

## **CHAPTER VI**

# ***SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SIKKIMESE WOMEN INVOLVED IN HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION AND SELLING***

### **Profile**

- Age Distribution
- Marital Status
- Education
- Occupation
- Family Type
- Family-size
- Number of Female in the family
- Living Status
- Land owning
- Income

### **Findings**

## CHAPTER VI

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SIKKIMESE WOMEN INVOLVED IN HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION AND SELLING

Before proceeding to examine and analyze the role and status of <sup>handi</sup>craft producing women, it is of foremost important to know the structure and composition of the 116 informants whom I have studied in details. The profile of these women involved in <sup>handi</sup>craft production and or selling i.e. their educational, socio-economic and other details have been discussed in this chapter with a view of knowing the background of these women involved in cottage industry. In this context, the analysis is based on the study of 116 women informants ( Bhutia 48, Lepcha 21 and Nepalese 47) with the help of a interview schedule. All the informants are involved in the production and or selling of various handicrafts .

#### 6.1 Profile

The profile of 116 women informants involved in the organization of handicraft production and or selling in terms of their Age, Marital Status, Education, Occupation, Family Status, Family-size of the Informants' Family, Number of Female in Informants' Family, Living Status, Land owning and Income are presented in the preceding delineation.

##### 6.1.1 Age distribution

The distribution of women informants according to age categories is presented in Table 67.

Table : 67 Age distribution of informants

Age group	Bhutia-Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
16 - 25	37.7	34.0	36.2
26 - 35	27.5	38.3	31.9
36 - 45	17.4	19.2	18.1
46 - 55	17.4	8.5	13.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Age-wise distribution of the women informants shows that 68.1 per cent of them are in 16-35 years age group, and rest are having the age above 35 years (Table 67). This has been visible both among Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities. It also signifies that there seems to be two groups mainly viz. those between the ages of 16-35 years constitute the young age group and other belonging to the age group 36-55 years constitute the older group. In other words, it indicates the more involvement of women among young age groups in handicraft production and/or selling and who have adopted it as gainful occupation in the region.

### 6.1.2 Marital status

Marital status of the informants has been shown in Table 68. Taking their marital status, 40.5 per cent are married and 50.0 per cent unmarried and

Table : 68 Marital status of informants  
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Marital status				
	Married	Unmarried	Divorce	Widow	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	40.6	49.3	2.9	7.2	100.0
Nepalese	40.4	51.1	2.1	6.4	100.0
Total	40.5	50.0	2.6	6.9	100.0

Note : Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

rest widow/divorcee (Table 68). It may be noteworthy to be mentioned here that even after the death of husband or separation from husband in the society the widow/divorcee women (9.5 per cent) have adopted the involvement in handicraft production and or selling as gainful occupation for earning as well as to get them self reliant financially and also to sustain their families too. In this case the handicraft industry has opened the avenues greatly to these women for earning .

### 6.1.3 Education

Education has been very crucial for women's development and to enhance the power of capability of women towards becoming self-reliant in the

Table : 69 Educational level of informants  
(Percentage distribution)

Educational level	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Illiterate	7.2	-	4.3
Can sign only	2.9	2.1	2.6
Can read and write	-	2.1	0.9
Class II	2.9	4.3	3.4
Class III	7.2	10.6	8.6
Class IV	5.8	6.4	6.0
Class V	20.2	14.9	18.1
Class VI	2.9	4.3	3.4
Class VII	8.7	8.5	8.6
Class VIII	11.6	17.0	13.8
Class IX	5.8	2.1	4.3
School Final	14.5	12.8	13.8
School Final with Computer Diploma	-	2.1	0.9
Higher Secondary	5.8	6.4	6.0
B.A. First Year	1.5	-	0.9
B.A./B. Sc.	1.5	4.3	2.6
B.A. and LLB	-	2.1	0.9
M.A. with B.T.	1.5	-	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

society . Taking into consideration the extent of educational background of the informants , Table 69 indicates that 66.2 per cent are having education either at primary or middle school level. This has been visible both among Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities . The illiteracy is found only among the Bhutia-Lepcha informants (7.2 per cent) . On the whole , 21.6 per cent of them have passed either school final or higher secondary . And only 4.4 per cent are graduates and above .

