

***WOMEN IN HANDICRAFT
PRODUCTION
OF SIKKIM : A STUDY IN
ASPECTS OF
THEIR ROLE AND STATUS***

THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE
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Mowsome Bose Roy Datta

Date : 14th May 2008

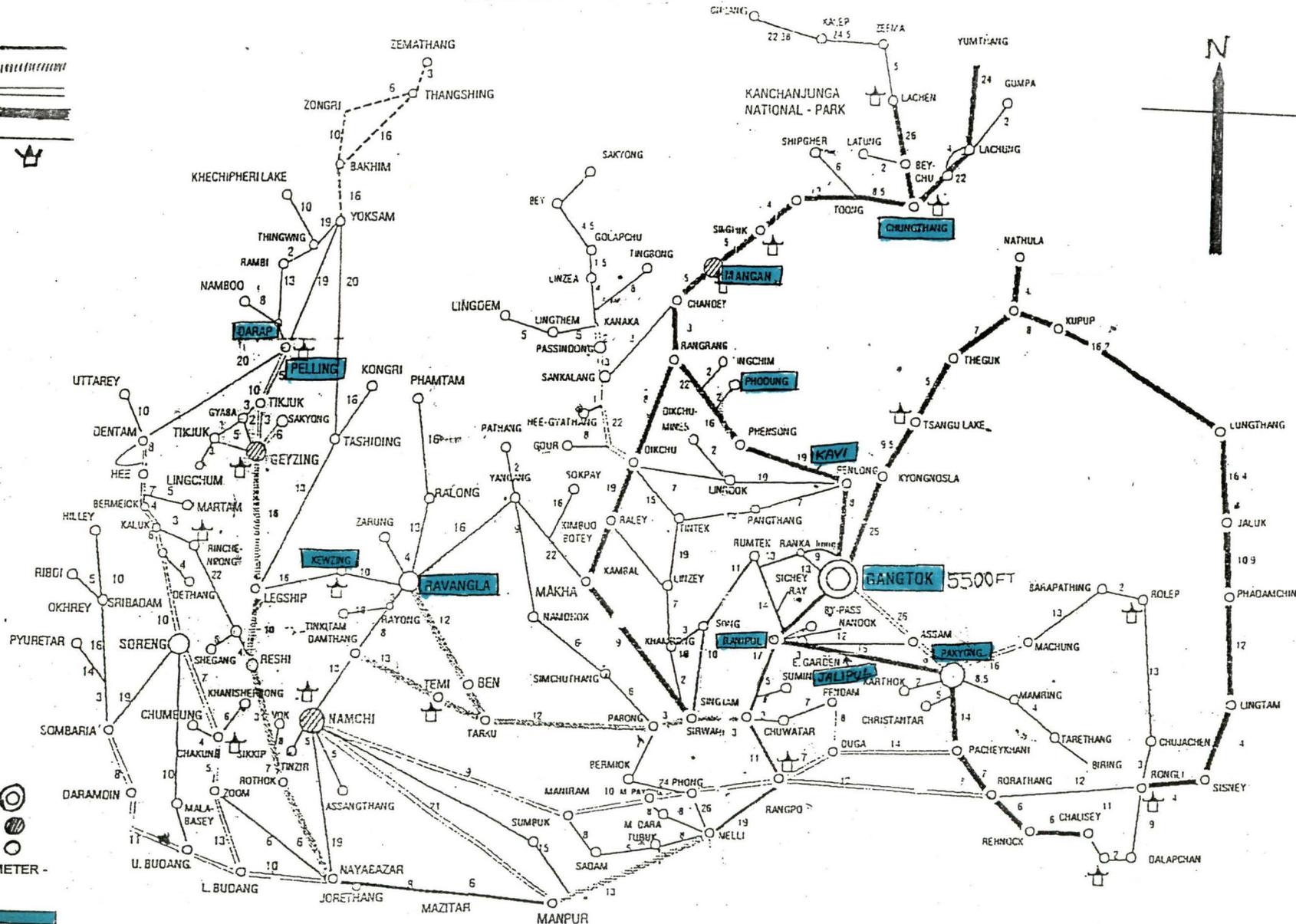
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Mowsome Bose Roy (Datta)

SIKKIM LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

REFERENCE

1. NATIONAL HIGHWAY -
2. STATE HIGHWAY -
3. MAJOR DIST. ROAD -
4. BOARDER ROADS -
5. OTHER DIST. ROADS -
6. REST HOUSE -



INDEX

- STATE HEADQUARTER -
- DISTRICT HEADQUARTER -
- SUB. DIV. HEADQUARTER -
- DISTANCE SHOWN IN KILOMETER -
- SCALE: NOT TO SCALE
- STUDY AREA -

Dedicated to my

**Beloved mother-in-law
Smt. Renuka Datta**

&

Other members of my in-law family

Husband

Dr. Amal Datta

Loving Daughter

Chaitali Datta

Beloved parents

Mrs. And Mr. Bose Roy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study
Concepts used - Gender , Role , Status and Empowerment
Women Studies – the Perspectives
 Structural-Functional Perspective
 Marxist Perspective
 Feminist Perspective
Review of Literature
Significance of the Present Study
Aims and Objectives of Present Research
Research Questions
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 Research Design
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 Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation
Problems and Limitations of the study
Chapterization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Traditional arts and crafts have been the very breath of Indian Civilization. Significantly, Sikkim is known for its traditional ^{handi}crafts-- paintings, motifs, carpet, traditional tribal shoes, dresses, ornaments, weaving, and so on. The traditional ^{handi}crafts in Sikkim had has enormous cultural significance and many of the Bhutia and Lepcha as well as Nepali women are engaged in traditional ^{handi}crafts production. Indeed, the crafts in the present study indicates the various traditional handicrafts that had have been produced in Sikkim since long past.

Traditionally, Carpet (locally known as *Den*) weaving is a symbol of cultural expression and very important export oriented handicraft industry in Sikkim. The carpets are of with various exquisite and intricate designs, motifs and colours which are typical of Sikkimese type and made of various size. Carpet weaving is dominated by women. Though it is a traditional activity, very few families follow it as a part of family tradition in present day Sikkim. Besides carpet, handloom weaving is another important handicraft and women in Sikkim play a predominant role in handloom weaving. In this craft Lepcha '*duree*' is woven and that range from 30 inches to 36 inches. This *duree* is made from woolen and cotton yarn. The vertical frame loom with a back strap used by the Lepcha women is indigenous in Sikkim. The handloom products are ranged from plain to intricate patterns. By and large, each product has its own distinct identity. From the woven fabric, varieties of item. such as, Lepcha dress, table mats, napkins, cushion cover, shoulder bag, purses, the cloth for '*gho*' (male bokhu) and '*kira*' (a rectangular female dress) etc. from the cotton yarn. Woolen yarn is also used in handloom weaving for producing items like shawls, mufflers, and hand woven jackets.

Woodcarving is one of the most important handicrafts of Sikkim. Traditionally, only the Buddhists, Bhutias and Lepchas practise wood carving. Generally, women do not take part in such wood carving as it is very difficult to use and handle the heavy implements/tools for the same. Another, that has special socio-religious significance is wooden mask of various types being used during their religious dances by the Lamas. The wooden mask is normally prepared by men and not by women. Women do not make any *cane* and *bamboo-craft*, while only men used to make bamboo - craft. Paintwork known as *Thangka* Painting has an excellent tradition that depicts different incarnations of Buddha. Traditionally, only the Bhutias and

Lepchas were allowed to make 'Thangka' painting. Men mainly make 'Thangka' paintings, and women generally do not do such paintings.

Indeed, women are mainly involved to a greater extent in weaving carpet, Handloom weaving, knitting of various woolen items, weaving and stitching of clothes for pillow cover, cushion cover, Lepcha bag items, traditional dress items for Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese, embroidery work, making of different kind of toys, traditional 'Jhalor' (used in the pillars of monasteries and also in houses) etc.

Traditional handicrafts of Bhutias and Lepchas were mainly for religious purpose and not commercialized. But now craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized among both men and women, and so is the craft. When the earlier ^{handi} crafts had only cultural and religious significance, the present day handicrafts are also often taken for decorative purposes too. Besides, at present the people also have the opportunity to get them employed in the training institutes under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom as well as can do business independently in this regard, or can work in different Cooperative Societies related to handicrafts. Indeed, there has been number of cooperatives who deals with the making of handicrafts as well as selling of the produced ^{handi} crafts in Sikkim. Interestingly, there are number of Women Cooperatives Societies located in different parts of the state.

For commercialization of the handicraft the Government Institute of Cottage Industry (GICI) at zero point of Gangtok under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (previously known as Palsuing Tendung Institute during Chogyals' reign and only the lamas were entitled to go through various handicrafts training) and its different Training Centers have contributed significantly in commercialization of produced handicrafts in Sikkim apart from different cooperatives and business enterprises.

There are 20 branches of Government Institute of Cottage Industries under the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom located in different places in all the four districts e.g. East, West, North and South Sikkim including the main centre in Gangtok. Besides, there are number of cooperatives including those which are run exclusively by women mainly in Gangtok town including its nearby areas like Tadong, Deorali, Bagthan, Swastika areas etc., and also other areas like Pakhyoung, Jalipool, Ranipool etc. of East Sikkim; Ravongla, Kewzing and Namchi etc. of South Sikkim; Pelling, Darap, etc. of West Sikkim, Mangan, Chungthang etc. of North Sikkim

In fact, this study is undertaken among the women involved in handicraft production and selling and the emphasis is laid on the particular aspect i.e. their role and status in relation to empowerment issues in Sikkim.

When women are in the main stream of progress then only social and economic development can be meaningful. But, Indian women had have been continues to be neglected in a patriarchal society . A colossal percentage of them largely belonging to traditional and orthodox families are deprived of even social mobility and enjoy low social status. Due to domination of patriarchal norm most of women lack property rights and hardly enjoy the ownership of property. On the whole, women enjoy lower accessibility to saving and credit facilities.

Since 1975 women's studies, issues, women's political participation, legal protection against criminal exploitation was highlighted globally and the Indian Democracy also attested the fact cordially. In 1975, UNO took the initiative for the development of the women, especially in the Third-World Countries, and declared 1975 as the 'International Women's Year'. It also labeled the ten years period from 1975 to 1985 as the 'Decade of Women's Development'.

The terms "Gender Justice, "Women Empowerment, "Women Welfare", are in limelight in the social and economic development analysis of both developed and developing nations. The debate on gender justice/women empowerment/women welfare was at the center stage in the international arena in 1994 United Nation Conference in Cairo; UN's Fourth International Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995 and UN's Social Summit Conference at Copenhagen in March 1995 (Pattanaik:2000.) Interestingly, the year 2001 has also been declared as the 'International Women's Empowerment Year' by United Nations. Simultaneously, the Government of India has recognized the same year as 'International Women's Empowerment Year'.

Indeed, the subject of Women's traditional social status and the process of its transformation is gaining importance in recent years. There is an intimate relationship between environment and society with the status of women. The women's study is receiving cognizance today with an objective to study and collect information on women. Thus there has been a growing trend among social scientists to acquire and accumulate knowledge on women to gain insight about their multifarious roles and problems, women's study has a great value in generating consciousness about the multidimensional roles played by women in the society. Its ultimate objective is to empower women in their struggle against inequality.

In this context, taking the citation of Sir Charles Bell, British Political Representative in Tibet , Bhutan and Sikkim, who writes in 1928 that " When travelers enters Tibet from the neighbouring nations of India and China few things impress him more vigorously or more deeply than the position of Tibetan women . They are not kept in seclusion as are Indian women . Accustomed to mix with the other sex throughout their lives, they are at ease with men and can hold their own as well as any women in the world ". Bell continues , " And the solid fact remains that in Buddhist countries

women hold a remarkably good position, Burma, Ceylon and Tibet exhibit the same picture”.

In Buddhist society the position of women was equal to that of men, for the myth of male superiority is universal. The Buddhist doctrine of salvation through an individual's own efforts presupposes the spiritual equality of all beings, male and female. This assertion of women's spiritual equality, explicitly enunciated in the texts had a significant impact on social structures.

In case of mountain communities of eastern Himalayas like Sikkim, the women have distinct pattern of life and culture under economically marginalized and geographically isolated region. There are variations among communities in respect of women's social position. Particularly in some ethnic groups who are Buddhists or animist, their traditions are more favourable towards women, while to others, specially among Hindu caste communities women have well defined roles and position which are not always favourable to them. In spite of these differential traditions, the overall inequality between men and women is still a major concern (Mondal :1999).

The people living in Sikkim are ethnically and culturally heterogeneous and the followers of various faiths and traditions. However, there are some similarities among them owing to environmental, situational and cultural forces. Thus the women in Sikkim have some common features and problems which need to be explored and examined. Besides, it is also important to be mentioned here that unfortunately the information about women of various traditional societies, particularly of lesser known Himalayan mountain communities like in Sikkim are rather scanty.

Indeed, Sikkim joined the Indian Union as its smallest state on May 16, 1975. Taking the historical background of Sikkim in very brief, until its incorporation into India, the state had remained administratively for many years in relative isolation. The socio-political structure centered around an hierarchy of lamas and monasteries and the temporal ruler known as *Chogyal*. The kingdom with its system of feudal, aristocratic bureaucracy was formed by the immigrant Bhutias in co-operation with the local Lepcha chiefs. Before the Bhutia immigration there was no central political power in Sikkim but only local Lepcha Chiefs were there to administer their respective villages.

Sikkim, the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom, offers a singular example of modernization of a backward areas in the Himalayas within a short span of time. In all spheres of life – political processes, social structure, economy, culture and style of life this state has witnessed unusual changes since turn of the century. The processes of change, though slow in the initial

stage, were greatly accelerated since its merger with the Indian Union in 1975. After its merger, the scope of the State Government activities has increased tremendously due to the growth of state bureaucracy in all areas of life within the society. indeed, the State Government gradually in assistance with the Central Government of India has been taking necessary measures to make Sikkim one of the modern and developed state of India. Obviously, the development in all spheres vis-à-vis the development of women has been assigned in the plans of the state which has now been playing positive contributing role to bring about the progress of women in the society of Sikkim.

Being the beautiful mountainous state it leaves lasting impression of its scenic beauty, the rushing river *Rangit* and *Teesta* and other streamlets, water falls and forest. Its total territory (7096 square km.) constitute only 0.22% of India's total territory. One third of its land is covered with dense forest. It is bounded by Tibet on the north, Nepal on the west. On the south it is bounded by the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, and district of Darjeeling and part of Tibet on the east. The state has four districts viz. *North*, *South*, *East* and *West*, and their respective headquarters are *Mangan*, *Namchi*, *Gangtok* and *Gyalshing*. Among the districts the North district is the largest and having the geographical areas of 4226 sq. km. And South district is smallest having the areas of 750 sq. km. As per 2001 census, its total population has been 540,493 of which percentage of males is 53.3% and 47.7% females. The number of total main workers according to available 2001 census has been 2,12,904 of which males are 68.8% and females 31.2%. The present population of Sikkim is primarily composed of Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalese and the plain peoples, in which the Nepalese are numerically dominant.

In Sikkim, the present study undertaken among the women belonging to the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese in its all four districts i.e. East Sikkim, South Sikkim, West Sikkim and North Sikkim and who are mainly involved in handicrafts production and or selling.

1.2 Concepts used for the Study- Gender, Role, Status and Empowerment

It is the fact that there has been the almost absence of either a comprehensive study on gender related issues in Sikkim or any gender audit of the development programmes of the state government, thereby it is difficult to make any correct assessment of the situation of women in terms of empowering issue. Under such scenario, before revealing the role and status of women involved in handicraft production and or selling in the purview of their empowering issue in Sikkim, an attempt has been made here to delineate the concepts like role, status and empowerment used in the present study.

Indeed, the term 'Gender' is defined the socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women in a given culture and the societal structure that support them. Gender is therefore a learned behaviour, which is dynamic. It is determined by society and not by biology (Mondal, 1999; Pelinck, 1997 ; UNICEF, 1991) .

The term 'gender' can be juxtaposed with that of sex . While sex is something that is related to biology, gender is socio-cultural in nature . Gender relations are socially constituted rather than derived from biology, and the gender roles are man made which distinguish between the masculine and feminine qualities. Both gender relations and roles are the product of power relations in the society . The division of labour in the society i.e. production ascribed to men and reproduction ascribed to women is also the result of gender discrimination . And a marked contrast of domination and subordination is highlighted in the men and women relationship .

The 'role' is the customary complex of behaviour associated with a particular status (Hoeble , 1966) , and status is a neutral term which refers only to position . An individual's status is his social position with reference to the other members of his society as determined by a specific attribute , a cluster of attributes . Thus every person has a number of statuses simultaneously , as there are recognized characteristics of the individual in his culture . Such characteristics are age , sex , bodily traits , specific social experiences and affiliations .

Dube (1963) while giving review of men's and women's roles in India , shows that the sphere of activity related to earning a living is not clear and distinct . Among the lower urban strata , however, to support, protect, and control the family are recognized as male roles, while management of household and care of the child are feminine roles.

Rohrlich-Leavitt, Sykes and Weatherford (1975) cited that Durkheim and Levi-Strauss set up dichotomies between sacred and profane , and arbitrarily designate men as sacred and women as profane , or men as actors and women as acted upon objects . Such polarized view was challenged by Kaberry and Goodale. They focus on interaction between quotidian and the ritual activities of Australian aborigines. They describe the crucially important economic role of aboriginal women and show how these determine the nature of spiritual role of women , refuting the male view that women are excluded from the sacred state

The term 'status' was first used in anthropology by Ralph Linton (1936) . He pointed out "All societies prescribed different attributes and activities to men and to women. Most of them try to rationalize these prescriptions in terms of the physiological differences between the sexes and their different roles in

reproductionⁿ. Status is a composite concept and it indicates the position of an individual, or a group, in terms of several values in society. Each status position is expressed in terms of a role. Role denotes a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular status position within a group. In fact, it is the sum total of various culturally attributed roles one has to play together with the rights and duties inherent in social position. Linton (1945) also clearly pointed out that status is a collection of rights and duties and as such it is clearly distinct from person to person who occupy it. The status that an individual holds are attained in various ways. They may be sought through striving and competitive mastery of the roles linked to the various status linked to the various statuses. Such statuses in the terminology suggested by Linton (1936) are called 'achieved'. Maclver calls them functional determinants of social position (1931). Parsons (1972) points out that in a changing situation of modernity status changes from ascription to achievement.

Other status developed upon the individual by virtue of innate biological characteristics such as sex, age, and race or by virtue of pre-existing social affinities, such as statuses of his parents and kinsmen and the involuntary associations into which he is born. These statuses are ascribed to the individual by his social system and there is little he can do escape from them or to alter them.

Malinowski states the division of labour by sex that the Australian aboriginal are forced to do heavier work by the other (brutal) half of the society and relation of a husband to wife in its economic aspect is that of a master to its slave and according to him the husband has a definite 'over-right' over his wife (Cited in Rohrich-Leavitt, Sykes and Weatherford, 1975).

Max Weber used the term status to define the behavioural parameters of class; such as the possession of economic means, external standard of living, cultural and recreational possibilities (Cited in Gerth and Mills, 1970).

The functionalists' view is that women should be studied in terms of role, function and attributes and they should be treated as a social category. In this context, Mead thinks that there is hardly any sex-linked aptitude or abilities which are universally acknowledged. In all societies there are certain abilities and aptitudes which can be considered as typically male and other as typically female (Mead, 1948).

Status is composite concept. It indicates the position of an individual, or a group in terms of several values in society. Each status position is expressed in terms of a role. Role denotes a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular status position within a group. It is thus the sum total of various culturally attributed roles one has to play together with the rights and duties inherent in a social position (Bharati Debi, 1988).

Status if seen as a derivative is the result of a pattern of relationships between two sets of human beings . The pattern is composed of images they have of themselves and of each other . . . the status denotes relative position of persons, group, social strata , and a range of identifies social categories as men and women acquire their identities through all these units and institutions. The notion of status involves comparison and grading . That one has to occupy very many status positions at a given point of time and to play a number of roles as those in kinship system , family system and in a wider network of social system. His or her status is usually not determined by any one particular status position held by him or her, but by the composite status which results from merging of these various positions (Debi, 1988) . In some societies women's status is higher at younger ages while in other it is higher at older age (Bart 1969 ; Foner 1984 ; Vatuk 1987) . The United nations has defined the status of women in the context of their access to knowledge, economic resources, and political power, as well as their personal autonomy in the process of decision making.

The status of women is therefore governed by cultural values of a society. In the case of Indian women , status means her personal rights , property rights , her duties, abilities and disabilities vis-à-vis the society and her family members. In the context of specific societal variables, women's status in India is bound with social, political, cultural and economic factors that influence all aspect of their lives. There are strong cultural influences on fertility, preference for sons, education of the girl child , age at marriage , dowry, widowhood, decision-making , reproductive rights , child bearing practices , nutritional status, access to health care and the degree of access to the outside world . All these factors have profound implications on the status of women in India . The role and status of women in the present study has been considered from the points of view of familial status and role i.e. women as a mother, housewife and daughter in relation to empowerment issues in terms of women's rights to own resources, resource control , education , their participation in gainful employment for self earning as well as to supplement the family, access to credit and savings , active involvement in decision-making process of both household and economic affairs, , participation in political affairs which includes political awareness , etc. .

Undoubtedly, women are the vital human infra-structure and their empowerment – economic, educational, social and political – would certainly hasten the pace of social development. Interesting in women's "capabilities" and empowering them to achieve their "choices" and opportunities in the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development. Therefore, 'Empowerment' is no doubt an integral component for women's development because it could bring a change in the context of women's life which enables her increased capacity to lead a fulfilling human life, characterized by external quality like status in the family,

participation in decision-making as well as internal qualities like self awareness and self confidence. In many societies across the world, women are discriminated against by law and by customs, rendering them among the vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups. The condition of Indian women is, of course, no exception. Gender discrimination in India is situated within deeply ingrained system of patriarchy which confine women to subordinate roles. Against this scenario, empowerment vis-à-vis development of women is no doubt a grave necessity.

Empowerment is the process of generating and building capabilities to exercise control over one's own life. Women's empowerment is a model of gender analysis that traces women's increasing equality by empowering through five phases, viz. welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control (INSTREW, 1995 ; Mondal, 1999). The empowerment is a concept that has become popular in recent times to describe an enabling process for socially marginalized persons and groups to gain advantageous and opportunities otherwise non-available to them (Olawoye, 1999).

According to the United Nations statistical commission , 1960 (SEARCH Bulletin, 1997) among all the major components which have a bearing on the standard of living , priority was given to components like health , food and nutrition, education, employment, housing, clothing , social security, human freedom and recreation . As a result , uni-dimensional development programmes on each of the above mentioned components were taken up by different government and non-government organizations to raise the standard of living of human population.

In fact, the concept of empowerment is to be understood from the standpoint of psychological, cultural, social, economic , organizational, political behaviours of human beings (Stephen, 1977) . It is not an end in itself, however, but a means to an end. It entails acquiring adequate knowledge and capacity, the confidence, the help and the ideas to decide what is best for (oneself) and to act accordingly in fulfilling one's own potentials (Udegbe, 1996).

The entire study indeed envisaged the role and status of women in Sikkim specifically in relation to some aspects of empowerment issue in terms of the extent of women's rights to own resources, gender division of labour, education , their participation in gainful employment for self earning as well as to supplement the family, access to credit and savings , active involvement in decision-making process of both household and economic affairs, and resource control in the family as well as society etc.

1.3 Women Studies – the Perspectives

In view of examining the status of women , the same has be placed in the context of socio-cultural reality, the levels of consciousness and action of members in the society. So, there are different perspectives with which

status of women are analysed and within each of these gender inequalities and patriarchy have been understood differently.

1.3.1 Structural-Functional Perspective

It is an etic approach which seeks to analyse the inter relations between women's status with the nature of social system. It considers women's activities as essentially cultural and denies that women do in fact constitute a subordinate social category. It views that women should be treated as a social category, thus must be studied in terms of roles and attributes as ascribed by the society. It perceives a harmonious division of labour between men and women for smooth functioning of the social system and advocates for equality of men and women in the framework of persisting social order. In South Asia and Indian subcontinent studies on women are mainly influenced by structural functional perspective owing to influence of British structure functional school of anthropological and sociological thought.

1.3.2. Marxist Perspective

It is an approach which helps to understand how the modes of production determine the lives of women within the household as well as in the society. According to this perspective the position of women is better understood through the analysis of modes of production and their place in class structure of the society. It recognizes the social oppression of women and its institutional and ideological supports in the society. It advocates that women's liberation is not a fight of women against men, but of women against the capitalist system. In the notion of Marxist perspective men is a privileged class, while women constitute an underprivileged class. The sexual antagonism is one of the major social

conflict which helps women to hold the society together. Many left oriented women organizations in South Asia have used a Marxist-class framework for analyzing women's oppression.

1.3.3. Feminist Perspective

It analyses the system of male domination and female in the society, and tries to assert the position of women in sexual social hierarchy. It considers that men and women are constitutional equal and share the same human capabilities. Observed differences therefore, demand a critical analysis of the social institutions that cause them. For feminists the position of women under patriarchal system is the question as well as the issue. Feminism is an emic approach, analyzing the issues by the women and for the women. The twentieth century feminism made contribution to women's movement.

1.4 Review of literature

1.4.1 Studies on Women in India and Abroad

The structure and functionalists try to analyze the interrelations between women's status and nature of social system, and view the women's activities in home as essentially cultural. They often deny that the women do in fact constitute a subordinate group. Women have one conceptual set of images which are moulded by value system. Likewise they have a set of images of men which are structured by the central value system.

The interesting dimension regarding the caste is the extent to which caste background affects women's self image and influences selection of a role model or reference group.

Beteille (1975) pointed out that there are a number of caste related factors which clearly affect the position of women in Indian society. He also observes that among the poor and low castes the relationship between men and women is more egalitarian than among the higher castes.

According to Karve (1965) the system of caste, family structure, kinship and marriage affect the status of women in a fundamental way. There are a number of factors related to caste in India which clearly affect the position of women in society.

Shrinivas (1978) has studied a number of factors related to the caste system which clearly affect the position of women in Hindu society. Among the low castes the relationship between men and women is more egalitarian than among the higher castes).

Desai's (1957) view on this issue is " More and more women consider self respect and development of personality as necessary goals of life". According to Dube (1963). "The process has been generated and aided by a variety of factors which are operating almost simultaneously. Increasing opportunities for modern education, greater geographical and occupational mobility and the emergence of economic patterns are in the main responsible for the trend" in the context of change in status of women in the society."

Gore (1968) showed that though the household family in urban areas is becoming more and more nuclear, family relations are to a great extent governed by traditional joint family norms and values. Subordination of women to men and segregation of sexes is followed in the family in rural and urban areas, and tasks such as domestic chores and child-care continue to be performed by women.

Kapadia (1959) , in the course of dealing with family, opines that the employment of women, which has become possible through education and present economic strains , has also affected the family greatly.

Ross (1961) expresses her view , “ Indeed the main reason why so many higher middle class women work without reproach is because everyone understands the economic problems of the middle class and that a wife’s income is often essential to the family’s standard of living” .

Kanhere (1987) revealed that the Status of Women in India (1974) has extensively examined the condition of women all over India , and reports the position of women not just the ‘visible’ women elite, educated urban women , but the ‘invisible’ women, illiterate women trapped in domesticity in urban-rural India, their social, economic, educational, legal and political condition. Studies pertaining to urban poor and slums, men and women working in the informal unorganized sector of the urban economy and self-employed women have begun to explore the position of the invisible women. However, detailed study in the lower strata is needed to understand their role and status in the society .

Kapur (1970, 1973, 1974) had taken an abiding interest in studying the course and pattern of changes in the life and attitude of educated married working women in India . In her studies , she consistently attempted to drive home the hypothesis that after the independence of India the changed socio-economic conditions have made it imperative for women belonging to middle class to take up gainful employment. She has argued that this emancipation of women from their set tradition-bound ethos has mainly been instrumental in changing their life . And especially the entry of women , both of the middle and upper classes , into remunerative vocations has been the causal factor to be counted upon much in effecting changes pertaining to their role , status and the life patterns . Her findings also indicate, to paraphrase her “ Not only those who are economically hard pressed get engaged in jobs but also those who use to live a socially useful and add to the family finances . They have come to realize that works give them personal status and an independent social standing . With the change in women’s personal status and social stature there has come a change in her way of thinking and ‘feeling’” (Cited in Devi , 1988) .

Parsons (1975) stated that the root of functions of the family and pre-eminently of the adult woman as the key personality in the internal family structure are those of socialization and the emotional stabilization of the adult personality .

Singh (1980) viewed that in India studies on women are mainly influenced by the structure - functionalism . This is perhaps due to the history of origin of

the two disciplines – Sociology and Social Anthropology in this country which have been initially influenced by the British functionalism . Most of the women studies have been done to examine the changing roles, attitudes and functions of family, and its consequences in marital adjustment particularly of the educated urban one .

Notable work of eminent scholars both from India and abroad , among others, Altekar (1973) , Asthana (1974) , Baig (1976) , Boulding (1977) , Bowman (1954) , Desai (1957) , Dube (1963) , Fieldman (1958) , Hate (1930, 1948, 1969) , Kalhan (1977) , Kapadia (1954, 1955, 1958 ,1959) , Kapur (1970, 1973, 1974) , Myrdal and Klein (1956) , Merchant (1935) , Mies (1980) , Naik (1974), Desai and Raj (1987) , Ross (1959, 1961) , Sengupta (1960, 1974), Khanna and Verghese (1978) , and Goode (1965) , etc. working on the status of Indian women opined that many changes have occurred in the traditional conception of role and status of women through new opportunities for education and employment, emergence of new socio-economic pattern, and privileges of equal legal and political rights. Women are competing with men on an equal footing and have entered into occupations which were considered as the domain of men . The freedom that women have gained through cultural change has broadened their social horizon more than what they had earlier being a traditional wife-home maker-mother. The broader aspects of change , mainly concerning various socio-psychological aspects, have also been focused .

