

CHANGING IDENTITY OF WEAVER CASTE IN INDIA: A STUDY ON *BHULIA* COMMUNITY OF WESTERN ODISHA

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RECEBIDO EM:	27.8.2022
APROVADO EM:	30.8.2022

LA MUTEVOLE IDENTITÀ DELLA CASTA DEI TESSITORI IN INDIA

- **ASTRATTO:** Dall'India antica a quella moderna, i tessuti rappresentano una parte della cultura del paese. Essi si sono evoluti in molte forme e sono stati utilizzati in ogni modo per l'espressione culturale. Ogni parte dell'India si identifica con un tipo specifico di telaio a mano utilizzato. I tessitori sviluppano un importante attaccamento nei confronti del telaio e del processo di lavorazione, arrivando ad identificarsi con esso. Fra i tessitori dell'Odisha, la casta dei Bhulia si identifica con la tessitura del tessuto chiamato Sambalpuri. Tuttavia, con i cambiamenti economici recenti e l'effetto della globalizzazione, lo sgretolamento dell'economia rurale si ripercuote sui tessitori. Con il mutare della domanda del mercato e il venir meno della protezione giuridica ed il peggioramento delle condizioni di vita, i tessitori sono costretti ad una mobilità occupazionale che influisce sulla loro identità legata al mestiere. Il presente studio analizza la letteratura e gli studi precedenti condotti sulla questione di Bhulia per osservare la minaccia all'identità che la comunità sta affrontando, soprattutto nella parte occidentale dell'Odisha.
- **PAROLE CHIAVE:** Mobilità occupazionale; distinzione di casta; riconoscimento sociale; comunità di tessitori.

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- **ABSTRACT:** From ancient India to the modern one, textile remains part of the culture of human beings. They evolved in many forms and were used in any way for cultural expression. Every part of India identifies itself with the type of handloom it has weaved. The people who weaved have a long attachment to the process and identify themselves with it. The weavers of Odisha have many identities and one of them is *Bhulia*, a caste that identifies itself with the weaving of Sambalpuri textile. But, with the economic changes and the effect of globalization, the crumbling of the rural economy impacts the weavers. Though textile has its identity in the market, weavers gradually lose them. With the changing demand of the market along with failing legal protection and better life, weavers are engaged in occupational mobility, which affects their identity attached to the occupation. The present study analyses the literature and earlier studies conducted on the issues of *Bhulia* and tries to correlate the identity threat the community is facing, especially in the western part of Odisha.
- **KEYWORDS:** Occupational mobility; caste-based distinctiveness; social recognition; weavers community.

MUDANÇA DE IDENTIDADE DE CASTA DE TECELÃO NA ÍNDIA: UM ESTUDO NA COMUNIDADE DE BHULIA DE ODISHA OCIDENTAL

- **RESUMO:** Da Índia antiga para a moderna, os têxteis continuam a fazer parte da cultura dos seres humanos. Evoluíram em muitas formas e foram utilizados de diversas maneiras para expressão cultural. Cada parte da Índia identifica-se com o tipo de tear manual que teceu. As pessoas que teceram têm um longo apego ao processo e identificam-se com ele. Os tecelões de Odisha têm muitas identidades e uma delas é *Bhulia*, uma casta que se identifica com a tecelagem do tecido Sambalpuri. Mas, com as mudanças na economia e o efeito da globalização, o desmoronamento da economia rural tem impacto nos tecelões. Embora os têxteis tenham a sua identidade no mercado, os tecelões perdem-nas gradualmente. Com a mudança na demanda do mercado, juntamente com a falta de proteção legal e de uma vida melhor, os tecelões estão envolvidos na mobilidade ocupacional e isso tem um efeito na sua identidade ligada à

ocupação. O presente estudo analisa a literatura e estudos anteriores realizados sobre as questões de Bhulia e tenta correlacionar a ameaça de identidade que a comunidade enfrenta atualmente, especialmente na parte ocidental de Odisha.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Mobilidade ocupacional; distinção baseada em castas; reconhecimento social; comunidade dos tecelões.