Therefore it may be said that the education among the largest part of the informants has been low i.e. at primary or middle level. And this is pertinent among the informants belonging to both Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities .

But interestingly , all of the informants (except those who are trainees in handicraft ) are either having 2 years Diploma in Handicraft from GICI, or having 6 months Diploma/training in Handicraft from Cooperatives, like of *Nayuma Women Cooperative, Carpet (Den) Weaving Training Center* under *Swarna Jayanti Saharey Rozgar Yojana* ; *Kumphenling Tibetan Multi-purpose Co-operative Society, Shristi Samity , Educated Unemployed Women's Welfare Cooperative Society Ltd. , Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs Service Cooperative Society Ltd.* etc. Though those who are involved in woolen items of production have got the training of knitting traditionally from their mother/ grand mother for hand knitting woolen items, but at the same time they also have undergone training for knitting woolen items by modern machine .

Table : 70 Educational level of informants' husband  
(Percentage distribution)

Educational level	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Illiterate	8.5	-	5.2
Can sign only	5.7	-	3.4
Religious study	2.9	-	1.7
Class II	-	4.3	1.7
Class IV	-	4.3	1.7
Class V	2.9	13.0	6.9
Class VI	2.9	4.3	3.4
Class VII	-	4.3	1.7
Class VIII	5.7	4.3	5.2
Class IX	5.7	4.3	5.2
School Final	28.5	21.8	25.9
Higher Secondary	17.1	17.5	17.3
B.A./B.Com./B.Sc./Graduate	11.4	13.0	12.1
Graduate in Tibetan language	2.9	-	1.7
B.E.	-	8.4	3.4
M.B.A.	2.9	-	1.7
M.A	2.9	-	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : No. of married women is 58 (including widow and divorcee) (Bhutia-Lepcha N= 35 ; Nepalese N=23 ).  
Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

In case of educational level of the informants' husband as shown in Table 70, 43.2 per cent are having education either school final or higher secondary level. Community-wise, such percentage is higher among Bhutia-Lepchas (45.6 per cent) than that of Nepalese (39.3 per cent). Besides, a considerable 20.6 per cent of them are having higher education i.e. graduation and above, and the percentage of Nepalese in this regard has been nominally higher (21.4 per cent) as compared to Bhutia-Lepcha (20.1 per cent).

As a whole, 25.8 per cent of their husbands are having primary (II-V) and middle (VI-IX) educational level. Such low educational level has been comparatively higher among Nepalese (38.2 per cent) than that of Bhutia-Lepchas (17.2 per cent). While only 14.2 per cent of the Bhutia-Lepcha informants' husbands are either illiterate or who have the ability only to sign in mother tongue.

It appears that their husbands' educational levels are comparatively higher than that of women as may be seen from informants' educational background indicated in Table 69.

Undoubtedly, it is important to have the idea regarding the educational background of the informants' parents in view to envisage that from which educational families the informants have come. This has been presented in the Tables 71 and 72.

Table : 71 Educational level of informants' father

(Percentage distribution)

Educational level	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Illiterate	36.1	14.9	27.5
Can sign only	24.6	53.2	36.2
Can read and write	-	10.7	4.3
Class II	-	2.1	0.9
Class III	3.0	2.1	2.6
Class IV	5.8	-	3.4
Class V	3.0	2.1	2.6
Class VI	1.4	-	0.9
Class VII	-	2.1	0.9
Class IX	3.0	4.3	3.4
School Final	10.1	4.3	7.7
Higher Secondary	1.4	-	0.9
B.A.	5.8	2.1	4.3
B.A. and B.T.	-	2.1	0.9
M.A	1.4	-	0.9
Religious study	3.0	-	1.7
Not known	1.4	-	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .  
Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

In case of educational level of the informants' fathers, it is clear from Table 71 that 63.7 per cent are either illiterate or having the ability of signing in mother tongue only . This has been observed in both the communities though the percentage of Nepalese (68.1 per cent) in this case is comparatively higher than Bhutia-Lepchas (60.7 per cent). Besides, 14.7 per cent of them are having the educational level that range from class II to class IX. It gives that the educational level of the fathers of informants are significantly low as compared to the educational level of the women informants and also their husbands as evident from Tables 69 and 70 .

