

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Status is a position deserved by a person in his or her society. It is a relative term which differs according to place and time, so it has a changing capacity. It gives meaning to the position of an individual in a society which is based on social evaluation. Every individual plays a different role in a society and society evaluates their roles differently. Thus the term "status" denotes relative position of person in a social system or subsystem which is distinguishable from that of others through its rights and obligations (ICSSR, 1975). Similarly Davis (1960) says that status is a position in the general institutional system, recognised and supported by the entire society spontaneously evolved rather than deliberately created, rooted in the folk ways and mores. Each status position is expressed in terms of a role (ICSSR, 1975), because each individual occupies a number of distinct statuses within a society where he or she performs a variety of roles which are culturally ascribed as well as achieved through personal efforts. Thus status is realized through roles. According to Linton (1936) "Status" means a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals and by "role" the behavioural enacting of the patterned expectations attributed to that position.

The "status" is a concept which mean the relative socio-economic position observable through specific roles performed by individuals which would be expressed by changes in resource, employment, attitudes and ideologies. It may be affected by the influence of internal as well as external socio-economic forces.

Further more, status is the institutionally defined position or role of the individual, that is supported by the individual's personal qualities, attitudes and evaluation. It is recognised and safeguarded by society through legal privileges, economic monopoly and social distance. It depends on past status and sometimes become hierarchy. But each person gains status through struggle or at least has to fulfil minimal obligations of a status through concrete behaviour that must win the prestige associated with that status (Mukharjee, 1965).

### **Status of Women:**

A disparity in the social role of men and women is manifest among virtually all peoples in the world. Mukharjee (1978) says that usually the social position of women is examined from certain customs and institutionally imposed limitations all women will face in regard to their rights and duties, the effect on men of these customs and institutions is entirely contrary.

Though there have been cases of women predominance in different ages and the different societies it has been evidenced that no society in the world ever provided or provides women equal status with men (Giriappa, 1988). According to him, men and women have been performing different roles, but aspects such as cultural expression, work and mobility, education, health and family size, political expression and social awareness etc. have changed the role of women considerably over years. Even in the traditional societies women's participation in various fields has necessitated a changing image of women. The role and status of women changes according to different environments, depending upon the cultural factors, structural

variables, economic and social development process and the influence of science, technology and modernization.

Status of women is an indicator to the level of culture of a society. It has been directly affected by progressive or reactionary trend which prevailed in the society. In other words, the status of women is effected by the social structure at a particular period of operation of the society in which distinctive groups are discriminated against differently and the social customs and institutions which effect women directly and are the expression of a particular social system (Mukherjee, 1978).

In fact the status of women should be analysed in totality and not in isolation, because it is the product of a social system of a particular society effected by both internal as well as external forces.

In a Hindu society the status of women is evaluated in different ways in different periods. A multitude derogatory attributes have been ascribed to women in Hinduism as if they are not human beings and are not independent by birth. The rules ascribed by Manu has made Hindu women paralise and parasitic. According to him "in childhood a woman must be subjected to her father, in youth to her husband and when her husband is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be independent". In this way she is viewed totally as a mother, and a wife and her role is idealised as one who possesses no distinct personal identity in the society.

The traditional concept of women being bondage to the household of child bearing, child rearing and domestic miscellanary is now gradually challenged. The process of emancipation from age-old male domination in women's life and social restriction imposed on her from time to time while elevating her from domestic chores has been speeded up. But despite all these changes women's position has not been totally improved. Male

domination still persists to haunt the women's life from both inside and outside the home.

In the early period the middle class women used to look after the children and house work alone. But the growth of education and parent encouraging women to pursue education, led to recognizing the fact of giving equal opportunities to eligible women. The opportunity of employment is however uneven in the organized sector and only a few sections of the society enjoy these employment benefits. In a developing country like Nepal the problem is further intensified due to increasing unemployment and widespread competition. Women naturally stand at a disadvantage. Despite all these factors women are coming forward to make their presence felt.

The modern woman, while gradually entering into all field to emancipate herself from the traditional bonds, has to carry on a prolonged struggle within her own family and along with others in a larger social system. In the process of struggle she has made significant contribution to social changes which shock the very foundation of the society at large.

Usually the social position of a woman is examined from the social customs and institutions which effect her directly and are the expression of a particular social system.

Women's participation in handicraft production is not new, they are found to take part in agriculture and artisan occupation since time immemorial. But the industrial revolution in Europe and subsequent development in the rest of the world attracted educated women to various positions in private and public organizations.

## **Background :**

Handicraft are occupations that involve making usable or decorative products by hand. It reflects the artistic value or indigenous culture and which are made by using simple tools or implements or only hands for decoration or for use in household or for day to day usage (The Handicraft Advisory Board, 1984).

The International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities defines manufacturing as the mechanical or chemical transformation of inorganic or organic substances into new products whether the work is performed by power driven machines or by hand, whether it is done in a factory or in the worker's home or the products are sold at wholesale or retail level (His Majesty Government (HMG)/National Planning Commission (NPC)/Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 1992).

Thus "handicraft" refers to any object which is partially or completely made by hand right from jewellery to household furniture. It can be defined as products that are totally or partially handmade; are produced with low initial capital investment; often have a design that reflects local cultural factors, and are generally made from material within the producing country (Singh, 1997).

The history of cottage industry dates back to many centuries before the Christian era. It was properly taken care of in ancient Nepal. Kautilya's Arthashastra has already mentioned about the export of Nepalese goods such as "Radi" and "Pakhi" (Woollen carpets and blankets) to the other countries (Shrestha, 1967, 1981 and Palikhe, 1985). Manu Smriti also records the superiority and purity of Nepalese "Radi" in those days (Prasad and sons, 1968).

Handicrafts have been a valuable part of Nepalese heritage which express the great tradition and proud culture of the country. Among the Arts of Nepal perhaps the best known is the wood carving that adorns both domestic and religious buildings. This is a craft that developed among the Newar tribes in Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries during the Mall Rule (Bajracharya, Sharma and Bakshi, 1993).

Kathmandu Valley is the original home of the Newars. They are a highly urbanised section of Nepali population and are found in every market, town and villages throughout the country (Shah, 1975). Hamilton (1819, 1986) said their women spin and weave, which is the only point in which they differ from Brahmans. Besides their trading skills, they have presented artistic talents and best qualities - world wide famous Nepali art and architecture - are largely their creation. Likewise they are successful farmers, artisans and craftsmen too.