The impetus to empirical studies on women came during the “international women’s year” i.e. 1975 . The “international women’s year” in 1975 has attracted a number of Anthropologists and Sociologists to study women from various perspectives. And, since 1975 number of studies have been done on working women in India. But these studies mainly concentrated on the changing status of middle class educated and the educated employed women and consequent problems and stress of their marital and social adjustment.

In fact, anthropologists’ interest in the study of empowerment grows with the realization that the process of empowerment originates first in the human mind reflecting changes in attitude, which afterwards bring in further changes in the life style and behaviour pattern .

Chakrapani and Vijaya Kumar (1994) offered that with the changing times the role of women has changed from child bearing and rearing to bread earner. It revealed the role of women in the changing society and their changing roles under the broad categories of health, education, employment, politics, popular movements and development.

Similarly, Joshi (1999) also highlighted that how far the changing socio-economic set up in the rural economy during the process of economic

development over a period of five decades is acting and reacting to the women education, employment, opportunities, participation in social and political activities, age at marriage and their fertility behaviour, participation in household, farm and non-farm activities, dowry, purdah and widow remarriage system as well as the role of women in decision making in different spheres.

Mahajan (1966) opined , “ More and more educated women are taking up new occupational roles. Employment and income provide them with recognition, status and sense of achievement and ensure for them an equality of status with men”. Ranade and Ramchandran (1970) indicated that “... women’s employment is a source of income , making her economically independent, enhancing family prestige , preparation for unforeseen circumstances and improving matrimonial prospects and so on⁴ .

Narasimhan ((1999) discussed alternative strategy for empowering women from rural India and emphasized that ‘empowerment’ in the sense of bringing women into the main stream of national activity as equal partners alongside men has not materialized even after 50 years of planned progress. The reality that women face is not fully reflected in the economic models of development because growth in material terms can take place without diminishing equalities and inequalities.

While Samanta (1999) emphasized that the process of empowerment must address all relevant structures and sources of power. And one of the prerequisite of women is promotion of organizations among women. Women can be organized through a variety of means. Women empowerment will lead to the nation towards desired development objective as these women are the chief architects of nation’s development.

Singh (1980) emphasized that the traditional attitudes and practices related to the position of women vary from region to region and within a region from caste to caste . The regional variation is more important than caste variation . As Kolenda points out , the incidence of bride price, divorce and remarriage varies in practice from region to region, despite differences in the ideals among castes within one region.

1.4.2 Studies on Women of Sikkim

There has been number of studies undertaken by various scholars on women’s role and their position in the society of Eastern Himalayas like Barua (1985), Chaudhury (1963) , Danda (1978) , Das Gupta (1978) , Jain (1980) , Jones, & James (1976) , Upreti (1993) , Roy Burman (1978) , Zarika Rani (1986) , etc. The study undertaken by Bhadra (1992) on women workers of tea plantation of Terai region of North Bengal deals with the process of their adaptation and adjustment in home and the work place. Mondal (2005) delineated the social situation of Muslim women of India in general and the state of West

Bengal in particular. The situation of Muslim women of West Bengal specially of Northern region of the state has been described in details.

In the context of Sikkim, initially there are number of studies on ethnography, political history, common history, and historical literature of Sikkim. Moreover, some of the writings on Sikkim are basically of travelers notes. Now, there are number of in-depth studies undertaken by various scholars on the history, life and culture, people etc. in Sikkim, like, Bhattacharya (1984) , Datta (1991), Gorer (1938), Nakane (1966), Siiger (1967) , Singh (1993) , Sinha (1975), Subba (1989) , etc.

The scholars like Bhasin (1996), Danda (1991) , Gurung (1999) , Majumder (1962), Prasad (1989) , Raha (1987), Sinha (1983) , etc point out that the women of Himalayan region of West Bengal, Sikkim, and North Eastern states differ radically from the plains not only in physical feature but also in distinctive economic, social and cultural behaviour . Besides, studies undertaken by Bhattacharya (1994) and Mondal (1991) emphasized that the traditional society of Bhutia and Lepcha communities has been favourable towards women .

A number of books and publications exist about the political history of Sikkim, and about the merger of of Sikkim with India. However, there is not as much information about Sikkimese socio-economic structure apart from a few anthropological and ethnographic studies. Sikkim Human Development Report (2001) cited that “ ... in the absence of either a comprehensive study on gender related issues in Sikkim or any gender audit of the development programmes of the State Government, it is difficult to make a correct assessment of the situation of women” . In turn, it articulates to the fact that the in-depth and comprehensive study on gender related issues is rather lacking in the state of Sikkim.

1.4.3 Studies on Women Artisans

Dhamija (1997) in her study reflected that India's rich heritage is preserved in its folk arts and crafts by revealing the story of how the arts and crafts of an ancient and imaginative people can be related to their day-to-day living , their legends, myths and festivals.

Jan (2001) in her study conducted among artisan women in Kashmir Valley delineated that artisan women engaged in embroidery and spinning operation were from low educational and socio-economic background. Their men enjoy more liberty and free to do whatever they feel like they do not need any one's consent. While women has no right to decision . The female artisans were aware about their right, but most of them preferred to go by customary law.

Mondal (2006) delineated the gender role in *Jari* embroidery (household) industry and examined the relative status of women involved in it at household level, and highlighted the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour among the women *Jari* workers and their empowerment issues .

Shrivastava (2002) carried out a study and attempted to delineate age-old art , crafts and vibrant cultural patterns of Sikkim and also focused life-styles, eating habits, dressing patterns, folk dances, festivals and worships etc.

Besides , studies undertaken by Singh (1968) on Himalayan Art and Subba (1983–84) on Development of Local Arts and Crafts of Sikkim are important to be mentioned here.

Waheed (2006) revealed the issues of entrepreneurship among the Muslim artisans , Craftsmen and traders .

On the whole, taking the above review of studies which already reveal and suggest that the studies on women in Sikkim is either very scanty or lacking. Therefore, the present study on women in Sikkim may be considered important in view that no such in-depth study so far has been undertaken to reveal their position vis-à-vis role and status in relation to empowerment issues including development of women particularly involved in handicraft production and selling in post-merger period of Sikkim.

1.5 Significance of the present study

It is important to be mentioned here that “ ... in over-all farm production women’s average contribution is estimated out 55% to 66% of the total labour particularly in the Himalayan region. The extent of their contribution can be gauged from the finding in a study that in the Himalayan region a pair of bullocks work 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman works 3485 hours a year on a one hectare farm” (Padmanabhan:2001). It emphasizes the greater contribution and importance of women in farm sector in the Himalayan region. Taking this into consideration , Sikkim being one of the Himalayan state, the women workers have a definite function to perform in ^{hand}craft production , and in some cases women are more suitable than men in the state.

Indeed , the state of Sikkim is much more interesting area which certainly claims special attention. Because, until its incorporation into India, Sikkim had remained, administratively for many years in relative isolation . The socio-political structure centered around an hierarchy of lamas and monasteries and the temporal ruler known as ‘Chogyal’. The kingdom with its system of feudal aristocratic bureaucracy was formed by the immigrant Bhutias in co-operation with the local Lepcha Chiefs. And till its merger with the Indian Union, Sikkim remained mostly in relative isolation and outside the influence of greater society. But, during the last few

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decades or so, Sikkim has experienced a number of major changes in the functioning of the state power. Particularly, after its merger with the Indian Union, since 1975, all the inorganic and organic resources in the state have been designated as 'public goods' under the direct control and utilization of the state. The changes have been the rise of social services and the large state expenditure for public welfare, utilization of public goods in the state for its development, administration and enforcement of law and order and the like. There has now been the growth of state power as the independent force subjected to the Indian Constitution. The acceptance of the principle of welfare arises from the necessity of inclusion of its people into citizenship in the society. Allocation and the distribution of the state's resources and rewards are carried out in an equally democratic way which is meant for the state's citizen. Therefore the situation what was prevailed during the pre-merger period has now been obviously changed (Datta, 1991).

Similarly, there might have been changes in the pattern of ^{handi}craft production as well as in the organization of relation and its commercialization. Moreover, the craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized and so is the crafts. If the ^{handi}earlier ^{handi}crafts had only the cultural significance during the Chogyal's regime, the ^{handi}crafts are now often taken more for decorative purpose in present day Sikkim. Moreover, being now a part of India the state is having more exposure to greater Indian society as well as to other international countries. Under such changing circumstances, it is now much significant and interesting present day Sikkimese society. Since the very limited information are available on women and ^{handi}craft production in Sikkim Himalayas, so ^{handi}and to know and examine the role of women in the organization of ^{handi}craft production as well as their present position as regards to women's empowerment in the empirical study has been so important and the study merits because no such study on role and status of women working in ^{handi}craft production so far has been undertaken in Sikkim.

Moreover, importance and need of this study may be envisaged from the citation in Sikkim Human Development Report (2001) "... in the absence of either a comprehensive study on gender related issues in Sikkim or any gender audit of the development programmes of the State Government, it is difficult to make a correct assessment of the situation of women". Therefore, taking the above citation made in the *Sikkim Human Development Report (2001)*, such empirical research study is important and the outcome of the study being that it may contribute towards the knowledge/information feasible for women's development in the society, and development programmes and policies for women in Sikkim. Apart from this, it may add to the knowledge/information on women's situation in Sikkim particularly in the arena of gender studies in Social Sciences, in view of unavailability of comprehensive and in-depth studies in Sikkim.

1.6 Aims and Objectives of Present Research

The basic objective of the present study is to explore, examine and analyse the role and status of ^{handi}craft producing and ^{handi}craft selling women of Sikkim with particular reference to their problems and prospects of empowerment for development and change. Emphasis has also given in this study to examine the role and status of women entrepreneurs involved in ^{handi}craft production, selling and business.

Therefore, the main objective of the present study has been to find out the position of women in terms of their role and status, particularly among the women those who are involved in handicraft production, selling and business in Sikkim.

In view of above, the specific *objectives* of this study that have been derived from the said general objectives are as follows :

1. *To assess the demographic, economic, educational, socio-cultural, political, and health situation of women of Sikkim.*
2. *To find out the types of handicraft production in Sikkim and the participation of women in the handicraft making, selling and business.*
3. *To evaluate the various existing schemes, policies and programmes meant for women artisans and sellers in relation to their empowerment and welfare issues.*
4. *To examine the role of cooperatives and other organizations of Sikkim involved in handicraft production and selling.*
5. *To find out the demographic, economic, educational, socio-cultural, and political condition of the women artisans, sellers and entrepreneurs.*
6. *To assess and examine the role and status of women involved in handicrafts production and selling as well as in handicraft business in Sikkim with particular reference to their empowerment issues.*

The **first objective** is intended to delineate the situation vis-à-vis position of women in general of the present day Sikkim.

The **second objective** has been included with a view to find out the types of handicrafts produced in Sikkim and to examine the extent of the involvement of women in ^{handi}craft production.

The **third objective** has been drawn in view to find out the programmes and schemes taken for the upliftment and welfare of women in the state of Sikkim.

The **fourth objective** is indeed intended to evaluate the role of various cooperatives including exclusive women cooperatives and welfare societies involved in handicraft production particularly their contribution towards empowerment of women artisans and entrepreneurs .

The **fifth objective** is in fact to conduct the in depth empirical study on situation of women involved in handicraft production and selling as well as in handicraft business with particular reference to the demographic and socio-economic attributes like - demographic condition , state of education , economic position , social situation , political participation , etc.

The **sixth or last objective** is included with a view to find out the role and status of women involved in handicraft production and selling as well as in handicraft business specifically in respect to their empowerment issues like extent of women's rights an opportunities to own resources, education, participation in gainful employment, access to credit and savings , involvement in decision-making , resource control in the family as well as society etc.

1.7 Research Questions

In accordance with the above aims and objectives the present study is a humble attempt to deal with the following set of research questions. Throughout the study effort has been made to find out the answers of the following questions on the basis of data gathered from primary and secondary sources .

- i) What are the various types of handicrafts produced in Sikkim and what roles the women extend to produce such handicraft ?
- ii) To what extent the Government Institute of Cottage Industry , cooperatives, welfare societies and private entrepreneurs play their role in imparting handicraft training as well as in producing , selling and marketing activities ?
- iii) Who are the women involved in handicraft production and selling ?
- iv) What extent the women artisans and sellers have access to education?
- v) What is the extent of women's participation in gainful employment ?
- vii) What about the access of women artisans and sellers in sharing of family property ?
- vii) What about the monetary contribution of women artisans and sellers towards their family economy ?
- viii) How far the artisan women are getting importance in the family?
- ix) What extent the women are involved in decision-making in business as well as in family affairs ?
- x) What position the women have in the context of decision-making in their own marriages ?
- xi) To what are the health problems faced by women artisans ?
- xii) What about the position of women in politics ?
- xiii) What extent the women artisans are lagging behind the men ?

The purpose of the study is three-fold . Firstly, the investigation of role and status of women involved in handicraft industry will help us to understand their position as well as activities and so also their problems in social life . Secondly , it will throw some light to identify the various factors that are acting as barriers towards the status upliftment of the women involved in handicraft industry. Finally, the result of the study will give some ideas to formulate ways through which the emancipation of the women by way of their empowerment and upliftment can be achieved.

In the present research it is intended to examine the social situation of Sikkimese women . The study is confined among the women involved in handicraft production and selling of Sikkim only .

1.8 Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the afore cited research questions the following set of hypotheses are drawn and that have been examined in the present study and the findings accordingly presented in the preceding discussions.

1. In spite of some progress of Indian women in all spheres of development , the Sikkimese women lagging behind to a certain extent .
2. Cooperatives, Welfare Societies , GICI, etc. might have played vital contributing role in imparting training and popularizing handicrafts including its commercialization in today's Sikkim .
3. The women of Sikkim have comparatively better position and access to empowerment aspects like education , gainful employment , resources, decision-makings in the family vis-à-vis society, savings, politics etc.
4. Despite having better position of women in the Sikkimese society a subtle gender disparity exist too in Sikkim.

1.9 Methodology

1.9.1 Research Design

The design of the present research has been formulated on the basis of the nature of the study . The study areas, the people, the tools and techniques for data collection have been chosen as per the aims and objectives of the study. The main purpose of this study is to gain insights and experience on the situations and problem associated with the ^{handi}craft producing women and their empowerment issue .

The study has been carried out primarily on the basis of structural – functional approach with liberal feminist perspective . It is purely an exploratory study with diagnostic outlook in some cases. The approach of this study is descriptive with an analytical base. The comparative method, both synchronic as well as diachronic over time and space has been adopted for understanding the present situation of ^{handi}craft producing women of

Sikkim and changes there in . The data for this research have been gathered both from primary as well as secondary sources . The facts on the situation of women in terms of role and status in relation to empowerment issues with particular to Sikkimese society have been gathered through reviewing the secondary materials and collection of empirical facts through intensive field investigation in the four districts of Sikkim . For data collection field studies were conducted . Both extensive and intensive approaches were adopted in field study . Primary and secondary data pertaining to various aspects of women under study were collected, analyzed and interpreted .

1.9.2 Locales of the Study

Since the present one being the partial representative study for women who are involved in handicrafts production and or selling or as entrepreneur, the study areas were selected purposively from all the four districts of Sikkim . The main purpose being to have sufficient number of women welfare societies , various cooperatives involved in handicraft production , handloom centers , handicraft training centers and also private entrepreneurs involved in handicraft production and or selling were taken into consideration. That is why extensive survey in all the four districts of Sikkim was done to cover even the very few private/single entrepreneurs in remote areas .

It is important to note that due to absence of house to house involvement in handicraft production in today's Sikkim, the entire field work was depended on the information on women involved in handicraft production and or selling either privately, or working in government/private organization, cooperatives etc. This difficulty had been overcome through extensive survey in Sikkim particularly in view to have the representative size of informants for quantification. Thus the areas viz. Gangtok , Sichey Bustee , Deorali , Tadong , Amdogolai, Ranipool, Jalipool and Pakhyoung under East Sikkim; Chungthang, Mangan , Phodong and Kabi of North Sikkim ; Pelling and Darap of West Sikkim; Ravongla and Kewzing under South Sikkim were selected purposively for the present study . Thus entire study was conducted in all the four districts of Sikkim with a total 16 villages and urban bustees.

1.9.3 Field work

This study is based on field survey conducted on women working in handicraft production and selling or functioning as entrepreneur . The field work was started during February 2002 . Indeed , the field work for this study had been conducted in number of phases during the period between February 2002 to December 2005 .

During the period of enquiry I observed the daily life of the women involved in handicraft production and selling . They gradually took me as a well

wisher and a sister. All these helped me to collect more data and to get experience on the field situation very closely .

1.9.4 Selection of Informants

It was decided to conduct an empirical and holistic study on women involved in handicraft production and selling in different areas under four districts of Sikkim. Information on women involved in various handicrafts production and selling or as entrepreneur were obtained from women welfare societies , various cooperatives involved in handicraft production , handloom centers , handicraft emporium both Government and Private , Showrooms (both Government and Private) , Government Institute of Cottage Industry, Handicraft Training Centers, Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft Industry , and also Private Entrepreneurs from the locales of the selected areas viz. Gangtok , Sichey Bustee , Deorali , Tadong , Amdogolai, Ranipool, Jalipool and Pakhyoung under East Sikkim; Chungthang, Mangan , Phodong and Kabi of North Sikkim ; Pelling and Darap of West Sikkim; Ravongla and Kewzing under South Sikkim . The study was primarily on the women involved in various handicraft production , selling and business in these selected areas . All the women involved in various handicraft production, selling and business were interviewed and from them bulk of the data were gathered . In this way a total of 116 women informants belonging to the main communities like Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese were selected purposively . The informants were drawn through categorization of the women on the basis of their involvement in a particular type of handicraft production selling and business

The Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese women are predominantly involved in carpet weaving, handloom weaving , tailoring dress materials , embroidery work , knitting of woolen items, making of hand-made papers, making of toys, etc. Therefore, the selection of informants was restricted to those women belonging to above communities and those who were involved in such handicraft works as well.

The objectivity was maintained while selecting the women informants, their involvement in handicraft production, selling and business were also taken into account . The informants were selected purposively to represent the major communities like Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese with particular reference to their involvement in various handicraft production and selling . To select the informants, it was decided to depend on their sincerity and reliability for giving correct information , fair appreciation regarding questions they were asked to answer and their capability to serve proper and correct information . Informants were of two groups viz. key informants and occasional helpers. The key informants were asked to furnish most of the data on the basis of

set questions framed for this research while the occasional helpers were mostly used for checking and verification of the collected data .

In fact , due to absence of house to house involvement in handicraft production in today's Sikkim, the entire process of selecting the informants would have been dependent on the information regarding the availability of women involved in any handicraft production and or selling and business either privately, or working in government and private organization, cooperatives etc. And no house to house census enumeration were conducted during the field work.

1.9.5 Tools and Technique of Data Collection

To collect primary data a long term field work was conducted . The data was collected through conventional anthropological tools and techniques viz. interview , key informants case study , group discussion and observation etc. To obtain preliminary and comprehensive data interview schedule was prepared . The interviews were with the women involved in handicraft production and selling . Information were also obtained through informal discussion with women and men who voluntarily took part in discussions on several occasions . The technique of case study was also used for the collection of data . The data collected through various techniques were supplemented by observation. Photograph were also taken in view to have an additional support for the study and also for documentation.

Indeed, a total 116 women informants belonging to the main ethnic communities of Sikkim viz. Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese were interviewed for collection of empirical facts . In fact, the Lepcha , Bhutia and Nepalese women were predominantly involved in carpet weaving, handloom weaving, tailoring of dress materials, embroidery work , knitting of woolen items, making of toys, etc. Therefore, the main field study was restricted to those women who belong to those communities and mainly involved in such handicraft works.

At the initial stage bulk of the quantitative data on the demographic , educational, political and socio-economic life of women i.e. situation of women were collected from census reports, statistical reports , published books , articles and other reports. The quantitative and qualitative data on the extent of nature of handicrafts , type of handicrafts and also technique of its production including the nature of materials used, role of women in handicrafts , etc. were collected through interviewing the handicraft workers as well as from various secondary from the available reports , articles and books . Similarly, the role of cooperatives , handicraft training institutes , Women Welfare Societies, GICI (including its branches) etc. in handicraft industry of Sikkim including the extent of role of women in them were also

variable were taken and presented in a chart with percentages so that the overall situation could be manifested at a glance. Role and status of women in relation to empowerment issues is the main focus of this study. Some tables were also generated with a view to express role and status of women involved in handicraft productions and or selling in relation to some empowerment issues. To assess attitudinal attributes two point rating scale (based on favourable and non-favourable) were also used here.

However, data had been analysed by both quantitative and qualitative methods consisting mostly of percentages and analytical discussion. The analysis of quantitative data were made through systematic and analytical description of the collected facts. In course of analysis, methods of comparison had been followed. Data were presented by using different tables, graphs and charts in relevant chapters. At the last an attempt was made to summarize the findings in general with concluding remarks and recommendations.

On the whole, the delineation of the situation of ^{handi}craft producing and ^{handi}craft selling women of Sikkim in terms of their role and status with reference to empowerment issues may help as a source of reference for the planners and policy makers in relation to development of women in the society.

1.10 Problems and Limitations of the study

This study restricted to the role and status of women involved in ^{handi}craft production particularly in the context of empowerment issue. Hence, only the women involved in handicraft manufacture and selling are under the purview of this study.

During the field study I encountered some difficulties. The main difficulty being that due to absence of house to house involvement in handicraft production in today's Sikkim, the entire field work would have been dependent on the information regarding the availability of women involved in handicraft production and or selling either privately or working in government and private organization, cooperatives etc. This difficulty was succeeded through extensive survey in Sikkim. Another important difficulty was the availability of the women handicraft workers and entrepreneurs at one time during the field work. Moreover, to cover even a single or two private entrepreneurs in a village extensive survey was done.

Besides, at the beginning of field study the main difficulty I had to face was to convince the people about the purpose of the research. To tackle the problem I had to convince the people by stating the fact that the data obtained from them is only for the study and research, hence will not be disclosed to anybody and their secrecy shall strictly be maintained. The techniques of rapport establishment and information management were

adopted for field study and as a woman it was easier for me to conduct this study .

On the whole the present study has certain major limitations since there has been no empirical studies on role and status of women in Sikkim . Thereby, the benefit of earlier research studies were not much available. Therefore, as an initial study it has its own limitations. Apart from this, the study was undertaken in different places only among 116 informants in Sikkim . Hence, the observations gained from the present study can not be generalized too far covering the whole of the states even though this study provides broad clues about the condition of women in the state and the country as well .

1.11 Chapterization

The thesis contains nine chapters based on in-depth research on women involved in handicraft production, selling and business in Sikkim

The first chapter is *Introduction* , that deals with theoretical part of the research including background and utility of the study, statement of the problem, study area, concepts, review of literature, significance of the study, research design , aims and objectives , research methodology , research questions and hypotheses, and also limitation of the study .

Chapter II is *Sikkim - the State and the Peoples* in which devotion is made to delineate the profile of the state in terms of its physical feature and eco-system , administrative set-up , demography , education and ethnic composition etc.

Chapter III contains *Profile of the Status of Women of Sikkim* which deals with situation of women in present day Sikkim . The presentation in this chapter has been made elaborately on the profile of women in terms of demography , education , socio-cultural, and socio-economic characteristics including politics and health issues . In this chapter the entire discussion has been made in the purview of development vis-à-vis progress of women including gender disparity in Sikkim .

Chapter IV deals with *Handicrafts and Women of Sikkim* in which presentation is made on the aspects of handicrafts of Sikkim , the participation vis-à-vis involvement of women in producing the different types of handicraft in the Sikkimese society. Besides, the significance and role of Government Institute of Cottage Industry (GICI) in handicraft industry has also been discussed in this chapter. Apart from these , an attempt have also been made in view to delineate the economic aspects of handicrafts in Sikkim .

Chapter V is Cooperatives and Welfare Societies for promoting Handicraft Industry of Sikkim – The Role and Status of Women which reflects the importance and role of various cooperatives (including exclusive women cooperatives), women welfare societies, private entrepreneurs etc. in handicraft industry of Sikkim. Indeed, in this chapter an attempt is made to reveal the type and nature of organization of various handicrafts production, its selling and marketing, training and employment, and so on.

Chapter VI deals with Socio-Economic Profile of Sikkimese Women involved in Handicraft Production and Selling. It deals with the detail discussion of demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics of the women handicraft producing under study.

Chapter VII is Role, Status and Empowerment of Sikkimese Women involved in Handicraft Production and Selling which delineate the role and status of women involved in handicraft production and or selling particularly in relation to the aspect of empowerment issues. This has been presented specifically in the contexts of their rights to utilize and also to own resources like education, gainful employment, capital and property, access to credit and savings, involvement in decision-making process of both household and financial affairs including purchasing, resources control, rights to have own choice in marriage, rights to have better health and less household chores, politics etc.

Chapter VIII is A Brief Resume of Sikkimese Women Handicraft Producers, Sellers and Entrepreneurs – Some Case Studies. In fact, the portrait of 12 case studies are presented in this chapter in support to envisage the situation of women in terms of role and status of women including their empowerment issues in Sikkim.

Chapter IX confers on Major Findings, Concluding Remarks and Recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II

SIKKIM - THE STATE AND THE PEOPLES

Physical Features, Environment and Eco-system
Administrative Set-up
Population
Education
Economy
Ethnic Composition
 Lepcha , Bhutia , Nepalese , Other Communities
Findings

CHAPTER II

SIKKIM - THE STATE AND THE PEOPLES

Before going through the discussion on the situation of women in Sikkim, it may be relevant to have a grasp over the background of the state and its ethnic composition .

2.1 Physical Features, Environment and Eco-system

Sikkim is located in the Eastern Himalayan region with a geographical area of 7096 sq. km. The state being a part of the inner ranges of the Himalayas has no open valley or plains. It is a tiny state joined the Indian Union as its smallest state on May 26, 1975. It is situated in the eastern Himalaya from longitude 88 degree 03' 40" to 88 degree 57' 19" east and from latitude 27 degree 03' 47" to 28 degree 07' 34" north . The state spread below the highest elevation the Mt. Kanchanjunga (8534 meters) , the third highest mountain in the world and revered by the Sikkimese as their deity . The altitudinal zone ranges from 300 meters to 8586 meters above mean sea level comprising of lower hills , middle and upper hills , alpine regions and snow bound areas . It is a beautiful mountainous that leaves lasting impression of its scenic beauty. It has a total area of 7096 sq. km., 114 km. From north to south and 64 km. From east to west. Its total territory constitute only 0.22 per cent of India's total territory .

The entire state primarily consists of gneissose rocks and half-schistose rocks. The soil developed from gneissic group or rocks is brown clay generally shallow and poor . They are typically coarse , often with ferric concentrations , neutral to acidic with poor organic mineral nutrients. They tend to carry most of the evergreen and deciduous forests . The high intensity of rainfall in the state often cause extensive soil erosion and landslides , and heavy losses of nutrients of land by leaching . Teesta and Rangit which originate respectively from Cholamu Lake and Rathong Glacier , are the two major rivers of the state.

Sikkim being the wettest part of the north eastern region, its climate varies from the sub-tropical to the alpine depending upon the altitude (Sub-tropical up to 1500 meters ; Temperate from 1500 to 2000 meters ; Alpine up to 4000 meters ; Snowline at 5000 meters and above) . the relative humidity remains above 70 per cent throughout the year at most places . The temperature varies with altitude and slope (generally 6 degree to 10 degree) . For most of the period in a year, the climate is cold and humid as rainfall occurs in each month . The state receives an average rainfall 500 cm. This is the highest in the eastern Himalayas. As a whole the state receives an annual rainfall of 2000 cm to 4000 cm.

Sikkim , the state is bestowed with abundant natural resources and has tremendous biodiversity and has been identified as one of the hot spot for biodiversity. One third of its land is covered with dense forest . The total

recorded forest area is 5841.40 sq. km. , which is 82.32 per cent of the total geographic area of the state , and the per capita forest cover has been 0.61 hectare . The details in this regard are given below.

Classification of recorded forest area, 2004

Classification of area		Area in sq. km.
Reserved Forests (including tree forest, pasture, alpine shrub and uncultivable Alpine regions e.g. perpetual snow, glacier and Alpine lakes, etc.)		5452.40
Protected Forest	Khasmahal Forest	285
	Gaucharan Forest	104
	Total	389.00
Total Recorded Forest Area	Area	5841.40
	% to total geographical area	82.32

Source: Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department, Sikkim.

Indeed, the forest of the state exhibit diversified variety of flora and fauna. More than 5000 species flowering plants are found in the state which is nearly one-third of the total species of the covering plants found in the country . The Sikkim Himalayas that spread over Sikkim and the hill region of Darjeeling harbors more than 26 per cent of the flowering plants reported in the country and known to be an important phytogeographical reserve of the country. Species-wise , it has approximately 5000 flowering plants, 515 orchids, 36 rhododendrons, 16 conifers, 23 bamboos, 362 ferns and ferns allies, 8 tree ferns , 60 primulas , 11 oaks, over 424 medicinal plants, 150 mammals, 552 birds, 48 fishes, over 690 numbers of butterflies and also 28 numbers of mountains/peaks, 21 glaciers , 227 high altitude lakes and wetlands and over 104 rivers and streams. Indeed, the Sikkim Himalayas has excellent scope for value added eco-tourism and traditions.

2.2 Administrative Set-up

The state is bound on the north the by the Tibet plateau , on the east by Chumbi valley of Tibet and Bhutan, on the west by Nepal and on the south by Darjeeling district of West Bengal . The state has four districts viz. North, South, East and West , and their respective headquarters are Mangan , Namchi , Gangtok and Gyalshing . Among the districts the North district is the largest and having the geographical areas of 4226 sq. km. And South district is smallest having the areas of 750 sq. Km. There is 159 Panchayat Units and 453 Revenue Blocks, which comprise of 32 Assembly Constituencies. The Bhutia, Lepcha, Nepali and Limbu are the main languages recognized by the State Government, and the Nepali language is the lingua franca of the state. The capital of the State is Gangtok, which is situated in East District and elevated at 5,840 feet above sea level . Gangtok is the principal urban center and constitute the focal point of all socio-political and cultural activities. It is connected by well developed road links with all the four districts. Gangtok is also the principal commercial center of the state. Being the seat of the state government , it has become the most important center of administrative and political activities . The administrative set-up of the State (as on 20001) is given in Table 2.