**Table : 72 Educational level of informants' mother**

(Percentage distribution)

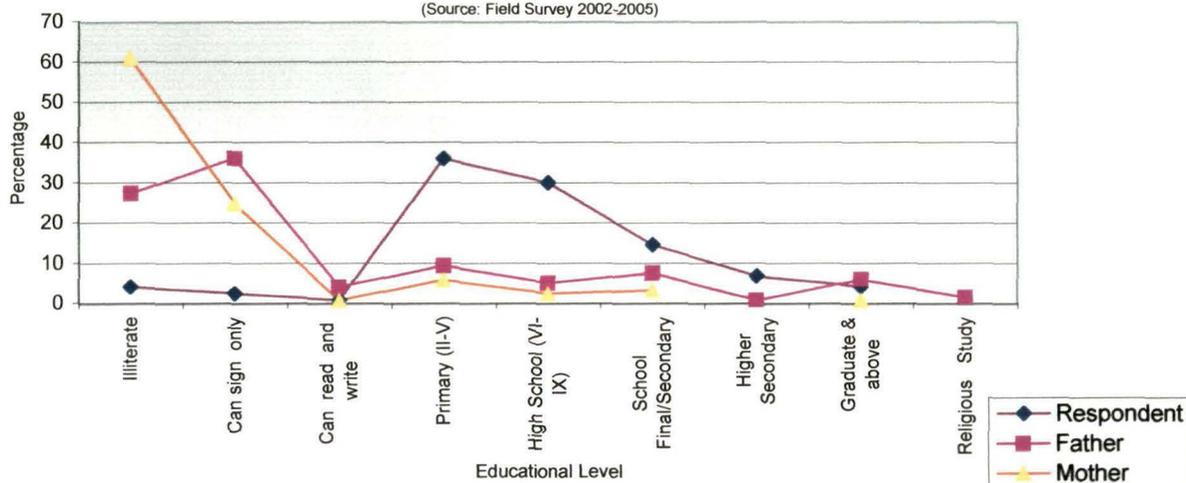
Educational level	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Illiterate	63.8	57.5	61.2
Can sign only	20.3	32.0	25.0
Can read and write	-	2.1	0.9
Class II	-	2.1	0.9
Class III	1.4	-	0.9
Class IV	2.9	2.1	2.5
Class V	2.9	-	1.7
Class VI	2.9	-	1.7
Class IX	1.4	-	0.9
School Final	2.9	4.2	3.4
Graduate	1.4	-	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

It appears from Table 72 that the educational level of the informants' mothers are also very low. That the illiteracy among the mothers of the informants are quite high (61.2 per cent) , followed by 25.0 per cent who can sign only. So , it substantiates that the majority of them are either illiterate or having the educational level like who can sign only . Apart from these, only, 8.6 per cent of them are having either primary (II-V) or middle school ( VI-IX) educational level .

Figure : 7  
Comparative educational background of informants, informants' father and mother  
(Source: Field Survey 2002-2005)



All these emphasizes that the educational level of the informants are comparatively higher than that of their parents. In other words, it may also be said that education has been more among the present generation. Moreover, it may also be important to be noted here that there has been progress in education among the informants' generation taking the educational background of their mothers in comparison. Therefore, it may also be said that the majority of the informants are from illiterate, very low and marginally educated families taking into consideration the educational background of their parents in comparison as appeared in Tables 71 and 72.

#### 6.1.4 Occupation

It is the fact that all of the informants are gainfully involved in handicraft productions and/or selling. Even then to have a clear look into the extent of varieties of involvement in handicraft production and/or selling mainly an attempt has been made in Table 73 to visualize in this regard.