The handicraft as an occupation is quite practical where the people are uneducated, poor and unemployed. It is a labour intensive industry which does not require sophisticated technology and maintain pollution free environment. It also helps to earn foreign exchange where women participation as an entrepreneur and as a worker is comparatively high.

Nepal had a population of 18.5 million, an increase of 23 percent over the 1981 population 15 million. Over the 1981-1991 decade, population growth rate is 2.1 percent annually, life expectancy at birth 54.4 years, 40 percent literacy rate and US \$ 180 per capita income (HMG/CBS, 1991). Its population is multi-ethnic, multilingual and each community has its own rules and regulations as far as women's mobility, marriage options, access of resources and social status are concerned. In spite of this divergence as far as women's access to property and modern avenues of education, skill development and knowledge are concerned, Nepalese women in general lag

far behind men (Acharya, 1997). They suffer from higher rates of malnutrition and morbidity than men and have fewer legal rights than men, especially in property and family matters (Jansens, 1991).

In urban areas the trend is to work in non-agricultural sectors such as spinning weaving, knitting and now increasingly in the carpet manufacturing industry (Ibid).

Only 25 percent women are literate, while they cover more than 50 percent population of the country, who contribute 50 percent in household economy and work 11 hours per day (Acharya & Bannet, 1981).

The concept of "Women Development" came into Nepal officially when the UN declared the year 1975 as the "International Women's Year". Since then at the national and regional forums, women's role in development has become a major component. During the International Women's Decade (1975-1985) there were significant attempts to address women's interest at the national level and several units and cells were established in a number of ministries. A Women Development Division has been set up in the then Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to act as the focal point for women issues in relation to SAARC. A broad mandate to promote and supervise women's development activities was given to Women Service Co-ordination Committee. Almost all the IRDP have employed a staff or set a cell to start women's development project as a component rather than integrating it into the whole programme as a central concern. Many of the activities of WDP were patterned on occupations for women that are the least meaningful and which perpetuate the same stereotyped roles. No deliberate effort was made to develop a sense of self-worth among them and transmit this to the succeeding generation.

The overall trends has shown that with regard to occupational distribution both male and female participation in agriculture has declined over the last 30 years, although the proportion of female involvement is higher than that of males due to the heavy concentration of females in the family worker category. Due to this decline in the primary sector a steady increase in participation in secondary sector has taken place. A steadily increasing trend for female is taking in the secondary sector, through markedly less than the increase of males. Jobs tend to be gender-based since jobs requiring high educational qualifications, long training periods, greater responsibility, mechanised knowledge and supervisory skills are highly enjoyed by men. Few women are at top and middle level management positions. In fact there are few who also own and manage their own business (HMG / NPCC, 1994).

The main employers of women are the textile and weaving industries, but involvement is mainly in the unskilled and semiskilled categories. Statistics about the informal industrial sector are limited. Most units are established on a household basis and are unregistered (HMG, NPC, 1994).

Female employment dominated slightly, with women making up 51 percent of the work force, but here too, women are concentrated in the weaving, knitting and stitching industries. Likewise female employment is high in the cottage industry sector. Rural and urban households derive 14 percent and 34 percent of their income respectively from the informal sector and Kathmandu has the highest concentration of female informal sector workers, with an increasing, although as yet negligible number of female entrepreneurs (UNIDO, 1987).

Cottage industry has not only the vital importance to the economy of the country but also a part of life, particularly handicraft, as being one area

where women have always been and still are largely concentrated due to the nature of the activity.

### **Importance of the Study :**

Almost all the studies show that the major reason for women entering the outside work is economic consideration, either this is a dire economic necessity or it is supplementing the family income for maintaining higher standard of life. But it should be considered that a woman wants to search her identity in the society as a human being through her work outside the home and not only as a house-wife or a supporting earning member of the family. The year long struggle of women after industrialisation in the west and the UN declaration of women's year 1975 and the women decade from 1975-1985 as well as the discussion and programmes of all over the world about women's issue has helped to change the attitude of society towards women. "Women are gradually realising that they have personalities of their own as human beings and that their mission in life does not end with becoming good wives and wise mothers but also realising that they are all members of the civic community and the body politic" (Rajgopal, 1936).

There are number of social and cultural factors which make the position of women in South Asia somewhat different from that of their Western counterpart. Whereas the goals of equality, justice and peace in human development may be the same for the people, the fundamental problems and situations are bound to be different in different societies (Desouza, 1980).

Thus the position of a woman can be measured in terms of different roles she performs in her family and society. The most obvious measure is the

degree of freedom she enjoys in different aspects to improve her personality and career. In fact indicators of improvement in women's position are usually less obvious than improvement in their condition, because they are more qualitative than quantitative and are difficult to measure. Even then this can be observed through the following achievement of women :

- Education, training, occupation and decision making in family concern;
- Greater personal and economic independence and self confidence;
- Greater (increased) participation in familial and community development;
- Recognition of independent identity, dignity and entity;
- Reduced institutional discrimination and violence against women;
- increased women's control over their fertility;
- Increased acquisition of disposal of consumer durables and fixed property (land, house, precious metals) etc.

In history throughout the world women have made an important and direct contribution to the economic support of the family. This contribution has always included the processing of food, cleaning and ordering the utensils, clothing and dwelling (Hoffman and Ivan, 1974).

Since the women are relatively new comers to the employment field, adjustment to the dual duties of the house and the office possesses as problem due to the fact that their lives are more intricately linked with the

family and the bringing up of the children than those of men. The nature of the familial constraints of women's role as worker in every type of society is perhaps best captured by the triple role concept of "Breeder-feeder-producer" (Boulding, 1977).

Because of the existence of different levels of development in a developing economy the problem of evaluating the status of women assumes crucial importance; while the better educated and organised female workforce enjoys a high socio-economic status in conjunction with male workforce, that of rural and unorganized sector is replaced with dependency, bondage and under coverage. In a household economy, it will be difficult to pinpoint the specific contribution of women and also children when the particular household is headed or powered by males. Discrimination in job opportunities, lower level of wages, poverty and other several factors lead to lower status of women in an underdeveloped country like Nepal.

