

**Pauperisation of Handloom Weavers of Banaras  
An Oral History Documentation**

*Report Submitted by*

**Archana Aggarwal**

**Integrated Labour History Research Programme  
V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, NOIDA**

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## PAUPERISATION OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS OF BANARAS: AN ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTATION

### **The Study**

The past two decades, especially the last decade has seen major upheavals in the lives and work of workers, especially those of the handloom industry. Handloom weavers in the country are mainly concentrated in seven states, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Manipur, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The *poorvanchal* belt of Eastern U.P. has been a major source of labour throughout the country and within this belt, handloom industry has been one of the largest sources of employment, second only to agriculture.

Today, the *poorvanchal* belt is witnessing a decay in whatever little industry did exist there. Apart from organised, formal industry, even traditional industry is seeing a process of breakup and decay. The crisis in the weaving industry, especially handloom weaving has assumed alarming proportions.

Within the *poorvanchal* area, Banaras has been a centre of production of handloom silk fabrics since time immemorial. The Varanasi Silk fabrics have been eulogised in scriptures and ancient books and had acquired a special distinction after the advent of muslims in the city. Varanasi has been the centre of production of brocade and plain silk.

By 1906, the demand for former had declined due to a decline in the fortunes of the nobility. In the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Varanasi weaving industry has been producing mainly fabric, sarees and some other specialized pieces. There are 22 varieties of cloth which are supposed to be produced only on the handloom.

According to available estimates, the Varanasi city itself has more than two lakh handloom weavers and approximately 40,000 powerloom weavers. There are many more *bunkars* or weavers in areas adjacent to the city. The weaving profession traditionally belong to the muslim community, although in the course of our research, we also came across some Hindu bunkars. According to one estimate, today the city has nearly 40% non-muslim weavers, whereas of the total weaver population in areas adjacent to Varanasi city, non-muslims constitute nearly 80% of the total weaver population and they belong predominantly to the backward and the dalit castes. The main castes that the bunkars belong to are Ansari, Mansoori, Khan, Rangrej, Hashmi, etc. The main weavers settlements of the city are Madanpura, Reoritalab, Bagh Sadanand and Jagivanpura in the south of the city; Alaipura area comprising of 17 *mohallas* including Nati Imli in the north of the city; Lallapura in the west; Kotwan in the Gangapur constituency and Bajardiha, Lohta in the Cant area. Except for the migrants from Bengal and Bihar who had settled in the profession nearly 35-40 years back, weaving has been a hereditary profession followed across generations. The weaver settlements of the city itself are nearly 400 years old!

The past decade or so has seen a significant upheaval in the lives of these bunkars. The advent of powerlooms on one hand and the policies of liberalisation and globalisation have affected the production and sale of the handloom industry and have eroded the dignity and social security of the bunkars. The bunkars are being forced to switch over to relatively more casual and even more informal forms of labour. As a result of the impact of the new textile policy and on account of the changes in the market conditions, the bunkar who held a high position in India's cultural history, is getting stripped of his profession and dignity. Pauperisation and

casualisation of the bunkar community is taking place. As a result of this economic decline, even Varanasi reported two suicides in the course of past few months.

During one of the interviews conducted in the course of this study, one woman from the bunkar household interrupted angrily with, “we work the whole day, eat two times, go hungry one time, on top of it, there are four children, in the afternoon they want food, I have to tell them to have patience.” And some of the male weavers added that, “the business has completely collapsed, we only want to run away.” [Interview no. 19, Page 49 of hindi transcript].

### **Objectives**

The broad objective of the present study is to analyse informalisation and pauperisation of the bunkar community. Specifically, the study intends to collect oral interviews of the weavers of Banaras with the objective of recording their perception about the economic upheavals in their lives and to understand the strategies, they employ to cope with this crisis.

### **Methodology**

From the pockets of silk weaving identified during the preliminary visits, some were selected for detailed study, e.g. Nati Imli, Bajardiha, Reoritalab, Karaundi. The selection of the areas was based on dispersion of areas, the difference in the socio-economic status of the weavers in these areas and convenience. Within these areas, oral interviews were conducted with the bunkars, based on convenience sampling. Since the objective is not merely to statistically document, the impact of economic crisis on the lives of the weavers, these detailed oral interviews were conducted to give an insight into the thoughts, emotions, fears, anxieties, frustrations and the zeal to survive of the bunkar community. The pilot survey was

held during September-October, 2002. Thereafter the oral interviews started being recorded. In total, 42 interviews have been conducted.