Apart from the exclusive private handicraft worker, some of the informants are producing handicraft items like carpet, embroidery and tailoring products, woolen products privately too for earning as and when they receive order/demand apart from producing for own household uses as per requirement. Some are not doing though privately but used to produce handicraft items for family use including for relatives.

Weaving privately for producing woolen and carpet items including the embroidery and tailoring products have been either on wage or contract basis according to size, quantity and design mainly. Besides, after producing

Table : 73 Occupation of informants

(Percentage distribution)

Occupation	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Trainee of GICI/Co-operative (carpet and handloom)	27.5	14.9	22.3
Senior instructor/ instructor in handicraft training in GICI/ Cooperative (carpet, handloom, tailoring and embroidery etc.)	23.1	19.1	21.5
Director in GICI	1.4	-	0.9
Branch In-charge in GICI	1.4	-	0.9
Assistant Sales Manager (GICI)	1.4	-	0.9
Sells women/Sells Assistance (GICI/ Showroom of Handicraft Emporium /Cooperative /SRDA/ Khadi Gram Udyog)	7.2	6.4	6.8
Business (Producer and Seller of Handicraft products)	4.4	-	2.6
Secretary / President of Cooperative	1.4	2.1	1.7
Employee of Cooperative for Handicrafts (as cashier)	1.4	-	0.9
Wage worker in FLO section of GICI for Handicraft Production and private handicrafts producer as well	4.4	-	2.6
Carpet weaver of Cooperatives	10.1	6.4	8.6
Retired from Khadi Gramin Udyog and involved in handicraft production and business	1.4	2.1	1.7
Tailoring business (trained in tailoring)	4.4	4.3	4.3
Seller of woolen garments and liquor shop owner as well	1.4	-	0.9
Handicraft (Carpet)producer and hotel business	2.8	-	1.7
Woolen handicraft producer and seller	-	8.5	3.4
Tailor in Cooperatives	-	4.3	1.7
Handicraft (woolen) producer and In-Charge of Khadi Gram Udyog	-	2.1	0.9
Jute weaver of Cooperative	-	4.3	1.7
Carpet weaver and also instructor in cooperative	-	4.3	1.7
Producer of woolen garments and business including member of cooperative	-	2.1	0.9
Member and employee of Cooperative	-	2.1	0.9
Private Carpet weaver and selling	5.8	10.6	7.8
In-Charge/ Instructor of Cooperative in tailoring machine embroidery, cutting and also do these specialized work privately as per demand / order	-	6.4	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

2. All are involved in handicraft production .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

any handicraft product they used to sell the same in the local market on their own and also used to produce as per order/demand received time to time from the customers.

So it may also be relevant to look into the nature of work used to be performed by the informants . This is reflected in Table 74 .

Table : 74 Nature of work performed by informants  
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Nature of work				
	Household work	Agricultural work	Handicraft work		Other activities
			Official	Private	
Bhutia-Lepcha	95.7	17.4	94.2	26.1	100.0
Nepalese	97.9	17.0	89.4	53.2	100.0
Total	96.6	17.2	92.2	37.1	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

2. Other activities include watching television, listening radio, social work, visiting monasteries/temple/church, visiting friends/relatives, reading newspapers/journals/magazines etc.

3. Among handicraft work , 5.8% among Bhutia-Lepchas and 10.6% among Nepalese (total 7.8%) are exclusive private handicraft worker/producer .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Table 74 highlights that almost all of the informants are involved in household work apart from handicraft work either officially and or privately. Only a negligible percentage of them do not perform household work as they are in well-to-do families having higher income and keeping maid servants/others for doing household tasks. Some of them are also involved in agriculture too along with handicraft and household work. As a whole a good percentage of the informants are doing the handicraft work privately too apart from official handicraft work or exclusive private handicraft work . This has been comparatively more among the Nepalese than that of Bhutia-Lepchas.

It indicates the multifarious role used to be played by the informants in terms of their involvement in various activities for the family and its income.

In case of occupation of informants' husbands as shown in Table 75, it is clear that nobody is involved either in handicrafts production and/or selling or its training . Indeed, 51.7 per cent of them are involved in government service including army, school teacher , mining engineer etc. , followed by business (10.3 per cent) , etc.