1. Introduction

Along with the many handicrafts of India, the Handloom sector is a part of a devolved and unorganized segment of the Indian economy. According to the Textile Ministry of India, (2015) people involved in handloom form India's second-largest rural employment sector, after agriculture. Handloom in India, which is also popularised as "the craft of the people", involves forty-three million craftspeople today. Through performing valid and fruitful social functions for the community, they earn themselves a certain social status. They also weave people's traditions into their craft. Their skill is somewhat transmissible as they absorb it from the preceding generation of caste and family affiliations, rather than any sort of professional training as per market demand, which has primacy in the Indian situation. The low capital investment and the uniqueness in designs make it stand out and are the strength of Indian craft tradition. This gave them a competitive edge in terms of prices, quality, and distinctiveness. Whether it is Banrasi¹ silk from Uttar Pradesh, Ikkat² work of Andhra Pradesh, Tie and Die art of Gujarat and Rajasthan, Silk of Tamil Nadu, and many more is part of the textile industry weaved by people and their culture. It is not only the textile but also the handicrafts that popularise the state identity as well as a source of livelihood for people. But in the present scenario, due to the impact of globalization on the traditional occupation (weaving, pottery, fishery), they struggled to sustain themselves in the market economy. Traditional crafts are heading towards commodification with a heavy compromise on quality.

Ham, Allan, et al. (2011) explained that in the context of globalization, due to numerous social changes, weaving as a craft-based occupation faces occupational

1 The weaved textile of Uttar Pradesh, India.

2 The weaved textile of Andhra Pradesh, India.

mobility. Such kind of mobility can be understood through the metaphor of an escalator which represents the means of moving both forward and upward. When this concept is applied in the context of occupation, it suggests that if there are fewer opportunities in one occupation compared to other occupations, then those situations create more opportunities for occupational mobility, and then this will produce patterns of mobility towards those regions, where the demand for that particular occupation is high. Likewise, with the mounting demands of education-based occupations, many people from handloom sectors are shifting there.

The handloom industry in India is often found to be allied with different caste groups. The concept of identity is defined variedly in many disciplines: It can be formed and can be given. Many times, it depends on the social and cultural circumstances and the socialization process. Stryker and Burke (2000) described that the identity of an individual is formed by the effect of the socialization process and the continuous influence of social institutions such as family, education system, and mass media, which also involves both elements of personal choice, circumstance, socio-cultural attitudes, and environments. But every individual has a personal and social identity. According to Turner, Hogg, et al. (1987), social identity approaches indicate that individuals may come to regard themselves as interchangeable examples of their social groups by viewing themselves and others primarily in terms of their caste group memberships. Such identity is related to the cultural construct of a person, while personal identity is somewhat related to his/her personality. With the interplay of these two kinds of identities, every individual identifies him/herself in society. In India, caste-based identity plays a very important role for a person both on the social and personal front. Usually, this caste-based³ identity generates from the category of occupation in which the generation is involved. Who should the person choose as their job is determined by caste and is part of the socialisation process as they grow up. The process sustains through generation after generation, which drives the younger generation to learn and take up the task further. Gradually in the subconscious state, this identity started to structure and function.

This traditional identity begins to question itself when external changes like globalization, industrialization, and changing economy affect the sustainability of the

3 The social stratification found in Hindu society that divide community in four strata (Brahmin, Khyatriya, Vysa and Sudra) I term of hierarchy. Each person born in a particular caste identity himself/herself with it.

occupation. As a result, the person started to drift off from the occupation and crawl toward finding new avenues. The alternative or new occupations are mostly economic and educational driven and differ from the original occupation perused from generations. This different occupation holds a different identity to the person, again challenging the identity related to the caste-based occupation. In the middle of this scenario, a crisis happens between sticking to the left caste-based identity or moving further with the acquired occupational identity. The craft-based occupations in India, in the era of globalization, suffer an economic impediment, and that leads to the scenarios explained above.