### **Scheme**

What will be presented below is a preliminary result derived from the oral interviews. The majority of the respondents in this study were between 15-50 years of age and were male, muslim bunkars. However, some interviews covered women in the bunkar household, hindu weavers and those weavers who have now left the profession.

After dealing with the structure of production and process of sales in Varanasi handloom weaving, the next section will describe the socio-economic aspects, state of living and working conditions of the bunkars. Lastly, the study will focus on the changes in the socio-economic conditions of the bunkars and the reasons thereof, as perceived by the bunkars themselves.

### **Structure of production**

In the course of oral interviews, it was found out that there are mainly following categories of bunkars :-

1. ***Bani Bunkar*** This category of handloom weaver is more like a wage earner. The *grihasta* or the middleman gives this bunkar loom, jacquard, accessories, raw materials, zari, katan etc. and the bani bunkar gets piece wages for the job of weaving. The average wage is roughly Rs.1800/1900 for a saree which takes 15 days to weave. The bani bunkar could be of either kind.

- a) The one who takes the raw material and the loom from the grihasta but does the weaving in his own house.
- b) The one who does the weaving in the grihasta's house.

The wages of the latter are nearly 25% less than those of the former category.

2. **Self Weavers** These weavers or bunkars do not work on *bani* but own the loom and raw materials themselves. Here also, there can be two categories:

- a) Some of the self weavers do their own weaving and sell directly in the open market or to the *gaddidar* or the trader. This category of the self weaver does not have any restrictions imposed on him.
- b) Some of the self weavers work on *lagar* which means that the *gaddidar* or the grihasta provides the design to him and the bunkar is bound to provide the final product to that very same grihasta or *gaddidar*. However, *lagar* weavers also own the loom and the raw material. But if the saree is rejected, it becomes the responsibility of the bunkar and he has to take it back.

Although the majority of weavers in Varanasi are self weavers but as a result of widespread pauperisation of these bunkars, now many of them are converting to wage labourers or *bani* bunkars so that they do not have to face the uncertainties of the market.

Usually, the master weaver at the loom is accompanied by a male child assistant or helper especially when the saree is such that a separate border needs to be woven.

The proportion of those taking help from the child labour is relatively higher among the loom owners rather than the wage earners. Women play an extremely crucial role in the bunkar family. Apart from the household work, women take up work such as carding, rolling on to bobbins and shuttles. Even after the preparation of saree, the work of cutting the threads is done by the women. Although it is not true of Varanasi, but in some adjacent areas like Mubarakpur, most of the weavers are women weavers.

### **Structure of Sales**

Once a saree or fabric is prepared, it is taken by the bunkar to the grihastha (middleman who is usually a muslim) or to the *gaddidars/kothidars* (the trader, who is generally a non-muslim and belongs to the marwari, khatri or agarwal castes). Earlier, the sarees were purchased by the gaddidars or the bunkar would carry them to a number of prospective buyers. Of late, there has been an increase in the number of muslim master weavers who act as middlemen between the bunkars and the kothidars. The grihastha gives his loom to the bani bunkar and keeps a stock of sarees for sale whereas the gaddidar is more of a trader and hence does not keep any stock with himself. The exception are those gaddidars who get the work done on lagar and hence need to keep a stock.

### **The family, residential conditions & working conditions**

The bunkar settlements are typically characterized by the work place being within the home premises of the bunkar. The bunkar colonies are typified by big and extended families, illiteracy, economic stringency and lack of cleanliness. Traditionally, weaving has been the occupation of the whole family where almost all the members are engaged in one or the other activities related with this

occupation. In the present study, the majority of the respondents inherited this profession from their fathers and ancestors.

The residential accommodation is usually small, old and decrepit. The existence of the work place and the residence, on the same floor area creates further shortage of space.. These dwellings are neither properly lit nor ventilated. As a result, even during the day time, it becomes impossible to work without electric lighting.

The work of weaving normally does not have a set time frame. However, working for long duration, with legs hanging in the pit (the pit loom system) has its adverse impact on the health of the bunkars.

### **Pauperisation of the bunkars: the reasons**

The study reveals that the majority of the respondents perceive a distinct deterioration in their socio-economic status over the past decade. The feeling of frustration can be summarised in the words of Abdul Rehman (age 20 years) who says, “in the future the grave is there for us, what else to do. We have to make use of what we have learnt. After studying upto class 8-10<sup>th</sup>, we have all come into this line. There is also no possibility of getting a job, the government also does not pay any attention to us”.