Table : 75 Occupation of informants' husband

(Percentage distribution)

Occupation	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Government Service	20.0	52.2	32.8
School Teacher	5.7	4.3	5.2
Contractor	5.7	4.3	5.2
Social Worker	2.9	-	1.7
S.S.B. (Security Service)	2.9	-	1.7
Private shop/Ration shop owner	5.7	-	3.4
Business (Handicraft products)	2.9	-	1.7
Motor driver	5.7	4.3	5.2
Unemployed	8.6	-	5.2
Army	14.2	4.3	10.3
Business (other than handicrafts)	8.5	13.0	10.3
Retired from army	5.7	4.3	5.2
Carpenter	2.9	4.3	3.4
Lama	2.9	-	1.7
Agriculture	2.9	-	1.7
Shepherd	2.9	-	1.7
Mining Engineer	-	4.3	1.7
Cable TV Operator	-	4.3	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 35 ; Nepalese N=23 ; Total N= 58 .

2. Total number of married women is 58 (including widow and divorcee).

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Table : 76 Occupation of informants' father

(Percentage distribution)

Occupation	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Government Service	8.7	4.3	6.8
Bank employee	1.4	2.1	1.7
Contractor	5.8	2.1	4.3
Self-employed	1.4	-	0.9
Panchayat Mukhia	1.4	4.3	2.6
Business	11.6	4.3	8.6
Military service	1.4	4.3	2.6
Agriculture	37.6	51.0	43.0
Carpenter	1.4	10.6	5.2
Wage Labour / Porter	3.0	-	1.7
Lama/Monk	4.4	-	2.6
Cook in Central School	1.4	-	0.9
Retired from Army/Police/ Government Service/	14.5	8.5	12.1
Milkman and Shepherd	3.0	-	1.7
Agricultural labourer	3.0	6.4	4.3
Motor driver	-	2.1	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Here , it is also similarly important to have a grasp over the occupational background of the informants' parents . This has been mainly in view to know that from which families in terms of occupational background of parents' the informants have come. This is reflected in Tables 76 and 77 .

In case of occupation of informants' fathers as shown in Table 76, nobody is involved either in handicrafts production and/or selling or its training . In fact, they are involved in occupation like agriculture (47.3 per cent) including agricultural labourer, followed by retired from service (12.1 per cent) and government service (11.1 per cent) including military service and bank employee , business (8.6 per cent) etc.

Taking the community-wise variation , higher percentage of informants' fathers among Nepalese are involved in agriculture (57.4 per cent). While this has been found 40.6 per cent among Bhutia-Lepchas (Table 76).

Table : 77 Occupation of informants' mother

(Percentage distribution)

Occupation	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Housewife	78.3	42.6	63.8
Business	3.0	-	1.7
Carpet weaver	5.8	-	3.5
Agriculture	10.1	48.9	25.8
Worker in Food Processing Unit	1.4	-	0.9
Agricultural Labour	1.4	6.4	3.4
Shop Keeper	-	2.1	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

But in case of occupational distribution of informants' mothers, it is clear from Table 77 that 63.8 per cent of them are housewife , followed by agriculture (25.8 per cent). Only 3.5 per cent of them are carpet weaver . So it may be said that the occupational participations and involvement in handicrafts production, training and/or selling have been mainly among the women informants' generation taking into consideration the occupational background of the informants' families vis-à-vis parents as cited in Tables 76 and 77 . In other words, it may also be stated that the handicraft industry has been more popular in the present day society and it also has the positive effect upon the present day women as it is providing then the opportunity of gainful employment, and thus it has the positive role and contribution towards the decline in unemployment situation in the region too.