In the period of globalization, the weavers of the handloom industry are more interested in moving forward to attain a better socioeconomic position. This process leads them to move outside of the geographical region for better education and employment leading toward occupational mobility in the community. When they shift to a different kind of occupation, their identity attached to the original occupation becomes uncertain. In that context, the next generation remains between the ascribed identity and achieved identity. According to Das (1996), as the handloom industry is employment-oriented today, it provides direct employment to about 10 million people for their livelihood in the country in weaving and other connected handloom activities. Still, due to various reasons, occupational mobility is found among the weaver community. Leaving their craft-based occupation, they are shifting to education-based occupation. Many weavers find a way to get connected to the handloom industry by joining the marketing sector; they have become elite businessmen in the textile.

The handloom industry in Odisha has spread across both the coastal region of eastern Odisha as well as the land region of Western Odisha. In western Odisha, the sambalpuri⁴ textile is renowned for its beauty and fabrics. The architects of such textiles are known as the weaver community with the name *Bhulias*⁵ (the henceforth in this article the weaver community will be identified as *Bhulia*). Sambalpuri textile is a kind of cotton fabric made of Ikkat work, which is also popularly known as the tie and dye technique. *Bhulia*, *Kustha*⁶, and *Ganda* are the three main castes of the weaving community, amongst which *Bhulias* are skilled weavers and produce superior quality cotton fabrics. The weavers produce sarees and other fabrics of magnificent designs. The *Bhulias*, who make the best of Sambalpuri cotton clothes, exhibit considerable taste in colour and variety of

4 The regional name of the textile, woven in western part of Odisha, India.

5 The caste-based weaver community, who identify as the weaver of sambalpuri textile.

6 Another weaving caste found in the Western Odisha lower to *Bhulia* in caste hierarchy.

patterns, and even the coarsest cloths are woven with dainty borders. *Bhulias* identify themselves very much with the weaving of the Sambalpuri textile. Their culture and identity revolve around this fabric. Gradually these result in situations where they tend to forget their occupational identity as *Bhulias*. But like the other handloom industry, the weavers of the *Bhulia* Community also went for occupational mobility to accept the development, migrating to another region for the search for better employment or changing the occupation result in an achieved identity in the case of *Bhulia*. So, the possibility of an identity crisis led by occupational mobility started to emerge in the new generation.

The present paper tries to explore the scenario of the weaver community in terms of occupational mobility and the identity crisis attached to it through the analysis of the data available in the secondary literature. This paper also tries to relate a few theories to secondary literature. The following reviews will help in understanding the scenario mentioned above. All the data were collected through reviews of various articles which are relevant to the subject of interest.

2. The community and its history

*Ikat*⁷ textiles command a very special status. This immensely skilled craft has developed in three diverse regions of the country at different periods. Distinct in geographical location and cultural traditions, each zone produced its own awareness experience and sensitivity to colour, form, and fabric. Scattered in a few towns and villages in the three states of Gujarat (*patola* textiles), Orissa (*bandha* textiles), and Andhra Pradesh (*ikat* textiles), looms still today resound to the vibrant rhythms of tradition and modernity. The *bandha* textiles of Orissa have a distinct native identity. The community popular for its unique ikat work is the *Bhulias* of Western Odisha. The population of *Bhulia* is higher in the western part of Odisha. In the reservation category by the Government of India, *Bhulias* come under OBC (Other Backward Class). The study areas are taken as the Sambalpur and Bargarh districts of Odisha, as more handlooms and *Bhulias* are prevailing in these particular areas. L. S. S. O' Maly referred to 'Sambalpuri textiles' in Bengal District Gazetteers, Sambalpur (1901), as "fine cotton clothes with colored borders, woven by *Bhulias*. This cottage industry does not appear to have been affected by the competition of imported machine-made clothes as they are woven

⁷ A weaving technique in which involve warp or weft threads, or both, which are tie-dyed before weaving.