Table: 2 Administrative Set-up of Sikkim, 2001

Particulars	Number of Unit (according to district)				
	North	East	South	West	State
District	1	1	1	1	4
Area in sq. km.	4226	954	750	1166	7096
Sub-division	2	3	2	2	9
Town	1	4	2	2	9
Revenue Block					
Revenue Block	45	120	135	111	411
Forest Block	8	14	10	10	42
Total	53	134	145	121	453
Panchayat Unit	20	48	42	49	159
Panchayat ward	103	273	255	274	905
Police Station	5	11*	6	6	28

Source: Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India, 2001.

Note : * Including Crime Branch and Vigilance.

Human Development Index and its component in Sikkim as per availability is depicted in Table 3.

Table : 3 Human Development Index and its component In Sikkim since 1991 to 1998

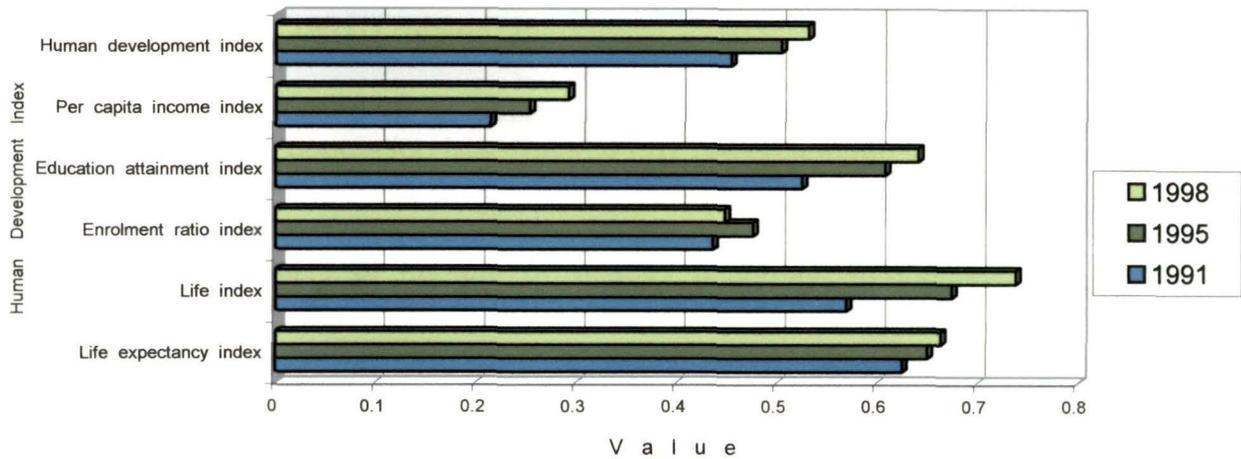
Component	Year		
	1991	1995	1998
	Sikkim	Sikkim	Sikkim
Life expectancy index	0.625	0.650	0.663
Literacy index	0.569	0.674	0.738
Enrolment ratio index	0.436	0.476	0.448
Education attainment index	0.525	0.608	0.641
Per capita income index	0.214	0.253	0.292
Human development index	0.454	0.504	0.532

Source: National Human Development Report, 2001, Planning commission, Government of India, March 2002

Actually, Human Development Index is a composite of variables capturing attainments in three dimensions of human development viz. Economic, educational and health. In other words, it may be defined as a process by which people are able to enlarge their choices, enhance their capabilities and expand their freedoms. Its goal is to place people and what they value most - their aspirations, their rights, their priorities - at the center of development.

Taking the human development indices percentages in Sikkim, literacy rate has been 69.68%, fertility rate 2.75, infant mortality rate 52, index of social and economic infrastructure 108.99, plan expenditure in social sector 45.38%, access to safe drinking water in percentage of households 73.19%, per capita consumption 182 KHz, and per capita income Rs. 11,356/- (Table 3).

Figure 1
Gains of Human Development in Sikkim , 1991 to 1998 (Source: Human Development Report, 2001)



2.3 Population

According to 2001 Census of India, its total population has been 5,40,841, whereas in 1991 it was 4,06,457 and 3,16,385 in 1981. Of the total 5,40,841 population in Sikkim the percentage of females has been 47.7% as compared to male (52.3%). The number of total households is 1,14,223 with average family size 4.7 which has been low as compared to national average of 5.3. Density of population per sq. km. since 1901 onwards has been shown in Table 4.

Table: 4 Density of population per sq. km. since 1901 to 2001, Sikkim and India

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Sikkim	8	12	12	15	17	19	23	30	44	57	76
Growth %	-	50.0	0	25.0	13.3	11.8	21.1	30.4	46.7	29.5	33.3
India	77	82	81	90	103	117	143	177	221	267	324
Growth %	-	6.5	-1.2	11.1	14.4	13.6	22.2	23.8	24.9	20.8	21.3

Source : Census of India, India and Sikkim Series, Government of India , 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 .

Density of population shows that after 1971 onwards the population growth had has been significant till 2001 both in Sikkim and India (Table 4).

Table : 5 Decadal population growth since 1901-1911 to 1991-2001, Sikkim and India

	1901 to 1911	1911 to 1921	1921 to 1931	1931 to 1941	1941 to 1951	1951 to 1961	1961 to 1971	1971 to 1981	1981 to 1991	1991 to 2001
Sikkim	48.98	-7.05	34.37	10.67	13.34	17.76	29.38	50.77	28.47	32.98
India	5.75	-0.31	11.00	14.22	13.31	21.64	24.80	24.66	23.86	21.34

Source : Census of India, India and Sikkim Series, Government of India , 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 .

Decadal growth particularly during the decade of 1971-1981 had been much higher in Sikkim. Indeed, the decadal growth of population as a whole

significant since the decade 1961-1971 onwards . Indeed, the decadal growth percentages have been higher in each decades as compared to national growth rates since 1961 (Table 5) .

The majority of the total population live in rural areas (88.93 per cent) . The percentage of urban population has been 11.07 per cent in the state. According to population size the distribution of villages has been given in Table 6 .

Table: 6 Distribution of number of villages according to population size in Sikkim, 1991 and 2001

Population size	1991		2001	
	No. of village	Percentage	No. of village	Percentage
0	0	0	0	0
1 - 200	52	11.63	42	9.33
201 - 500	125	27.96	82	18.22
501 - 1000	159	35.57	157	34.89
1001 - 2000	79	17.67	120	26.67
2001 - 5000	29	6.49	40	8.89
5000 above	3	0.67	9	2.0
Total	447	100.0	450	100.0

Source: Census of India, Sikkim Series 2001, Government of India, Sikkim.

It is apparent from Table 6 that due to increase in population the number of villages having population size 1001-2000 , 2001-5000 and 5000 above have increased to a extent since 1991 to 2001 . As a whole , 62.44 per cent of the total 450 villages in 2001 has been having the population size in between 1-200 to 501-1000 .

2.4 Education

The total literacy in the state has been 69.68 per cent with variation district-wise. Of the four districts , the east district is having higher literacy rate (75.57 per cent) and lowest in west district (59.31 per cent). While this has been 69.11 per cent in the north and 68.12 per cent in the south districts.

Table : 7 Literacy rate since 1901 to 2001, Sikkim and India

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Sikkim	NA	NA	3.97	2.98	NA	NA	12.33	17.74	33.83	56.94	69.68
India	5.35	5.92	7.16	9.50	16.10	16.67	24.02	29.45	36.17	52.21	65.38

Source: Census Report, Government of India, 1981, 1991.

Literacy rate in Sikkim as shown in Table 7 presents the trend of significant increase since 1971 . The overall literacy percentage has gone up to 69.68 per cent in 2001 as against 56.94 per cent in 1991 and 33.83 per cent in 1981 . In the year 1971 it was only 17.74 per cent. In fact, since 1991 to 2001 the literacy percentages have been higher even than national average in those years .

Table: 8 Distribution of no. Of villages according to literacy
In Sikkim, 1991 and 2001

Literacy rate	1991		2001	
	No. of village	Percentage	No. of village	Percentage
0	3	0.67	1	0.22
1 to < 10	3	0.67	2	0.44
10 to < 20	12	2.68	5	1.11
20 to < 40	89	19.91	36	8.0
40 to < 60	239	53.47	124	27.56
60 to < 80	91	20.36	260	57.78
80 to < 100	9	2.01	22	4.89
100 above	1	0.22	0	0
Total	447	100.0	450	100.0

Source: Census of India, Sikkim Series 2001, Government of India, Sikkim.

Table 8 gives that with the increase in total literacy since 1991 to 2001 the number of villages having higher literacy rate 60 to < 80 has increased substantially from 20.36 per cent in 1991 to 57.78 per cent in 2001 . Besides, there has also been the trend of increase in the number of villages having higher literacy rate 80 to < 100 e.g. from 2.01 per cent in 1991 to 4.89 per cent in 2001 . As a whole , 62.67 per cent of the total 450 villages in 2001 has been having the higher rate of literacy in between 60 to < 80 and 80 to < 100 .

In this context it may be relevant to have a grasp over the distribution of schools in Sikkim as shown in Table 9.

Table: 9 Number of schools and students by category, 2004

Category	Government		Private	Total	No. of Student (2004 year)
	State	Central			
Lower Primary Schools	166	1	49	216	19,674
Primary Schools	336		181	517	78,585
Upper Primary Schools	147		59	206	27,549
Secondary School	92	1	17	110	9,147
Higher Secondary School	41	3	6	50	5,675
Total	782	5	312	1099	1,40,630

Source: Human Resources Development Department, Sikkim.

Apart from schools, there is 7 number of Colleges including one Law College , and 5 numbers of Teacher Training Institutes in Sikkim .

2.5 Economy

The economy of the state is mainly based on agricultural and animal husbandry . The agriculture in Sikkim is of the mixed type and still at the subsistence level rather than commercial level . Agriculture is practiced on terraced field. The work force participation rate as per 2001 census is 39.31 per cent . The distribution of working population and land use are shown in Table 10 and Table 11 .

Table: 10 Distribution of population according to working, Non-working and category of works, 2001

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total Population	2,88,484	100.0	2,52,367	100.0	5,40,851	100.0
Total workers	1,65,716	57.4	97,327	38.6	2,63,043	48.64
Non-workers	1,22,768	42.6	1,55,040	61.4	2,77,808	51.36
Total Workers	1,65,716	100.0	97,327	100.0	2,63,043	100.0
Main workers	1,46,541	88.4	66,363	68.2	2,12,904	80.94
Marginal workers	19,175	11.6	30,964	31.8	50,139	19.06
Total Workers	1,65,716	100.0	97,327	100.0	2,63,043	100.0
Cultivators	70,107	42.3	61,151	62.8	1,31,258	49.9
Agricultural Labourers	8,762	5.3	8,238	8.5	17,000	6.5
Household industry worker	2,849	1.7	1,370	1.4	4,219	1.6
Other workers	83,998	50.7	26,568	27.3	1,10,566	42.0

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India, 2001 .

Table : 11 Land use pattern in Sikkim, 2004

Category of land	Area in hectare
Irrigated	11.31
Un-irrigated	49.31
Non Agriculture Use	6.22
Barren land	8.98
Groves/Bushes, etc.	17.34
Grass lands	4.12
Uncultivated fallow	8.54
Cardamom	21.22
Operational area	127.05

Source: Food Security and Agriculture Development Department, Sikkim.

Besides, horticulture is another important activity of the people. Large cardamom, ginger and turmeric are principal horticultural crops in Sikkim. In a predominantly rural economy such as Sikkim, animal husbandry activities has been playing an effective role to bringing about substantial improvements in the subsistence as well as living standard of the people.

The state is not rich in mineral resources and apart from the deposits of copper, lead and zinc, no other viable and exploitable mineral deposits have so far been discovered. As regards to the industrial development , a number of small and medium units have been promoted in the state. For instances, The Sikkim Time Corporation (SITCO) and Government Institute of Handicrafts and Handlooms. Indeed, the overall area available for agricultural operations is limited to 11 per cent of the total geographical areas of the state and with the increasing population , per capita land has been continuously declining . Under such situation , the household/cottage industry like handicrafts and handloom has also been playing important role and has become an integral part of the household economy of the region and that too add to household income substantially as well as providing wage employment opportunities apart from entrepreneurship in such cottage industry, besides jobs in government services , etc. Moreover, the various cooperatives also has been playing important effective role in the development of economy of the state . The details of various cooperatives has been shown in Table 12 , which indicates

the overall trend of growth in the number of various cooperatives from 1999 to 2003, except decline in the case of Consumers Cooperative Society. Moreover, Table 12 also indicates a rapid growth (740.0 per cent) of Weavers' Society since 1999 to 2003.

Table: 12 Co-operative Societies in Sikkim, 1999 and 2003

Type of Societies	No. of Cooperative Societies		Growth % (1999-2003)
	1999	2003	
Cooperative Bank	1	2	100.0
Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies	35	153	337.1
Farmer/Service Cooperatives	19	32	68.4
Non-Agricultural Credit Societies	8	9	12.5
Marketing Cooperatives	28	36	28.6
Dairy Union Society	96	112	16.7
Livestock Products Cooperative	2	10	400.0
Society Weavers Societies	5	42	740.0
Other Industrial Society	15	18	20.0
Consumers Cooperative Society	115	101	-12.2
Total	324	515	59.0

Source: Department of Cooperation, Government of Sikkim, Sikkim.

On the whole, tourism industry has also been playing important effective role in the property of Sikkim's economy. Every year huge number of domestic tourists used to visit Sikkim including international tourists. The number of domestic tourist has increased to 2,34,394 in the year of 2004-2005 as compared to 1,60,789 in 2002-2003. Similarly, the number of international tourists in Sikkim also has increased to 14,774 in 2004-2005 than that of 8,439 in 2002-2003 (Table 12).

2.6 Ethnic Composition

Sikkim is a multi-ethnic State. The present population of Sikkim is primarily composed of Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalese and the plain peoples, in which the Nepalese are numerically dominant.

Lepchas are said to be the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim. The Lepchas were food gathering people who claimed they came from Mayel, a legendary kingdom on the slopes of Kanchanjunga. Some believed that they might have migrated via Assam to this mountain state. They call themselves as Rong-pa, a totem which means people living in ravines or *Rong-Folk*. The Lepchas also call themselves as *Rongkup* (children of Rong), followed *Bongthing* and worshipped the spirits of mountains, forests, and rivers that is to say nature in general and lived in close harmony with nature. Religiously, these days they belong to Lamaist Buddhism due to their conversion into this faith by Bhutia rulers i.e. Particularly after the Bhutias' immigration to this region. Besides, there are considerable number of Lepchas who are mainly the Christian converts.

They speak Lepcha language - the most ancient language and having their own script. The Lepchas are mongoloid in appearance with oblique eyes small in stature and fair in complexion who are amiable, cheerful, hospitable,

shy, good humoured , sociable, indolent and peace loving people. Most of them are concentrated in Dzongu valley of north Sikkim. They used to live in hill tops. They lived in hunting, fishing, trade and later agriculture , and paddy , oranges, cardamom are their favourable crops. They are also good entomologists in identifying the names and behavior of the wild animals, birds, insects , fishes, frogs, medicinal herbs, and also at ease to distinguish all the edible roots. The Lepcha is now spread in all parts of Sikkim because of network of roads, communications, education, and seeking government jobs.

The Lepchas have no caste distinction, but they believe that they belong to either of the five clans namely *Syang-Den Mu* , *Ling-SingMu* , *Himu* , *Karthak Mu* , and *Thikung Syalang* which originated from supernatural and mythological ancestors. There are certain other classes based on the places of residence .They acknowledge the existence of good and bad spirits and do a lot to appease the bad one . Every class has a priest doctor, who is in fact an exorcist. The priest doctors may be either male or female. The male one is called 'bon' and the female one is called generally 'monn' . The Lepcha society is patriarchal. They used to live in a joint family. Polyandry was prevalent among the Lepchas in the past (Kotturan : 1983). Marriage of wards is normally negotiated by the parents and after fulfilling certain condition, the marriage is publicly celebrated with much feasting. But with the passage of time and spread of education the modern Lepchas do not favour such practice . While , the Lepchas on the whole are free to choose their partners. But they have still a tradition of paying bride-price. Traditionally the inheritance of property according to male line. They have their own language locally known as Rong or Lepcha language which has been recognized by the Government. The script of their language has been Tibeto- Burmese.

The male Lepcha wears a dress called a *Pagi* made of cotton which is striped. The dress comes down to the knees. It is fastened on the shoulder by a pin and a belt is worn round the waist. The Lepcha women wear two piece dresses. The upper garment or blouse is called the *Tago* whereas the lower part which resembles a petticoat is called *Domdyan* . Lepchas are very good at archery. Archery competitions are held very frequently by the Lepchas. The Lepchas were expert weavers and cane craftsmen and very handy with the bow and arrow, but their crafts were meant mostly for domestic purposes. The Lepcha bags, hats, shawls and dresses have been popular in Sikkim and Darjeeling hill areas.

Bhutias of Sikkim are the people of Tibetan origin who played important role in establishing the kingdom of Sikkim. The present days Bhutias are mainly the descendants of the early settlers from Tibet and Bhutan who came to this place some time in the 15th Century. They accompanied ancestors of the first Chogyal Phuntsog Namgyal who settled in higher altitude , driving the Lepchas into the forests and lower valleys . Racially, they belong to Tibet-Mongoloid. Bhutias are big built, tall, strong, sturdy and fair in complexion with pronounced Mongolian features and differ distinctly from the Lepchas. The Bhutias promoted jhooming (shifting) cultivation as they possessed plenty of

lands and sowed paddy, kodo (millet), maize and other cereals . The Bhutias have imbibed the Tibetan civilization in regard to their dresses, ornaments, religion and scripts. The traditional dress of the male member is known as the *Bakhu* which is a loose cloak type garment with full sleeves and is fastened at the neck on one side and near the waist with a cotton belt . They wear loose trousers. The Bhutia woman's dress consists of a silken *Honju* which is a full sleeve blouse and a loose gown type garment fastened near the waist tightly with a belt. In the front portion they tie a loose sheet of multi-coloured woolen cloth made of special design . This is called *Pangdin* and is a symbol of married woman. Ladies are fond of very heavy jewellery made of pure gold .

Being Lamaist Buddhists aligned with the traditional Tibetan and Bhutanese aristocratic houses (Sinha : 1983), the monasteries , prayer flags, prayer wheels and chortens are much a part of the lives of the Bhutias as faith in reincarnation. Earlier every Bhutia family had a male member who joined the monastery and led the life of a monk because the monks are considered the intellectual elite of the Bhutia Society and education was the sole preserve of the monasteries.

In northern Sikkim, where they are the major inhabitants, they are known as Lachenpas and Lachungpas . Indeed, Lachenpas and Lachungpas have their own traditional legal system called "*Dzumsa*" (means meeting p[lace of the people) headed by "*Pipon*" (village headman) . The "*Dzumsa*" of north Sikkim has been given full protection by the Government by deeming a status of Panchayat ward and the "*Pipon*" a status of Panchayat . As a whole, there is no caste distinction among the Bhutias. Their social structure is patriarchal. Patrilocal society with the norms of patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent male equigeniture prevails among the Bhutias. As for rules of inheritance, property is inherited only by sons. Sons get equal shares. Succession has been by the eldest son. Women have no right of inheritance in general. Normally , the Bhutias used to live in a joint family. They have their own 'Bhutia' language, and the script is Tibetan and recognized by the Government. Interestingly, According to Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes Order 1978 - Bhutia also includes Chumbipa , Dophapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa , Tibetan , Tromopa , Yolmo , etc.

In marriage the practice of polyandry was very common among the Bhutias. Polyandry served to prevent the family being split up and the property from being divided . But with the passage of time and spread of education this practice finds no favor with the modern and young Bhutias now-a-days . Marriage is normally arranged and settled by the parents. In the affairs of marriage , maternal uncle and astrologer play an important role . In marriage, they also have the tradition of paying bride price. Both men and women can seek a divorce. If the matrimonial relation has to be served , the man or the wife would refer the case to the village elders. At present the aggrieved parties go to the court of law also . Traditionally, the parties who apply for

separation has to pay a penalty and the actual expense incurred during marriage .

Though among Bhutias and Lepchas traditionally women have no right to family property. But women and girls are given gifts and assets including livestock, utensils , ornaments and land etc. (if the household is wealthy) which may be taken with them after marriage. It is known as "*Pewa*". But Bhutia and Lepcha women who marry outside of their ethnic group forfeit their opportunity to get even "*Pewa*" property . Constitutionally, as both Bhutias and Lepchas are scheduled tribes they are not the subject to the Hindu marriage Act of 1955 , which was extended to Sikkim in 1989.

The Bhutias are expert weavers and the hand-woven rugs, carpets and blankets are very famous and quite high in demand. All Bhutia art and paintings are derived from Buddhists spiritually and the most famous are the *Thangkas*. The Bhutia craftsmen are known for the intricately carved statues , objects of worship and *choktses* – the carved tables.

Nepalese indeed comprise over 70% of Sikkim's population. They begun to settle down in Sikkim since the last two decades of 19th Century. Their settlement in Sikkim was encouraged by the British. The Nepalese community of Sikkim is the *mélange* of various castes and a highly stratified society, speaking their own vernacular and having a culture of their own. Among the castes of Nepalese origin settled in Sikkim the Bahuns (Brahmins) , Thakuris and Chetris are notable . The Bahuns have the highest position among the Nepalese caste people and normally do not have any matrimonial relations with lower castes. The Bahuns are basically monogamous but some of them were earlier known to be polygynous. They would not even eat together with other non-Bahunns. Next in social rank are the Thakuris followed by Chetris . Both Thakuris and Chetris wear sacred threads. Indeed, Chetris have little difference with Bahuns and Thakuris in terms of ritual practices and social ceremonies . Along the lower castes, there are Kamis the blacksmiths , Damais the tailors and Sarkis the cobblers etc. , who are also regarded as Scheduled Castes in Sikkim. They are the artisans and engaged in trades which are forbidden for the higher castes Nepalese. All of these caste groups are Hindus by religion. Besides castes , there are several tribes normally enumerated as *Kiratis* . Among the Kiratis, the Gurungs, Rais, Mangars, Limbus, Sherpas, Tamangs, Newars etc. Are important. In fact, Gurungs, Murmis, Mangars, Rais etc. were previously enumerated as *Kiratis* but now are treated as middle castes in the Nepalese caste hierarchy , and they are mainly the Hindus and have their own dialect .

Limbus are mainly Hindus , though some Limbus are still found as animists in the interior part of Sikkim . Limbi also believe that they are indigenous people of Sikkim. Indeed, they are supposed to have been immigrants, but are identified with a region covering Eastern Nepal and western Sikkim and traditionally called Limbuan (Chaube : 1987). The Limbus have their own Limbu language which is recognized as one of the state languages in Sikkim . Though, Limbus are regarded equal by other middle castes Nepalese , yet they are not completely assimilated into the Nepali caste hierarchy. Now, the

Limbus want to retain their own Limbu identity in contrast to the Nepali identity .

Sherpas were normally grouped with Kirati tribes in earlier periods. Sherpas are not assimilated into Nepalese caste hierarchy. They have their own dialect. Religiously they belong to Lamaist Buddhism .Under the Constitution of India , Sherpas are subsumed under the term 'Bhutia' and recognized as Scheduled Tribe. Tamangs also were enumerated with Kiratis. But now they represent as Nepalese in a broader context. Tamangs are not normally included in the Nepalese caste hierarchy , but are regarded as equal to the other Nepalese middle castes in Sikkim . Religiously they also belong to Buddhism and have their own dialect . Newars in Sikkim are regarded as equal by other Nepalese middle castes. Though they are mainly Hindus but worship both Hindu and Buddhists deities together and combine rituals of both faiths in their religious and domestic levels . They also have their own Newari dialect. In fact, Newars are predominantly traders.

Above all , Nepali language is the lingua-franca of the State and spoken by all communities in Sikkim . It is recognized by the State Government as well as in the year 1992 it has also received Constitutional recognition and included in the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

On the whole , Nepali society in Sikkim had been a rigidly patriarchal society with the norms of patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent and male equigeniture prevails among the Nepalese. As for rules of inheritance, property is inherited only by sons. Sons get equal shares. Succession by the eldest son. Women have no right of inheritance in general and thereby do not inherit property. Nepalese are mainly monogamous but the cases of polygamy is also there. Marriage is mainly arranged by the parents and at the time of marriage a non-compulsory gift or dowry known as '*daijo*' is given, which may include household goods or livestock. As Hindus, Nepalese are subject to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, which governs property relations in marriage among Sikkimese Hindu Households. Among the Nepali higher castes, divorce is not practiced by custom. Widower remarriage and sororate take place but widow remarriage is not practiced.

The traditional costume of Nepali men consists of *Daura* and *Suruwal*. *Daura* is a knee-length double breasted shirt, fastened at four points across the body by a string of cloth called the *Tuna* ; and *suruwal* is the trousers . They wear a sleeveless coat over the *Daura* and a cap called the *Birkhe Topi* . The women wear a double-breasted blouse called *Choubandi*, held at four points across the body by the *Tuna*. They wear a *Phariya* or the *Gunui* which is worn from waist down and reaches to the ankle with tiny pleats in front . The *Phariya* is held at the waist by a long strip of cotton cloth called *Patuka* . The women cover the head with a triangular or rectangular piece of cloth called *Majetro* and tie a cloth around the bust down to the hips called *Hembari* .

The Nepalese women are expert in hand-knitting of woollen products, handloom weaving too. Many of them also are now also involved in carpet weaving and handloom weaving in Sikkim.

Other Communities

There are many people (plain peoples) from other states of India and settled in Sikkim. Firstly, the Marwaris who belong to the business community and came to promote trade via Sikkim to Tibet and later also in Sikkim. They have settled in Sikkim since long. Besides Marwaris, there are people from Bihar, Hariyana and Rajasthan. These communities are also involved in business and other associated works and allied professions. Rest people from other States are employed in Central and State Government jobs and in other professional areas like teaching and other technical areas. The distribution of population of Sikkim according to communities is given in Table 13.

Table : 13 Population by community since 1891 to 2001, Sikkim

Year	Community	Population	
1891	Total	30,458	
	Lepcha	5,762	
	Bhutia	4,894	
	Limbu	3,356	
	Nepalese	15,458	
1911	Total	30,000	
	Lepcha, Bhutia and others	50,000	
1931	Figures based on religious affiliations (Indians & Tibetans excluded)	Total	109,808
		Lepcha	13,060
		Bhutia	11,955
		Nepalese	84,693
1951	Total	137,725	
	Buddhists	Total	39,395
		Lepcha	13,625
		Bhutia	15,626
	Hindu including Limbus	97,863	
1961	Total	162,189	
	Buddhists(Lepcha, Bhutia and others)	49,894	
	Hindu	108,165	
1971	Total	209,843	
1981	Total	316,385	
	Scheduled Caste	18,281	
	Scheduled Tribe	73,623	
1991	Based on Language	Total	406,457
		Nepali	256,418
		Bhutia	32,593
		Lepcha	29,854
		Others	87,592
2001	Total	5,40,851	
	Scheduled Caste	27,165	
	Scheduled Tribe	111,405	

Source : Sikkim since Independence, by Amal Datta, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1991 and Census Report, Government of India, 1991 and 2001.

Table 13 shows that the population of each communities had has been increased significantly since 1901. Obviously, it may be said that the female population also has been increased significantly in all communities.

Findings

Climate of Sikkim varies from sub-tropical to the alpine depending upon altitude . The temperature varies with altitude and slope. For most of the period in a year, the climate is cold and humid. As a whole the state receives an annual rainfall of 2000 cm to 4000 cm.

Sikkim , the state is bestowed with abundant natural resources and has tremendous biodiversity . One third of its land is covered with dense forest .

The human development indices , percentages in Sikkim have increased since 1991 to 1998 .

The decadal growth of population as a whole significant since the decade 1961-1971 onwards, and such growth percentages have been higher in each decades as compared to national growth rates since 1961.

Of the total population 88.93 per cent live in rural areas and 11.07 per cent in urban areas. Number of villages having population size 1001-2000 , 2001-5000 and 5000 above have increased to a extent since 1991 to 2001 .

Overall literacy percentage has gone up to 69.68 per cent in 2001 as against 56.94 per cent in 1991. and 33.83 per cent in 1981 . In the year 1971 it was only 17.74 per cent.

District-wise , the east district is having higher literacy rate (75.57 per cent) and lowest in west district (59.31 per cent) . While this has been 69.11 per cent in the north and 68.12 per cent in the south districts.

The number of villages having higher literacy rate 60 to < 80 has increased substantially from 20.36 per cent in 1991 to 57.78 per cent in 2001 . Besides, the number of villages having higher literacy rate 80 to < 100 e.g. from 2.01 per cent in 1991 to 4.89 per cent in 2001 .

The economy of the state is mainly based on agricultural and animal husbandry . Besides, horticulture is another important activity of the people. The work force participation rate is 39.31 per cent .

The state is not rich in mineral resources and apart from the deposits of copper, lead and zinc, no other viable and exploitable mineral deposits have so far been discovered.

As regards to the industrial development , a number of small and medium units have been promoted in the state.

Overall area available for agricultural operations is limited to 11 per cent of the total geographical areas of the state .

Various cooperatives has also been playing important effective role in the development of state's economy . Number of cooperatives has increased from 324 in 1999 to 515 in 2003. On the whole , there has been a rapid growth (740.0 per cent) of Weavers' Society since 1999 to 2003.

Tourism industry has also been playing important effective role in Sikkim's economy. Numbers of domestic and international tourist have increased to 2,34,394 and 14,774 in 2004-2005 as compared to 1,60,789 and 8,439 in 2002-2003 respectively .

Sikkim is a multi-ethnic State. The present population of Sikkim is primarily composed of Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalese and the plain peoples, in which the Nepalese are numerically dominant.