### 6.1.5 Family type

Table : 78 Family type of informants

Family type	(Percentage distribution)		
	Bhutia-Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Nuclear family	55.1	68.1	60.3
Joint family	40.6	14.9	30.2
Extended family	4.3	17.0	9.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Family type of the informants as shown in Table 78 indicates that the 60.3 per cent of them are being the member of nuclear family , followed by joint family ( 30.2 per cent). Community-wise, higher percentage of informants belonging to Nepalese community (68.1 per cent) are being the member of nuclear family as compared to Bhutia-Lepchas (55.1 per cent) in this regard. Interestingly , a good percentage of respondents (40.6 per cent) among Bhutia-Lepcha community are being the member of joint family as compared to 14.9 per cent among Nepalese.

### 6.1.6 Family-size

Family size indicates that a good percentage of them belong to large sized family i.e. 6 members and above (45.7 per cent). Besides, 19.8 per cent of

Table : 79 Family size of Women Artisans and Sellers

Family size (No. of family member)	(Percentage distribution)		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
1	4.4	2.1	3.4
2	1.4	2.1	1.7
3	8.7	4.3	6.8
4	18.8	27.7	22.4
5	20.3	19.2	19.8
6	10.2	6.4	8.6
7	5.8	19.2	11.2
8	13.0	2.1	8.6
9	7.3	2.1	5.2
10	4.4	6.4	5.2
11	1.4	2.1	1.7
12	1.4	2.1	1.7
13	1.4	-	0.9
14	1.4	2.1	1.7
15	-	2.1	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

them belong to families having members of 5. It articulates to the fact that the majority of them belong to families having large family size . This has been observed among the informants belonging to both Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalese communities with nominal variation in percentage in this regard (Table 79) .

### 6.1.7 Number of female in the family

Table : 80                      Number of female in informants' family  
(Percentage distribution)

Number of female in a family	Percentage of informants' family		
	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
1	10.1	14.9	12.1
2	26.1	27.6	26.7
3	23.2	17.0	20.7
4	18.8	17.0	18.1
5	10.2	14.9	12.1
6	5.8	-	3.4
7	4.4	4.3	4.3
8	1.4	4.3	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Number of female members in informants' family as shown in Table 80 highlights that among 47.4 per cent families the number of females are 2 to 3. Taking the community-wise variation in this case , this has been 49.3 per cent among Bhutia-Lepchas and 44.6 per cent among Nepalese. While among 40.5 per cent families, the number of females have been 4 to 8 . The percentage in this case has been higher among Nepalese (40.5 per cent) than that of Bhutia-Lepcha (30.6 per cent). It substantiates that the higher percentage of the informants' families (61.2 per cent) on the whole are having 3 and above female members .

### 6.1.8 Living status

In present day context , there has been obvious variation particularly in living situation of women in the society . Traditionally , women were not allowed to live singly independently or without having any male member as guardian . The women always had to have support of men i.e. relatives , kith and kin either from paternal or maternal side mainly as guardian . Moreover , women were not allowed to live separately in places distant from their parents' settlement. Under such situation , it is also very necessity to know the living status of the informants. This has been analyzed in Table 81 .

Table : 81 Living status of informants

(Percentage distribution)

Living status	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Living independently	15.9	-	9.5
Living with husband	26.1	40.4	31.8
Living with parents	34.8	42.6	37.8
Living with mother in law	1.4	-	0.9
Living with mother and brother	1.4	-	0.9
Living with sister/brother	7.3	4.3	6.0
Living separately from husband due to service	7.3	-	4.3
Living with cousin	1.4	-	0.9
Living with husband's brother	1.4	-	0.9
Living with daughter	1.4	2.1	1.7
Living with children	-	4.3	1.7
Living with mother's brother	-	2.1	0.9
Living with married sister	-	2.1	0.9
Living with brother's daughter	-	2.1	0.9
Living mother only	1.4	-	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Table 81 presents the living status of the informants . It indicates that 37.8 per cent of them are living with parents, followed by husband ( 31.8 per cent). It is interesting that a considerable 15.9 per cent of them among Bhutia-Lepchas are living independently, and 7.3 per cent living separately either due to husbands' service in other places or for performing the handicraft production in the places distant from their native villages. Rest of them are living with mother/brother/sister/daughter/other kin.