by the weaver from *Bhulia* families. Sambalpuri Textile is also well appreciated by its customers for its lower price and lighter texture than the machine-made stuff". The last three decades have seen multiple levels of change in the *ikat* weaving industry. Up to the 1950s, the decentralized nature of the industry isolated the weaver from information regarding technological advances, changes in raw materials, and shifting consumer demands. The history of the *Bhulia* community is attached to the legend of *Ramai Dev*, the first *Rajput*⁸ King of Patnagarh⁹ and warrior king of Odisha. According to their legend, *Ramai Dev* was the son of *Ashabati*, who was supposed to be a *Rajput* queen of Rajasthan. When *Rajputs* were defeated by *Mughals*, many *Rajput* queens sacrificed themselves in *Jouhar*¹⁰. But at that time, queen *Ashabati* was pregnant. She ran away and took shelter in Patnagarh. The community that helped her during this time was the *Hul* community, engaged in weaving. When *Ramai Dev* was establishing his kingdom in the western part of Odisha (currently the undivided Sambalpur region), he searched for the weaver community who helped his mother and helped them to settle in Patnagarh. Later two brothers of the same family divided the kingdom; the elder remained in Patnagarh while the younger one, *Ramai Dev*, established a new capital Sambalpur named after Goddess *Samlei*¹¹. He searched for the *Bhulia* families and established them near his fort. After that, the *Bhulia* started establishing themselves in Western Odisha. However, a couple of stories are also found to be related to the emergence of the term *Bhulia*. The first is the belief that the same was derived from the term "Hul", a community in Rajasthan who accompanied Queen *Ashabati*, mother of king *Ramai Dev* to flee from Rajasthan to Patnagarh. It is also told that they originally migrated from Rajasthan and were responsible for introducing tie and die art to Odisha fabric. All *Bhulias* bear the surname of "Meher", which seems derived from "Mihir", meaning *Surya* or Sun since they were followers of *Suryavanshis*. Whether their legend of origin is true or not, it is found that they have certain similarities with *Rajput* of Rajasthan, like worshipping sword, which is normally not found among the communities of Odisha. Surprisingly it is also found that the tie and die technique used in weaving by the *Bhulias* is also somewhere similar to the technique of *Patola*¹² art in Rajasthan.

8 A warrior clan found in Rajasthan and the western part of India.

9 Princely state of Odisha before independence and currently a district.

10 A ritual of mass sacrificing with fire of *Rajput* women in case of defeat of the *Rajput* king.

11 The leading deity of the place Sambalpur, Odisha, India.

12 A form of textile art found in western parts of India.

3. Results and discussion

Migration can enhance or reduce the status of an individual or group, enable their occupational or social mobility, strengthen or weaken a particular identity, activate a dormant identity, alter family structure and relationships and provide opportunities for the development of informal and formal support networks. After migration, a migrant has to undergo various changes in his/her lifestyle to adjust to the demands of the new place. One of the first adjustments that a migrant must make at the destination is to acquire new identities, although they continue to retain their older ones. Thus, they are caught between the duality of culture from the very beginning. This creates a situation of 'cultural ambivalence' for them. According to Bourdieu, Ferrie, & Kesztenbaum (2006), occupational mobility has been considered important to societies where occupations and positions are fixed and set at birth and are transmitted from father to child through rigid schemes. This left little room for innovation and fulfilment either for the individual or group. The caste-based occupations found in India have similar scope for occupational mobility due to changes in society and the environment. Changes in mobility patterns of the occupation, in the long run, may result either from an evolution of the economic structure, for example, the impact of industrialization, or from changes in the degree of openness and acceptance of the society. For instance, the possibility of mobility toward becoming a farmer declines as the proportion of farmers in the economy declines, whereas the opportunity of becoming a lawyer may grow, without any changes in the proportion of lawyers in society, as more and more people have access to education and societal acceptance. India's caste system provided a breeding ground for many occupations to thrive for centuries. As studied by Freitas (2006), caste acts as a system of enforcement for occupational hierarchy. It acted as a forceful system to maintain various occupational secrets of a particular group, thus creating a close system dedicated to a particular profession. As a result, the social life weaves around it to keep the future generation strangled in the same loop. Gradually the person identifies himself/herself with the profession. A system developed by himself/herself to sustain the economy of the society results in the personal and cultural identity of the person.

According to Deaux (2001), social identity is related to the person's group identity, whereas identity is the introduction of the self. Despite being a member of many groups, every person has a prime identity, related to a particular group. To become

an accepted member of the group, he/she inculcates the culture and tradition of the group. This remains with the person and transfers from generation to generation. This social identity is related to the ethnic identity of the person. In India, we can relate this to caste-based identity, where every caste is related to a certain occupation. The culture and tradition related much to that particular occupation.