The situation of present Nepalese women in the urban setting like Kathmandu, is different than that of ten years before. Most of the women, either educated or uneducated, married or unmarried want to be involved in a job other than household work, whether that be in formal sector or in informal one. Basically they choose handicraft sector : like tailoring, weaving, spinning, paper making, jewellery, knot crafting, wood carving etc. which does not required high educational qualification, that most of the Nepalese women do not get throughout their life time, and in some kind of work for which they need not go to the workshop regularly if they are working in a contract basis with the entrepreneur. Often the women themselves tend to prefer work in home industries or in service trade rather than in wage employment in large scale industry (Boserup, 1970). She has further explained that the more flexible working hours in home industries

are a great advantage for married women, and particularly for women with small children.

Both married and unmarried, basically the uneducated women have enough free time, because of nuclear family structure as well as lack of subsistence farming in the city. Due to the illiteracy and low level of education they are not able to get good and specific occupation like clerical work in the organised sector.

There is obviously two groups of women involved in handicraft production, one being entrepreneur and the other worker and there is a big gap between these two groups, one having high status in the society and the other possesses no status at all.

In fact, in Nepal, "working women" as such is not a new class of women nor their working outside the home is a new phenomenon. Because Nepal is primarily a country of villages which have predominantly an agricultural economy. Women can be seen always working in the field and crafts by the side of men. Similarly, working women are also found in the cities since long before, for women from the economically least privileged strata of society have also been working for a long time for wages in factories, at construction in sites and as menial servants and domestic helpers. Only the middle and upper class families, especially the married women of these classes whose participation out of home in gainful employment is comparatively a recent phenomena. Mostly a big group from middle class and subsequently small group from upper class women are involved in handicraft production in Kathmandu.

According to the recent source of the Department of Cottage and Rural Industry all together 268 small scale industries are registered by women entrepreneurs within the fiscal year 1998-1999. Among them the highest

number (54) is handicraft industry, others are printing press, travel and tracking, training, contract and construction, food processing, beauty parlour etc. This shows that women are more interested in the product of art and craft goods.

Similarly, the National Women Entrepreneurs Directory (1997) has shown that there are total 1150 entrepreneurs in the country among them 164 entrepreneurs are in Kathmandu valley. Among the total 164 entrepreneurs, 69 are involved in handicraft production including carpet, garment and hosiery.

Generally it is said that handicraft plays an important role in the national economy of an underdeveloped country like Nepal, where the contribution of cottage industry to GDP is 1.36 percent. Similarly it (handicraft) is along equally important as an export industry which is contributing 0.89 percent to GDP in 1997 (HMG, Ministry of Finance). But this sector has social and cultural values as well. Especially the handicraft industry gives to all Nepalese a sense of pride, rich heritage and self sufficiency. So the study of women's participation in handicraft production, basically in an urban area like Kathmandu, is especially important to know the status of women as an entrepreneur and as a worker, that will help to indicate the empowerment of women.

## **A Brief Review of Literature :**

There are many dissertation works done by M. A. students regarding handicraft production which basically reflect economic aspect and provide general information. But some of them are related to the participation of women in handloom industry (Ohja, 1985; Pandey, 1987; Shrestha, 1987) and carpet industry (Basnet, 1985; Joshi, 1987) in small villages of Nepal, basically in the periphery of Kathmandu city.

A few articles are available related to handicraft work which can be mentioned here. Gautam (1979, Nepali), has emphasized that to empower women the skill of entrepreneurship should be developed. Though they are working hard and giving more time than men, even then their economic activities are underestimated and they are regarded as incapable and less confident. It is due to the lack of education, awareness, attitude of help and inspiration as well as the strong traditional social values. But keeping in mind that women are active, disciplined and laborious, their innate talent should be identified and inspired for small entrepreneurship by providing skill development training.

Jansen (1991), through his "Status of Girl Child in Nepal" has observed that in general women has less access to income wealth and modern avenues of employment education and health facilities than men. Women suffer from higher rates of malnutrition and mobility than men and have fewer legal rights than men in property and family matters.

Prajapati (1997, Nepali), has also emphasized handicraft productions as an export item which obviously contribute to the national economy of the country.

Shrestha (1997), has explained the characteristics of women entrepreneurs in Nepal such as, lack of choice in the latter part of their life and women like divorced, widowed and those facing difficult conditions too start working in this field (handicraft), though the trend is changing, lower middle class women entrepreneurs involving following the micro-level or cottage industry, rarely technically trained, self employment, less risk taking factor, lack of mobility and adequate training. According to her most women entrepreneurs are involved in food processing, handicraft or agro-industries and those who are engaged in handicraft are mostly in textile, especially weaving, tailoring, woolen and urban garments, kitchen crafts, boutiques and mass products. Other are involved in doll making, rice paper products, recycled craft products, horn and wood items, basketry, block printing, fabric painting, jewellery etc. She has also inspired women to show their talent and empower themselves and at the same time to further the national development.

Singh (1997) has provided some definitions of handicraft and discussed its importance in Nepalese society as a tradition and proud culture. He has included wood carving, gems, metal crafts, bronze art, painting, thanka, cotton slippers, bamboo, cane and straw products, leather crafts, rope incense and stick, paper made mask, puppets, wooden dressed dolls, musical instruments, bone and horn products, as handicraft items and provided their brief description.

Thaker (1991), has discussed about the evidence of great contribution from women in forestry. Women are the prime users of forest products for their household purposes. Rural women sustain their individual households as well as the local village ecosystem. Many (women) are reliant on collecting and processing forest based raw materials into finished products, which constitute a large source of their income. By improving their traditional

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skills they also find employment making furniture and baskets with forest products. Similarly in the next article (1991), she has suggested that the success of programmes designed to alleviate poverty for women and the powerless will depend on how gender sensitive these programmes are through which sustainable development will imply equal opportunities for both male and female at grassroot and policy levels. Too often, within policy rhetoric, women in decision and policy making positions are left aside. Women in sustainable development would, therefore, create structural changes in the institutions of power which are currently male dominated.