### 6.1.9 Land owning

Table : 82 Land owning by informants' family

(Percentage distribution)

Land area (in acre)	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
No land	40.5	40.4	40.5
0.5	10.2	6.4	8.6
1	11.6	14.9	13.0
1.5	1.4	-	0.9
2	11.6	17.0	13.8
2.5	3.0	2.1	2.6
3	4.4	6.4	5.2
4	3.0	-	1.7
5	8.7	8.5	9.4
7	-	4.3	1.7
10	1.4	-	0.9
12	1.4	-	0.9
24	1.4	-	0.9
37	1.4	-	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Ownership of land by informants' families is given in Table 82 . It gives that a good percentage of them do not own any land (40.5 per cent).

While 21.6 per cent of them are having 0.5 acre to 1 acre land. Similarly 17.3 per cent of them own land that ranges from 1.5 acres to 2.5 acres. Besides, 17.0 per cent are having 3 acre to 7 acre of land. Interestingly, 3.6 per cent are having land that ranges in between 10 acres to 37 acres and that too among Bhutia-Lepchas only . Therefore, it shows that though the higher percentage of the informants (59.5 per cent)) are having land . Yet the percentage of landless among them has also been good (40.5 per cent).

#### 6.1.10 Income

Majority (77.6 per cent) have been earning and their monthly income ranges in between Rs.1,000/- to 20,000/- . Even the trainees (22.4 per cent) who receive the stipend and that also range from Rs. 500/- to Rs.600/- monthly, mainly from Women's Cooperatives and GICI . All of the informants do income from handicrafts production either as service, selling , business, trainee etc. The details of income of the informants as reported by them approximately has been presented in Table 83 .

Table : 83 Monthly income by informants

Income (in Rs.)	(Percentage distribution)		
	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
500 -600	27.5	14.9	22.4
1000 - 2000	34.7	31.9	32.8
2001 - 3000	8.7	8.5	8.6
3001 - 4000	3.0	12.8	6.8
4001 - 5000	4.4	6.4	5.2
5001 - 6000	7.2	10.6	8.6
7000 - 8000	8.7	6.4	7.8
9000	3.0	2.1	2.6
10000	1.4	-	0.9
12000	1.4	-	0.9
15000	1.4	2.1	1.7
20000	-	4.3	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : 1. Bhutia-Lepcha N= 69 ; Nepalese N=47 ; Total N= 116 .

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

As earlier already stated , it ultimately substantiates that the handicraft vis-à-vis cottage industry has opened the avenues for earning and to be gainfully employed which in turn have the positive obvious effect in decreasing the unemployment situation and induce economic development in the society . It is notable to be mentioned here that above all the handicraft industry too have a positive impact to bring about the changes in the role and status of women in relation to the empowerment issues in the society. In other words , it might have played an important contributing role towards strengthening the position of women towards progress in turn ultimately brought about empowerment to a extent among the women in the region.

## **Findings**

The major findings of the background of the informants has been summarized below in view to know that who are these women involved in handicraft productions and or selling.

In fact, 68.1 per cent) are in 16-35 years age group, and rest are having the age above 35 years.

Half of the total informants are unmarried while 40.5 per cent married and rest widow/divorcee. Even after the death/ separation from husband the widow/divorcee women (9.5 per cent) are gainfully employed in handicraft production and /or selling .

Taking education, among 66.2 per cent are either at primary or middle level. While 21.6 per cent have passed either school final or higher secondary Nominal 4.4 per cent are graduates and above.

All are having either 2 years Diploma in Handicraft from GICI, or 6 months Diploma/training in Handicraft from different Cooperatives. In case of knitting of woolen items , they have undergone the training of hand knitting traditionally from mother/ grand mother and for modern machine knitting from cooperatives and other institution .

Educational level of informants' husband has been relatively higher than their women counterpart like, 43.2 per cent are having education either school final or higher secondary level and considerable 20.6 per cent graduation and above. Besides, 25.8 per cent of them are having primary (II-V ) and middle (VI-IX) educational level.

Among informants' fathers, 63.7 per cent are either illiterate or having the ability of signing in mother tongue only . Besides, 14.7 per cent of them are having the educational level that range from class II to class IX.