In response to the question as to whether there are times when there is no work, Rizwan of Bajardiha says, “Many times, from ten-ten, fifteen-fifteen days to two-two months, we sit idle. Then we are forced to take loans.” **[Interview no. 7, page 21 of hindi transcript].**



Khurshid (20 years) had started working in this profession at the age of 14. His father had bought land and increased the number of looms. But Khurshid has been forced to reduce the number of looms and close down one *karkhana* (workshop). He says that, “the business has collapsed, the workshop which used to weaved for the outsiders has closed. There is a lot of slowdown. We do not get money. The saree does not sell, even if it sells, we do not get money in time. If we do not get money in time, then how will we make payment at the place from which we get *tani*. If we cannot pay him, he will tell other people. We have to consider everything, so we had to stop work.” **[Interview no. 11, page 29 for hindi transcript].**

Another bunkar by the same name who is 18 years of age and has been in this profession for the last 10 years says that, “earlier our pocket money was Rs. 500/- per week, but today we manage the month’s expenditure in Rs. 1000/-. Earlier there was *gadi* (motorised vehicle), today we do not even have a bicycle. Ever since this government came, we have had to sell houses.” **[Interview no. 19, page 48 of hindi transcript].**

The deterioration of the handloom industry can be understood in terms of decline in the market, emergence of the powerloom, virtual absence of government support to the handloom weavers, and the cooperatives, which act more as mafias, the pocketing of profits by the middlemen, the worsening electricity scenario in U.P. and last but not the least, the riots which erode the market further.

#### **i) New textile policy & decline in the market**

According to Mohd. Abdullah Ansari, who is the president of Bunkar Sewa Samiti, Varanasi, the decay of the handloom sector can be dated back to the introduction

the new textile policy by the government in 1984. As a result of this policy, a subsidy of 25% was announced on staple yarn, polyester, cotton, i.e. all the products which have the potential to act as substitutes for the product of the handloom sector. However, the handloom products were not included in the subsidy. Consequently, the products of the handloom sector became relatively much more expensive and hence less competitive. The market for the product of handloom weaving has declined significantly. Mohd. Salim, Aseem, Naseem, the three weaver brothers of Bhelupur area say, “What could be sold earlier for Rs.2000/-, now fetches merely Rs.1000/- to Rs.1200/-”. Khursheed of Bajardiha is 18 years old and has been in this profession since the last 10 years. His family had a house in the famous ghats of the Varanasi city but the family was forced to sell the house and move back to their native village because the situation had become so grave that the saree which cost them Rs. 2000/- sometimes had to be sold for only Rs. 800/-. Now Khursheed has left this profession and taken up work outside. Mohd. Juber of Bajardiha says that it costs nearly Rs.1100/- to Rs. 1175/- to make a saree and this is sold only for Rs. 1225/-. Even in this, if there is some *dag-dhabba* (fault), this profit of Rs.50/- has to be left. The general perception is, “the saree is not sold, if it is sold we do not get the money”.

There are varying perceptions regarding the reasons for the decline faced by this industry. According to Khursheed of Bajardiha, “the reason for decline seems to be that the government has stopped exports. When exports were there, our products sold easily. With stopping of exports, sales have stopped. Ever since BJP government came, the business of *banarsi* has collapsed further. [Interview no. 11, page 28 of hindi transcript]. Samin Bhajji (35 years) believes that it does not help even if the yarn becomes cheaper because the price of the saree also falls and benefit goes only to the middleman. [Interview no. 4].

The purchases by the government are negligible and whatever purchases do take place are routed through the co-operative societies. There is no prior advertisement so the end result is that the ordinary bunkar has no mechanism to sell his product directly to the government. And, as we will see below, the co-operative societies are controlled by a few influential people and have become irrelevant for the ordinary bunkar.

## **ii) Emergence of powerlooms**

Apart from the decline in the market, there are supposed to be 22 designs which can be produced only by the handlooms but the government is not restricting the powerloom sector in this regard. The emergence of powerloom is further eroding the market for the handloom sector. Mohd. Irshad (age 30 years) of Nati Imli says “the situation has worsened because of the powerlooms. If the powerloom can produce a saree for Rs.1000/-, we (on the handloom) can do so only for Rs.1500/-, so who will buy from us?”.