It may be said that with the increasing population, per capita land has been continuously declining. Under such situation, the cottage industry like handicrafts and handloom has been playing important role and has become an integral part of the household economy of the region and that too add to household income substantially as well as providing wage employment opportunities apart from entrepreneurship in such cottage industry, besides jobs in government services, etc.

CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN OF SIKKIM

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CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN OF SIKKIM

In this section an attempt as a whole is made to visualize the extent of gains in human development in respect of women in general with a view to envisage the situation of women in terms of the disparity vis-à-vis the status of women. The entire analysis in this part has been based on available secondary information which were drawn from various reports, published books, research articles, etc.

Women's relative status, however, varied from one ethnic group to another. Their social position in the State seems to be better than that in the rest of the country. At the economic, social, ritual, religious and political levels the women have equal rights with the men as claimed. Although it is secondary to that of the males. A woman is considered to be an asset in the household and commands a bride price, but she has no rights of inheritance. It is only when a daughter remains unmarried that parents customarily transfer some property to her.

The status of women in Sikkim – their economic contribution, socio-cultural autonomy, authority, involvement in the decision-making process within the household – varies across communities. The practice of polyandry among tribal communities could be one of the variables explaining the higher value attached to women. Similarly, local religious practice also plays a role in influencing the status of women (Dhamala, 1985).

In contrast to the unfavourable sex ratio in the population as a whole, the number of women in government employment is greater. Overall, 20.74 per cent of Government employees are women of which 35.0 per cent are of Lepcha or Bhutia. Indeed, women are not secluded, while more visible in the public sphere in Sikkim than is the norm for India and South-Asia as a whole (Lama, 1994).

The women do all the household work. They manage the family affairs. The senior female member played a commanding role within the family by controlling resources, making crucial planting and harvesting decisions, and determining the expenses and budget allocations. Yet women's lives remained centered on their traditional roles - taking care of most household chores, fetching water and animal fodder, and doing farm work. Their standing in society was mostly contingent on their husbands' and parents' social and economic positions.

They have their important role in animal rearing including grazing and feeding, cleaning sheds etc. It has been their responsibility traditionally, to collect fuel wood and fodder for the family, and fetch potable water for drinking and other purposes including for ritual and social functions mainly from 'jhoras' (springs) and other sources in vessels which they carry in a *doko* (basket) on their backs, domestic business, significant role in agricultural operations starting from the preparation of bed, sowing, planting and weeding, down to harvesting, storing of crops, etc. but except ploughing. Women participate in economic activities and also exercise control over domestic expenditure and enjoy a status equal to that of men in some cases.

Women's work is an important underpinning of society and economy in Sikkim as it is elsewhere. Indeed, participation of women in economic activities is high in Sikkim. Women also play a major role in trading activities, which allows them to participate in decision-making far more than in most other States in India. Women take part in family management and contribute to the subsidiary income of the family by collecting firewood from the jungle, selling vegetables and other items in the markets, working as daily wage/agricultural labourers, construction workers and porters. Besides, they are responsible also for the collection of fire woods. From forests, apart from fodder and fuel women collect non-timber forest products like food and medicinal plants while timber by men. Besides, feeding and watering of the poultry i.e. birds, collection of eggs and marketing are some key management practices carried out by the women. They contribute to the income of the family also through their traditional skills in spinning and weaving.

Now women are in services in a large numbers. They are educated and some times more educated than their male counterparts. Marriage age for a girl is between 14 to 20 years and that for a boy between 18 to 25 years. Married women (42 per cent), do not need permission to visit friends and relatives, the proportion of 24 per cent for India as a whole. Another striking feature of Sikkim is the absence of gender differentials along many indicators of human development. In 1998-99, for instance, 83.2 per cent of boys and 82.6 per cent of girls between 6-17 years attended school. Nevertheless, women still face unequal opportunities in a variety of spheres. For instance, Women still remain largely involved in traditional but unpaid tasks of community life. Girls are typically denied the opportunity to pursue higher education since it often involves moving out of the village, district and even the state. Socio-cultural and family considerations often deny women the opportunity to pursue employment outside the state (Sikkim Development Report, 2001).

Women by and large have access to resources but not control over significant assets such as land. Interestingly, land tenure is always registered in the name of the male head of household in Sikkim, regardless of ethnicity. Panchayat land records only note the name of the male head of household.

Upon the death of the male head of household, women retain usufruct rights to the family holding, and continue to live there until their death (Eckman,1996). Such fact was also reported during field survey in Sikkim.

When employed, wages of women are normally less than those paid to men. For instance, the wage (without food) for men in agricultural labour work is being Rs. 100/- per day. While the same for women being Rs. 80/- per day i.e. 20 per cent less than the wage paid to men. Similarly, the wage including food for men in agricultural labour work is being Rs. 80/- per day. While the same for women being Rs.50/- per day i.e. 37.5 per cent less than the wage paid to men (as reported in Ravongla, South Sikkim). Therefore, the gap between the men and women wage rates show that for the same type of work women wage workers get lower rates vis-à-vis men wage workers.

3.1 Demographic and Socio-economic Features

3.1.1 Population

Of the total 5,40,841 population in Sikkim the percentage of females has been 47.7% as compared to male (52.3%).

Table 14 presents the decadal growth of female population since 1921 to 2001. Though sex-ratio had been decreased since 1901 onwards in Sikkim and India both. Even then the decadal growth percentage of female

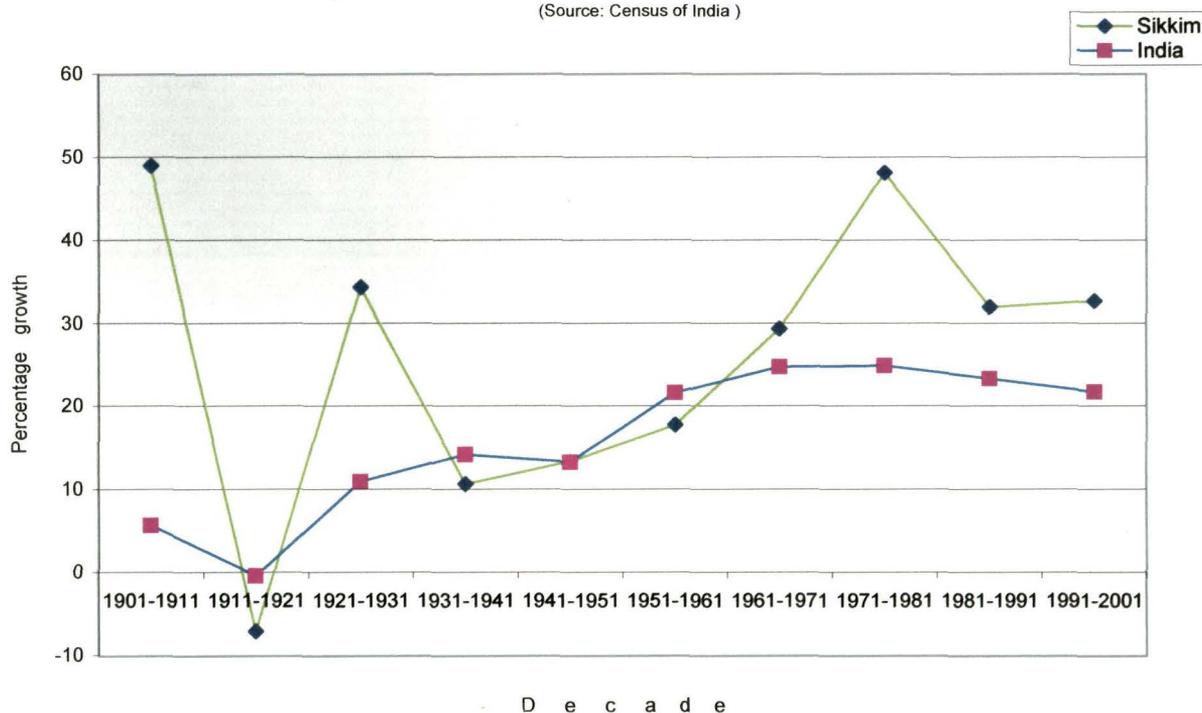
Table : 14 Decadal growth of female population since 1901-1911 to 1991-2001, Sikkim and India (Percentage distribution)

Decade	Sikkim	India
1901 – 1911	48.98	5.75
1911 – 1921	- 7.05	- 0.31
1921 – 1931	34.37	11.0
1931 – 1941	10.67	14.22
1941 – 1951	13.34	13.31
1951 – 1961	17.76	21.64
1961 – 1971	29.38	24.80
1971 – 1981	48.12	24.93
1981 – 1991	32.02	23.37
1991 – 2001	32.76	21.78

Source : Census of India, India and Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1981,1991 and 2001.

population had been increased in each decades since 1921 – 1931 onwards and such increases had been significant during the decades since 1971 onwards. In this context it also may be seen that such increase had been relatively higher in Sikkim as compared to national level since 1961 - 1971.

Figure 2
Decadal growth of female population from 1901 to 2001, Sikkim and India
(Source: Census of India)



3.1.2 Sex – ratio

Traditionally, there has been no discrimination against the girl child and no case of female foeticide and dowry death of women death have been reported. Even then there has been an unfavourable sex ratio as a whole in the population in Sikkim as may be observed from Table 15.

Table : 15 Sex-ratio since 1901 to 2001, Sikkim and India
(females per thousand males)

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Sikkim	916	951	970	967	920	907	904	863	836	878	875
India	972	964	955	950	945	946	941	930	935	927	933

Source : Census of India, India and Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001.

Table 15 indicates that after 1921 and onwards the sex-ratio i.e. number of females per thousand males had has been decreased in every year in Sikkim. While in case at national level such decrease in sex ratio had been after 1901 and onwards.

Figure 3
Sex Ratio (females per thousand males) in Sikkim and India, 1901 to 2001 (Source : Census of India)

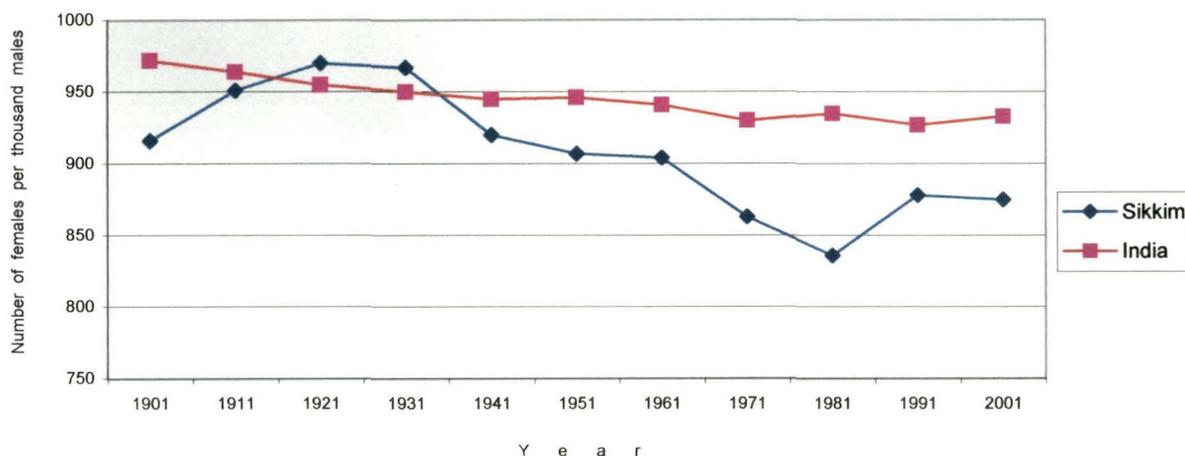


Table : 16 District-wise Sex-ratio by 1991 and 2001 in Sikkim (females per thousand males)

District	Year	
	1991	2001
North Sikkim	828	752
West Sikkim	915	930
South Sikkim	892	927
East Sikkim	859	844

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1991,2001 .

District-wise sex ratio is shown in Table 16 . According to this table it is the fact that the sex ratio in North district has decreased significantly and followed by East district in the year 2001 as compared to 1991 . While, there has been increase in sex ratio particularly in West and South district in 2001 as compared to 1991.

Table : 17 Sex ratio among child population (Females per thousand males)

Age group		Year		
		1981	1991	2001
0 years - 4 years	Sikkim	975	965	951
	India	978	955	934
5 years - 9 years	Sikkim	988	1001	990
	India	941	938	923

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India , March 2002 ; and Census of India , Sikkim Series, 2001.

Sex ratio among child population i.e. number of females per thousand males is presented in Table 17 . Such sex ratio in 0 – 4 years age group shows the trend of decline both in Sikkim and national level since 1981 to 2001 . While it has decreased significantly at national level since 1981 to 2001 . Similarly , in case of 5 – 9 years , such ratio has also shown the trend of decline in national level since 1981 to 2001, but in case of Sikkim there was increase in such ratio in Sikkim since 1981 to 1991 but decreased again

since 1991 to 2001 . As a whole , the sex ratio among child population in both the age groups have been higher in Sikkim than that at national level .

Table : 18 Estimated sex ratio at birth
(Females per thousand males)

Year		Rural	Urban
1981	Sikkim	962	1020
	India	971	962
1991	Sikkim	952	806
	India	943	926

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India , March 2002.

Table 18 gives the estimated sex ratio i.e. number of females per thousand males at birth . It indicates that the number of female per thousand males at birth has decreased since 1981 to 1991 .

3.1.3 Age Structure

Table 19 shows the distribution of female population according to age-group . In fact, female population according to age group in the year 1991 reveals that in all age groups, the percentages of female population are comparatively less than males and this has been more pronounced in each age groups from 30 years and above.

Table : 19 Percentage of female population by age group in Sikkim, 2001

Age group (in years)	Total population	Percentage of female population to total population	Female population (N = 2,52,367)	
			No.	%
0 – 4	52,269	48.7	25,480	10.1
5– 9	64,970	49.7	32,315	12.8
10 – 14	71,668	49.0	35,152	13.9
15 – 19	63,444	48.6	30,805	12.2
20 – 24	55,171	46.4	25,604	10.1
25 – 29	47,552	47.5	22,588	9.0
30 –34	39,153	44.7	17,503	7.0
35 – 39	36,384	44.0	16,001	6.3
40 – 44	28,129	42.4	11,915	4.7
45 – 49	22,177	42.1	9,345	3.7
50 – 54	16,919	42.2	7,148	2.8
55 – 59	12,037	41.3	4,966	2.0
60 – 64	10,469	44.5	4,657	1.8
65 and above	18,571	42.7	7,922	3.2
Age not stated	1938	46.2	896	0.4

Source : Census Report, Sikkim Series , Government of India , 2001.

Taking the age-wise distribution of female population , it is also the fact that the percentage of female in the age groups from 0 to 14 years has been 36.8 per cent to total female population . Indeed taking the age groups together from 0 to 29 years which constitutes more than half (59.1 per cent) of the total female population .

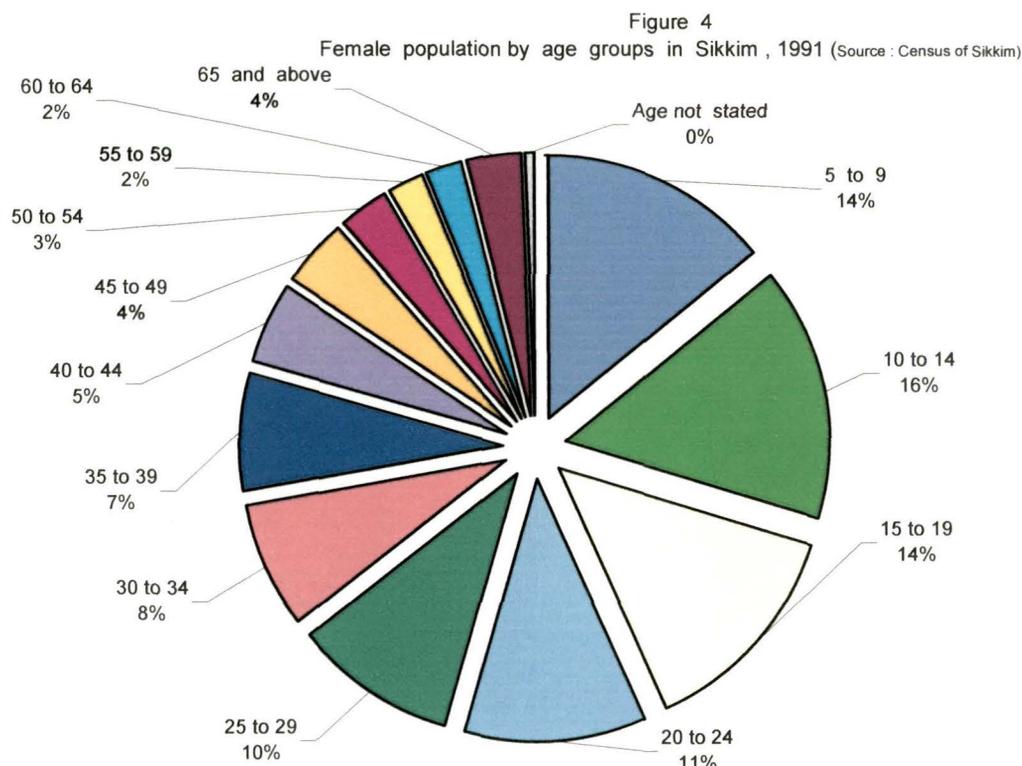


Table : 20 Female target groups in population, 2001 (Population in million)

Women target group	Sikkim		India	
	Women population	%	Women population	%
Early Childhood (0-6 years)	0.04	16.0	78.82	15.9
Girl Child (0-19 years)	0.12	48.0	220.40	44.4
Adolescent Girl (11-18 years)	0.05	20.0	83.19	16.8
Reproductive age (15-44 years)	0.12	48.0	228.89	46.1
Economically Active (15-59 years)	0.15	60.0	282.24	56.8
Old Age (60 and above years)	0.01	4.0	38.85	7.8

Note : Percentage based on total female population in million.

Source : Women & men In India, Central Statistical Organization, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Statistical Division, New Delhi, India, 2006.

Table 20 shows the female target groups in population of both Sikkim and national perspective . It highlights that the women target group like early childhood (0-6 years), girl child (0-19 years), adolescent girl (11-18 years), reproductive age (15 - 44 years) and economically active (15-59 years) have been comparatively higher in the population of Sikkim than that of national average , except the old age (60 and above years) .

3.1.4 Health and women

Taking into consideration the geographical conditions of rugged steep terrain, heavy rainfall etc., in turn the women have to directly bear the brunt of all

climatic hazards. The heavy load of work in the daily lives of Sikkimese women has serious implications for their health. This is more so because the families are large in Sikkim – 30 per cent of rural families and 22 per cent of urban families have more than 6 members. Heavy workload coupled with early marriages, between 16 – 20 years, take their toll on women's health. This is reflected as a whole in the declining sex ratio in Sikkim. In this context, Table 21 depicts the distribution of women and children according to having the extent of suffering from anaemia .

Table : 21 Anaemia among women and children, 1998-1999
(Percentage distribution)

Type of anaemia	Sikkim		India	
	Women	Children	Women	Children
Any anaemia	61.1	76.5	51.8	74.3
Moderate anaemia	21.4	40.7	14.8	45.9
Severe anaemia	2.4	7.5	1.9	5.4

Source : National Family Health Survey, 1998 –1999 .

It is very clear from Table 21 that the higher percentage of women and children in Sikkim are suffering from anaemia and percentages have been comparatively higher than at national level.

Table : 22 Women with any anaemia, 1998-1999
(Percentage distribution)

Variable		Sikkim	India
Community	Scheduled Caste	64.3	56.0
	Scheduled Tribe	60.7	64.9
	Others	61.3	47.6
Education	Illiterate	63.8	55.8
	Literate	51.7	46.4

Source : National Family Health Survey, 1998 –1999 .

Table 22 also shows the similar trend i.e. the higher percentage of anaemia among women in Sikkim according to community and education and that too higher comparatively than at national level, except scheduled tribe .

Table : 23 Type of medical attention received by mothers at child birth (1995-96)
(Percentage distribution)

Type of medical attention	Sikkim			India		
	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban
No attendance	19.30	19.90	9.70	32.20	35.80	15.90
Government appointed doctor	11.10	8.30	52.20	10.30	7.60	22.60
Other doctor	0.20	-	3.90	11.60	8.0	27.90
Government appointed nurse/mid-wife	13.60	13.40	15.90	8.50	8.60	8.30
Other nurse/mid-wife	6.0	6.0	5.70	18.90	19.50	16.0
Others	49.70	52.30	12.70	15.20	17.0	7.0

Source : Maternal and Child Health Care in India, July 1995 - June 1996, Report No. 445 .

Type of medical attention received by mothers at child birth is shown in Table 23 . It shows that the percentage of 'no attendance' received by mothers at child birth has been much higher at national level than in Sikkim . While percentage of women attended by Government appointed doctor at child birth has been much higher in urban areas of Sikkim than rural areas, and that too comparatively higher than at national level. But in case of attended by 'other doctors' , the percentage has been higher at national level as compared to nominal percentage in Sikkim. Similar trend is discernible in case of 'Government appointed nurse/mid-wife' and 'nurse/mid-wife' respectively.

3.1.5 Mortality

Infant mortality rate and under five mortality rate has been given in Table 24.

Table : 24 Infant mortality rate

		(Per thousand)		
Year		Male	Female	Total
1981	Sikkim	135	118	127
	India	122	108	115
1991	Sikkim	58	62	60
	India	74	79	77
2002	Sikkim	34	25	34
	India	69	40	63

Note : 1. 'Infant mortality rate' denotes no. of infant death per thousand live births.
2. 'Under five mortality rate' indicates no. of death by age 5 per thousand live births.

Source : 1. Census of India, Occasional Papers, 1981 and 1991 .
2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India , March 2002.
3. Economic Survey Report, 2002-2003

Table 24 shows the trend of decrease in infant mortality rate since 1981 to 2002 .

Table : 25 Age specific child mortality rate by gender and areas,1991

		(Per thousand)					
	Area	0 years - 4 years			5 years - 9 years		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Sikkim	Combined	13.5	12.4	13.0	3.3	2.9	3.1
	Rural	14.7	13.2	13.9	3.7	3.3	3.5
	Urban	5.7	7.4	6.6	1.0	0.7	0.8
India	Combined	25.6	27.5	26.5	2.6	2.9	2.7
	Rural	28.1	30.2	40.8	2.8	3.2	3.0
	Urban	15.4	16.6	16.0	1.6	1.5	1.5

Source : 1. Compendium of India's Fertility and Mortality Indicators 1971-97, Registrar General of India, 1999 .
2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India , March 2002 .

Age specific child mortality rate by gender and areas has been shown in Table 25. It substantiates that the child mortality rate in 0 years – 4 years has been though higher in rural areas of Sikkim, even then it has been less than at national level.

Table : 26 Death rate by sex and areas

(Per thousand)

Year	Area	Male		Female		Total	
		Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
1981	Combined	-	12.4	-	12.7	8.6	12.5
	Rural	-	13.4	-	13.9	9.9	13.7
	urban	-	8.0	-	7.6	5.4	7.8
1991	Combined	7.6	10.0	7.5	9.7	7.5	9.8
	Rural	8.6	10.7	8.4	10.5	8.5	10.6
	urban	2.9	7.5	3.1	6.7	3.0	7.1
1997	Combined	6.5	9.2	6.4	8.6	6.5	8.9
	Rural	6.6	9.8	6.6	9.4	6.6	9.6
	urban	4.6	7.0	2.2	6.0	3.5	6.5

Source : 1. Compendium of India's Fertility and Mortality Indicators 1971-97, Registrar General of Census, India, 1999 .

2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, March 2002.

Table 26 shows that there has been decrease in death rate both among males and females in both rural and urban areas since 1981 to 1997 .

3.1.6 Fertility

The distribution of number of cases of adopting family planning as shown in Table 27 substantiates the inequality in terms of adopting family

Table : 27 Family planning , 1992-93 to 1995-96

(Number of cases)

Year	Type family planning adopted		
	Vasectomy	Tubectomy	Sterilisation
1992 - 1993	45	970	1,015
1993 - 1994	14	314	328
1994 - 1995	44	1,548	1,592
1995 - 1996	27	1,014	1,041
Total (1992 - 1996)	130	3,846	3,976

Source: Health Information Bulletin, 1998, Statistical Cell, Health & Family Welfare Deptt., Govt. of Sikkim.

Planning in between male and female . It highlights the huge number of cases adopted by females for family planning as compared to male since 1992-1993 to 1995-1996 .

Table : 28 Total fertility rate , 1990-92 and 1995-97

Year	Area	(No. of children)	
		Sikkim	India
1990 – 1992	Rural	3.2	4.0
	Urban	2.1	2.7
	Combined	3.0	3.7
1995 - 1997	Rural	2.6	3.7
	Urban	1.4	2.5
	Combined	2.5	3.4

Note : Total fertility denotes the number of children a woman would have if hypothetically she lived through her reproductive years (i.e. 15 years to 49 years) experiencing the age specific fertility rates prevailing in the population during a given period.

Source : 1. Compendium of India's Fertility and Mortality indicators, 1971-1997, Registrar General of India, New Delhi, 1999 .

2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, March 2002.

Table 28 presents the total fertility rate which has been comparatively less in Sikkim than at national level .

3.1.7 Employment

The Indian work force participation rate is 37.7% (1991 census). The rate for women is 22.7%, which is less than half the rate of 51.6% for men . The pattern of women's participation in the labour force varies across the country depending upon geographic region, caste, socio-economic class and formal and informal sectors . The rural female participation rate is 27.2%, nearly thrice as much as the urban female participation rate of 9.7% . The percentage of labourers employed as main workers is higher among men than among women . The majority of the main workers (66.8%) are employed in agriculture and allied industrial sectors. The proportion of women employed in this sector is 80.7% , compared to 62.7% for men . In rural areas 89.5% of the total female employed are engaged in the agricultural and allied industrial sector . In urban areas manufacturing, processing , servicing and repair, when it is in the household, absorbs larger proportions of the total female employment compared to men . The reverse is true when it is other than household work . Industries which employ more women than men are *Bidi* and *firematch* manufacturing , cotton textiles, cotton spinning , cashew nut processing , tobacco stemming and re-drying , canning, preserving and fish processing (CSO, 1995) .

Rural India women are extensively involved in agricultural activities . However, the nature and extent of their involvement differs with the variations in agro – production systems. The mode of female participation in agricultural production varies with the land-owning status of farm households . Their roles range from managers to landless labourers. In overall farm production , women's average contribution is estimated at 55.0% to 66.0% of the total labour with percentages much higher in certain regions (Venkateswaran , 1992). In the Indian Himalayas a pair of bullocks work 1064 hours , a man 1212 hours

and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a one hectare farm , a figure which illustrates women's significant contribution to agricultural production (FAO, UN) .

The economic contribution of women was substantial, but largely unnoticed because their traditional role was taken for granted. When employed , their wages were normally 25 per cent less than those paid to men . In most rural areas , their employment outside the household generally was limited to planting, weeding, and harvesting. In urban areas, they were employed in domestic and traditional jobs, as well as in the government sector , mostly in low-level positions.

Low social status of women gets reflected in low economic status also . We have noticed before that about 61 per cent of the Indian women are illiterate as per 1991 census. Accordingly, most of the women work in unorganized sector either in agriculture or in household industries . This in turn does not get captured in "*statistical purdah*" created by existing concepts and the methods of measuring labour participation that creates invisibility of women's contribution to National Income of the country (Gopalan, 1995) . For instance, the census defines work as gainful economic activities but activities due for domestic consumption are not considered as work . So we find that as late 1991 only 22 per cent of total female population are considered to be workers in contrast to 52 per cent of the male population though the rural areas show slightly higher female work participation rate i.e. 27 per cent , than that of the total rate. As expected the urban area has failed to provide much avenues for female workers as is evident from the statistics . The gap between the male and female wage rates show that for the same type of work women workers get lower rates vis-à-vis men workers .

Taking the sexual division of labour in Sikkim – men tend to care for livestock that are of larger size (goats, cattle, oxen) although women and children are also involved in livestock management . Women are primarily responsible for tending poultry. Men and women are involved in agricultural production on a relatively equal basis , but the involvement of children in agriculture varies by villages and by ethnic groups. Women are primarily responsible for hauling water . Women cook, do child care and other household tasks , cleaning and washing etc. In case of among the Bhutias and Lepchas " there is no hard and fast division of labour between the sexes , although the heavier works are done mostly by men. There is practically no such distinction as men's work and women's work. Both men and women among Bhutias run small business and shops ... women also work as porters" (Lama 1994) . Children and particularly girls, have a high labour contribution to the household economy . Girls are sometimes withdrawn from primary school years to work , with preference for education given to boys. This has been a major gender disparity, in terms of more limited educational opportunities available for girls. Interestingly, in some families irrespective communities, even grown up sons do nothing except loaf around while the daughters not only look after the household chores, but also the livestock and agricultural activities and farming and thus

contribute towards the economy of the family too. Earning daughters contribute even financially .

The chain from farmer to consumer is long and often complicated. Women's work along this food chain does not end with cultivating crops, but they are also responsible for processing, preserving and storing the food so that it is safe, nutritious and available throughout the year . Transforming paddy into rice by milling , making puffed rice, drying fish, cleaning and slicing fruits and vegetables for canning are some of the processing activities where women have a major share of labour .

Women in Sikkim enjoy relatively more freedom and occupy a better position in society than women in other parts of the country. By playing a greater role in trading activities women become a part of the decision making process. A women is considered an asset in the household and commands a bride price, but she has no rights of inheritance. The Census Report of 1991 notes that women make up 38 per cent of the workforce in Sikkim, as compared to the national average of 20 per cent. In rural areas they are involved in all manner of agricultural activity, working as agricultural labourers, construction workers as well as the retailers of vegetables in the market place. In Sikkim , overall, 20.74 per cent of government employees are women, and of which 35.0 per cent are of Lepchas or Bhutias (Lama 1994) .

In case of occupation, the number of total main workers according to available 2001 census has been 2,12,904 of which males are 68.83 per cent and females 31.17 per cent .