Similarly , illiteracy among their mothers are quite high (61.2 per cent) , followed by 25.0 per cent who can sign only. Besides, only 8.6 per cent of them are having either primary (II-V) or middle school ( VI-IX) educational level .

Therefore, education among the informants is comparatively higher than that of their parents and more pronounced among the present generation.

Moreover, there has been progress in education among informants' generation taking the educational background of their mothers in comparison. It may be said that the majority of the informants are from illiterate, very low and marginally educated families .

In fact, all informants are gainfully involved in handicraft productions and/or selling. Apart from exclusive private handicraft worker , some of them are

producing handicraft items privately too for earning as and when they receive order/demand apart from producing for own household uses as per requirement .

Some are not doing though privately but used to produce handicraft items for family use including for relatives . Weaving privately for producing woolen and carpet items including the embroidery and tailoring products have been either on wage or contract basis according to size, quantity and design mainly.

The produced handicraft item they used to sell in the local market on their own as well as produce as per order/demand received time to time from the customers.

Almost all of them are involved in household work including some in agriculture too apart from gainful work in handicraft industry either officially and or privately.

In case of informants' husbands, nobody is involved either in handicrafts production and or selling or its training , while involved in government service (51.7 per cent) including army, school teacher , mining engineer etc. , followed by business (10.3 per cent) , etc.

Among informants' fathers, nobody is involved either in handicrafts production and or selling or its training while involved in agriculture/agricultural labourer (47.3 per cent), retired from service (12.1 per cent), government service (11.1 per cent) including military service and bank employee , and business (8.6 per cent) etc.

Similarly, 63.8 per cent of informants' mothers are housewife, and agriculture (25.8 per cent). Only 3.5 per cent of them are carpet weaver . So it may be said that the gainful involvement in handicrafts production, training and/or selling have been mainly among the women informants' generation and more popular in the present day society .

60.3 per cent are being the member of nuclear family , followed by joint family ( 30.2 per cent).

Indeed, 45.7 per cent of them belong to large sized family i.e. 6 members and above , and 19.8 per cent belong to families having members of 5. On the whole 61.2 per cent of the informants' families are having 3 to 8 female members . Therefore , it may be said that a substantial percentage of informants are from nuclear families , large sized families and families having more number of female members.

Traditionally , women were not allowed to live singly independently or without having any male member as guardian . It is observed that 69.6 per cent of them are living either with parents or husbands. Rest of them are living with mother/brother/sister/daughter/other kin. Interestingly, only among Bhutia-Lepchas 15.9 per cent are living independently, and 7.3 per cent of them living separately due to husbands' service in other places and for performing the handicraft production in the places distant from their native villages.

In fact , 59.5 per cent are having land that range from 0.5 acre to 37 acres and rest 40.5 per cent belong to landless families. Interestingly, more acres of land has been found among Bhutia-Lepchas only .

Majority i.e. 77.6 per cent earn and their monthly income ranges in between Rs.1,000/- to 20,000/- . Even the trainees (22.4 per cent) who receive the stipend and that also range from Rs. 500/- to Rs.600/- monthly, mainly from Women's Cooperatives and GICI . All of the informants do income from handicrafts production either as service or privately by selling , business, trainee etc.

So, it may be stated that the education of these women are comparatively higher than that of their parents and more pronounced among the present generation. Indeed, the majority of them are from illiterate, very low and marginally educated families . Apart from these, they are mainly from nuclear families , large sized families and families having more number of female members. All of them do income from handicrafts production either as service or privately by selling , business, trainee etc. It is also the fact that the gainful involvement in handicrafts production, training and or selling have been mainly among the women's generation under the study.

Besides, it is also the fact that almost all of them are involved in household work including some in agriculture too apart from gainful work in handicraft industry either officially and or privately. Apart from these, being women they used to perform the traditional role as mother , wife , sister and daughter in the family vis-à-vis society. Thus the women under the study used to play multifarious role in terms of their involvement in various activities for the family and its income.