The powerloom gained prominence in Varanasi city, since late seventies. In many areas adjacent to the Varanasi city, e.g.Tanda, Ambedkar Nagar, etc., the powerloom is producing suiting, shirting also and thus filling the vacuum being created by the closure of textile mills.

## **iii) Raw material and role of co-operative societies**

As far as raw material is concerned, the handloom sector uses hank yarn which was brought under open general licence (OGL) around 3 years back. Prior to that, this yarn used to be smuggled and used to cost Rs.1800/- per Kg. After being brought under OGL, the cost of yarn has fallen considerably (Rs.975/- per Kg.) but the former Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha had imposed an excise duty of 8% on

this, thus raising its price. Mohd. Abdullah Ansari of the Bunkar Sewa Samiti says that despite the decrease in the cost of the yarn, the problem is that the handloom weavers have no direct access to its purchase. The bunkars are forced to buy the yarn only through the co-operatives which deliberately hike the yarn price. On the other hand, according to the bunkars of Nati Imli, the reason for the decline of the weaving profession is the increase in the prices of raw materials, “if, what used to cost Rs. 500/- per kg earlier, costs Rs. 1500/- per kg today, how can we manage.” **[Interview no. 31, page 89 of hindi transcript]**. Similarly, Md. Basir (28 years) of Bhelupur says that, “since the government imposes a tax on yarn, it’s price increases. If the material comes from outside, the tax is more. By the time, we buy it here, it becomes even more expensive.” **[Interview no. 38, page 121 of hindi transcript]**.

Varanasi has more than 100 co-operative societies and 2 APEX co-operatives but unfortunately they act more as “co-operative mafias” in the words of Mohd. Ansari. The majority of bunkars, we came across in the course of our study were either unaware or extremely critical of the working of these co-operatives. Md. Juber of Bajardiha says that, “we hear that there is a co-operative or we can get loan from the bank but all that is useless for us. We do not get any loan from anywhere and there is so much hassle in taking the loan that anyone would come back. And we do not have a co-operative nor have we formed one.” **[Interview no. 1, page 3 of hindi transcript]**. Or Abdullah (42 years) comments that in the co-operatives, only the name of bunkars is there but all the fruits are enjoyed by the gaddidars. **[Interview no. 6, page 18 of hindi transcript]**. As Sahrarujaleel of Bajardiha says “we do not have any organisation, the organisation belongs to the *bade log* (big people) and only these people get the money (from the government)”. Vajruddin says quite critically, that the union people only play a

game, “they do not take up any issues, they only look after the welfare of *bade log* (big people) not the *chote log* (small people).” [Interview no. 14, page 38 of hindi transcript].

The U.P. Government has supposedly allotted Rs.300 crores for the handloom sector. This is supposed to provide various kinds of concessions to the handloom weavers, e.g. grants to the widows of deceased weavers, grants for water or electricity, grants for spectacles, etc. But this money is also routed through co-operative societies and hence rarely reaches the weaver.

Moreover, since the purchases by the government are also routed through these co-operatives, the bunkar is unable to avail of any benefit.

#### **iv) Weather and electricity**

The work of weaving cannot take place during the monsoon, which practically means that the work stops for nearly four months in a year. Moreover, the work place of the bunkars are so badly lit that it is impossible to work without electric lighting. The long period of load shedding by the UP government adds to the problems faced by the bunkars. Secondly, the bunkars have to pay electricity bills at commercial rates. One respondent in our study lamented that sometimes they have to pay as much as Rs. 10,000/- as electricity charges.

#### **v) The middlemen**

Apart from the serious deterioration in the market conditions, whatever little profit is made on the handloom products, is pocketed by the middlemen or the gaddidars. Abdullah (age 42 years) of Bajardiha says “we have to wait for a saree to be sold; sometimes we get the money 10-15 days after the saree has been given to the

grihasta. Sometimes, the saree gets rejected as well. We do not earn, the gaddidar earns as he takes the saree from one place and sells it in a second place. The bunkar societies only take down the names of the bunkars but the fruits are enjoyed by the gaddidars. The big parties of Chauk & Madanpura, get the benefits. The big traders get everything”. According to Samin, “when the yarn becomes cheaper, the middleman buys a lot of stock and sells it when it becomes expensive. They also get to know, when the price is going to increase or decrease.” **[Interview no. 4, page 14 of hindi transcript].**