Table : 29 Percentage distribution of workers by gender according to category, 1981 to 2001
(Percentage to total main workers)

Year	Gender	Category				
		Total Main Worker (Nos.)	Cultivator	Agricultural labour	Household Industry worker	Other worker
1981	Person	1,47,436	60.10	3.31	1.08	35.51
	Male	97,508	50.15	3.45	1.25	45.15
	Female	49,928	79.52	3.06	0.74	16.68
1991	Person	1,64,392	57.84	7.82	0.77	33.57
	Male	1,09,994	50.96	8.04	0.99	40.01
	Female	54,398	71.74	7.37	0.33	20.56
2001	Person	2,12,904	47.53	4.27	1.49	46.71
	Male	1,46,541	40.84	4.08	1.66	53.42
	Female	66,363	62.31	4.68	1.11	31.90

Source : Census of India, Workers and non-workers Report, Government of India, 1981, 1991, and 2001.

Though, the majority of the female main workers had has been involved in agriculture , even then Table 29 also shows that there has been substantial increase in the percentage of other workers since 1981 to 2001. It is also important to be noted here that though there has been the trend of decline in the percentage of both male and female agriculturists since 1981 to 2001. Even then, the percentage of female agriculturists has been nearly three –fourth of the total female main workers (62.31 per cent) in the year 2001 while this has been 40. 84 per cent in case of males. It reflects the significant proportion of participation by women in agriculture in Sikkim.

Table : 30 Percentage of working population in Sikkim by gender , 1981 to 2001

(Percentage to total population)

Year	Gender	Total Population	Total main worker	Marginal worker
1981	Person	3,16,385	46.60	1.70
	Male	1,72,440	56.55	0.68
	Female	1,43,943	34.69	2.93
1991	Person	4,06,457	40.45	1.07
	Male	2,16,427	50.82	0.43
	Female	1,90,030	28.63	1.79
2001	Person	5,40,851	39.37	9.27
	Male	2,88,484	50.80	6.65
	Female	2,52,367	26.30	12.27

Source :Census Report (Economic Tables), Census of India, Government of India , 1991

It is important that the percentage of total main workers has been substantially higher among the males as compared to females in every year since 1981 to 2001. But in case of marginal workers there has been the trend of substantial increase among the females like from 2.93 per cent in 1981 to 12.27 per cent in 2001 as compared to males being 0.68 per cent in 1981 to 6.65 per cent in 2001 (Table 30) .

The Government is the sole employment provider in Sikkim taking the organized sector . With the increase in literacy among females from 43.82 in 1991 to 61.46 in 2001 the female population has increased from 4,105 in 1994 to 12,584 of the total employees 2002 , and the rate of increase since 1994 to 2001 has been 206.6 per cent . Indeed, in the year 1994 the percentage of female employees has been 21.01 per cent to the total government employees in Sikkim and that too has increased significantly to 34.0 per cent in 2002 out of 37,005 . The distribution of women government employees according to Department is shown in Table 31 .

Table : 31 Distribution of government women employees ,
1994 and 2002

(Percentage distribution)

Department	1994	2002
Agriculture	0.39	17.0
Animal Husbandry	0.23	15.0
Building and Housing	21.66	15.0
Co-operation	0.11	22.0
Courts	0.10	30.0
Culture	0.13	24.0
DESME	0.08	-
Ecclesiastical	0.02	23.0
Education	10.94	40.0
Election	0.04	36.0
Electricity Advisory Board	-	7.0
Excise	0.04	11.0
Finance	0.13	24.0
Fisheries	0.02	3.0
Food & Civil Supplies	0.05	13.0
Forest	13.84	13.0
Health & Family Welfare	4.02	48.0
Home	0.20	17.0
Horticulture	-	13.0
Income & Sales Tax	0.03	-
Industries	0.11	44.0
Information & Publicity	0.07	25.0
Irrigation	0.05	20.0
Labour	0.03	38.0
Land Revenue	0.11	19.0
Law	25.0	26.0
Milk Union	-	15.0
Mines & Geology	12.82	2.0
Motor Vehicle	30.77	-
Personnel, Administrative Reforms & Training	30.19	23.0
Planning & Development	32.26	25.0
Department	1994	2002
Police	3.83	4.0
Power	9.10	20.0
Printing & Stationery	5.19	11.0
Public Health Engineering	15.0	20.0
Raj Bhawan	4.76	12.0
Rajya Sanik Board	10.53	10.0
Roads & Bridges	12.30	23.0
Rural Development	17.04	28.0
Science & Technology	-	20.0
Sikkim Legislative assembly	23.08	28.0
Sikkim Public Service Commission	19.05	18.0
Sikkim ST/SC/OBC Development Corporation	-	29.0
Sikkim Industrial Development & Investment Corporation	-	8.0
Social Welfare	38.71	41.0
Transport	2.24	7.0
Tourism	28.87	24.0
Urban Development and Housing	17.67	26.0
State Bank of Sikkim	-	38.0
STCS	-	22.0
Temi Tea Estate	-	21.0
Tibetology	-	13.0
Total	21.01	34.0

Source : Sikkim Manpower Review 2002 by S.D.Tshering , Gangtok , Sikkim .

Table : 32 Workforce participation rate by gender and areas , 2001

Area	Gender	Sikkim	India
Rural	Male	57.75	52.36
	Female	40.67	30.98
	Total	49.75	41.97
Urban	Male	56.27	50.85
	Female	21.42	11.55
	Total	40.49	32.23
Combined	Male	57.58	51.93
	Female	38.59	25.68
	Total	48.72	39.26

Source : Census of India , 2001 , Registrar General , Government of India.

In case at national level , the female work participation rate was very low at 22.3 per cent in 1991 against 51.6 per cent for males. The provisional results of the Census 2001 has shown a moderate rise of female work participation rate to 25.68 per cent at National level .

In this context , the workforce participation rate in both Sikkim and at national level according to urban and rural areas has been given in Table 32. It indicates that both in Sikkim and at national level such participation rate have been comparatively higher in rural areas than in urban areas. On the whole , such participation rate has been higher in Sikkim as compared to national level. Besides, both in Sikkim and at national level the workforce participation among the males has been higher as compared to females.

Table : 33 Gender differences in work participation

Year		Gender gap	Rank
2001	Sikkim	19	26
	India	26	-

Source : Census of India, and Annual Report of the Department of Women and Child Development : Economic Survey, 2002-2003.

In 2001, the gender gap in work participation ranged between 41 – 43 for Andaman & Nicobar Islands , Chandigarh and Delhi , and was maximum 48 for Daman & Diu. While among North Eastern states, Manipur showed lowest 8 in gender gap followed by Mizoram and Nagaland both 9, Meghalaya 13 and Sikkim 19. In case of Sikkim , the gender gap in work participation has been low as compared to National level (Table 33) .

Table : 34 Growth of employment (Per cent per annum)

Year	Area	Male		Female		Total	
		Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
1983 to 1993-94	Combined	2.9	2.2	0.6	1.7	2.3	2.1
	Rural	3.5	2.0	0.8	1.5	2.8	1.8
	Urban	-1.0	2.8	-1.7	3.2	-1.1	2.9
1999 to 2000	Combined	1.4	1.9	9.1	0.9	3.4	1.6
	Rural	1.4	1.6	9.0	0.8	3.4	1.3
	Urban	1.6	2.6	9.4	1.5	3.0	2.4

Note : Growth in employment has been estimated as compound annual growth in the persons employed in the age group 15 years and above on the usual principal and subsidiary status.

Source : 1. NSSO on Employment and Unemployment Situation, Census of India 1981 and 1991, Report of the Technical Groups on Population Projections, Registrar General of India, 1996.
2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, March 2002.

Growth of employment has been shown in Table 34. It shows that there has been considerable growth of employment for women in Sikkim during 1999 to 2000 and the percentage has been comparatively more than at national level.

Table : 35 Incidence of unemployment (As a percentage of labour force)

Year	Area	Male		Female		Total	
		Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
1983	Combined	2.6	2.3	1.3	1.3	2.2	2.0
	Rural	1.0	1.4	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.1
	Urban	9.9	5.0	6.9	5.2	9.4	5.1
1993-1994	Combined	0.7	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.0	2.0
	Rural	0.6	1.5	1.4	0.8	0.8	1.2
	Urban	1.4	4.1	8.2	6.6	2.5	4.6
1999 - 2000	Combined	3.6	2.5	2.7	1.8	3.4	2.3
	Rural	3.3	1.7	1.9	1.1	2.8	1.5
	Urban	6.4	4.5	13.2	5.9	8.0	4.8

Note : Growth in employment has been estimated as compound annual growth in the persons employed in the age group 15 years and above on the usual principal and subsidiary status.

Source : 1. NSSO on Employment and Unemployment Situation, Census of India 1981 and 1991, Report of the Technical Groups on Population Projections, Registrar General of India, 1996.
2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, March 2002.

Even there has been growth of employment for women in Sikkim, but at the same time there has also been the incidences of unemployment. In this context, Table 35 indicates the higher percentage of incidences of unemployment among females as compared to males and that too has been more than at national level.

3.1.8 Literacy

In fact, one tangible measure of women's status was their educational attainment. Although the constitution offers women equal educational opportunities, many social, economic, and cultural factors contributed to lower enrollment and higher drop out rates for girls. Illiteracy imposed the greatest hindrance to enhancing equal opportunity and status of women. They were caught in a vicious circle imposed by the patriarchal society.

Their lower status hindered their education, and the lack of education, in turn, constricted their status and position. Although the female literacy rate has improved noticeably over the years even then fell far short of the male level.

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of girls and women obtaining an education since the turn of the century, although this increase does not appear to be uniform across all regions of the state and across all income and ethnic groups. In this context, it may be said that "Bhutia women probably have benefited most from increased access to educational facilities. Women in aristocratic Bhutia households have had access to higher education, as well as education abroad, since the beginning of the 20th Century" (Lama 1994). Besides, The level of educational attainment among female children of wealthy and educated families was much higher than that among female children of poor families.

It is no doubt that there has been a direct correlation existed between the level of education and status. Educated women had access to relatively high status positions in the government and private service sectors, and they had a much higher status than uneducated women. This general rule was more applicable at the societal level than at the household level. It is also the fact that within the family, a woman's status, especially a daughter-in-law's status, was more closely tied to her husband's authority and to her parental family's wealth and status mainly. Therefore, it obviously necessitates to look into the educational attainment vis-à-vis literacy among the women in Sikkim. In this context Table 36 presents the literacy rates by sex in both Sikkim and India.

Table : 36 Literacy rate by sex since 1971 to 2001, Sikkim and India

Sex	1971		1981		1991		2001	
	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim
Person	34.45	17.74	43.57	34.05	52.21	56.94	65.38	69.68
Male	45.96	25.37	56.38	43.95	64.13	65.70	75.85	76.73
Female	21.97	8.90	29.76	22.20	39.29	46.76	54.16	61.46

Note : Excluding 0-6 years population.

Source : Census of India, India and Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1981, 1991, 2001.

Table 36 signifies that the female literacy rate has been significantly higher in the year 2001 (61.46%) as compared to 1971 (8.90%). In the year 1991 it

was 46.76% and 22.20% in 1981. It gives that in Sikkim there has been rapid progress in the rate of female literacy since 1971. Moreover, the female literacy percentage has been comparatively higher than that at national average .

It is also the fact that the literacy rate as a whole had has been increased significantly after 1971 both in Sikkim and at national level , and such increase has been much higher in case of both male and female in the year 2001. Even then the rate of increases and percentage of literacy among females have been far short of the male level.

Figure 5
Gender-wise literacy rate in Sikkim , 1971 to 2001 (Source: Census of Sikkim)

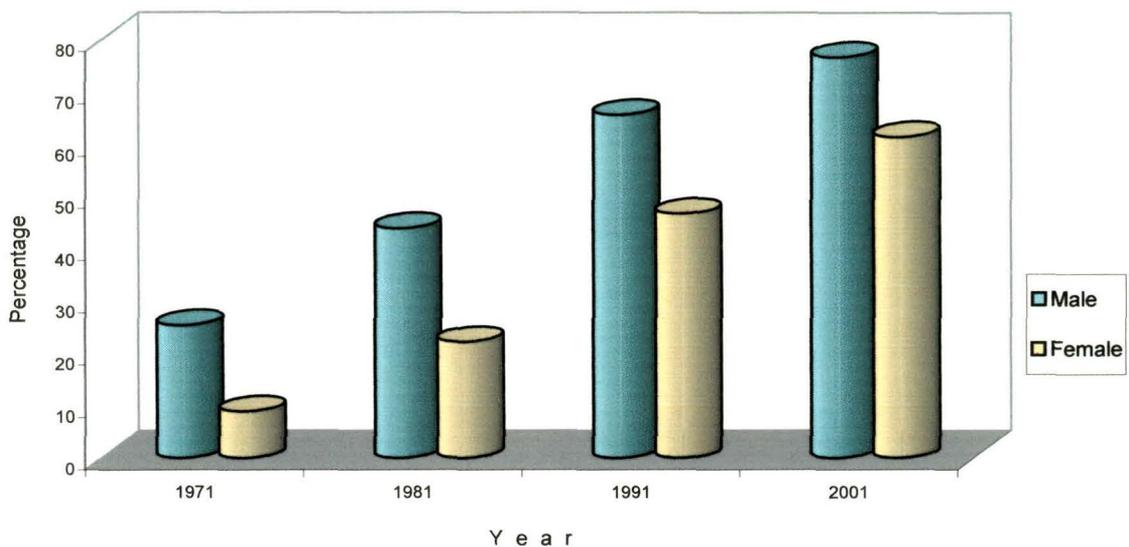


Table : 37 District-wise literacy rate by sex since 1981 to 2001, Sikkim

District	1981			1991			2001		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
North	39.4	16.7	29.4	63.06	41.60	53.55	77.32	57.65	69.11
West	32.4	12.7	23.0	54.92	35.26	45.62	67.21	50.75	59.31
South	42.4	19.9	32.0	63.18	43.70	54.08	74.57	61.02	68.12
East	50.9	29.7	41.5	73.10	55.66	65.13	82.05	67.74	75.57

Note : 1. Excluding 0 –6 years population.

2. M denotes male , F denotes female and T denotes total .

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India ,1981, 1991, 2001.

Besides, there has been district-wise variation in female literacy rate as cited in Table 37 . Table 37 indicates the district-wise literacy rate in Sikkim . It shows that the female literacy rate has been lowest in West Sikkim followed by North Sikkim. While female literacy rate is highest in East Sikkim. This has been visible in each decade since 1981 to 2001 . In all the aforesaid decades the female literacy fell far short of male literacy in each districts.

Table : 38 Literacy rate by areas and sex

(Percentage distribution)

Year		Rural			Urban		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1981	Sikkim	49.01	22.52	36.94	70.98	55.61	64.93
	India	49.59	21.70	36.01	76.70	56.30	67.20
1991	Sikkim	63.49	43.98	54.38	85.19	74.94	80.89
	India	57.87	30.62	44.69	81.09	64.05	73.08
2001	Sikkim	75.11	59.05	67.67	88.61	80.19	84.82
	India	71.18	46.58	59.21	86.42	72.99	80.06

Note : Literacy among 7+ Population i.e. excluding below 7 years population)

Source : 1. Census of India, Sikkim Series, 1981; 1991 and 2001.

2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, March 2002.

On the whole, there is also variation in female literacy rate according to rural and urban areas as shown in Table 38. Table 38 substantiates that the literacy percentage among females in rural areas has been conspicuously far short of female literacy percentage in urban areas. Besides, in rural areas female literacy percentage has been significantly less than that of males. As a whole, female literacy percentage is comparatively less than that of males.

Table : 39 Percentage of illiterates

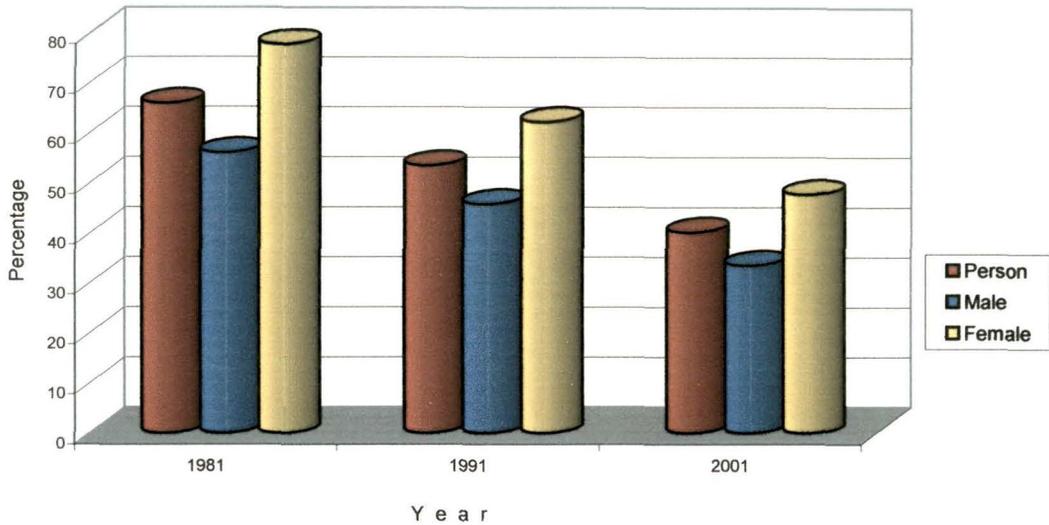
(Percentage distribution)

Year	Percentage of illiterates to total population			Decadal change in male and female illiteracy percentage		
	Person	Male	Female	Year	Percentage	
					Male	Female
1981	65.95	56.05	77.80	-	-	-
1991	53.52	45.84	62.26	1981 – 1991	-10.21	-15.54
2001	40.27	33.6	47.87	1991 – 2001	-12.24	-14.39

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, 1981, 1991 and 2001.

Undoubtedly, the illiteracy usually imposes the overwhelming hindrance to equality of opportunity and status of women. Taking this into consideration, it may be relevant to look also into the situation of illiteracy that prevails among women in Sikkim. Table 29 reveals the fact in this regard and it shows that the illiteracy percentage has always been higher among females than that of males since 1981. Though there has been the trend of decrease in the illiteracy percentage since 1981 to 2001 both among males and females (Table 39).

Figure 6
Illiteracy in Sikkim, 1981 to 2001 (Source : Census of Sikkim)



Traditionally, there has been no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society. Girls and boys are normally given equal status in the family as reported during the field survey. Even then girls in Sikkim are underprivileged in terms of their education as may be seen from Table 40 and Table 41.

Table : 40 Literates and illiterates in 7 – 14 years age group
(Percentage distribution)

Year		Literates			Illiterates		
		Boys	Girls	Children	Boys	Girls	Children
1981	Sikkim	57.42	43.54	50.65	42.58	56.46	49.35
	India	60.58	41.57	51.49	39.42	58.43	48.51
1991	Sikkim	78.54	70.62	74.62	21.46	29.38	25.38
	India	71.44	56.23	64.16	28.56	43.77	35.84

Note : Based on total population of each category.

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, March 2002.

Table 40 shows the percentage distribution of literates and illiterates in 7 – 14 years age group among both boys and girls. It is clear from this table that the percentage of literates among females in this age group has increased so rapidly since 1981 to 1991 and such increase has been much higher in Sikkim than the national average. Even then the male literate percentage is higher than that of females in 7 years to 14 years age group.

Besides, there has also been significant decrease in the percentage of illiterates among females in this age group since 1981 to 1991 in Sikkim than that at national level. But the percentage of illiterates among females in this age group has no doubt been higher as compared to males (Table 40).

Table : 41 Literacy in 15 years and above age group
(Percentage distribution)

Year	Sikkim			India		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1981	51.68	21.33	38.59	54.92	25.72	40.83
1991	61.64	37.78	50.88	61.89	34.09	48.54
1995 – 1996	75.61	51.24	63.89	67.25	40.67	54.32

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India ,
March 2002.

Literacy percentage among females in 15 years and above age group though has increased since 1981 to 1995-1996 in Sikkim and at national level. Even then the literacy percentage of females in this age group has been far short of male literacy percentage both in Sikkim and India . As a whole , the increase in literacy percentage among females has been comparatively higher in Sikkim than that at national level (Table 41).

In fact, the reasons for the unequal and slow spread of education among girls in Sikkim may be like elsewhere due to poverty, social customs, negative parental attitudes, poor accessibility to schools and non-availability of schools which have women teachers. But the state government has initiated several measures in view to spread the education among females to a great extent in Sikkim. These included the establishment of separate primary and junior high schools for girls, wherever there is a demand , and the expansion of facilities for higher secondary education in the exclusive girls' secondary schools at Gangtok , Deorali , Namchi and Gyalshing.

Besides, the introduction of free education in government schools in terms of books, uniform and mid-day meal up to the age of 5 years, have definitely attracted more and more girls to the schooling system. These benefits are extended to all the girls in a family, whereas in the case of boys, the benefits are limited to two per family. This might have resulted into the enrollment of more and more girls in schools. And such trend of increase in the enrolment of girls among 6 years to below 11 years age group and 11 years to below 14 years age group can be envisaged from Table 42 .

Table : 42 Age specific enrolment ratios
(Percentage distribution)

Age group	Year		Boys	Girls	Children
6 years to below 11 years	1981	Sikkim	57.0	46.2	51.7
		India	55.3	38.5	47.2
	1991	Sikkim	61.1	55.3	58.2
		India	56.6	45.4	51.2
11 years to below 14 years	1981	Sikkim	70.3	51.0	61.0
		India	62.0	36.7	50.0
	1991	Sikkim	78.4	71.3	74.9
		India	71.1	52.2	62.1

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Govt. of India, March 2002.

Table 42 shows that the increase in age specific enrolment ratios since 1981 to 1991 in both the age groups have been comparatively higher in Sikkim than at national level. In case of Sikkim the increase in age specific enrolment ratios since 1981 to 1991 among girls in 11 years to below 14 years has been rapid (71.3 per cent) as compared to girls in 6 years to below 11 years (55.3 per cent) .

As a whole there has been unequal percentages of age specific enrolment ratios since 1981 to 1991 between boys and girls both in Sikkim and at national level , in which the percentages of boys have been higher than girls (Table 42).

Table : 43 Girls' enrolment in various school stages, 1978
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Class I – V		Class VI – VIII		Class IX onwards	
	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
All	38.59	38.27	33.12	32.70	30.59	28.69
SC	39.62	34.36	36.94	25.82	35.55	21.53
ST	39.75	33.29	38.93	26.97	29.11	26.70

Source: National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Govt. of India , March 2002.

Table : 44 Girls' enrolment in various school stages, 1993
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Class I – V		Class VI – VIII		Class IX – X	
	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
All	46.82	43.16	48.80	39.62	47.90	36.47
SC	47.75	41.66	49.44	36.25	44.62	32.31
ST	47.73	41.45	52.67	35.77	52.44	32.10

Source: National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Govt. of India , March 2002.

Table : 45 Gross enrolment ratio, 2002-2003

Gender	Class I – V (6 – 11 years)		Class VI – VIII (11 – 14 years)		Class IX – X (6 – 14 years)	
	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
Boys	120.46	97.53	62.13	65.34	97.04	85.43
Girls	122.92	93.07	68.36	56.22	101.32	79.33
Total	121.68	95.39	65.19	60.99	99.16	82.51

Source : Selected Educational Statistics, 2002-03 , Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India ; Economic Survey Report , 2002-2003

Indeed, Table 43 to Table 45 substantiate also the significant increase in the percentage of enrolment of girls in various classes from Class I to Class X in Sikkim. And such increases have been comparatively more in Sikkim than at national level.

Besides, as per Sikkim Development Report (2001) it may also be mentioned here that nearly 83 per cent of 6-17 years old children attend school in Sikkim .

Table : 46 Drop out rates in Sikkim and India

(Percentage distribution)

Year	Gender	Class I – V		Class I – VIII		Class I – X	
		Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
1981-82	Boys	61.5	51.1	99.20	68.50	-	79.44
	Girls	66.5	57.3	99.0	77.0	-	86.81
	Total	63.6	53.5	99.10	72.10	-	82.33
1992-93	Boys	50.46	43.83	81.77	58.23	85.64	70.0
	Girls	45.22	46.67	78.40	65.21	85.67	77.32
	Total	48.09	45.01	80.34	61.10	85.66	72.93
1998-99	Boys	45.39	38.23	70.85	54.40	89.38	65.44
	Girls	36.45	41.34	63.31	60.09	89.00	70.22
	Total	41.30	39.58	67.37	56.82	89.21	67.44

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India ,
March 2002.

Drop-out from schooling has also been crucially important in view of continuation and retention of education among females to get them properly educated . In this context, Table 46 reveals the drop-out situation among females in Sikkim. It highlights the higher rates of drop outs both among boys and girls in Sikkim and at national level too . Interestingly, such drop outs has been relatively lower among females as compared to males in Sikkim . While , this has been just opposite i.e. such drop outs has been relatively lower among males as compared to females at national level.

Table : 47 Intensity of formal education

(Percentage distribution)

Year		Boys	Girls	Children
1981	Sikkim	3.18	2.82	3.04
	India	4.19	3.76	4.03
1993	Sikkim	4.35	4.39	4.37
	India	4.77	4.46	4.64

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India ,
March 2002.

Intensity of education has been very important in view of continuity and retention of formal education . Table 47 in this regard shows that there has been increase in the intensity of formal education both in Sikkim and at national level since 1981 to 1993 . Interestingly, in the year 1993 the intensity of formal education among females has been relatively higher than males in Sikkim . While , this has been higher among males as compared to females at national level in that year .

3.1.9 Age at Marriage

While marriage by negotiations i.e. arranged is the predominant norm at national level, Sikkim shows an unusually high incidences of marriage by elopement, marriage by service , marriage by courtship and marriage by capture . Important feature is the flexibility in terms of remarriage for widow, widower , divorcee, and divorce.

At the heart of early marriage in Sikkim, is the system of socially sanctioned elopement (*bhagaune pratha*). This system probably evolved because of the strict caste system prevailing in Nepali society. Under this system, caste exogamy was strictly prohibited for both the higher and lower castes. Faced with the social ostracization and sometimes severe punishments for inter-caste marriage, *bhagaune pratha* evolved as mechanism for social acceptance.

Bhagaune pratha allows a boy and a girl from different castes and social backgrounds to elope. After three days of living together, the boy's family goes to the house of the girl to inform them of the whereabouts and well being of the girl. Some amount of money, alcohol and milk are paid to the girl's parents, and the marriage is formalized. Though parents may not be happy, they are forced to accept marriage on account of both social and moral pressure. This continues to be a major mode of marriage between castes and to a certain extent between communities.

High levels of expenditure that have to be incurred in traditional marriage ceremonies have also helped to give sanction to *bhagaune pratha*. Unfortunately, this practice of elopement has for the last few decades become increasingly casual - to the extent that young girls and boys who want to avoid going to school or take up any family responsibility often elope. Almost every family/home has suffered from this phenomenon of untimely marriage.

Indeed, customary early marriage for girls has a direct impact on their future prospects. Statistics reveal that in rural areas 32 per cent of girls are married before 18 years, and another 34 per cent by the age of 20 years. This implies that 66 per cent girls are married on reaching 20, while men marry between the ages of 18 to 25. In the urban areas the situation appears more alarming as almost 39 per cent of women marry by 17 years, and another 36 per cent by 20 years of age (Sikkim Development Report, 2001).

In this context, it may be relevant to look into the distribution of married population according to sex which has been given in Table 48.

Table : 48 Population by sex according to marital status in Sikkim, 1981 to 2001

Year	Sex	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced/separated
1981	Total (Nos.)	184,158	119,483	10,505	2,166
	Male (%)	56.51	52.47	42.13	55.54
	Female (%)	43.49	47.53	57.87	44.46
1991	Total (Nos.)	240,350	156,158	8,271	1,621
	Male (%)	55.21	50.86	41.49	52.75
	Female (%)	44.79	49.14	58.51	47.25
2001	Total (Nos.)	303,669	217,164	15,474	4,544
	Male (%)	54.85	52.62	35.34	47.93
	Female (%)	45.15	47.38	64.66	52.07

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1981, 1991, 2001.

It is clear from Table 48 that the percentage of males have been more among never married, married categories as compared to female except

widowed in all the year since 1981 to 2001. In case of divorced/separated categories the percentage of males were more as compared to females since 1981 to 1991 , but interestingly the percentage of females has increased to 52.07 per cent than the males (47.93 per cent) in the year 2001.

Indeed, low participation of girls in education has a direct impact on their social chances and future prospects. This is reflected the prevalence of early marriages, in both rural and urban areas, as well as in all the three communities, Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalese (Sikkim Development Report, 2001) . Table 49 in this context indicates the percentage distribution of married population by below age groups .

Table : 49 Percentage of married population by 10-14 and 15-19 years age groups, 1981 to 2001

Year	Area	(Percentage distribution)					
		10 – 14 Years			15 – 19 Years		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1981	Total	0.55	0.42	0.70	13.53	4.53	23.84
	Rural	0.53	0.43	0.65	13.45	4.41	23.53
	Urban	0.65	0.37	0.97	13.91	5.07	25.42
1991	Total	1.15	0.89	1.42	10.36	3.46	17.85
	Rural	1.16	0.93	1.40	10.60	3.48	18.17
	Urban	0.99	0.46	1.57	8.24	3.23	17.74
2001	Total	0.74	0.40	1.11	9.84	3.77	16.27
	Rural	0.72	0.37	1.08	10.22	3.80	17.0
	Urban	1.0	0.64	1.36	7.06	3.52	11.0

Note : Percentage of married population to total population of each age group .

Source : Census of India, Sikkim series 1981 and 1991, 2001 Social and Cultural Tables

Table 49 indicates the significant percentages of married in below i.e. 15 – 19 Years age group among both male and female in which the percentage of females are significantly higher as compared to males in all the years since 1981 to 2001 . Similarly , it also shows even the cases of early marriages particularly in 10 – 14 Years age group among males and females both in which the females are more.