Acharya (1979) in the study "The Statistical Profile of Nepalese Women" has presented a national statistical profile of Nepalese women. She has explained basically the women's economic, educational and health status as well as their child bearing roles. According to her, women's lives are characterised by early marriage, high fertility rate, accompanied by an extremely high infant mortality rate, high death rate and low life expectancy. Their low literacy rate reflects their limited access to education. Women have been able to obtain higher educational status only on very limited scale. Their participation in political as well as administrative affairs is marginal with very few women being employed at decision making level in the Government of organised sector. Thus their political awareness is almost nonexistent and their marketable job skills minimal. Women are generally found in low paying jobs, and when they are able to find work at all they are displaced first and most severally by the introduction of mechanized western technology. Employment trends over the past ten years show an alarming decrease in women's participation in industrial, transportation and construction jobs. In overall terms, the statistics indicate a much lower economic activity rate for women than for men.

In fact, the study shows that Nepalese women are married early, overburdened with children and lower life expectancy than men. They also bear the greater risk of early widowhood due to poor health facilities and the practice of early marriage.

The study of "Maithali Women of Sirsia (1981) has emphasized that women play a very important role in the household as well as in the production of the social system". She has also analysed the status and role of women in Maithili society in the context of development policies and programmes and has indicated the scope and direction for future work towards integrating Maithili women into the development process.

Acharya finds that women are considered to be weak, irresponsible and incapable of protecting themselves against sexual assault. Men gain success by fulfilling their personalities while women may gain success only by suppressing their own personalities. They have no independent existence and a woman's social position is entirely defined by her father's, husband's or son's status. It means the Maithili society is also not ready to share the equal status with women because of the economic dependency on the male member of the household. This study is basically related to the economic status of women.

"The Statistical Profile of Nepalese Women" (1994) has presented demographic, social and economic characteristics, political participation and access to position of power. She has also highlighted the emerging trends regarding population growth (family planning), and provided a comprehensive study of the 1971-1981 and 1991 censuses with analysis of differences in indicators.

"Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women" (1997) has examined the process of rethinking of plans, programmes and projects to translate the

"main streaming" into practice from a gender perspective. She has also evaluated the current status of women through the discussion of women in Development Institutions, planning mechanisation, programmes and monitoring process, Government, non-Government organizations and international non-Government organizations activities etc. Basically the statistical situation analysis regarding age/sex composition, marital status, fertility, infant, child and maternal mortality, literacy, education and training, economic participation, political participation and political empowerment are discussed. She has also observed that home based industries in Nepal are progressively dying out due to competition from imported products or being replaced by organised formal units. Women who have been functioning as managers, supervisors, entrepreneurs and even skill workers in home-based crafts enterprises lose control over the production process and are transformed into wage labour as industrial activities become increasingly externalized. This process affects women more since newly emerging organised industries not only need more capital but also lay stress on more educated and mobile labourers. Women are in a disadvantageous position vis-a-vis their male counterparts regarding education and capital. Consequently young women tend to be concentrated in textile and carpets as unskilled workers and poverty is the major factor which pushes women to the urban manufacturing sector. Though the international competition in such industries is very keen, the wages are kept low.

Acharya and Bennet (1981) in "The Status of Women in Nepal" has presented the findings of eight villages regarding Tamang women. The Jyapu, Newar women, Maithili women, Parbatya women, Lohrung Rai women, Tharu women, Kham Magar women and Gurung women and analysed the result of the study on the status of women of eight ethnic groups covering the dynamics of the day-to-day life of village women and

the diversity of wages in which the role and status of women have been defined by different ethnic groups as an outstanding conclusion in general. The rural women's total work burden is extremely high at an average of 10.81 hours per day as compared to 7.51 hours per day for men, but women are primarily engaged in non-market subsistence production. Female entrepreneurship and the cultural and economic conditions which foster it, appear to be among the most important factors affecting inter-community variation in women's status. The family's dependence on girl-child labour at home and in the fields is the primary reason given for keeping girls out of school. Neither the women have formal ownership nor legal control over productive resources in any community, despite their greater contribution to the economy. The age of marriage is increasing, remarriage is fairly common among all groups at 16 percent for women and 30.5 percent for men. Women's role in subsistence agriculture and the market economy, including their considerable decision making responsibilities are not reflected in any development related agency's strategies for extension, training, credit, employment etc.

In "Women and subsistence Sector : Economic Participation and Household Decision - Making in Nepal (1982)", they have analysed the relationship between cultural patterns and norms of female behaviour, the sexual division of labour and women's status as indicated by their relative input into the household decision-making process. This study also deals with the economic activities and status of women.

Allen, (1982) in "Girl's Pre-Puberty Rites Amongst Newars of Kathmandu Valley" has observed that the usual marriage rites of Newars (IHI and Barha rites) of Kathmandu valley. Marriage practices amongst lower casts group and unorthodox or reformist Hindu sects are also discussed by him and observed that the percentage of adult marriage, socially accepted

divorce and widow remarriage is higher among lower caste groups than among orthodox high caste groups.

Both spinning and weaving are exclusively women's work and even today in sophisticated urban casts who purchased manufactured cloth, a spinning wheel is still an essential item in a girl's dowry.

Aryal (1960) has edited SAARC women Nepal, which provides the details of 300 women personalities of Nepal. He has expressed the general status of Nepalese women, especially education, health, employment, agriculture, politics and legal rights of women as well as short review of SAARC activities in relation to women in SAARC region is also highlighted.

Bennet (1979) in "Tradition and Change in the Legal Status of Nepalese Women" has presented a brief analysis of interface between tradition and change in the legal status of women in Nepal. She has reviewed the official legal status of women with special emphasis on their rights to property ownership and inheritance, marriage, divorce and other family laws as well as laws affecting women's ability to enter into business contracts, obtain employment etc.

