisis was

critical and sixteen weavers in their own interest started a co-operative. The weavers to combat the situation formed many other co-operatives. The ones that were remarkable were Chaital Para weavers' co-operative society Ltd., Ranaghat Sub-divisional Industrial Co-operative Society Limited. The latter was previously a sub-divisional Society now has turned into private concern. Its main objective is to assist in production and marketing.⁴¹

Initially the co-operatives worked well but owing to several problems relating to handloom weakened their effectiveness. There was no government intervention to turn the wave. The trouble turned serious after the Partition in 1947. By 1950 scores of homeless people started pouring in and settling down in search of work at Santipur.

Many weavers settled at Santipur, Phulia, Samudragarh, Nabadwip. Despite all hardships they were not ready to give up their traditional occupation. On one hand crisis of thread was aggravated on the other people had no loom, no shelter, no food and situation worsened. Weavers at Santipur and Phulia became dependent upon the moneylenders. Weavers were torn in between the abuses of moneylenders and want of shelter, yarn, and loom. They started mingling designs of Santipur with that of Dacca and Tangail, katak (Orissa) and created new varieties demand for which soared high in the market. Phulia concentrated upon making pure tangail variety. Introduction of technology brought some changes in the weft method through introduction of drumming system, which relieved the weavers from problems related to weft run in the rainy season.⁴²

The subsequent crisis in the handloom industry appeared in 1971-72. The scarcity of thread at reasonable price was the reason behind such crisis. In February 1972 100 count of thread cost Rs 130 per bundle. In 1973 the price rose exorbitantly to Rs 235. The state government immediately increased the price of yarn at Kalyani cotton mill from Rs 120 per 100 count to Rs 185.

Consequently Rs 5 or 6-increased price of textile at Santipur led to the closure of about 150 looms. Many weavers were compelled to leave their traditional occupation and take up other work. The handloom industry was again in a critical phase.⁴³

At times the irony leave many of us dazed. At one end when the moneylenders were dominating the scenario on the other weavers of Sutragarh were developing co-operatives and selling textile directly to the market overcoming the moneylenders. Such undaunted spirit of the weavers was really rare and they had started doing business independently and progressively since the end of the 1950s.

In the evening the weavers started selling the textile in the Sarvuj market. Slowly the market started expanding. Several small hats developed where the weavers sold their products. Still today such small local markets are the places where buyers and sellers transact. Gradually in the area beside the high school at Sutragarh textile market started on every Sundays and Thursdays, which has eased the labour of the weavers, now moneylenders come to them in the market and purchase their stock. Currently there are about 800 stalls and buyers come from Malda, Siliguri, Assam, Benaras etc.⁴⁴

Thus the handloom industry of Santipur bloomed. The united effort, independence and integration of the weavers of Sutragarh inspired the co-operatives elsewhere. The samity established at Phulia flourished and business expanded. The Kuthirpara Samabay Samity of Santipur and other co-operatives had received government intervention and prospered. With the intervention of government organisation Tantuja, Tantusree, Manjusha Santipur textiles went places all over the country. Kuthirpara Samabay Samity had set the unique instance where men and women worked hand in hand which has been already mentioned in the earlier section on women participation. The co-operatives

have significantly cut off the dominance of the moneylenders. But the most remarkable fact that surfaced is the indomitable spirit of the weavers that keep them walking towards the goal forever conquering all barriers.

The central government has introduced several schemes for the co-operatives of the handloom industry, which are as follows:

- ❖ Pension Scheme (central Govt.)
- ❖ Handloom development scheme 1994-95 (co-operatives will produce textile and yarn)
- ❖ D.E.P.M scheme 2001-02 development for exportable products and their marketing
- ❖ Project Package Scheme (central Govt.)
- ❖ Dindayal Halkargha Pratrasha Yzona (D.D.H.P.Y) to update the co-operatives. The BJP government at the centre had started the scheme
- ❖ Contributory Provident Fund Scheme' ratio- wage earner's 3%, co-operative's contribution 3% plus the contributions of the state and central government a provident fund for the employees will be created. This is a significant development.
- ❖ Residences for the weavers
- ❖ Medical benefits and spectacles to the extent of Rs 190
- ❖ Maternity benefits for the women- Rs 500 up to the birth of two children
- ❖ Asthamatic tendency- Rs 1500 –2000 maximum by state government but one should become the member of C.P.F, one year of continuous service will make one eligible for membership of society.
- ❖ State Government Pension Scheme
- ❖ 10 yrs of continuous service at the co-operative. Rs 400 per month after 60 yrs of age and free to work as long as one can

There is no leave for the weavers, as it would lead to loss of wages. Under

Santipur samabay there are many weavers who are around 77 yrs of age. It has become more of a passion than an occupation. In this case its not the wages but the love for the work keep such veterans ticking. There are stories that there are weavers who had been into this profession since pre independence period and even when they are taken ill at hospital bed they continue weaving.⁴⁵

It is evident from all documents above that the history of Santipur handloom industry had witnessed many crest and trough, waves of changes. It is also the anecdotes of love and passion of the weavers for the profession it was always much more than just profession rather it was the pulse of their lives. There had been a strong nexus between the loom and their soul that had helped them tide over crisis during British period, rise against the wrongs with indomitable courage and continue their love for the work. The resolute weavers with their undaunted spirit had set instance that has become glory of the nation strengthening the nations' spine further. But one would not find the names of such patriots, nationalists anywhere in history maybe for the fact that their vast contribution over a long period could not be measured or captured within the meagre pages of history.

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