Goffman (1959) established a relation between self and social identity. According to him, every person behaves by the expected outcome of society. The formation of social identity is related to that lifestyle, which is regular and fixed by the group. The group projects a standardized lifestyle and every individual part of the group adopts a trait approved by the standardized lifestyle. This can be understood by the concept of 'Dramaturgy', which is conditioned upon the circumstances in which every person adopts identity and performs according to the accepted standard. Considering the group as the caste, it played a major role in forming the person's identity. The person always performs according to the accepted standard of the caste. The caste forms all the traditions, rules, and regulations and follows from generation to generation. But when the person leaves the traditional occupation, the question arises, whether it affects the social identity of the person or not. If so, does it result in an identity crisis for the new generation, who is not willing to take up the traditional occupation? How their position remains in the caste group?

With the changing social scenario, the system faced many challenges, collapsing at various levels. According to Nandi (2015), the improved education system and growing industrialization bring age-old occupations to a questionable level. The sustainability and viability of these caste-based occupations result in a haze. The future generation accepting the improved social order challenges the enforcement structure. As a result of that, it remains an option for those people who cannot reach an improved education and lack the assets to change their situation. In other words, they acclimate their father's occupation, not as a choice but as a compulsion, and remain to choose to climb up the occupational ladder by choosing a better education-based occupation, thus creating a situation of occupational mobility in the Indian caste system. Supporting that, Chakraborty, Mukherjee, et al. (2016) discussed occupational mobility in extended form. Focusing on the caste system in India, they elaborated on intergenerational occupational mobility in India.

Azam & Bhatt (2012) discussed the intergeneration occupational mobility in India. According to him, a higher percentage of traditional occupations shifted from

father to son across a generation. The present generation opts for another job rather than pursuing the traditional occupation of their previous generation. The mobility is significant in OBC¹³ (Other Backward Class) and SC (Scheduled Caste)/ST (Scheduled Tribe) communities.

According to Breakwell (1986), if any obstacle threatens the process of identity formation, it causes serious harm to the identity. To cope with the changing situation, the individual usually adopts intra-personal and intra-group level functioning to restore the standard. Caste identity, in a collective way, constructs the self-identity of the person, as it recognizes very much through the caste within the periphery of the society. So, any harm to the caste identity may result in an identity crisis. The caste identities function at the psychological level of the individual about the social purviews. Jaspal & Bal (2008) supported this in their empirical study on caste identity and its process, as caste-based identity affects the psychology of the person since birth. Jaspal (2010) explained that individuals develop a belonging feeling toward the caste, and if separated from the caste, this can cause a risk for the feeling of acceptance. It may result in a situation where the individual struggle to be accepted as part of the group, but the core principle of acceptance does not exist.

According to Identity Process Theory (IPT) by Jaspal & Breakwell (2014), to reach a “desirable end state” of identity formation that is creating an identity, the following principle helps guide the person in the right direction:

- Continuity
- Distinctiveness
- Self-efficacy
- Self Esteem

When the person associates his/her caste identity with a historical perspective leading to a glorified origin, it adds to the person’s self-esteem by relating herself/himself to the in-group. On the contrary, the presence of any social prejudice related to the caste pushed by some caste out-group can be supplementary to the person’s deprivation of self-esteem and self-efficacy. As an outcome, the theory proposes that in any

13 The caste and tribe-based categories, Other Backward Class, Scheduled Caste, and Schedule Tribe, are used by the Indian government to group together distinct communities with a similar socioeconomic background.

way, the factors are compromised; it impacts the process of identity formation. That, in turn, contributes to a crisis. To overcome the crisis, the person needs to involve some coping strategies. The process of overcoming the crisis and restoring the factors are important for the psychological well-being of the person as well as the socialization process with the caste group. A person takes utmost care to restore balance with it. The situation of *Bhulia* in terms of changing occupation has an impact on identity and that leads to facing a similar situation of crisis.