In "The Parbatya Women of Bakundole (1981), she has stated that when home production as well as outside earnings are considered, women contribute 45 percent of the household income. Due to the double responsibility in the fields (agricultural production) as well as in the home, women in Bakundole have a staggering work burden of 12.81 hours per day as compared to 8.16 hours per men. Women have nearly equal say with men in farm management decisions regarding the productive process, women made only 12.5 percent of the decisions regarding the disposal of household agricultural production but 81 percent decision and handling the scale of the production is dominated by male. Similarly household

expenditure, medical treatment, education, travel, food, clothing durables even in expenditure for religious and social obligations are also dominated by men and the major capital decisions are made by 86 percent of men without female input. Such a low position of Parbatya women is due to deep seated cultural belief in male pre-eminence combined with the strong ideological emphasis on the maintenance of female sexual purity through productive male control of female behaviour

In "Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters" (1983), Bennet has set out to delineate the nature of social and symbolic roles of high caste Nepalese women. In the case of these women gender notions articulate major categories, the affinal women (wives) and consanguinal women (sisters), where the former are defined negatively and the latter positively according to the religious symbolic system. Bennet characterises the social positions of these categories of women in oppositional terms, arguing that constraints apply to wives, whereas daughters in contrast enjoy 'relative freedom'. Bennet has tried to show how women's social roles in Hindu kinship and family structure are related to their symbolic roles in the ritual and mythical structure of Hinduism. Women "interpret these structures" and indulge in strategic manoeuvres to achieve their own roles, is also discussed.

Chalise and Adhikary (1986), in "Women in Politics in Nepal" has explored the general socio-economic, health, legal and political problems of women politicians in Nepal as well as identified the general socio-economic constraints that have created hurdles on their participation in political process in Nepal.

Regarding the social status they have stated that more than 90 percent Nepalese society practice Hindu religious values, sons occupy relatively greater social importance than daughters. The Hindu religion is more liberal than Buddha and Islam religion in permitting their female members to stay

outside home in connection with their social work. However social taboos acted as a major factor that was responsible for the low participation of women in politics.

Dagmar (1990) in "Women's participation in off Farm Income Activities" has highlighted the importance of gender issues which have lately gained some ground in the development dialogue but are yet far from being internalised in main stream planning and implementation. Besides agricultural production many rural women are involved in home-based or small scale manufacturing producing goods for household needs and to generate additional income. Spinning and weaving are traditional skills of many women in hill and mountain areas, though this is less common in the Tarai low lands.

Female labour in formal manufacturing sector, according to Dagmar, accounts for only 11 percent of the total female labour which is predominantly concentrated in the textile and food processing industries, mostly as unskilled or semiskilled labour due to the low educational level, low participation in skill training and some major constraints inherent in the social perception of women's role as mothers and wives.

Dixit and Shrestha (1990) has edited the "Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Girl Child : A Neglected Majority" organized in Kathmandu for the survival and development of female child in Asia regarding the Decade of the girl child declared by the SAARC. In this symposium the paper was presented by the experts on "Health and Nutritional status of girl children, socio-cultural factors affecting girl children and girl child labour and abuse" from Nepal, China, Malayasia, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philipines, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand. To highlight the situation of Nepalese girl child Shrestha has emphasized on the issues that deprive a child to thrive and survive in his

paper " Child Survival and Development with special Reference to girl Child".

Dixit, in his paper "Status of the Girl Child in Nepal in 1990", has expressed that the girl child in Nepal starts her life of discrimination from the womb itself, for the preference in this part of the world is for a male child. In parts of the South Asian Region it has even led to fetal sex determination to abort if the foetus is female. During the stage of her development the girl child encounters various difficulties. Her health problems are greater than that of boys and her life is a story of toil from infancy to adulthood. There is the exploitation of girls and the reality is that a large number of them may be unwillingly drawn into the flesh-trade in some of the larger cities of both India and Nepal. Some might escape from this nightmarish life and others come back on their own, having contracted STD or even HIV infection. Such a scenario bodes ill for the country with the possibility of a major problem of AIDS in the future.

Eva (1995) in "Bending Bamboo Changing Winds, Nepali Women Tell Their Life Stories" has presented the life story of Nepalese women from different ethnic groups and different districts to gain a greater understanding of the reality of Nepali women's lives at the same time some possible changes they have felt in their lives.

Eva observed in her study that the whole pattern of Nepalese women's lives is determined by the group into which she is born. Her position, status and freedom depends on the laws and characteristics of her ethnic group. Generally it is well accepted fact which Eva also has stated that women belonging to the Mongolian groups like Sherpa, Gurung and Tamang generally have fewer restrictions than the Indo-Aryan group like Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar, where child marriage still exists and the position of a daughter-in-law is still unfavourable. This Indo-Aryan group's religion is

Hindu which is divided into castes. But there is no such distinct caste rigidity at present as it was in the mediaeval period. The status and position of village women in Nepal is gradually changing in many areas, says Eva. Women in Nepal not only attempt to change their immediate living conditions for their own good but also make long term improvements to various aspects of life in their society so that everyone will benefit, is the reading of Eva in the rural area of Nepal.

Ghimere (1979) has edited " Women and Development" the proceedings of the seminar on the auspices of International Women's Year. In this paper many personalities have presented the paper regarding various prospects and problems of Nepalese women. The major concern of this seminar was women's participation in national development. The articles and comments contain a great deal of detailed information on traditional values and social norms, prevailing discriminatory laws, absence of equal opportunities for women, e.g., wage differences in private sectors, maternity provisions and the gap between women's productive roles and economic status.

HMG, Nepal Planning Commission Secretariat (1994) in "Country Report of Women" has clearly stated that Nepal recognizes the importance of women's role in economic development. Although women are considered vital and productive workers, their access to productive resources has remained limited. Nevertheless, in terms of labour force participation defined on the conventional way women are behind men; are predominantly confined to agriculture; account for the majority of unpaid family workers; number predominantly among the underemployed and are heavily concentrated in low paid jobs. However between 1981 and 1991, the growth rate in the female labour force exceeded that of males with a significant drop in the 10-14 age group, indicating an increased involvement of girls in education. Involvement in agriculture shows a declining trend. Their

involvement in industry is marginal, confined to low skills areas and is unevenly distributed. Principal activities are in jobs such as spinning, weaving etc.

HMG, National Planning Commission Secretariat (1994) in the "International Conference on Population Development" has accepted the low status of women who still lack adequate access to employment, income, education, health care, nutrition and skill development despite impressive legislature and constitutional positions favouring their equal right to work, employment and education. The gender gap in terms of their economic opportunities and participation in public life and decision making prevails. It has emphasized that Government has been initiating measures from as early as 1951. Government has lately ratified the 1979 UN convention of elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1990. The present constitution forbids any and all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, religion and caste.