#### **vi) Riots**

Some of the respondents also cited riots in general and the Gujarat riots of 2002 in particular as a significant reason for the decline in the market of sarees. Vajaruddin who has 3 looms says that the situation was alright before the demolition of Babri Masjid. “when the religious issue entered, the business was ruined. Gujarat riots caused a major impact. 75% of our products are sold in Gujarat. The market in Gujarat has declined (as a result of the riots)”. He continues further, “when religious issue comes, two groups get made, and when people are divided, the business collapses. The politicians make the people fight on the issue of mandir-masjid. This is only politics. Our workmen are hindu but we do not discriminate. Only the poor man loses (due to riots).” **[Interview no 14, page 7 of hindi transcript].**

#### **Pauperisation of the bunkars : Impact**

Whatever may be perceived as a reason for decay and deterioration of the handloom industry, there is a complete unanimity in this perception that the handloom sector has definitely seen a decline since the last 10 years or so. Some date the decline to 1984, others to the beginning of 90s and still others to 4-5 years

back. Whatever be the timeframe, this decline has taken its toll on the lives of weavers. In April 2003, an excise duty of 11.2% was declared on the products of the powerloom sector, which the government was forced to withdraw later. However, the imposition of the duty led to a strike by the powerloom weavers. This prolonged strike resulted in the suicide of a young girl, daughter of a wage earner at the loom.

As of today, those amongst the handloom weavers, who have the economic capability are buying powerlooms. Others are selling their looms and becoming wage labourers or bani bunkars so that atleast they would be assured of a daily wage and would not have to face the uncertainties of the market. Some bunkars have also given up their traditional occupation and taken up work like pulling auto-rickshaws or opening small shops, e.g. in Karaundi, Khumkhum (42 years) left weaving around 4 years back and has since opened a parchoon shop. In the past few months, there have been significant migrations of the bunkars of Varanasi to places like Surat and Bangalore.

The decline of the handloom sector and the consequent pauperisation is also influencing the gender relations within the bunkar household. Women of the bunkar household, who earlier restricted themselves to household work or rolling bobbins, etc., are now taking up piecemeal work from outside like cutting threads of the sarees, tailoring, etc. But this work does not bring home much money. Khaleeja Bibi of Bajardiha who is 40 years old, laments, “what earning, earlier the four girls (daughters) could earn Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/- but now there is no work.” “There is no work for women, either make *nallis* or do household work, if someone calls for work in 6 months or 1 year, then we go.” **[Interview no. 2, page 6 of hindi transcript]**. However, this has not changed the patriarchal perception

about women. Khaleeja Bibi says further, “who would consider our work? They say, this is women’s work (and so you have to do it). In any case, it is not as though you are earning Rs. 1000/- or Rs. 1200/-”.

The bunkars are virtually living on the edges of existence. Along with them, the livelihood of various people employed in related professions is also threatened. Abdul Rehman of Til Bhandeshwar who is 20 years of age, makes designs for Banarasi sarees. He makes a profit of only Rs. 10/- per month! **[Interview no. 33]**. The bunkars and the traders of the handloom sarees are not in a situation to compete with a foreign cloth which would soon flood the market as a consequence of the policies of liberalisation. This would force the weavers into further destitution.

### **Conclusion**

The bunkar community of Varanasi has witnessed significant change in their life and dignity in the past decade or so. The decline of the market and squeezing of the profits has stripped the bunker of his traditional *izzat* and forced him in a situation where he is struggling to survive. The co-operative societies which have sometimes played a positive role in the lives of the weavers in other parts of the country have turned into virtual mafias controlled by a handful of powerful lobbies in Varanasi. Many bunkars have left the weaving profession and taken up other work in order to survive. Others have been forced to migrate to far away places.

In the strict sense of the word, informalisation connotes the breakup of the ‘formal’ sector but a distinction needs to be made between the sector and the process. The policies of liberalisation and globalisation have affected traditional industry as well, and the ‘workers’ therein are being forced to switch over to relatively more



casual and even more informal forms of labour. The existing structures of production and kinship relations are breaking up and social security is being eroded. Pauperisation and casualisation of the work force is taking place.

## APPENDIX

I am presenting below a few case studies, which starkly show the feeling of despondency prevalent amongst the weavers of Banaras. Although there is a unanimity in the perception of pauperization, but the perceptions regarding the cause for the same show fractured opinions.