It was discovered in the secondary literature that people are mostly looking for better professions in order to escape the caste-based occupation in the study of the Indian caste system and its impact on occupational mobility. In the study on the Khadi industry, the weavers are deprived of progress due to their caste-based status, leading to their economic condition remains lack of empowerment. A study was done in the handloom sector by Mukund & Sundari (2001), which concluded that weavers opt more towards becoming master weavers by running the weaving business. They usually employ other weavers on a contract basis and deal with the marketing of the product more than production. This introduces entrepreneurs, but the situation of weavers working under them remains questionable.

Supporting, Meher (1995) pointed out three systems of production among the weaver of handloom: independent weavers, attached weavers of the cooperative system of production, and attached weavers working under the private master weavers-cum-capitalist producers of handloom. After the failure of the cooperative system, there is a rise in entrepreneurship among the weaver, who is little well off. This gives rise to a system where weavers working under the master weaver remain dedicated to the master and work according to his demand. There the master controls the remuneration and everything under the weaving process despite owning the tools and factory building, resulting in exploitation.

Mishra (1994), in his study, brought out the impact of handloom co-operatives on the social lifestyle of weavers in Western Orissa. In this study, it was found that member weavers were more interested in their children's higher education and wanted to spend more money for the same purpose. They were less interested in putting their children in the traditional profession, because of a lack of scope for comfortable living. The aspiration toward higher education took the weaver's children to another occupation. After adopting another occupation, they left their native places and settled in places where they found scope for a new profession. This implies occupational

mobility in the weaver community, which resembles the concept of occupation mobility inducing migration.

Nath & Chauhan (2011), while studying among weavers of the *Bhulia* community, found out that the government has less recognized the highly skilled labour and material inputs involved in weaving these sarees. Orissa state government has helped them to get the National Awards but has done nothing to improve the financial conditions of weavers by providing the input material and marketing support. Most of the time, these innocent and illiterate weavers are exploited by the middleman by exchanging the finished products (sarees) with yarns. In their study, they identified various de-motivational factors like lack of raw materials, exploitation of the middleman, and lack of proper government support for the weavers. Government agencies have been misguiding the traditional weavers of saree to diversify to dress materials, furnishing bed covers and towels to cater to customer's needs across the country. These de-motivational factors push the weaver to occupational mobility. The older generation is not much interested in encouraging the younger generation toward weaving.

An article published in Samaj (2015) related to the situation of *Bhulia* weavers in Bargarh district put light on their plight. Despite much recognition given by the Government of India, weavers at the rural level are still struggling for their existence. An issue like the supply of thread as raw material is causing a problem for continuing the occupation, and the high rates of raw materials make the weaver impossible to weave. The occupation does not remain a choice for the new generation. Even the present weavers are also less enthusiastic about wanting their children in the same occupation. Even the remuneration is not promising for surviving in the changing environment. On the other hand, another article published in Orissa Post (Odia Daily newspaper) by Meher (2017) explains concern over the current taxation policy over handloom and its business. The downfall in the retail business will affect the weavers directly.

In the growing economic world, modern marketing development has affected every occupation present. Globalization can be considered a more operative phenomenon in the modern market. While the majority of products were getting benefited from the global village concept, handicraft or craft-based occupation in India does not fall in the same flow. The article by Jena (2010) evidently explained the effect of globalization on the Indian craft-based industry. According to his article liberalized market somehow makes the rural craft-based industry vulnerable. Despite various

government initiatives and a rise in the craft-based economy, artisans remain in the clutch of middlemen and trader entrepreneurs. In such a way, the artisans failed to keep pace with the market's growing demand. That results in the products getting popular, and the makers not being able to taste the fruits of their works. The poverty situation had drawn from these forces to shift their occupation. This case is very similar to many craft-based occupations in Odisha as well as outside Odisha.

Mohapatra (2014) discussed the plight of *Bhulia* despite many government initiatives to restructure the process. Some way or other, the craft of sambalpuri textile weaved by *Bhulia* losing existence, and the people whose lives revolve around it are choosing other occupations is subjected to the migration of the population from rural areas to urban areas. An existing system like Cooperative and Producers Company motivated by state governments is trying to help, but it is not covering the wider perspective of weaver's problem. Those institutions are lured by corruption and shift their focus from weavers' to profit-making, and the profit cannot percolate to the grassroots level.