Kondos (1989) in the article "Subjection and the Domicile : Some Problems Issues Relating to High Caste Nepalese Women's has concentrated on the study of the nature of the position of certain high caste Hindu women. He has commented a lot on Bennet's paper " Dangerous Wives Sacred Sisters : Social and Symbolic Roles of High Caste Women in Nepal, 1983."

According to him the subordination and subjection of women is a line issue for the high caste Nepalese and cultural meaning may be discriminatory even if couched in terms of complementary; therefore these matters warrant out some attention. He has demonstrated that Parbatya Women as compared to men are disadvantaged by the cultural specifications of their natures and the domestic arrangements for living, though its causes depend on history but it affects male privilege. Women from both 'consanguinal' and 'affinal' categories are disadvantaged by the household arrangements.

Kondos (1982), in the "Triple Goddess and the Processual Approach to the World : The Parbatya Case", has explained Dasain in detail as three *gunas* as *Rajas* (creation), *Satva* (sustain) and *Tamas* (disintegration) like cosmic cycles. He has compared these *gunas* with the female cycles as menstruation, pregnancy and neither reproductive nor damaging phase. And is also similar at the stage of pregnancy. As Kondos thought that the inquiry has taken many turnings from cosmic cycles, witches and widows, Polluters and the case order and apparently miscellany of anthropological issues, but in each the notion of cycles and the three *gunas* appeared as a common thread.

Molnar (1989), in his anthropological study of "Economic Strategies and Ecological Constraints : Case of Kham Magar of North West Nepal", has studied the ethnic group in detail. In fact he has studied their ethnographic and environmental background and has categorised the strategies in two ways and constraints in many ways. Regarding the work and the status of women he has emphasized that Magar women assume responsibility for most of the agricultural labour in the villages, bearing males free to tend animals over long periods of absence from the village. Except the agricultural actions, in addition to wool, Magar women weave cloth of raw cotton thread from the bazaars, puwa and hemp, says Molnar. Cotton is brought up by the villagers on their winter trips to the bazaars or when they go South with the herds. This is woven into cloth for local fabrics and sold locally or used in the household. They produce the most cloth from hemp and puwa of the four communities and use for variety of household and sellable goods, including grain sacks, *johlas* (bags), solder bags, matting, coarse covers and rope.

Pradhan (1979) in "Institutions Concerning Women in Nepal" has prepared an inventory of Nepalese institutions and their role concerned with women.

In this regard the then Nepal Women's Organization, the Women Service Coordination Committee, the Women Affairs Training and Extension Centre for Women, the Mother's Club and finally the then Business and Professional Women's Club are listed out. This series has included the "Equal Access of Women to Education" project of the Ministry of Education as well as the history, goals, leadership and membership pattern, organizational structure, programmes, forms of environmental linkages and extent of resource mobilization. But their role was quite unsatisfactory, said Pradha. Problems of "duplication and superficiality" as their common lot, quite insignificant contribution of Nepal Women's organization as the oldest institution towards development of women and critical constraints as its limited resources and programme relevance, its lack of dynamic and innovative leadership, its failure to communicate with rural women and the stifling control over the organization as a whole by the central political authorities.

Rana and Thapa (1987) in "Role of Women in Nepal's Industrial Development" have tried to understand the role of women in the industrialization process of Nepal. According to them women's participation in industry is evenly distributed between industries which is not only limited in a few industries but the significantly average rate of participation is noticed in textile and wearing apparel such as carpets, rugs, textiles and yarns. They have also observed that male female ratio is deteriorated in carpets and rugs, tea processing, brick and tiles, jewellery, bakery and confectionery where as the ratio is improved for women in textile and yarn, knit wear and bidi. In fact they have mentioned the pattern of women employment in different kind of industries such as textile / yarn, carpets / rugs, knitwear, tea processing, brick / tiles, bidi, fruit canning / bottling, cigarettes, grainmiling, bakery / confectionery matches, drugs / medicines etc. and other industries are insignificant from the perspective of

women in industry. According to them most formal industries having located in urban areas and the employment is also urban biased.

Rana and Shah (1987). in "Role of Women in Nepalese Industrial Development" have studied women related industries, their problems and opportunities, similar to the former study.

Shrestha (1985) in "Integration of Women in Basic Needs Activities and Cooperative Development of Nepal" has emphasized that women both as human beings and as a labour force of a nation have a right and responsibility to be integrated in the development process. According to her especially a development approach like basic needs and cooperative development which are basically people oriented will lag behind from the achievement of its goals, if proper integration of people i.e. men or women are not given due consideration.

Similarly, Shrestha (1989) in her paper "Women in Industry : Opportunities and Constraints - The Case of Nepal" has observed that the women, in Nepal, are employed in industry almost exclusively for the less skilled work which, to some extent reflects the lower educational level of women but even in garment making, where educational requirements is less, the employment of women is only marginal.

Due to low level of education of women, compared to men, and lack of suitable training, women are less qualified for available jobs. Furthermore, she found an unfavourable attitude towards women amongst employers in recruitment and promotion and in providing training opportunities for women.

She has remarked that the ideology which considers women as secondary persons within the social division of labour determines the nature of tasks

allocated to women and the values placed on their labour. At the same time, women related issues are neglected even in trade union activities. Not only women workers but women entrepreneurs are also affected by various factors. Although some initiatives have been taken to assist women workers and entrepreneurs, they are mere drops in an ocean.

Shrestha (1982) in "Women in Teaching" has studied the status of women who are involved in higher education teaching profession and found respectable job for women.

Shrestha (1995) in "Educated Women in Urban Nepal" has explained the problems of literate and educated females concentrating her study in Kathmandu. According to her, the status of unemployed female has generally been low whether it may be at home or in the society even if they are educated. Likewise even if women are employed, there is a tendency towards being low paid and low status occupations. That is why she has tried to investigate the economic participation of females by differential educational levels in different occupation and industrial sectors of the economy of the Kathmandu city.

Shrestha (1994) in "Gender Sensitive Planning, What, Why and How in Nepal" has tried to increase awareness amongst the committed, dedicated developmentalists, who stand for a just society, so that the concept of gender and development won't be a dulterated, misinterpreted and misimplemented to fulfil the wishes of the selfish and of the advantaged few. She has also presented the overall situation as a discrimination towards women from womb to tomb and pointed out the indicators of improvement in women's position in Nepal.