- I. Samin bhajji has 2 looms of which, he operates one himself and has employed a worker for the other. Both the looms together give him around 3000 rupees per month. He buys the yarn from the market as well as from the *grihashta*. On one saree, he may earn upto 1400 rupees. Sometimes the return comes immediately whereas at other times, he has to wait for long. At times he is unable to even recover the cost of the saree. If there is a *daag* in the saree, it may so happen that a saree that costs 2000 rupees to make may sell for mere 500 rupees.

According to him, a couple of generations back, the weaving was done using *asli taar* (real thread), whereas now they are forced to use artificial thread. Samin bhajji believes that the situation of the weavers has been deteriorating since the past five to six years and the main reason for that is terrorism since this has reduced the sales of sarees. As far as the assistance from the government is concerned, it is available only one is willing to run from pillar to post. Therefore, at times of need his family relies only on relatives for loans. (Interview No. 4)

- II. In Nati Imli, we came across a group of young weavers who were so agitated by the situation of weavers, that they were initially not willing to give interviews. Finally they relented after some persuasion. They were Mohd. Ikhlq (25-26 years, has been weaving since 10 years), Mohd. Roshan (22 years of age, weaving for 8 years), Iqbal Mohd.(25 years), Mohd. Arif, Mohd. Adnan and Raju.

These young weavers do not own any looms and believe that the yarn is getting expensive, also the inflation is growing and hence they are unable to save anything so much so that their children are unable to study because of lack of money. They do not agree that yarn has become any cheaper. As far as the export policy of the government is concerned, a change in that can only help the 'main people', claim these young weavers. It does not make any difference to the *mazdoors* like them. These workers told us that there has been a continuous decline in the wages, in fact the past decade has not given them even one paisa's increase. And given the growing inflation, it has worsened their situation. They believe that cooperatives are only for *bade log* and cannot benefit people like themselves.

They can now only survive on the basis of faith in Allah! (Interview No.31)

- III. 18 year old Khursheed has been weaving since ten years of age. He stays in Bajardiha. Earlier his family owned 10-12 looms but with continued losses, they had to shut most of them, sell the house and finally shift to the village. At present Khursheed's brother works on three looms while Khursheed has taken up the work of dyeing outside. Now he earns Rs. 1000 per month. Khursheed says that in earlier times he spent a weekly pocket money of Rs. 500 whereas now as decline has set in, he has to survive on merely 1000 Rs. per month. The family was forced to take a loan of roughly 3 lakh rupees to repay which, the house had to be sold.
- IV. Rizwan of Bajardiha does not own a loom but works as a wage earner and earns 1000-1200 Rs. per month. Often he does not get work for 10-15 days or even 2 months at a time. At such times his family has to survive on loans. Rizwan believes that the reason for such a dismal state of the

weaving industry is the advent of powerlooms. In the present circumstances, he can't even think of buying a handloom, which would cost at least Rs. 6000-7000. (Interview No. 7)

- V. Twenty year old Khursheed had started working at the tender age of 14. The family which has been staying in Reori Talaab earlier, shifted to Bajardiha because the living conditions in Reori Talaab were very bad. As of now they have six looms. Apart Khursheed and his brothers they have also employed 4 workers. In our interview he said that one saree can cost anything between 1400-1500 Rupees and takes 5-6 days to complete. Although he has never been forced to take loan, he believes that the situation of the weavers has worsened because the government has stopped exports.

According to him, although the cost of yarn has reduced but so has the price of the saree so this has not benefited the weavers. (Interview No. 11)

- VI. MOHD Basir of Bhelupur is 28 years old. He and his brothers own six looms and have employed one worker. They have a joint family

This family of weavers buys its own yarn and Basir opines that the situation of the weavers has been declining for the past 6-7 years due to a continuous increase in the cost of yarn. It is difficult to obtain a bank loan on the basis of owning looms, for that the house has to be mortgaged. He tells us that it takes one week to make a 'local' saree ie. a saree in the range of 500 to 5000 rupees. (Interview No. 38)

- VII. Khatima Bibi of Bajardiha is 40 years old and does the work of making *nallis* and stitching apart from the regular household chores like cooking

and looking after the children. Sometimes she also gets work from outside like putting *jali* on the *dupattas*.

Nowadays, her daughter does the work of filling *nallis* as Khatima Bibi does not get enough time. Earlier her four daughters could earn Rs. 100 to 150 but now there is no work. Especially there is no work for women, they can either make *nallis* or do household work. If at all some work comes in 6 months to 1 year, then they go. However, their work is not given much importance, as it is only 'women's work'! (Interview No. 2)