As part of legal protection for weavers, the handloom (reservation of articles for production) act 1985 was created to protect the weavers from power loom and counterfeiting the design into machine-made textiles. As discussed by R. Jayachitra and Leeson (2016), K. Srinivasulu (1994), and (1996), the act failed to protect the weavers from the impact of the power loom and the textile industry. The weavers still live under the possible threat of their design being stolen and devaluation of their products. In addition, The Government of India has also implemented the 5-12% GST (Goods and Service Tax), which was zero earlier on handloom products. This, in turn, increases the prices of the final product and discourages people from purchasing handlooms.

The situation created following the above-mentioned scenario results in conditions for the coming generation of weavers, who are answering the question of perusing the traditional occupation or not. The dilemmatic condition is more difficult for those who have already moved to another occupation, which is education-based. Their struggle remains in keeping the cultural aspect of the caste and letting the occupational aspect go, resulting in them remaining *Bhulia* only in the form of expression. Though the caste identity is difficult to change, the root of the identity is shaken.

4. Conclusion

The above theoretical study on the situation of Bhulia as a weaver community put light on the present plight and future consequences. As the secondary information suggested, the occurrence of occupational mobility in the community has started. The increasing impact of globalization and the changing economy has reached the handloom industry and impacted its market economy. With the changing scenario induced by globalization and changing economy, there is an evident change in the caste-based occupation. In return, this moves the weavers to search for better options in terms of occupation other than weaving. But, with the change of occupation, the younger generation is opting for new occupations putting the caste-based occupation in danger. As mentioned earlier, the weavers of Sambalpuri textile weaving is not just an occupation; their caste identity is attached to it. Through the argument supported by Goffman (1959) and Identity Process Theory by Jaspal & Breakwell (2014), group identity plays a major role in sculpting self-identity. Lacking the connection with the weaving occupation, there is the possibility of an impact on identity and that leads to a situation of crisis.

Supported through secondary literature mentioned above, it can be argued that the new generation of Bhulias, who were separated from the caste-based occupation, has the possibility of a crisis in making out a new identity. As the effect of globalization and changing economy is inevitable to the caste-based occupation in India, the culture and tradition related to caste remain with them. But occupational mobility induces migration, and with the change of occupation, the new generation adopts new culture and tradition. Moreover, due to possible migration, education-based occupation takes the place of caste-based occupation. These caste-based occupations are part of the craft industry found in rural India and, by large, associated with the culture of the land. So, it will not only be a thinkable threat to the caste-based occupation but also to the cultures related to it. Along with that, many structural changes happening within the weaving craft industry, like increasing private investors controlling the market, weavers losing faith in cooperatives, and the introduction of fake Sambalpuri textile sold at cheaper rates, affect the weaving economy at large, as found out by Pradhan and Khandual (2020) in their research on cultural sustainability of the Sambalpuri Textile. This completely disregarded the handloom (reservation of articles for production) act 1985 and any legal rights the weavers have. Following the decreasing legal

rights and increased taxation, the handloom sector is still under threat despite various promotional schemes by the Government of India, like a celebration of handloom day or giving promotional recognition to the weavers.

Leading to these contributing factors for increasing de-motivation and occupational mobility, there is a huge possibility of changing identity among the weavers. On the verge of that, there is a situation of identity crisis for the new generation of *Bhulia* as well as for those who left their traditional occupation. A situation induced by a change in the economy might result in a change in the psychological level.

There is a constant struggle by the existing community worker at ground level for a steady livelihood. No denial that there are many initiatives done by the governments and recognition given to the weavers, who have made outstanding contributions at the national and international level. However, for the weaver of sambalpuri textile, whose family income depends on it and the income is more important than the recognition, somewhere grind in between. Despite their willingness to remain attached to the occupation, the motivation is not enough for the next generation to continue. The struggling situation of the handloom industry is completely off-putting for the next generation. The gradual decrease in pursuing the occupation act as a motivational factor for intergenerational occupational mobility, along with losing cultural identity among the *Bhulia* due to the change of occupation.

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