Social Service National Co-ordination Council (1988) in "Employment and Socio-economic Status of Women Workers of garment Industry in

Kathmandu Valley" has provided the information regarding the involvement of skilled women in garment factories.

It has also pointed out various reasons for hesitancy of trained women to work in flourishing garment factories in Kathmandu valley. Basically this study has tried to access the past training activities of women trained by the DCVI in the field of sewing with special focus on women not currently employed and to access the unemployment income and social status of women employed in the Ready Made Garment Industries in Kathmandu.

Subba (1989) in her paper " Social Attitudes and the Status of Women's Education in Nepal : Problems and Prospectives" has presented social attitudes and the status of women in education. She refers to the special situation in Nepal that is diverse ethnicity, religion, caste, creed and languages and the attitude of people is influenced by these diversities. She has also emphasized the problems faced by Nepalese women such as the high rate of population growth, grossly inadequate supply of portable water, the emergence of a deteriorating social environment of drugs, sex, violence, terrorism and AIDS which have made women victims.

Subedi (1993) in "Nepali Women Rising" has provided the general information about the fundamental issues regarding Nepalese Women. She has covered the area such as women and society, trafficking, environment, education, AIDS, agriculture, health, medicine, development, children, population control, politics, law, organizations etc. related to women.

The National Planning Commission and UNICEF (1992) has presented the existing situation in the areas concerning their quality of life and made a critical analysis of the socio-culture, economic and legal environment which have been constraints in the development of child and specially of girl child and women in Nepal.

Tambahang (1998) "Status of Women in Limbu Community" is a recent study on women's status. He has tried to present the total culture of Limbu as well as the position of Limbu women within that culture. He has also observed some changes occurring in that culture through education even though the Limbu women are marginalised not only from the national level but also from the activity centre of the community level itself.

UNESCO (1990), Women's Participation in Higher Education ; China, Nepal and Philipines, has analysed regarding Nepal that advancement in the status of women is still far from satisfactory. Both the actual number and the proportion of females participation in administration and decision making.

UNICEF (1987) "Children and Women of Nepal : A Situation Analysis" has identified formidable problems faced by Nepalese children and women. It has also suggested some approaches to solve these by finding mechanisms for providing information directly to families and communities and by mobilising available resources effectively.

Acharya (1984), in "Cottage Industry in Nepal", has observed the problems and prospects of cottage industry in Nepal. According to him there is a high potentiality of development and promotion of cottage industries compared to large ones to increase labour productivity and to raise the level of living in the rural areas. He has emphasized on the importance of cottage industry for the economic development of the country being labour intensive and capital saving in Nature and are found to be operating even in those places where the basic infrastructure is lacking.

Amatya (1983), in "Employment Potential in Nepalese Cottage and Small Scale Sector", has discussed about the development of cottage industry in Nepal.

Amatya (1982), in "A Study of Off-farm Employment and Its Impact in Household Income and Consumption in Rural Areas of Nepal" has found the cottage industry as an important component of off-farm employment but it has to face many problems in rural areas, such as the problem of market, unavailability of raw materials, lack of updated and efficient technology, difficulty in getting organized effort are the major problems and the related problems are lack of capital, lack of institutional effort etc. Training for weaving and bee keeping are heavily concentrated on male members of the families.

APROSC (1980) in "The Report on Rapti Base Line Survey", it is focussed that the cottage industries are the importance activities among rural households. The main cottage industries of Rapti Zone are explained as Ghee, Dry zinger, Honey, Coarse-cloth, Bamboo and Cane Products, Intoxicants, woollen cloth and Iron products. It shows that not only food processing but the handicraft like coarse-cloth, bamboo and cane products and woollen cloths are important cottage industries which can provide employment to the local people of Rapti Zone.

Cottage and Village Industry Board (1989) has highlighted the major functions of Cottage Industry Development Board (CIDB) such as providing short term practical training and field level extension service to upgrade quality increase competitive strength of the product; introducing improved techniques, tools and equipments in promising product groups as well as other cottage industry in general; recommend for financial credit for sound feasible project; set up and manage demonstration and pilot units; make arrangements for easy availability of raw materials for industries; organise and participate in seminars; exhibitions, study and observation tours both internal and external; formulate development plans and publish books, journals and leaflets for promotion of cottage industry; arrange for

marketing of industries, identify and remunerate best performing entrepreneurs and craftsmen, prepare feasibility report.

Since 1982 CIDB has been actively engaged in promoting cottage and rural industries, providing industrial extension and promotional services in close collaboration with other agencies.

Gajurel and Vaidya (1984) in "Traditional Arts and Crafts of Nepal" have given a general information about the traditional handicraft and technologies related with them in Nepal. They have observed that now-a-days the younger generation are not interested to grasp the technique precisely and their attention is diverted to other occupation as well as other kinds of techniques. Materials required for different kinds of handicraft goods, production technology, cutting and furnishing is described in this book. Regarding women's work they have said that along with farming, the farmer women of Lalitpur work with wool or cotton as their primary raw materials and having thoroughly processed them in their way, turn them into Yarn and finally into articles of wear. Similarly they have also discussed about the "Radi" as a rough woollen carpet which has earned respect in Nepalese as well as the Indian Societies.

HMG Ministry of Industry and Commerce (1975), has defined cottage industry which includes all type of goods that can be manufactured with simple tools in the homes of local people. According to the DCVI there was no medium and large scale industry in Nepal prior to 1930. Incentives through legal projection and control for encouragement of industrialization were unknown. Moreover the lack of economic factors such as capital, technical know-how, access to markets, etc. hindered medium and large scale industrialization.

This situation led to the establishment of localized cottage industries which supplied villagers with consumer and essential goods, i.e., articles like agricultural tools, tiles and bricks, decorated doors and window frames, cotton cloths, blankets, carpets, leather and canvas goods, pottery, metallic utensils, bamboo and wooden furniture, herbs, ornaments and idols were produced and consumed locally.

This book has basically explained the cottage industry, its importance in the national economy etc. This has not only concerned with women but overall handicraft promotion programme as the expected rate of development in this area has not been achieved due to poor product quality, the lack of traditional designs and wide variations in price. This industry has considerable potential in the light of increased tourism, and can also be profitably introduced to exploit the demands of an international market.