Table : 50 Percentage of female married population in 10-14 and 15-19 years age group in Sikkim, 2001

Age (in year)	Area	Married		Widowed		Divorced/separated	
		Total population	% of female	Total population	% of female	Total population	% of female
10 -14	Total	533	73.0	50	66.0	33	57.58
	Rural	462	73.81	48	66.67	27	55.56
	Urban	71	67.61	2	50.0	6	66.67
15-19	Total	6242	80.31	49	71.43	96	79.17
	Rural	5702	80.94	43	67.44	92	78.26
	Urban	540	73.70	6	100.0	4	100.0

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India , 2001.

Taking the distribution of married population in below age groups as shown in Table 50 , it is clear that the greater percentage of the total married

population in 10-14 years age group has been females . Similarly , majority of the married population in 15-19 years age group has been females . Apart from these, the percentages of females in the categories like widowed/divorced/separated also has been higher in this age group particularly in rural areas.

Table : 51 Percentage increase of female married population in 10-14 and 15-19 years age group in Sikkim, during 1981 to 2001

Age (in years)	Year	Married	Widowed	Divorced/separated
10-14	1981 (Nos.)	130	-	1
	1991 (Nos.)	366	10	12
	2001 (Nos.)	389	50	33
	1981-1991 (% increase)	181.54	100.0	1100.0
	1991-2001 (% increase)	6.28	400.0	175.0
15-19	1981 (Nos.)	3627	8	49
	1991 (Nos.)	3701	16	50
	2001 (Nos.)	5013	49	96
	1981-91 (% increase)	2.04	100.0	2.04
	1991-2001 (% increase)	35.45	206.3	92.0

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1981, 1991 and 2001.

Interestingly, percentages increase in married female population in below age groups of 10-14 and 15-19 have been significantly higher than that of males. Similarly, the percentages increase in the categories like widow, divorcee and separated in below age groups of 10-14 and 15-19 have also been higher among female than that of males (Table 51) . These have been substantially higher among the below age group females in rural areas

3.2 Household

3.2.1 Female headed households

Number of female headed households per thousand households in Sikkim and India is shown in Table 52.

Table : 52 Female headed households in Sikkim and India , 1999
(per 1000 households)

Residence	Sikkim	India
Rural	143	104
Urban	83	99

Source : Government of Sikkim, Sikkim in Brief, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Gangtok, June 1999.

The fact that in 1999 the number of women headed households in Sikkim's rural areas (143 per thousand) was higher than the national average indicates not only the impact of migration but also the status accorded to women in the State (Table 52) .

Distribution of households according to its size in Sikkim has been given in Table 53 .

Table : 53 Distribution of household by size in Sikkim, 2001

Household Size	Urban		Rural		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 member	989	7.6	5,813	6.3	6,802	6.5
2 member	1,321	10.1	7,235	7.9	8,556	8.1
3 member	1,867	14.3	10,658	11.6	12,625	12.0
4 member	2,598	20.0	15,422	16.8	18,020	17.2
5 member	2,285	17.6	15,733	17.2	18,018	17.2
6 to 8 member	3,064	23.6	28,109	30.6	31,173	29.8
9 member and above	891	6.8	8,753	9.5	9,644	9.2
Total Household	13, 015	100.0	91,723	100.0	104,738	100.0

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Housing Profile, 2001.

Table 53 depicts that the higher percentage of household in Sikkim is having large family size i.e. 5 members and above (56.2 per cent) . Taking into consideration of present day modern trend of nuclear family rather than earlier joint family system in the society , the existence of higher percentage of large family size in other way substantiates the heavy burden of huge family chores upon the women .

Table : 54 Distribution of non-workers by household duties according to gender and education , 2001

Education	Men %	Women %	Total	
			No.	%
Illiterate	5.3	94.7	18,769	100.0
Literate	6.4	93.6	20,675	100.0
Literate but below Matric/Secondary	6.5	93.5	15,508	100.0
Matric/Secondary but below Graduate	5.1	94.9	4,016	100.0
Technical Diploma or Certificate not equal to Degree	28.6	71.4	14	100.0
Graduate and above other than Technical Degree	6.4	93.6	901	100.0
Technical Degree or Diploma equal to Degree or Post-graduate Degree	7.1	92.9	42	100.0
Total	5.8	94.2	39,644	100.0

Source : Table of non-workers population , Census of India , Sikkim Series, Government of India, 2001.

In this context, it may be relevant particularly taking the household duties as one of the main activities, the distribution of non-workers according to sex and education indicates that the participation of women in household work has been exclusively dominant as compared to very nominal participation by men irrespective education (Table 54) .

3.2.2 Type of fuel used

Distribution of household according to type of fuel used in Sikkim is presented in Table 55.

Table : 55 Distribution of household by type of fuel used in Sikkim, 2001

Type of fuel	Urban		Rural		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Firewood	472	3.6	67,189	73.3	67,661	64.6
Crop Residue	25	0.2	802	0.9	827	0.8
Cow-dung	6	0.0	59	0.1	65	0.1
Coal, Lignite, Charcoal	15	0.1	61	0.1	76	0.1
Kerosene	4,001	30.7	11,200	12.2	15,201	14.5
LPG	8,316	63.9	11,402	12.4	19,718	18.8
Electricity	2	0.0	519	0.6	521	0.5
Biogas	4	0.0	89	0.1	93	0.1
Any other	-	0.0	3	0.0	3	0.0
No cooking	174	1.3	399	0.4	573	0.5
Total Households	13,015	100.0	91,723	100.0	104,738	100.0

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Household Profile, 2001 .

Table 55 indicates the distribution of household by type of fuel used . It substantiates that the greater percentage of the households (65.6 per cent) mainly use the firewood , crop residue and cow dung etc. as fuel. Indeed, in urban areas , majority of the households (94.6 per cent) use LPG and Kerosene as fuel . While using of firewood , crop residue and cow dung etc. as fuel has been to a greater extent i.e. in 74.3 per cent of the total households in rural areas . Taking the household distribution in rural and urban areas , it is clear that majority of the total households are in rural areas i.e. 87.6 per cent and rest 12.4 per cent only in urban areas . It indicates , the greater extent of using firewood , crop residue and cow dung etc. as fuel in majority of the households in Sikkim. As the women are mainly responsible for all domestic works including collection and arrangement of firewood , preparation of cooking fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues , it also substantiates the important role played by women and contribution in subsidiary family income in Sikkim .

3.2.3 Source of drinking water

Distribution of household according to source of drinking water in Sikkim has been given in Table 56 .

Table : 56 Distribution of household by source of drinking water in Sikkim,2001

Type of source	Urban		Rural		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tap	12,625	97.0	61,025	66.5	73,640	70.3
Hand pump	25	0.2	231	0.3	256	0.2
Tube well	4	0.0	185	0.2	189	0.2
Well	2	0.0	140	0.1	142	0.1
Tank, Pond, Lake	1	0.0	970	1.1	971	0.9
River, Canal	39	0.3	1,171	1.3	1,210	1.2
Spring	258	2.0	26,261	28.6	26,519	25.3
Any other	71	0.5	1,740	1.9	1811	1.7
Total Households	13,015	100.0	91,723	100.0	104,738	100.0

Source : Census of India, Sikkim Series, Household Profile, 2001 .

It is already seen that majority of the total households are in rural areas i.e. 87.6 per cent and rest 12.4 per cent only in urban areas. Table 56 shows the distribution of households in Sikkim according to source of drinking water. It is clear from that table that in case of urban areas almost cent per cent of the households depend on tap as a source of drinking water, while this has been 66.5 per cent in rural areas. Even then a good percentage of rural households (31.0 per cent) depend on 'jhoras' (springs) and other sources. While such dependence has been only among 2.3 per cent of the households in urban areas. In this context it may be important to say that traditionally the women are also responsible to fetch drinking water from 'jhoras' (springs) and other sources in vessels which they carry in a *doko* (basket) on their backs. Besides, it has also been common that the women normally fetch drinking water from the nearby PHE taps particularly of those households not having such tap water connection directly in their homes. It also gives the another important role played by the women for the household.

3.2.4 Livestock and poultry

In animal husbandry women have a multiple role. With regional difference, women take care of animal production. Their activities vary widely ranging from care of animals, grazing, fodder collection, cleaning of animal sheds to processing milk and livestock products. In livestock management, indoor jobs like milking, feeding, cleaning, etc. are done by women in 90.0% families while management of male animals and fodder production are effected by men (FAO, United Nations).

Women accounted for 93.0% of total employment in dairy production (World Bank, 1991). Depending upon the economic status, women perform the tasks of collecting fodder, collecting and processing dung. Dung composting and carrying to the fields is undertaken by women. Women also are preparing cooking fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. Though women play a significant role in livestock management and production, but women's control over livestock and its products is negligible. The vast majority of the dairy cooperatives membership is assumed by men, leaving only 14.0% to women (Ministry of Agriculture, 1991).

Besides, feeding and watering of the poultry i.e. birds, collection of eggs and marketing are some key management practices carried out by the women. In this context, Table 57 shows the livestock and poultry distribution in Sikkim in view to visualize the extent of women's importance vis-à-vis role in caring the huge numbers of cattle and poultry in the state.

Table : 57 Livestock and poultry distribution in Sikkim, 1997 and 2003

Livestock	Number		Percentage increase
	1997	2003	
Cattle	1,43,024	1,60,932	12.52
Buffaloes	1970	2118	7.51
Sheep	5023	5746	14.39
Yak	4,731	5,719	20.88
Goats	82,980	1,23,841	49.24
Pigs	26,975	40,938	51.76
Poultry	2,19,552	3,21,919	46.43
Total	4,84,255	6,61,213	26.76

Source : Animal Husbandry Department, Government of Sikkim.

In this context, Table 57 gives the distribution of livestock and poultry distribution in Sikkim which indicates that there has been a good 26.76 per cent increase in the total livestock population since 1997 to 2003 in Sikkim. Such increase and huge number of livestock population in other way articulates to the fact the greater extent of important role used to play by women in caring, feeding the domestic animals and poultry including its marketing and thus also contribute to the subsidiary income (primary income in case of exclusive pastoral families) of the households.

3.3 Women and politics

Traditionally, Bhutia women have no right to take part in the election of the *Pipon* (headman and the *Gimbas* (assistants to *Pipon*) in Lachen and Lachung, the exclusive Bhutia settlement ((Singh, 1993). Among Lepchas particularly in Lepcha villages, chieftaincy remains a male preserve but men and women otherwise are regarded as socially equals (Kotturan, 1983). Indeed, before merger, there had been also *Mondal* (village headman and which was also mainly male preserve) in the villages except Lachen and Lachung and the Lepcha villages under Dzongu areas (the protected areas for Lepchas), who used to collect revenues from public for government and also settle minor disputes. But after 1975 with abolishing of *Mondal* systems, the Panchayat systems based upon the Panchayat models in other parts of India came up gradually though the Dzumsa has been continued and given the status of Panchayat ward by the government in Sikkim. Since 1975, in the course of time there has been number of women from all three major ethnic groups elected as member of Panchayat through Panchayat elections in Sikkim. And there has now been the trend of progress in the number of women elected as member in the Panchayat (both in Village Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat) in Sikkim. Presently, women having the age of 18 years and above cast their votes in Panchayat, Assembly and Parliament elections from time to time. There has been increase (31.7 per cent) in the number of women electors from 1,03,437 in 1994 to 1,36,199 in 2004. The percentage of women elector to total electors has also increased from 47.6 per cent in 1994 to 48.3 per cent in 2004. Out of total 1,36,199 women electors in Sikkim 75.54 per cent of them cast their votes in 14th Lok Sabha Election in 2004 (Source : Election

Commission of India-General Election, 2004) . In this context , it may be relevant to have a look into the distribution of elected women in both village and zilla panchayats as shown in Tables 58 to 60 .

Table : 58 Distribution of elected members in village panchayat by gender, 2002

District	Gender				Scheduled Tribe			
	Male %	Female %	Total		Male %	Female %	Total	
			No	%			No	%
West	59.9	40.1	274	100.0	33.3	66.7	57	100.0
South	66.3	33.7	255	100.0	64.0	36.0	50	100.0
East	67.4	32.6	273	100.0	69.9	30.1	73	100.0
North	69.9	30.1	103	100.0	69.5	30.5	95	100.0
Total	65.1	34.7	905	100.0	61.1	38.9	275	100.0

Source : Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, .

Table : 59 Distribution of village panchayat members according to portfolios by gender, 2002

Portfolios	Male %	Female %	Total	
			No.	%
Sabhapati	72.9	27.1	166	100.0
Up-Sabhapati	53.0	47.0	166	100.0
Sachiva	86.1	13.9	166	100.0
Member	59.0	41.0	407	100.0

Note : Based on the List of Panchayat Members according to District .

Source : Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, .

Table : 60 Distribution of elected members in zilla panchayat by gender,2002

District	Gender				Scheduled Tribe			
	Male %	Female %	Total		Male %	Female %	Total	
			No	%			No	%
West	72.0	28.0	25	100.0	100.0	-	3	100.0
South	70.8	29.2	24	100.0	50.0	50.0	4	100.0
East	74.2	25.8	31	100.0	71.4	28.6	7	100.0
North	70.0	30.0	20	100.0	68.4	31.6	19	100.0
Total	72.0	28.0	100	100.0	69.7	30.3	33	100.0

Source : Rural Development Department, Government of Sikkim, .

3.4 Crime against women

The prevalence of dowry and its increase demand in the society ultimately lower the position of women in the society and which also the result of ongoing torture, murder related to dowry against women , detection of female fetus and consequent abortion etc. are notable features . In case of Sikkim , as there is no hard and fast dowry while maintained as a token only without cash and kind even among Nepalese Hindus like other areas of the country and while among the Bhutias and Lepchas the token bride-price is prevalent, the Sikkimese women never experience such incidences .

Taking the situation of girl child in other states as cited by Danda (2002) , it is clear that the girl child is much unwanted and the people do not want to be burdened with female children , and that is not due to lack of affection while often girl child is found to enjoy as much affection of their parents as their male siblings. For instance , “Girls in Salem are born to die (Times of India , 1992)” , “Pre-natal sex determination tests, cashing in on age-old prejudices against the female sex, result in an estimated 3500 female foeticides every year in Jaipur city alone , a study of the department of Anatomy of SMS medical College (Hitavada, 1994)” , “A study by the Community Services Guild of Madras disclosed that ‘female infanticide is rampant in Tamilnadu (The Times of India , 1992) , “ supporting the policy of infanticide and refusing to admit it as a sin , while has to kill the girl child because the society is against women, and the mothers have suffered so much that they do not want the pattern repeating in their daughters’ lives (The Times of India , 1992). One of the major reason behind has been no doubt the prevalence of increasing huge ‘dowry’ system in the society which in turn leads to the cases of dowry deaths several times.

But in case of Sikkim the girls and boys are given equal status in the family and no cases of female foeticide and dowry death have been reported. Traditionally there has been no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society. All these may be the reason behind the lack of incidences of crime against women in Sikkim as may be envisaged from Table 61 .

Table : 61 Crime against women, 1991 ,1998 and 2004
(per million population)

Type of crime	1991		1998		2004	
	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India	Sikkim	India
Rape	9	9,793	7	15,031	3	18,233
Molestation	8	20,611	22	31,051	40	34,567
Kidnapping and abduction	3	12,300	4	16,381	4	15,578
Eve-teasing	0	10,283	2	8,122	0	10,001
Dowry deaths	0	5,077	0	6,917	0	7,026
Cruelty by relatives	0	15,949	2	41,317	1	58,121

- Source : 1. Crime in India, 1998, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs.
 2. National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India , March 2002.
 3. ‘Women and Men In India’, Central Statistical Organization, Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation .

3.5 Gender Disparity

Traditionally there has been no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society. Girls and boys are given equal status in the family and no case of female foeticide has been reported. In this background it is then somewhat surprising that women and girls continue to be under privileged in terms of education, early marriage and health. The relatively slow spread of education can be attributed to poverty, social customs, negative parental attitude, poor accessibility to school and the non-availability of women

teachers. In this context, the existing Gender disparity in Sikkim may be envisaged from Table 62. The data presented in this table is based on information so far available in this regard.

Table : 62 Gender disparity Index in Sikkim, 1981 and 1991

Year		Value	Rank
1981	Sikkim	0.643	23
	India	0.620	-
1991	Sikkim	0.647	20
	India	0.676	-

Note : The gender disparity index is estimated as proportion of female attainment to that of male for a common set of variables. The variable used to capture economic attainment is worker population ratio which is different from the variable used to capture economic attainment in the Human Development Index.

Source : National Human Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, March 2002.

Table 62 signifies the existence of gender disparity in Sikkim. It shows that in the year 1981 such disparity in Sikkim had been higher than the national average. The gender disparity value has increased slightly since 1981 to 1991 in Sikkim, though less as compared to national average. It gives that though there had been progress of women in every spheres of development, even then the women has been lagging behind the men too in Sikkim.

Therefore, on the whole it may be said that the women in Sikkim though enjoy many freedoms and have recorded significant gains in human development. Even then, like many parts of the world, they still live in an unequal world and lagging behind the men taking the context of development spheres into consideration.

3.6 Government Programmes and Policies for the Women in Sikkim

In this section an attempt has been made to discuss the programmes and schemes taken for the upliftment of women in the state as well as the rights of women vis-à-vis policies/measures taken for their protection both in the purview of the state and national context with a view to envisage the situation of women in the present day society. These have been highlighted in the preceding presentation.

3.6.1 Gender Budgeting and Five Years Plan

Gender budgeting is not a separate budget for women, rather it is a dissection of the government budget to establish its gender-differentials impacts and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. The main objective of a gender-sensitive budget is to improve the analysis of incidence of budgets, attain more effective targeting of public expenditure and offset any undesirable gender-specific consequences of previous budgetary

measures. Gender budgeting indeed is gaining increasing acceptance as a tool for engendering macro-economic policy-making. One of the major constraints in the gender analysis of public expenditure had been the non-availability of gender disaggregated data at the state and district level and therefore the initiative of generating such data across the country has been taken.

In India, gender perspective on public expenditure had been gaining ground since the publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in 1974. In fact, the gender budgeting initiative in India started in July 2000 when a workshop on 'Engendering National Budgets in South Asia Region' was held in New Delhi in collaboration with the UNIFEM, in which Government representatives, UN agencies, media, NGOs, research institutions, civil society and the members of the Planning Commission in the South Asia region participated. National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPF&P) was commissioned to study Gender Related Economic Policy Issues, which included gender segregation of relevant macro-data, quantification of contribution of women in economy, assessment of impact of Government Budget on women, the role women can play in improving institutional framework for delivery of public services and the policy alternatives for building a gender sensitive national budgeting process.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) highlighted for the first time the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from the general development sectors to women. The Plan document made an express statement that "... the benefits of development from different sectors should not by pass women and special programmes on women should complement the general development programmes. The latter, in turn, should reflect greater gender sensitivity". The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002), while reaffirming the earlier commitment adopted Women Component Plan as one of the major strategies and directed both the Central and the State Governments to ensure " not less than 30 per cent of the funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women's related sectors". It also directed that a special vigil be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth the holistic approach towards empowering women (Source : Centre for Budget Accountability : 2004)

3.6.2. Welfare Programmes, Schemes, Training

Indeed, the gender concerns have been addressed in the state through various women specific welfare and empowerment programmes. Reservation for women in Panchayats has been fully implemented. Both the Central and State Government have introduced number of programmes, for instance, Mahila Samridhhi Yojana, Swarna Jayanti Rozgar Yojana, Balika Samridhhi Yojana, and Smal Family Scheme etc. to promote both women's welfare and their empowerment.

Another yojana namely, Indira Mahila Yojana, to promote awareness generation among the women from both rural and urban slum, and economic

empowerment of the women. The Department of Women and Child Development impart training of women to women for their upliftment and income generating activities like knitting, cutting, tailoring and weaving etc.

Under welfare scheme for women, there are six training centers at Turuk, Ranipool, Tibet Road (Gangtok), Arithang (Gangtok), Gyalshing and Pelling, for training of rural women in knitting, tailoring and embroidery. Government Institute of Cottage Industry also playing pivotal role to impart training to women in carpet weaving, blanket weaving, weaving of clothes for various dress materials, cushion covers, bags, etc., making of toys, making of hand-made papers.

Besides these, various cooperatives also are providing such training to women. Department of Welfare not only provides financial grants to organize various training programmes for women, but also provides financial aid to the entrepreneurs involved in handicraft production, as well as to form cooperatives.

Sikkim State Commission for women has started functioning from November 2002. The Commission is a powerful advocate for women's rights created with the purpose of safe guarding the interest of women all over the State.

3.6.2.1 Economic Schemes

3.6.2.1.1 Balika Samridhi Yojana

This scheme was launched by the Government of India in 1997 with a view to provide financial assistance to the families living below the poverty line to whom the girl child is born and to give highest priority to ensure population stabilization with gender equity and sustained socio-economic development. The benefit is restricted to two girl child in each household. Indeed, when a girl child is born, a grant amounting to Rs.500/- is deposited in the Bank in her name as a gift from the Government with objective of changing community attitude towards the girl child.

When the girl child born on or after 15.08.1997 and covered under the scheme starts attending the school she will become entitled to annual scholarship for each successfully completed year of schooling as follows :-

<u>Class</u>	<u>Amount of Scholarship (per annum)</u>
I – III	Rs. 300/- for each Class
IV	Rs. 500/-
V	Rs. 600/-
VI – VII	Rs. 700/- for each Class
VIII	Rs. 800/-
IX – X	Rs. 1000/- for each Class

But in the event of marriage before attaining the age of eighteen years the amounts of scholarship has to be forgone while would be entitled only the post-birth grant amount of Rs. 500/- and the interest accrued there on. In

case of such happening or death the scholarship will be given to another girl child covered under the scheme .

Class

3.6.2.1.2. Swayamsidha

With an objective to facilitate the social and economic empowerment of poor rural woman through formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs), group activities and inculcating saving habit in poor women. In fact , Indira Mahila Yojana - a 100% Centrally Sponsored Project was launched during 1996-1997 , which was recast and renamed as Swayamsidha during 2000 –2001. the main objective is to develop empowered women - who will demand their rights from family, community and government; have increased access to and control over material, social and political resources ; have enhanced awareness and improved skills; and be able to raise issues of common concern through mobilization and networking .

3.6.2.1.3 Training for Women

The registered women organizations are imparting training in cutting and tailoring for a period of six months.

3.6.2.1.4 Pension to Widows of Ex-servicemen

Annual transfer of money to Rajya Sainik Board for disbursement to the widows of Ex-servicemen .

3.6.2.1.5 Women's Hostel

In view of providing secure and economical accommodation to the working women , the State Government has established two working women's hostel i.e. one in Gangtok of East District and another in Namchi of South District of Sikkim. The hostels in both the places have been centrally located . Besides accommodation , these hostel provide cooking as well as many recreational facilities to the inmates .

3.6.2.1.6 Crèches for Working Women's Children

There are 115 crèches throughout the State, which are run by NGOs under the supervision and guidance of the Sikkim State Social Welfare Advisory Board. Besides Anganwadi Centers to cover the children of labourers.

3.6.2.1.7 Honorarium to Anganwadi Workers/Helpers

The Anganwadi Workers and Helpers are honorary workers and as such they get honorarium @ Rs. 438 for Anganwadi Workers and Rs.260/- for Helpers from the Central Government .

3.6.2.2 Social Schemes

3.6.2.2.1 Small Family Scheme

The scheme for small family was launched in the year 1997 with the main objective to delay marriage and to maintain proper spacing between the first and second child .

To inhibit these early marriages, the government started the Small Family Scheme in 1997 where various financial incentives are given to girls who marry after 21 years. This scheme was aimed at controlling the population growth and reducing female mortality rates by delaying early motherhood.

3.6.2.2.2 Kishori Shakti Yojana

Adolescence is a crucial phase in the life of women. At this stage, she stand at the threshold of adulthood. The stage is intermediary between childhood and womanhood and is the most eventful for mental, emotional and psychological well being. The life cycle approach for holistic child development remains un-addressed if adolescent girls are excluded from the developmental programmes aimed at human resource development.

As such Kishori Shakti Yojana a scheme on adolescent girls as part of the ongoing ICDS scheme .

3.6.2.2.3 Widow Remarriage Scheme

It is a 100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme introduced with the primary objective to ensure social security and to raise the status of widow in the society. With the introduction to the scheme, Sikkim Widow Remarriage Scheme, 1993 was formulated and from the year 1994 the scheme got implemented throughout the state.

An eligible person on his marrying a widow shall on production of the certificate from the concerned Gram Panchayat in which he is resident, or of the Priest who solemnized the marriage or of Marriage Officer, be eligible for an incentive of ten thousand .

3.6.2.2.4 Educational facilities for girls

The state government has initiated several measures in view to spread the education among females to a great extent in Sikkim. These included the establishment of separate primary and junior high schools for girls, wherever there is a demand , and the expansion of facilities for higher secondary education in the exclusive girls' secondary schools at Gangtok, Deorali , Namchi and Gyalshing.

Besides, the introduction of free education in government schools in terms of books, uniform and mid-day meal up to the age of 5 years. These benefits are extended to all the girls in a family, whereas in the case of boys, the benefits are limited to two per family.

3.7 Constitutional Provisions , Rights and other Privileges for women in Sikkim

Sikkim, being the one of the state of Indian Union the rights and privileges of women in national context also are extended in the state . The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measure of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic and political disadvantages faced by them.

3.7.1 Constitutional Provisions

Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economic and social spheres.

Articles15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex etc.

Articles 15(3)- enables the State to allow affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

Article 16- provides for equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. The State also impose a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practice derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 39 Clause (a)-the State shall direct its policy towards securing for man and women equality and the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

Article39 Clause (d)-provide equal pay for equal work for both men and women,

Article 39 (A)-provides for promotion of justice, on the basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation of scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other abilities.

Article 42-the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief,

Article 46- the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation,

Articles47- the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of the public health,

Article 51 (A) (e)-To promote harmony and the sprit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounces practice derogatory to the dignity of women,

Article 243 D(3)-Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total

number of seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Article 243 D(4)- Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayat at each level to be reserved for women,

Article T(3)-Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

Article 243 T (4)-Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may be law provide.

3.7.2 Legislative Measures

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, various legislative measures are extended to Sikkim which intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support service especially to working women have been enacted. Although all laws are not gender specific, the major provisions affect women significantly. Amendments have been periodically carried out to keep pace with emerging demands. They include among others are:- 1) The Special Marriage Act, 1954 ; 2) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (The Bhutia and Lepchas are not the subject of this act in Sikkim) ; 3) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (The Bhutia and Lepchas are not the subject of this act in Sikkim) ; 4) The Family Courts Act, 1954 ; 5) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 ; 6) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act , 1971 ; 7) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; 8) The Child Marriage Restrain Act, 1976 ; 9) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 ; 10) The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act , 1986 ; 11) The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act , 1956 ; 12) Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of misuse) Act, 1994 ; 13) Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Section 498-A- Punishing husband of his relatives for perpetrating cruelty upon the wives) ; 14) Section 304 B IPC – where an unnatural death of a woman occurs within 7 years of her marriage and it is shown that she was harassed soon before her death for or in connection with dowry by her husband or relatives, the accused would be deemed to have caused her death ; 15) Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 ; 16) Domestic Violence Act, 2005 ; 17) Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government passed in 1992 by Parliament ; 18) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 ; etc.

3.7.3 Women's rights related to 'Law and Order'

- i) To refuse to be taken to the police station or anywhere else for interrogation.
- ii) To be questioned only at your residence and in the presence of your family members .
- iii) To ask for the reason of your arrest .
- iv) Not to be handcuffed at the time of your arrest .
- v) To demand that you be produced before magistrate within 24

- hours of your arrest .
- vi) To take along your relatives or friend to the police station, that you should be placed in female lockup .
 - vii) To ask a magistrate for your medical examination if you are beaten, abused or tortured by the police .
 - viii) To demand your bodily search be carried out only by another female in a decent manner .
 - ix) To search any police women before she searches you.
 - x) To demand that your F.I.R. be registered .
 - xi) To take along any friend or relatives at the time of filling the F.I.R.
 - xii) To read the F.I.R. or have someone else read it to you before you sign it .
 - xiii) To receive a free copy of a F.I.R.
 - xiv) To approach senior police officers of your area magistrate if the police refuse to register your F.I.R.

3.7.4 Some measures taken by the State Government for the protection of Women's rights

1. Committee for protection of Women's Rights has been constituted for each of the four districts under the Chairmanship of District and Session Judge vide Notification dated 27th May, 1997. This Committee shall monitor and take steps to expedite the disposal of the cases of atrocities against women whether they be at the stage of investigation, prosecution or trial.
2. Family Court has been set up for the entire State of Sikkim. And presently Dr. Lepcha, District & Session Judge East/North is the Judge of this Family Court.
3. 30% reservation for women in all Government Jobs.
4. 33% reservation for the women in the Panchayat.
5. Under Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, SDPOs of four districts have been appointed as Special Police Officers to deal with offences regarding trafficking of women and children. Further a Co-ordination Committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary has been constituted to review the prevailing situation and also to prepare a plan of action to combat commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children in Sikkim. Ms. N Thapa , Deputy Secretary, Women and Child development Division of Social Welfare Department has been designated as the Nodal Officer for the entire State of Sikkim.
6. With regard to sexual harassment at work place, Sikkim Government Servant's Conduct Rules, 1981 has already been amended as per which any government servant found to be indulging in sexual harassment of any women at her work place shall be stringently punished.

All the departments have been requested to constitute complaint Committee to take Care of cases relating to sexual harassment at work place , 'Sexual harassment' includes:-

1. Physical contact / advances
2. demand of request for sexual favours

3. sexually colored remarks
4. showing any pornography
5. any other unwelcome physical, verbal or sexual nature.

7. One Short Stay Home 'Mantalaya' at Sichey has been set up for women and girls in difficulties. And a Committee under the Chairmanship of Chairperson, State Social Welfare Advisory Board has been constituted to review the functioning of Short Stay Home and also for rehabilitating its inmates.