Palikhe (1986), in "Cottage Industries in Nepal", has stated that development of the industrial sector can make a remarkable contribution to the creation of employment opportunities for the growing population, solving the problems of unemployment and underemployment besetting the country, earning foreign exchange and maintaining the balance of payments. He has explained the historical background of cottage industries in Nepal, Industrial Policy 1981, some notable achievements towards the development of cottage industries etc.

Shakya (1977) in his article "Nepal's Handicraft A Growing export Industry" has described certain general aspects of Nepalese handicraft which is based on the definition at its first meeting in July 1969. The UNCTAD Inter Governmental Group of experts of Tarrif Reclassification taking account of the broad definition already adopted by the Australian Government for the purpose of administration. He has remarked that handicraft industry not only earns foreign exchange but also helps to create

a healthy image of the country. It can also help to provide employment including women and youth who can work in a part time or seasonal basis. Being an agrarian society the economy of the country still depends on agriculture and the growth of handicraft industry is helpful to create the seasonal employment to the farmer.

Upadhyaya and Sharma (1985), in "Handicraft Industry in Nepal's National Development Problems and Prospective" have highlighted the handicraft industries like handloom textiles, woollen goods, metal crafts and wood craft. Among these handicraft the handloom industry is largely rural based and meets most clothing needs of the rural population, particularly in the hills and also provides seasonal employment. Situation overviewed by them as handicraft industry in Nepal is characterized by tiny labour incentive production units primarily composed of self-employed rural artisans. Technology is slow to change due to loose links between artisans, exports and the domestic and international demands patterns within the handicraft industry, subsectors like metal craft are on the decline while others like woollen goods production are well increased. Such production units mostly meets household and local demands. Due to the high competition with the machine made goods many enterprises were closed down, particularly the cloths. Basically they have highly emphasized on cotton and woollen materials as locally available raw materials as well as the interest of entrepreneurs.

The above mentioned review of the available literatures on women particularly those who are engaged in handicraft production and other activities in Nepal obviously reflect that there is no proper sociological study concerning women in handicraft. Most of the studies are concerned with the educational and economic study of women, some of them are related to the cottage industry as a whole and emphasized the industrial

development in the country. The handicraft production has a long tradition in the history of Nepal and now-a-days it is being very popular throughout the country. In Kathmandu, Handicraft production activities has become an important occupation found among most of the uneducated and to some extent educated women as a subsistence economy due to the lack of farming activities following the characteristics of a city life. These factors have attracted my attention for a Sociological study of women entrepreneurs and workers in handicraft production of Kathmandu.

### **Objective of the Study :**

The basic objective of the study of "Women in Handicraft Production of the Kathmandu City in Nepal" is to investigate the socio-economic status of women involved in handicraft industry. The broad objectives are as follows :-

1. To know the household characteristics and socio-economic background of women involved in handicraft production.
2. To study the organisational framework of the handicraft work and to know the condition and environment under which they work. Investigation will also be done to know the nature, time, capital investment, covering of the handicraft work, involvement of the family members in the production process, marketing system available for the production, procure of the raw materials and the role of handicraft in women's empowerment.

3. To see how the women involved in handicraft contribute their income to their family along with their male counterparts or the other family members.
4. to know how the work is rated and ranked by the caste people, family members etc. and at the same time their own attitudes towards their work and the nature of commitment.
5. To see the difference between the traditional and modern social status of women if handicraft is a traditional occupation, by investigating the new factors of changes. At the same time their status in the family as well as in the wider social environment and the political field will also be investigated.
6. To know the sexual harassment or exploitation in the workplace.
7. The study will investigate the importance of handicraft in the rehabilitation of destitute women of Kathmandu valley in particular, the applied aspect of this study is the welfare of the section of women in Nepal.

### **Methodology :**

As this study is concerned on the socio-economic status of women in handicraft production in Kathmandu city, the data have been collected within the Kathmandu city only. This study is also limited within those women who are involved in handicraft production such as knitting, weaving, spinning, knot crafting, paper making, fabric painting, wood carving, jewellery and doll making.

These handicrafts are selected for the present study because it is providing employment to the uneducated women and also getting the importance of international export. Most of the women from uneducated section are involved in this work as workers and some educated as well as uneducated women are involved as entrepreneurs in Kathmandu.

For the proposed research the data have been collected from the following sources.

The primary data have been collected from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal in Bagmati Zone, the central Nepal has been selected for intensive field study. The city is multi-ethnic with valley lands. Within the valley out of three cities, namely, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur only Kathmandu city is selected for detail investigation, even then Kathmandu and Patan is not so distinctly different and most of the showrooms of handicraft productions are situated in Kupondole (Patan) which is attached with Bagmati bridge.

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### **Selection of Informants :**

Regarding the selection of informants I have divided the women involved in handicraft production in two categories - women entrepreneurs and women workers.

Women entrepreneurs - those who are running handicraft enterprises both small and large scale. There are total 1150 women entrepreneurs in the country among them 164 are in Kathmandu valley only. Similarly among the total 164 entrepreneurs, only 69 are involved in handicraft including carpet, garment and hosiery (National Women Entrepreneur's Directory,

1997). More than 50 percent entrepreneurs from the above mentioned handicrafts excluding carpet, garment and hosiery are interviewed.

Women workers - though there is a lack of specific data on women who work in the informal sectors like handicrafts mentioned above, approximately 1000 women are working as employees or contractors in Kathmandu excluding carpet, garment and hosiery. So keeping this number in mind approximately 25 percent women workers are interviewed.

The primary data have been collected with the help of an interview schedule. All total 124 questions are arranged in the schedule which are related to personal, familial, socio-economic, political and religious background and status of the respondents. Though the schedule for both the categories is not arranged separately, the questions are asked separately to the entrepreneurs regarding the establishment, management, investment, marketing, raw materials, political reasons of the involvement etc. Similarly questions regarding their work, income, childcare, family attitude etc. are asked to the women workers. At the same time family members of 20 percent working women respondents are asked randomly regarding their attitude towards women's work outside their house. The questions for this are arranged in the last portion of the schedule. Thus the respondents have provided the information on their participation, production type, time involvement, income, expenditure, decision, interest, compulsion etc.

The secondary data have been collected from the available literature reviewed above and the official publications, e.g. census, statistical year book, papers submitted in international conference etc.