8. Three Family Counseling Centers are being run by Non Governmental Organizations in the State .

9. Pre-natal Diagnostic (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 has been extended and enforced in Sikkim. This Act provides for the regulation of the use of pre-natal diagnostic technique for the purpose of detecting genetic or metabolic disorder or chromosomal abnormalities of certain congenital malformations of sex linked disorders and for the prevention of the misuse of such techniques for the purpose of pre-natal sex determination leading to female foeticide. Appropriate Authority and Advisory Committees as required under the relevant provision also have been set up.

Findings

Taking the demography , women constitute 47.7 per cent of the total population. There is an unfavourable sex ratio in the population. After 1921 and onwards the number of females per thousand males had has been decreased in every year .

Even sex-ratio decreased, the decadal growth of female population had has been increased in each decades since 1921 – 1931 onwards and such increases has been significant since 1971 onward.

The percentages of female population are comparatively less than males. This is more pronounced in each age groups from 30 years and above. In fact, age groups in between 0-30 years constitutes nearly three fourth (71.0 per cent) of the total female population .

The percentage of girl child (0 – 19 yrs.) , adolescent girl (11-18 yrs.) , reproductive age (15 – 44 yrs.) and economically active (15 – 59 yrs.) among women have been higher in Sikkim than that of national average.

The child women ratio in both 0 – 4 years and 5 – 9 years age groups have been comparatively higher in Sikkim as compared to national level . Moreover, such ratio in both the age groups have been comparatively higher in rural areas than that of urban areas both in Sikkim and at national level .

Now there has been the trend of decrease in infant mortality rate since 1981 to 2002 . The child mortality rate in 0 years - 4 years has been though higher in rural areas of Sikkim , even then it has been less than at national level. Indeed, the number of female per thousand males at birth has decreased since 1981 to 1991 . There has been decrease in death rate both among males and females in both rural and urban areas since 1981 to 1997 .

The total fertility rate which has been comparatively less in Sikkim than at national level .

Of the total main workers 68.83% are males and 31.17% females. Though, majority of the female main workers are agriculturists, but there has been substantial increase in the percentage of other workers since 1981 to 2001.

Though there has been the trend of decline since 1981 to 2001, even then the percentage of female agriculturists has been more than three-fifth of total female main workers (62.31 per cent) while this has been 40.84 per cent among males in 2001. It reflects the significant proportion of participation by women in agriculture in Sikkim.

In fact, the percentage of total main workers is substantially higher among the males than females. But there has been the trend of substantial increase in marginal workers among females as compared to males since 1981 to 2001.

When employed, wages of women are normally less than men. For the same type of work women wage workers get lower rates than men wage workers in construction and agricultural works, etc.

With the increase in literacy the number of female employees in government sectors has increased from 4,105 in 1994 to 12,584 in 2002, and the rate of increase has been 206.6 per cent. Indeed, the percentage of female state government employees has increased from 21.01 per cent in 1994 to 34.0 per cent in 2002.

Among the non-workers the participation of women in household work as main activity has been exclusively dominant as compared to men irrespective education.

The important findings as regards to envisage the status of women in general, it is observed that the number of women headed households in rural areas has been higher than the national average. While this is lower in urban areas as compared to national average.

On the whole, 56.2 per cent of household in Sikkim is having large family size i.e. 5 members and above.

In fact, 74.3 per cent of rural households and 12.4 per cent urban households use the firewood, crop residue and cow dung etc. as fuel for cooking. Indeed, the women are mainly responsible for collection, arrangement and preparation of cooking fuel for household.

On the whole, 31.0 per cent of rural households and 2.3 per cent urban households depend on 'jhoras' (springs) and other sources. Undoubtedly, women are traditionally responsible to fetch drinking water from sources even from PHE taps including storing for the household.

There is huge number of livestock and poultry rearing in households. The caring, feeding and management of livestock and tendering poultry including its marketing have been performed by women to a great extent.

All these substantiate the important role played by women by making their contribution in subsidiary family income. These also substantiate the important multifarious role played by Sikkimese women for the household apart from other household chores including looking after the children and other members of the family as well as other works in addition to their traditional role as mother, wife, sister and daughter.

Female literacy rate is significantly higher in 2001 (61.46%) as compared to 1971 (8.90%). In the year 1991 it was 46.76% and 22.20% in 1981.

Indeed, percentages of literacy among females have been far short of the male level both in rural and urban areas. Moreover, literacy rate among females in rural

areas has been conspicuously far short of female literacy percentage in urban areas .

Illiteracy percentage has always been higher among females than that of males. Though there has been the trend of decrease in the illiteracy percentage since 1981 to 2001 both among males and females .

There has been significant increase in the percentage of enrolment of girls in various classes from Class I to Class X in Sikkim since 1978 to 2000-2003.

The drop-out situation has been higher both among boys and girls in Sikkim and at national level . Interestingly, such drop outs has been lower among females as compared to males in Sikkim . While such drop outs has been lower among males as compared to females at national level.

There are cases of marriage among males and females both in 10-14 and 15 – 19 years age groups. Notably , majority of the total married population in 10-14 and 15-19 years age groups have been among females .

Indeed, percentages increase in married female population in below age groups of 10-14 years and 15-19 years have been significantly higher than that of males.

In case of Sikkim , the gender gap in work participation has been low (19) as compared to National level (26).

Traditionally , women had no right to take part in the election of village headman and chieftaincy/headman remains a male preserve. But after 1975 with introduction of Panchayat systems, there are number of women from all communities elected as member of Panchayat through Panchayat elections in Sikkim .

In 2002 , there has been 34.7 per cent women elected in different Panchayats all over the state. There are good representation of women as Up-sabhapati (47.0 per cent) , Member (41.0 per cent) followed by Sabhapati (27.1 per cent) and Sachiva (13.9 per cent) . Now , women aged 18 years and above cast their votes in Panchayat, Assembly and Parliament elections from time to time.

The percentage of 'no attendance' received by mothers at child birth has been much higher at national level than in Sikkim . While percentage of women attended by Government appointed doctor at child birth has been much higher in urban areas of Sikkim than rural areas, and that too comparatively higher than at national level. But in case of attended by 'other doctors' , the percentage has been higher at national level as compared to nominal percentage in Sikkim. Similar trend is discernible in case of 'Government appointed nurse/mid-wife' and 'nurse/mid-wife' respectively.

In case of Sikkim , as there is no hard and fast dowry while maintained as a token only without cash and kind even among Hindu Nepalese like other areas of the country . While among the Bhutias and Lepchas the token bride-price is prevalent . In fact, no cases of female foeticide , torture on women for dowry and dowry death have been reported in Sikkim. All these may be the reason behind the lack of incidences of crime against women in Sikkim .

There is also the existence of gender disparity in Sikkim . In 1981, such disparity in Sikkim was higher than national average . But in 1991 the gender disparity value though has increased slightly since 1981 to 1991 in Sikkim , even then it is less as compared to national average .

The higher percentage of women and children in Sikkim are suffering from anaemia and percentages have been comparatively higher than at national level.

There are the inequality in terms of adopting family planning in between male and female as the huge number of cases adopted by females (3,846) for family planning as compared to male (130) since 1992-1993 to 1995-1996 .

Though there is considerable growth of employment for women during 1999 to 2000, the percentage of incidences of unemployment among females has been higher as compared to males and that too has been more than at national level.

A women is considered to be an asset in the household and commands a bride price, but she has no rights of inheritance. It is only when a daughter remains unmarried that parents customarily transfer some property to her.

Women by and large have access to resources but not control over significant assets such as land . Interestingly , land tenure is always registered in the name of the male head of household in Sikkim, regardless of ethnicity. Panchayat land records only note the name of the male head of household. Upon the death of the male head of household , women retain usufruct rights to the family holding , and continue to live there until their death , as reported during field survey in Sikkim.

The gender concerns have been addressed in the state through various women specific welfare and empowerment programmes for the upliftment of women by state government. Reservation for women in Panchayats has been fully implemented. Both the Central and State Government have introduced number of programmes, for instance, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Swarna Jayanti Rozgar Yojana, Balika Samridhi Yojana, and Smal Family Scheme etc. to promote both women's welfare and their empowerment.

Cooperatives also are providing training to women. Department of Welfare not only provides financial grants to organize various training programmes for women, but also provides financial aid to the entrepreneurs involved in handicraft production, as well as to form cooperatives.

Sikkim State Commission for women has started functioning from November 2002 . The Commission is a powerful advocate for women's rights created with the purpose of safe guarding the interest of women all over the State.

The state government initiated several measures in view to spread the education among females that include primary and junior high schools for girls, expansion of facilities for higher secondary education, introduction of free education to all the girls in a family in government schools in terms of books, uniform and mid-day meal up to the age of 5 years.

So, it is notable that there has been progress of Sikkimese women in the sphere of education , economy , employment , politics etc. Besides , there has been number of programmes and policies for the welfare and upliftment of women including constitutional provisions , rights and privileges for the benefit and protection of women in Sikkim . Even then , in spite of some progress and sharing by Sikkimese women in all spheres of development like education, employment, economy , politics , the women in Sikkim to a extent lag behind the men .

CHAPTER IV

HANDICRAFTS AND WOMEN OF SIKKIM

Handicrafts of Sikkim

Handicrafts and Women's Participation

Woodcarving

Thangka Painting

Cane and bamboo work

Preparation of Lucky signs

Hand-made paper making

Carpet weaving

Blanket weaving

Handloom weaving

Role of Government Institute of Cottage Industry

Economic Aspects of the Sikkim Handicrafts - Role of Women Findings

CHAPTER IV

HANDICRAFTS AND WOMEN OF SIKKIM

In this section I shall discuss the women's participation in handicraft production, as well as their role in the marketing and selling of the produced items. The discussion presented in this section has been on the basis of facts obtained from the field studies.

4.1 Handicrafts of Sikkim

Traditional arts and handicrafts have been the very breath of Indian Civilization vis-à-vis Sikkim too. Significantly, Sikkim is also known for its traditional handicrafts, paintings, motifs, carpet, traditional tribal shoes, dresses, ornaments, weaving, and so on. The traditional handicrafts in Sikkim had has enormous cultural significance. And many of the Bhutia and Lepcha as well as Nepalese are engaged in traditional handicrafts production of Sikkim. Some of the very important type of handicrafts items are presented below.

Traditionally, *Carpet* (locally known as *Den*) weaving is a symbol of cultural expression in the state of Sikkim. Besides, Carpet is very important export oriented handicraft industry in Sikkim. The carpets are of with various exquisite and intricate designs, motifs and colours which are typical of Sikkimese type and made of various size. The price ranges vary according to size and quality of the particular carpet. Though it is a traditional activity, very few families follow it as a part of family tradition. *Handloom weaving* is another important craft in which Lepcha '*duree*' is woven and that range from 30 inches to 36 inches. This *duree* is made from woolen and cotton yarn. The vertical frame loom with a back strap used by the Lepcha women is indigenous in Sikkim. The handloom products are ranged from plain to intricate patterns. By and large, each product has its own distinct identity. From the woven fabric, varieties of item. such as, Lepcha dress, table mats, napkins, cushion cover, shoulder bag, purses, the cloth for '*gho*' (male bokhu) and '*kira*' (a rectangular female dress) etc. from the cotton yarn. Woolen yarn is also used in handloom weaving for producing items like shawls, mufflers, and hand woven jackets.

Woodcraft is one of the most important crafts of Sikkim. Traditionally, only the Buddhists, Bhutias and Lepchas practise wood carving. Another, that has special socio-religious significance is wooden *mask* of various types being used during their religious dances by the Lamas. The wooden mask is normally prepared by men and not by women. The *cane* and *bamboo-craft* is also important handicraft in Sikkim and the people of Sikkim used to produce different kinds of such beautiful handicraft in the society. Besides, there is paintwork known as '*Thangka Painting*', which depicts different

there is paintwork known as 'Thangka Painting', which depicts different incarnations of Buddha. It has an excellent tradition in Sikkim. Traditionally, only the Bhutias and Lepchas were allowed to make 'Thangka' painting.

In fact, traditional handicrafts of Bhutias and Lepchas were mainly didactic and for religious purpose and not commercialized. But now craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized. and so is the handicraft. When the earlier handicrafts had only cultural and religious significance, the present day handicrafts are also often taken for decorative purposes too. The role of *Government Institute of Cottage Industry* in handicraft industry and the economic aspects of the Sikkim handicrafts are discussed in details in this section apart from the role of women in this cottage industry. Besides, the role of different Cooperative Societies and private entrepreneurs related to handicrafts vis-à-vis cottage industry have also been discussed in this section.

4.2 Handicrafts and Women's Participation

The detailed particular of handicrafts in Sikkim and the extent of participation of women in producing the handicrafts has also been important and relevant to have a grasp over the extent of involvement of women in producing and selling the handicrafts in Sikkim in relation to envisage the situation of women in terms of their role and status in Sikkim. On the whole, though men and women are equally involved in producing marvelous pieces of exquisite quality and craftsmanship. There are certain handicrafts in which women are entirely predominant than men (excluding those which are not traditionally done by women). As a matter of fact, at present the Lepcha-Bhutia and Nepalese women are predominantly involved in carpet weaving, weaving and tailoring of dress materials, knitting of woolen items, and making of toys etc. In various handicrafts production the role played by women has no doubt been very crucial. Indeed, the role and participation of women in various handicraft production in term of specific handicraft may be visualized from the preceding discussions.

4.2.1 Woodcarving

It is one of the most important ^{handi}crafts of Sikkim. Traditionally, only the Buddhists Bhutias and Lepchas used to practise wood carving. Indeed, wood carving is an ancient art form of both the Lepchas and Bhutias of Sikkim. The items of woodcraft having wide range of variety can be found from household items to partitions to eight Buddhists lucky signs.



Cheosum or altars

Being decorative impressive and eye-catching with intricate designs and exquisite pattern, wood carvings can be seen in several monasteries and old buildings too. Locally available wood of *Chaap* and *Okar* trees are normally used for wood carvings. But now as the Government Institute of Cottage Industry used to provide training for multi crafts including wood carving. The people from Nepali communities are also being trained by the Government Institute of Cottage Industry in wood carving. Traditionally men normally do woodcarving. While, women do not take part in such wood carving/woodcraft as it is very difficult to use and handle the heavy implements/tools in producing the same. Woodcrafts are available in the following shapes *choktse* or table, *almirah*, sofa-sets, drawers or *bhodin*, screens, lamp stands, *cheosum* or altars, wall decorations, etc.



Screen

One of the most important materials item of Buddhists' traditional culture that has special socio-religious significance is **wooden mask** of various types being used during their religious dances by the Lamas. The masks are carved out of the tough light wood of the giant climber called *Zaru-shing*, mostly found in the high altitude areas of Sikkim. While in Tibet they were composed of *mashed paper* and *cloth*. In all cases they are beautifully painted and varnished, and are provided with yak tail wig. Each mask has a specific meaning and a story with certain religious connotation associated



Various Wooden Masks

with it. Traditionally the mask dances are staged by the Lamas or monks in the Gonpas or Monasteries. Such dances are normally performed only by men in the monasteries. There are different types of mask normally made by Bhutias and Lepchas like *mask of Khangchendzonga*, *mask of Garura*, *mask of Mahakal*, etc. But now, many of the Bhutias and Lepchas and the other people including the tourists also used to purchase to keep such beautiful masks in their domestic houses for internal decoration. Before initiating carving the wood must be seasoned. Thereafter, the wood piece is cut horizontally as per size of the mask to be made. After that, a curved knife is used to bring the shape the concave and convex portions. Number

of chisels and tools are put to use for days to finish. Finally, the sand paper is used for smoothening the surface of the masks. Paintings of the masks follow thereafter. At present, synthetic colours / paints have replaced the traditional stone colours and vegetable dyes, which had been so costly. The mask is normally prepared by men and not by women.



'Chham Dance' (Mask Dance) in premises of Enchey Monastery

4.2.2 Thangka Painting

The important *Thangka* is a paintings of divinities or group of divinities on silk clothes which depicts different incarnations and life of Lord Buddha, Goddess Doma (Tara), Guru Padmasambhav or God Chana Dorji or for that matter, any Tibetan saint, wheel of life (one of the purest Buddhists emblems) or some other deity, surrounded by deities of lesser significance etc. *Thangkas* are the religious scrolls found hung in monasteries and houses of Buddhists. It has an excellent tradition in Sikkim. Such paintings are considered very auspicious and is supposed to drive away evil spirits. On the wall of the monastery, there are paintings of



Thangka Painting

different incarnations of Buddha. As well as there are different kinds of paintings on black canvas (if on silk then costly/if on other clothes then not costly) which are associated with either monastery or non-monastery form. Traditionally, the *Thangkas* are painted by religious artisans (Bhutia/Lepcha) known as *Lharips*. Because, these paintings are made by referring to religious texts, it is necessary to know the Tibetan language. These are not mere pieces of decoration for the artist, but a powerful aid to tantric mediation. Costly stone colours and vegetable dyes are mainly used for

making such paintings. The two primary colours i.e. red and yellow of these paintings show the difference between the fire and life, between material and immaterial. The orange colour symbolizes knowledge of the highest form of spirituality, the blue colour suggests depth, purity and infinity, and green represents the vegetable aspects. In addition to occupying important place in monasteries or in a home the *Thangka* paintings are also the necessity during special occasions such as birth, death,



Paintings for decoration purpose

house-warming etc. Indeed, *Thangka* painting is a renowned art of Sikkim. "The *Thangka* works of master craftsmen sell for thousands of rupees abroad. They work in seclusion in remote villages" as cited by ex-governor of Sikkim namely Taleyarkhan (1981).

That is why, traditionally only the Bhutias and Lepchas were allowed to make 'Thangka' paintings. But now Nepalese also are creating such paintings of art. Men mainly make 'Thangka' paintings, and women generally do not do such paintings. Because such paintings are entirely associated with their religious text in Tibetan language, which are taught to Lamas only. But, I came to know that two Buddhist nuns (known as 'Unnie Chiemma' in local language) of monastery for women exclusively in Rumtek used to do 'Thangka' Paintings.



Two 'Thangka' Paintings, painted by two Buddhist nuns locally named as 'Unnie Chiemma' of Rumtek Monastery (for women only), Rumtek, East Sikkim.

At present women do 'Thangka' mounting and framing on brocade. For instance, Lachey Doma Sherpa (belongs to Bhutia community as per census of India) of Bhojagiri area of East Sikkim and nearer to Gangtok has the specialization to do such mounting.

4.2.3 Cane and bamboo work

It is also the traditional ^{handicraft} of Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese of Sikkim. Cane and bamboo pieces are first of all split by using simple tools like Khukri or knife to make thin strips. Thereafter the strips are sized as per requirement and are then intricately woven and modified and improved

upon as per the graphical design. There are varieties of cane and bamboo-craft products like, fruit baskets, bamboo flower sticks bear mugs, hair clips, tea-trays, tea strainers, spoons, flower vases, piras, mats, hats and tumblers. In Sikkim bamboo grows in abundance. But the cane is grown only in limited areas, thereby bulk of it comes from neighbouring Siliguri or other parts of the North East. Gorer (1938) points out that the weaving of mats and baskets was very in practice.



Weaving big basket by using bamboo strips

Lepcha weave strong and regular mats out of the barks of bamboo and various reeds, which they employ for the variety of purposes. This craft work was ideally supposed to be the men's work but even females did it. The females were in fact better weavers of mats. While weaving of baskets was however done mostly by males and during leisure hours particularly in the rainy days. Women normally do



Handicraft Products made from Bamboo and Cane

not make any cane and bamboo-craft, while only men make bamboo-craft. Traditionally, there is a notion among Bhutia-Lepcha that if any woman make bamboo-craft then she will not have any peace and prosperity in life (as reported) apart from the problem for women to do the heavy work in producing the said handicraft.

4.2.4 Preparation of Lucky signs

Another important handicraft is the 'Lucky signs' mostly made by women in Sikkim. The lucky signs are made by adopting two types of methods i.e. one type of embroidery work done by using needle on silk or 'sharteen' clothes, and another is the paintwork (fabric) on silk/'shirteen' clothes. Such lucky signs are presented either in the form of words or symbol. It is used as wall hanging and means the 'symbol of peace'. There are various types of lucky signs in Bhutia

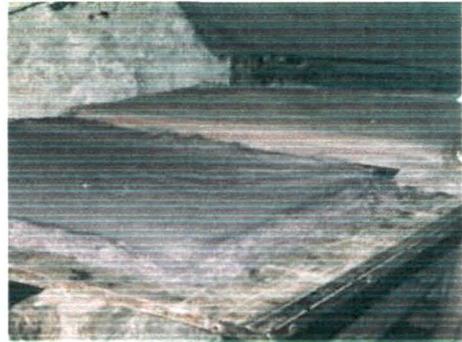


Lucky Signs

language like *Dug* (parasoul), *Bhumpa* (vase), *Dhunakar* (white conch), *Gyaltzen* (banner of victory), *Sernya* (Golden fish), *Pema* (Lotus), *Palbhen* (endless knot), *Choekyi* (Wheel of Dharma) etc. Words used as lucky signs are in Bhutia language, like 'Ohm', 'Bazra' (Thunder), 'Guru', 'Pema, Sithi, Hum' which means "O, Lord give us Peace", etc. Such lucky signs are normally purchased by Buddhists families and Monks too. As per their belief that if this lucky signs (symbol of peace) are kept in houses/monasteries then they will have all sorts of peace. Moreover, no evil can enter into the houses. Regarding the participation of women in making lucky signs there has been two views (as reported by the informants). In the GICI at Gangtok, it was told that woman generally do not make any lucky signs. While in S.R.D.A., it was told that woman also make lucky signs.

4.2.5 Hand-made paper making

It is another important handicraft item. Apart from other units, there is another important section namely *Handmade – paper* unit in the Government Institute of Cottage Industry at Gangtok,. At present, the number of total workers in this Unit has been 10. All they are women belonging to Nepalese ethnic group. The number of Instructor (all men) is 5. This



Hand-made paper product

Unit was opened in the year of 1962. This unit produces three types of handmade paper, namely, i) Rayon paper (used for rapping); ii) Rags paper (used for making files); and iii) Card sheet (used for making greeting cards and paper bag). Raw materials are used to be brought from Kolkata. The produced items are normally bought by 'Jaya Enterprises' in Kolkata, apart from selling in the local markets. Apart from GICI, there is two paper industry namely 'Arti Hand-

This unit produces three types of



Women producing Handmade paper

made Paper Industry', and another one under the Department of Khadi and Gramudyog of Sikkim Government, located at the place known as *Sarmasa Garden* about 16 to 18 kilometers from Gangtok town.

In this context, it may be mentioned here that in ancient time the Monks of Monasteries used to use a tree bark (*Dhapli Canomena*) as hand made paper for writing purpose.

4.2.6 Carpet Weaving

Traditionally, carpet (locally known as *Den*) weaving is a symbol of cultural expression in the state of Sikkim. Besides, Carpet is very important export oriented handicraft industry in Sikkim. The carpets are of with various exquisite and intricate designs, motifs and colours which are typical of Sikkimese type and made of various size. The price ranges vary according to size and quality of the particular carpet. Carpet weaving is dominated



Carpet product

by women. Though it is a traditional activity , very few families follow it as apart of family tradition.

It is not very clear exactly when the carpet weaving began in Sikkim but an earnest and serious step towards this direction had been taken in early 1920s, when the *Chogyal Tashi Namgyal* encouraged the craft and created a palace workshop for carpet weaving known as “*Namkhang*” which literally means woolen products manufacturing center. Skilled designers and craftsmen trained in Tibet set to work in training perspective weavers and creating superb specimens of carpets in the center which can rightly be called the *pioneer carpet industry* in Sikkim.

The real boost to the *carpet* industries in Sikkim however, was given in 1957 when, with the inspiration of Late Prime Minister *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *Chogyal Pandup Thondup Namgyal* established the present Government Institute of Cottage Industries with the objective to preserve and promote the traditional arts and crafts of Sikkim among which the carpet weaving is the major trade. Hundreds of GICI trained carpet weavers are now working in the Institute as carpet weaving instructor or as paid workers on piece-rate basis. While many others have started their own carpet weaving units all over Sikkim with the assistance from various financial institutions. It may therefore be mentioned here that the GICI had has



Woman weaving carpet

been playing an enormous and major role in taking carpet industries in almost every cottages of Sikkim. With the increased number of GICI trained carpet weavers year to year, and with the advent of private carpet

weaving industries Sikkim has now gradually become a rapidly growing one of the major carpet centers in India.

Like all oriental carpets, the *Sikkimese carpets* are also hand knotted and woven in fixed vertical loom. The fabric is composed of warp, weft and pile. The warp is the set of cotton threads arranged vertically in parallel lines between the two ends of the loom around which the knots are tied. The function of the weft, which also consists of cotton threads, is to hold the knots in parallel line and strengthen the fabric of the carpet. The advantage of using cotton warp and weft is that the finished carpet will be firm and strong and less flexible. The pile is the visible surface of the carpet and is made entirely of wool. The materials for weaving carpets are mainly the cotton threads (available in local market) and wools (used to come from Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan states). Indeed, raw materials by virtue of practice, hand spun sheep woolen yarns specially brought from across the borders was used. But at present, cotton as also woolen yarns is regularly procured by the traders in Gangtok and far off places like from Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan states. The carpets are of with various exquisite and intricate designs, motifs and colours which are typical of Sikkimese type and made of various size like 3 ft./6 ft, 2 ft./5 ft, 2ft./2 ft, etc. and for larger size according to specific orders from buyers/clients. The price ranges vary



Carpet products with varieties in size and design

according to size and quality of the particular carpet. Price of some carpets (depending on quality) according to size is shown below (as reported by sales woman in GICI, Gangtok).

Carpet Size	Set (number of piece)	Price in Rs.
3 ft. / 6 ft.	1 piece	885.00
2 ft. / 2 ft.	3 pieces	492.00
2 ft. / 5 ft.	3 pieces for Sofa	885.00
18 inches / 4 ft.	2 pieces for Car set	492.00

Source : Government Institute of Cottage Industry, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Requirement of raw materials for a carpet of standard size i.e. 3 ft. X 6 ft. size is approximately 6 kg. of woolen yarns and 2 kg. cotton yarn. The

tools used in making the carpet are few and simple. They are as follows :

Tools' name in Bhutia language	English term	Function
<i>Den-thak-thi</i>	Loom	Upon which the main carpet is woven
<i>Bha-shey</i>	Garden brush	To roll raw wool for spinning
<i>Phang</i>	Spindle	For spinning yarn
<i>Sok</i>	Axis rod	Holds the warp and functions as its main support
<i>Pen-shing</i>	Spools	Pushes weft threads across warp
<i>Tam</i>	Shed-sticks	Eases way for spools to pass through warp and also separates warp threads
<i>Ne-shing</i>	Heddle rod	Attached by leashes of cord to each warp thread. Its function is to keep the warp tight
<i>Chak-tap</i>	Comb beater in	To press weft thread firmly down.
<i>Gyak-shu</i>	Gauge rod	Around which the woolen pile is knotted
<i>Thowa</i>	Wooden hammer	After each row of knotting the gauge rod and knots are beaten down against the previous rows of knot with 'thowa'
<i>Shyap</i>	Wooden pieces	Help to adjust the length of warp
<i>Jhem-chey</i>	Scissor	For out lining the unwanted threads
<i>Do</i>	Do	For contouring and shearing finished carpet
<i>Dhi</i>	Knife	For cutting knots woven around the gauge-rod after hammering
<i>Charkha</i>	Wheel	For reeling and plying yarns
<i>Dom</i>	Box	For keeping rolled yarns for weaving
<i>Den-thi</i>	Seat	For weavers to sit

Source : Self Help Group Rural Artisan Center , Darap Village, Pelling , West Sikkim .

4.2.7 Blanket Weaving

It is also one of the traditional handicrafts of Sikkim . It is normally done by women particularly in North Sikkim . The blankets are woven on loom, and the raw materials are available in local market. There are mainly two sizes of blanket available i.e. 4 ft. by 6 ft. and 4 ft. by 7 ft.

4.2.8 Handloom Weaving

is another important ^{handi} craft and women in Sikkim play a predominant role in handloom weaving. In this craft Lepcha *duree* is woven and that range from 30 inches to 36 inches. This *duree* is made from woolen and cotton yarn. The yarn is dyed and dried for at least a week before being put on loom for



Women weaving clothes in Handloom

weaving. Both vegetable dyes and synthetic colour are used in dying . The colours are mainly white, black, red, yellow and green etc. The vertical frame loom with a back strap used by the Lepcha women is indigenous in Sikkim. The handloom products are ranged from plain to intricate patterns. By and large , each product has its own distinct identity . From the woven fabric, varieties of item . such as, Lepcha dress, table mats, napkins, cushion cover, shoulder bag, purses, the cloth for 'gho' ((male bokhu) and 'kira' (a



Handloom products like Lepcha bag, shawls , cushion covers

rectangular female dress) etc. from the cotton yarn. Woolen yarn is also used in handloom weaving for producing items like shawls, mufflers, and hand woven jackets.

In fact, weaving was not only an art but also a craft in the sense that it was also a profession for men and women of Lingthem . But by 1937 , this craft had also begun to disappear . As Gorer (1937) expressed that “ until the beginning of this century Lepchas used to weave all their clothes , but now-a-days only a couple of women bother to weave , people were instead ready-made and fairly shoddy clothes” . Gorer (1937) further points out that the ready-made clothes were of poor and this material rendering the children susceptible to cold and bronchitis. To him this is one of the possible causes of infant mortality. Three young children were of the village had died of bronchitis trouble during his three months stay .

Weaving clothes , mats and baskets continues everyday but more for domestic consumption than for commercial purposes. Only two women were found weaving clothes for commercial purposes in 1987 . Apart from the apparent discontinuity, there are certain differences between weaving earlier and now . For instance, earlier the threads were not easily available, but now ready-made threads of varying thickness are readily available for weaving . Second, the threads used to be dyed indigenously and only a couple of colour combinations was possible then. But, now threads of every possible colour and shade are available. Therefore, attractive colour combination and designs can be made today.

Indeed, women in Sikkim are mainly involved exclusively in carpet weaving, blanket weaving, knitting of various woolen items , handloom weaving, stitching of clothes for pillow cover, cushion cover, Lepcha bag items, traditional dress items for Bhutias and Lepchas , embroidery work, making of

different kind of toys, traditional 'Jhalor'(used in the pillars of monasteries and also in houses) etc. Multi-crafts like doll making , hand bags , toyships and toy aero planes. Raw material like wool are usually brought from Ludhiana, while wood and cotton are either procured locally or brought from the neighbouring state of West Bengal.

The development of arts and crafts in Sikkim shows a close link with the development of the general economy of the region. Though the history of arts and crafts of Sikkim is as old as the history of Sikkim itself. It did not receive much attention of the outsiders, such as the British initially. Previously land was plenty and the population was very low. Agriculture was the mainstay of a majority of the people . The crafts as a part of occupation was , however, followed in the north district where, due to climatic factors , agriculture did not hold much importance. But with the gradual increase in the population due to immigration as well as natural population growth it became impossible for agriculture to accommodate all the people.

Indeed, the terms 'art' and 'crafts' do not differ much in meaning. Aesthetics is the soul of the both, but still there has been a subtle difference. An art is purely a creation and expression of beauty. A handicraft is also largely so but it has an additional connotation - occupation (Subba , 1983) . But both 'art' and 'craft' in this study are used in this study essentially as a handicraft which in other way may be treated as a 'occupation' or 'profession' which has already become one of the sector of 'gainful' employment of Sikkim.

Taking the origin of development of arts and crafts in Sikkim , the early forms of the Sikkimese art as cited by Singh (1968) that " the earliest known art forms in Sikkim do not go back before the 15th-16th century A.D. These are rather crude carvings in relief placed upon *chhortens* (receptables of worship) . The first *chhortens* were built after Tibetan models and other shapes were fixed by definite measurements and design. The earliest stone reliefs used for outer decoration of *chhortens* go back to a period before Phuntsog Namgyal (born 1604 A.D., who was the first ruler of Sikkim)".

Taking the statement of Singh (1968) , Subba (1983) indicated that "there existed some arts and crafts in Sikkim even before the Tibetan immigration to this place. The local knowledgeable also recall that the Lepchas who were one of the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim and were animists, made idols and images of different gods and goddesses and worshipped them . It was only after they had been converted to Buddhism religion that this practice was supposed to have been given up ; at least officially" .

Undoubtedly there has been change in the local arts and crafts of Sikkim in terms of modernity and tradition. In other way it may be envisaged that there has been a smooth blend of tradition and modernity in the arts and crafts of Sikkim (Subba: 1983) .

Taking the continuity of tradition in arts and crafts, people do not use all colours while adhere to prescribed one as per tradition. Because, each of the colours used has some religious significance. Similarly, the most common pictures/designs carved, or woven also have some religious significance, such as *dhug* or parasol , *pema* or lotus , *pet-behu* or eternal knot, *ser-nya* or golden fishes , *gyaltsen* or victory banner, *tar-chen-bhum-pa* or vase, *dhum-kar-yel-kei* or conch shell , *khor-lo* or sacred wheel, dragons , elephants , etc. Besides, other pictures/pictures of god/goddesses carved on wood or woven on carpets have some religious significance.

The earlier carvings on wood were , e.g. much deeper and subtler than the carvings seen today in the market. The carpets were also of much superior quality , both in designs and in the materials used. It has been perhaps due partly to the availability of better materials then from Tibet. The colours used earlier for paintings were made out of tree barks or plants, but today they use modern chemical paints produced in the factories. Moreover, there was no time limit for the preparation of a particular article, but today the articles are produced after a fair calculation of the cost benefit ratio and more number of products for selling and commercial gains.

Human resource is by and large managed by GICI , cooperatives, private entrepreneurs who also employ workers. Besides, number of women also are self employed in terms of doing handicrafts production on wage basis while materials supplied by the customers . Raw materials like wool are usually brought from Ludhiana, while wood and cotton are either procured locally or brought from the neighbouring state of West Bengal. The supply of finished products is also done through the Sikkim State Trading Corporation.

4.3 Role of Government Institute of Cottage Industry

Taking into consideration the important and effective role played by *Government Insitute of Cottage Industry* (GICI) in creating the viable situation of popularity and spreading of Sikkimese handicrafts apart from imparting training to the Sikkimese , it may be much relevant to have a look into the background of GICI in Sikkim , which has been presented in the preceding discussion.

Government Insitute of Cottage Industry at zero point in Gangtok under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, Government of Sikkim (previously

known as Palsuing Tendung Insitute) was established in the year 1957 with the objective of imparting job oriented training to the boys and girls in traditional arts and crafts like Carpet weaving, Thara weaving, Thangka paintings and other Multi-crafts had has been running with production and marketing wings. This institution provides necessary help and assistance to its ex-trainees to market their products besides selling its own products. It provides marketing facilities for handicrafts made by local craftsmen/women (ex-trainees of GICI) had has been proving very beneficial to these artisans. During Chogyals' (Kings) reign only the lamas were entitled to go through various handicrafts training . Indeed the establishment of GICI in Gangtok in 1957 and the starting of technical training in the institutes premises was a landmark in the industry history of Sikkim. Later on



Researcher in front of GICI, Gangtok , East Sikkim

day by day the establishment of technical training centers has been established in different areas in all the districts.

This institute has at present 20 training centers (including the main training center at Gangtok) located in north (6 centers), south (4 centers), west (6 centers) and east (4 centers) districts of Sikkim. All over Sikkim, wood carving training is given in 15 centers, carpet weaving training in 18 centers, Handloom in 10 centers, Blanket in 4 centers, Multi-crafts in 2 centers etc. In case of Tangka paintings, Wooden Mask, Cane and Bamboo etc. training are given only in Headquarter i.e. Government Institute of Cottage Industry in Gangtok, apart from Wood carving, Carpet, Multi-crafts, and Handmade paper making. The details of number of trainees according to type of crafts since 1997 to 2002 (till June) as per availability (both men and women) is shown in able 63 and Table 64 .

Table : 63 Number of trainees by gender and type of handicrafts, 1997 – 2002
(As on 15/06/2002)

Type of training	M F T	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total	
								No.	%
Wood carving	M	20	30	25	39	56	32	202	80.2
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	20	30	25	39	56	32	202	13.4
Carpet	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	F	126	102	215	179	113	129	864	68.7
	T	126	102	215	179	113	129	864	57.3
Handloom	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	F	32	49	50	34	32	32	229	18.2
	T	32	49	50	34	32	32	229	15.2
Multi-crafts	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	F	21	7	15	18	7	8	76	6.1
	T	21	7	15	18	7	8	76	5.0
Mask	M	-	1	3	-	-	2	6	2.4
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	-	1	3	-	-	2	6	0.4
Thankka paintings	M	3	5	8	4	1	3	24	9.5
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	3	5	8	4	1	3	24	1.6
Cane and Bamboo	M	2	2	-	1	-	-	5	2.0
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	2	2	-	1	-	-	5	0.3
Blanket	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	F	15	13	23	23	14	15	103	8.2
	T	15	13	23	23	14	15	103	6.8
Total	M	40	38	36	44	57	37	252	100.0
	F	179	171	303	254	167	184	1257	100.0
	T	219	209	339	298	224	221	1509	100.0

Source : Government Institute of Cottage Industry, Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, Gangtok, East Sikkim .

Note : M denotes male , F denotes female and T denotes total .

Craft-wise, majority of women trainees (68.7%) were in Carpet production, followed by Handloom (18.2%). As a whole, majority of the total trainees since 1997 to 2002 had been women (83.3%) while men 16.7% (Table 63).

Table : 64 Number of Handicraft Trainees in different districts , 1997 - 2002
(As on 15/06/2002)

District	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
East Sikkim	79	57	78	74	57	60	405
West Sikkim	44	56	74	74	67	56	371
North Sikkim	65	54	121	99	69	60	468
South Sikkim	31	42	66	51	30	45	265
Total	219	209	339	298	223	221	1509

Source: Government Institute of Cottage Industry, Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom , Gangtok, East Sikkim .

Since 1997 to 2002 (June), a total number of 1509 men and women had been trained in the aforesaid crafts in different Government Training Centers all over Sikkim. Of which 405 are trained in East Sikkim, 468 in North Sikkim, 371 in West Sikkim, and 265 in South Sikkim (Table 64) .

As per available data collected from GICI in Gangtok, there are only women trainees (both first and second year) in three sections, namely Carpet (49 trainees), Multi-craft (21 trainees) and Handloom (16 trainees) sections belonging to Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali communities, during the period of 2001-2002. Even the instructors of these three craft sections also are women. In case of Carpet section, there are 3 Bhutia and 1 Lepcha women ; in Multi-crafts section, 2 Bhutia and 2 Nepali women ; in Handloom section 2 Nepali women .

In the first year the student used to get Rs. 300/- stipend each month, and in 2nd year Rs. 350/- each month. In case of Art and Thangka Paintings the training course is for 5 years, and the trainees used to get Rs. 300/- per month in the 1st year and Rs.350/- per month for the rest 4 years. There are two girls' hostels for the women trainees who are coming from far-off places, one in *Gangtok* of east Sikkim and another in *Mangan* of north Sikkim. After completion of training, the student may get employment as paid worker of the Institute and later on as instructor as per the availability and desire. Each training center is having *cane and bamboo section, art and thangka painting section, mask section, handloom section, multi-craft section, hand-paper making section, carpet section* etc. Besides, each training institute is having marketing section with emporium for selling directly to the customers.

The details as regard to the type of training, number of students etc. in the two Branch Centers of GICI has been cited in the preceding discussion in view to visualize the situation of various Branch Centers of GICI in terms of its functioning. GICI Kewzing Branch at *Kewzing* situated on the way towards *Geyzing* of West Sikkim. This branch center is under the *Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom* , Government



Researcher along with one woman FLO worker in front of GICI Branch at Kewzing, South Sikkim

of Sikkim at Kewzing , South Sikkim. In this center, there are now 32 trainees (19 female and 13 male) altogether in carpet, handloom and wood carving sections. Indeed, of the total 19 trainees , 6 of them are in carpet

section and 13 of them in handloom section. Male trainees are only in wood-carving section. In this branch center one Field Level Organization (FLO) separately for both carpet and handloom weaving - are there. In FLO, those who after completion of the training can work on wage basis. The materials in such case are supplied by the branch center. In carpet weaving FLO section, there are 5 female FLO weavers, and in handloom weaving FLO section there are also 5 female weavers .

All the trainees and workers in FLO section belong to Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese communities . There are 3 instructors (2 female and 1 male) for imparting training to these trainees in this center . Training period at present for carpet and also handloom weaving courses are for 2 years, and wood carving 3 years. The stipend of the trainees at present enhanced to Rs. 500/- per month for the 1st year, and for the 2nd and 3rd years the stipend is Rs. 600/- per month (as reported during field survey in April, 2004) . Earlier it was Rs. 300/- and Rs. 350/- respectively. Number of trainees of this center since 1997 to 2002 is given in Table 65.

Table : 65 Number of trainees in Kewzing Branch Center, since 1997

Year	Carpet Section	Handloom Section	Wood Carving Section
1997	12	-	3
1998	8	9	6
1999	6	9	3
2000	6	4	3
2001	6	1	4
2002	4	4	1
Total	42	27	20

Source : Government Institute of Cottage Industry, Kewzing Branch Center, Kewzing , South Sikkim.

In *Kabi Village Branch Center* for handicraft training under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom located about 22 kms. Away from Gangtok town under Mangan sub-Division of North Sikkim, there has now been 40 (20 female and 20 male) trainees . In Kabi village , it was observed that the role of women there have been equally important with men particularly in case of agriculture (except plough), collection of broom grass and making broom for house



Researcher in front of GICI Branch , Kabi, North Sikkim

cleaning, taking care of livestock, collection of firewood etc. apart from other household work and child care.

In *Chungthang* (North Sikkim) GICI Branch Center under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, Government of Sikkim, students usually come from various villages/areas viz. *Mangan, Singhik, Lachen, Pakseck, Pegong, Kamom, Thenga Naga*, and from surrounding areas of *Chungthang*.

In fact, total number of students in this Branch Center for the year 2003 has been 23. Of which, 7 students in 1st year (4 students in Handloom section and 3 students in Carpet section), and 16 students in 2nd year (8 students in Handloom and 8 students in Carpet



Researcher in front of GICI Branch at Chungthang, North Sikkim

sections). Community-wise, all 4 students in 1st year Handloom section belong to Lepcha community. While, in 1st year Carpet section, 2 students belong to Lepcha and 1 from Bhutia communities. In case of 2nd year Handloom section all of the 8 students belong to Lepcha community. Whereas, out of other 8 students in 2nd year Carpet section, 5 of them are Nepalese, 2 Bhutia and 1 Lepcha. All of the students in both the year are women. Besides, number of total instructors/teachers is 4 and all of them are women. Though there was Blanket section. But the same was closed down since few years back mainly due to no admission taken/lack of interested students to learn Blanket weaving in the area. This Branch Center is having hostel facility and those students who are coming from long distance usually stay in this hostel.

In *Pelling* (West Sikkim) GICI Branch Center under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, Government of Sikkim, students usually come from various villages/areas viz. *Gyalshing, Darap, Pemyangtse*, etc. and from surrounding areas of *Pelling*.



Researcher in front of GICI Branch at Pelling, West Sikkim

4.4 Economic Aspects of the Sikkim Handicrafts - Role of Women

In fact, handicrafts sector enjoys a special significance in the country's economy in terms of employment generation as well as earning of foreign exchange through carpets. Estimates based on the population census, survey (NSSO), NCAER Survey and other studies and information available for unorganized cottage industry sector reveal that the annual growth rate of employment (both direct and indirect) in the handicrafts sector could be around 2.5%. Based on this, it is presumed that during the 9th Five Year Plan, employment in the handicrafts sector increased from 52.92 lakh in the year 1997-98 to 56.99 lakh in 2000-2001 and is estimated to reach 58.41 lakh by the end of 9th Plan i.e. 2001-2002.

Table : 66 Exports of Handicrafts from 1997-98 to 2002-2003

Item	(Rs. In. Crore)					
	1997 – 1998	1998 – 1999	1999 – 2000	2000 – 2001	2001 – 2002	2002 – 2003
Carpet and other floor covering						
Woolen	1495.35	1783.32	1888.45	2045.96	2152.69	1649.48
Silk	109.62	136.46	153.93	167.03	198.27	115.25
Synthetic	56.64	94.16	93.65	102.16	85.17	32.85
Total	1661.58	2013.94	2136.03	2315.15	2436.13	1797.58
Other handicrafts						
Art metal ware	1291.88	1329.16	1497.18	1778.10	1758.90	1622.47
Wool ware	279.35	286.04	394.95	434.44	431.88	257.23
M.P. Textiles	489.82	1033.98	1158.05	1276.75	1221.59	1093.52
Embroidered and crochet goods	1307.15	1209.42	1584.36	1964.78	1931.97	1714.23
Shawls and art wares	20.10	48.48	21.50	27.20	27.01	23.18
Zari and zari goods	71.88	74.95	83.52	142.32	134.04	101.46
Imitation jewellery	68.12	104.10	113.64	121.68	117.53	83.10
Miscellaneous handicrafts	646.09	1057.57	1116.40	1210.08	1146.58	818.65
Total	4174.39	5143.70	5969.60	6955.35	6769.50	5713.84
Grand total	5835.0	7157.64	8105.63	9270.50	9205.63	7511.42

Source : Annual Report – 2002-2003, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, New Delhi.

Exports of handicrafts including hand knotted carpets were recorded at Rs.9205.63 crore during 2001-2002 showing a slight decrease of 0.8% in export compared to the corresponding period of 2000-2001. The export of handicrafts in the financial year till December 2002 (as per availability) has been Rs.7511.42 crore. Item-wise exports of handicrafts since 1997-98 is given in Table 66.

As the handicrafts being a state subject, its development and promotion is the primary responsibility of the state government, it is also imperative to delineate the situation i.e. economy of handicrafts in Sikkim. Indeed, the development of arts and crafts in Sikkim no doubt shows a close link with the development of the general economy of the region. Though the history

of arts and crafts of Sikkim is as old as the history of Sikkim itself. It did not receive much attention of the outsiders, such as the British initially i.e. during British rule. Previously land was plenty and the population was very low. Agriculture was the mainstay of a majority of the peoples. The crafts as a part of occupation was, however, followed in the north district where, due to climatic factors, agriculture did not hold much importance. But with the gradual increase in the population due to immigration as well as natural population growth it became impossible for agriculture to accommodate all the people.

Moreover, the traditional handicrafts of Sikkim received a serious setback following the Sino-Indian rivalry of 1962. These crafts were virtually abandoned as the import of raw materials like wood and silk were stopped from Tibet. Therefore, State patronage became very much imperative in order to sustain and develop arts and crafts of Sikkim. In this context, the establishment of GICI at Gangtok in 1957 and the starting of technical training in the Institute's premises was a landmark in the industry history of Sikkim. But despite such patronage the arts and crafts did not develop much until 1977-78. But then in 1975 Sikkim had joined the Indian Union which flooded this new state with so much capital that an inflationary trend was clearly visible. This inflow of money indirectly contributed to the development of the arts and crafts of Sikkim. In the process of rapid development of Sikkim with the capital and technical guidance from the Indian experts, many people from outside got employment. Hardly any Sikkimese who had studied up to class VIII had to remain unemployed. This has increased the purchasing power of the people of Gangtok which was the center of development. This also resulted in a rapid development of the arts and crafts of Sikkim. There has been on the one hand the arts and crafts have a traditional and religious values, and on the other the techniques in the same have been secularized considerably. On the whole this has taken a market or commercial orientation at present.

In the past, the traditional ^{handi}crafts of Bhutias and Lepchas were mainly didactic and for religious purpose and not commercialized. But now craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized among both men and women, and so is the craft. When the earlier ^{handi}crafts had only cultural and religious significance, the present day handicrafts are also often taken for decorative purposes too. For commercialization of the craft the Government Institute of Cottage Industry at zero point of Gangtok and its different Training Centers have been contributing significantly in commercialization of handicraft products in Sikkim (apart from its training to students along with other different cooperatives and business enterprises).

Besides, at present the people also have the opportunity to get them employed in the training institutes under *Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom* as well as can do business independently in this regard, or can work in different Cooperative Societies related to handicrafts. Indeed, there has been number of cooperatives who deals with the making of handicrafts as well as selling of the produced crafts in Sikkim.

Interestingly, there are number of *Women Cooperatives Societies* which are run exclusively by women located in different parts of the state. For instances - *Tribal Women's Weaver and Handicraft Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Nambu of West Sikkim ; *Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.*, at Nam Nam of Gangtok, East Sikkim ; *Women Cutting and Tailoring Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Namchi of South Sikkim ; *Nayuma Women's Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Tadong, Gangtok of East Sikkim ; *Mahila Broom Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Namthang of South Sikkim ; *Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Gangtok of East Sikkim ; *Carpet (Den) Weaving Training Centre* under Swarna Jayanti Saharey Rozgar Yojana at Ranipool of East Sikkim ; *Srishti Samity* at Sarmasa-Jalipool under Ranipool of East Sikkim ; *Educated Unemployed Women's Welfare Cooperatives Society Limited* at Nop Gao under Pakyoung of East Sikkim ; etc. Besides, there are number of *Cooperative Societies* which are involved in carpet weaving. Apart from these, there are number of private business enterprises dealing exclusively with carpet, woolen and other handicraft items etc. where women have the opportunity to work there. All these have access to exhibitions, retail outlets as sells emporium/center , trade fairs , tourism and other fairs , thorough which the handicraft items are sold. Besides , the handicraft product items are also sold/marketed directly to its customer in urban and rural areas by private entrepreneurs themselves involved in handicraft production .

In fact, women play important contributing role in the economy of the Sikkim handicraft . The key aspect in this regard that the women are the producers of various handicraft items and at the same time they are also the sellers as well as marketing too . They are also playing the contributing role in popularizing the various handicraft items in the market . The handicraft items are sold by women through exhibitions, retail outlets as sells emporium/center , trade fairs , tourism and other fairs , Besides , the handicraft product items are also sold/marketed directly to its customer in urban and rural areas by women private entrepreneurs themselves involved in handicraft production . Therefore, the women in Sikkim no doubt have been playing important role in commercializing the various handicrafts in the society and thus contribute towards the development of handicraft economy vis-à-vis general economy of Sikkim.

Findings

Traditionally *Woodcarving* is one of the most important crafts of Sikkim, only the men Buddhists (Bhutias and Lepchas) practise wood carving. While, women do not perform wood carvings. *Wooden mask* is of various types and having special socio-religious significance being used during their religious dances by the Lamas and men only.

Important *Thangka Painting* is a paintings of divinities/group of divinities on silk clothes which depicts different incarnations and life of Lord Buddha, God/Goddess, religious Guru, Tibetan saints, wheel of life, other deity, etc. are very auspicious and excellent tradition in Sikkim. Traditionally only the men Bhutias and Lepchas were allowed to make 'Thangka' paintings. Men mainly make 'Thangka' paintings, and women generally do not do such paintings. At present women do 'Thangka' mounting and framing on brocade.

Cane and Bamboo-craft like, fruit baskets, flower sticks, bear mugs, hair clips, tea-trays, tea strainers, spoons, flower vases, piras, mats, hats and tumblers are also the traditional art of Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese of Sikkim and done mainly by men.

Lucky signs (symbol of peace) are various types and presented either in the form of words in Bhutia/Tibetan language or symbol of Buddhists tradition, mostly made by women in Sikkim either as embroidery or paint(fabric) work.

Handmade-paper is another important handicraft item. There are three types of handmade paper, namely, i) Rayon paper (used for rapping); ii) Rags paper (used for making files); and iii) Card sheet (used for making greeting cards and paper bag). Women are mostly involved in producing hand-made paper.

Traditionally, *Carpet weaving* is a symbol of cultural expression in the state of Sikkim. Besides, Carpet is very important export oriented handicraft industry in Sikkim. The carpets are of with various exquisite and intricate designs, motifs and colours which are typical of Sikkimese type and made of various size. Women are dominant in carpet making.

Blanket weaving is also traditional handicrafts of Sikkim and normally done by women. The blankets are woven on loom, and the raw materials are available in local market. Women in Sikkim play a predominant role in *Handloom weaving*.

It may also be relevant to point out that *Government Institute of Cottage Industry* (GICI) being established in 1957 with objective to impart job oriented training to the boys and girls in traditional arts and crafts like Carpet weaving, Thara weaving, Thangka paintings and other Multi-crafts had has been running with production and marketing wings have played the important and effective role in creating the viable situation of popularity and spreading of Sikkimese handicrafts.

This institute has at present 20 training centers including the main training center at Gangtok. Since 1997 to 2002 (June), a total number of 1509 men and women had been trained in the aforesaid crafts in different Government Training Centers all over Sikkim.

Taking the economy of the handicrafts, the traditional crafts in Sikkim in the past were mainly didactic and not commercialized. While at present craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized among both men and women, and so is the craft.

Besides, at present the people also have the opportunity to get them employed in the training institutes under *Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom* as well as can do business independently in this regard, or can work in different Cooperative Societies related to handicrafts.

For commercialization of the ^{handi}craft the State Institute of Cottage Industry at zero point of Gangtok under *Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom* and its different Training Centers have been contributing significantly in commercialization of produced handicrafts in Sikkim apart from different cooperatives and business enterprises. Indeed, there has been number of cooperatives who deals with the making of handicrafts as well as selling of the produced crafts in Sikkim.

Undoubtedly there has been change in the local arts and crafts of Sikkim in terms of modernity and tradition. There was no time limit for the preparation of a particular article in the past, but today the articles are produced after a fair calculation of the cost benefit ratio and more number of products for selling and commercial gains. On the whole this has taken a market or commercial orientation.

In fact, though the arts and crafts no doubt have a traditional and religious values, at the same time now the techniques in the same have been secularized considerably. Human resource is by and large managed by GICI, cooperatives, private entrepreneurs and employ workers. Besides, number of women also are self employed in terms of doing handicrafts production on wage basis. Raw materials like wool are usually brought from Ludhiana, while wood and cotton are either procured locally or brought from the neighbouring State of West Bengal.

Indeed, the Sikkimese women on the whole are predominantly involved in lucky signs paintings, carpet weaving, blanket weaving, handloom weaving, knitting of various woolen items, tailoring of dress materials, stitching of clothes for pillow cover, cushion cover, Lepcha bag items, traditional dress items for Bhutias and Lepchas, embroidery work, making of different kind of toys, traditional 'Jhalor' etc. Multicrafts like doll making, hand bags, toyships and toy aeroplanes, etc.

CHAPTER V

COOPERATIVES AND WELFARE SOCIETIES FOR PROMOTING HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY OF SIKKIM - THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN

Cooperatives , Welfare Societies and Self Help Group

M/S Dzungri Enterprises

Sikkim Rural Development Agency (S.R.D.A.)

Khadi Gram Udyog Board

Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.

Lotus Associates Pvt. Limited

Carpet Production Centers in Swastik Area

Carpet (Den) Weaving Training Center

Srishti Samity

Educated Unemployed Women's Welfare Cooperatives Society Ltd.

Nayuma Women Cooperative Society Ltd.

Vijra Carpet Center

Kumphenling Tibetan Multi-purpose Co-operative Society Ltd.

Training programme organized by Sub-Divisional Magistrate's (SDM) Office at Mangan

Tibetan Refugee Carpet (Den) Training Center

Weaving of Carpet on the basis of wage only

Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs Service Cooperative Society Ltd. (SCESCOS)

Women's Cutting Knitting and Tailoring Cooperative Society Ltd.

Panchayat Weaving Center

Self Help Group Rural Artisan Center

Findings

CHAPTER V

COOPERATIVES AND WELFARE SOCIETIES FOR PROMOTING HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY OF SIKKIM - THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN

Indeed, importance of cooperatives and welfare societies involved in handicraft productions as well as its selling have also been no doubt significant in Sikkim and that play important contributing role in spreading as well as imparting handicrafts training, providing opportunities for self-help and earning i.e. employment, development of handicrafts, continuity of age old traditions, and local market economy etc. Moreover, women play decisive contributing role in the functioning of these cooperatives. This can be envisaged from the preceding detailed delineation of functioning of various cooperatives vis-à-vis the role of women in this cooperatives. In fact, this section is based on the information drawn from the facts collected during the field study.

5.1 Cooperatives , Welfare Societies and Self Help Group

The various cooperatives including exclusive women cooperatives , development agency, welfare societies , self help group etc. in terms of their role in imparting handicraft training , production of various handicraft items and its selling including marketing as well as their background have been delineated in the followings . Besides , the role of women in these cooperatives has also been discussed elaborately.

5.1.1 M/S Dzungri Enterprises

It is located in New Market area of Gangtok town, run by a Bhutia woman namely *Mrs. Pema Chomu* along with her husband. This enterprise was originally a privately owned knitting Center for woolen garments. But in the year 2002 it closed down its production and reopened as ready-made modern garments manufacturer and used to produce modern garments and supply its products to various private enterprises dealing with ready-made garments. All workers at present are men. Before that, all the workers were women .

5.1.2 S.R.D.A. (Sikkim Rural Development Agency)

One S.R.D.A. showroom at Gangtok located in the New Market area was visited. In this showroom, one Nepali sales woman namely *Sukhmaya Rai* used to look after the selling of various handicrafts like, Lepcha Bag,

Lepcha Shawl, wall hangings like Lucky signs, woolen sweaters, Thangka paintings, different types of wall decoration items e.g. flowers, Buddhists God / animals, paintings of human beings (both men and women belonging to Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese communities) . This sales woman also used to do knitting of woolen sweater by Knitting machine .



Woman knitting woolen garment in sewing machine in S.R.D.A. Show Room at Gangtok, East Sikkim

5.1.3 Khadi Gram Udyog Board

One showroom of *Khadi Gram Udyog Board* in Super Market area is run by one woman showroom in-charge, and one woman sales assistant . Various Kahdi materials like towel, bed cover, kurta, bag etc. are sold here.



Women in-charge and sales-assistant of Khadi Gram Udyog Board's show room at Gangtok, East Sikkim

5.1.4 Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.

It is located in the Super Market area in Gangtok. This society is registered under the Sikkim Government Cooperative Society. The secretary of this cooperative society is one Bhutia woman . Apart from her, three women are also working in the society . Among them, two belong to Bhutia community and another one is Bengali . Besides, the daughter-in-law of Secretary also works here voluntarily and maintains all sorts of bank transaction



Show Room of Denzon Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd. at Gangtok of East Sikkim

and used to advise the designs of woolen sweaters. This society mainly deals with various types of woolen sweaters production and its selling in the market. The price range of woolen sweaters are varied from Rs. 150/- to Rs. 600/- depending on the size and quality of wools.

5.1.5 Lotus Associates Pvt. Limited

This enterprise is located in the village known as Bagthang about 5 kilometers away from Gangtok towards Mangan (North Sikkim). This is actually a German Angora Rabbit Firm and Breeding Center run by one Nepali namely Shri M. Pradhan. Shri Pradhan after getting training in Kulu of Himachal Pradesh established this firm in the year of 1997. Here, mainly German rabbits are bred for rabbit wool production.



German Angora Rabbit Firm and Breeding Center

There are also such centers in North, West and South Sikkim. In case of North Sikkim, such center is run by Government, and rest are run privately. From Bagthang center the rabbit wools are supplied to Kathmandu in Nepal as well as for the use of the local people.



Angora Rabbit wool

5.1.6 Carpet Production Centers in Swastik area

Carpet Production Centers is located in Swastik area about 3 kilometers away from Gangtok. Earlier there was about 15 carpet production centers, where Tibetan, Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali women were working as carpet weavers. But these centers were not government registered and doing carpet production and its selling on their own i.e. privately. All these centers are now closed due to problems of sufficient capital for investment as well as problems of selling. As they all had to import woolen yarns from Punjab and the price of woolen yarns had been increased day by day. It was difficult for them to purchase the woolen yarns from Punjab. Moreover selling of their carpets was not regular. Initially, some offices and others used to purchase carpets from them, but now they are purchasing carpets from GICI with cheaper cost than that of their price. Due to which their selling of carpets came down gradually day by day. That is why, it was difficult for them to continue such production and ultimately they had to stop production. As they are either illiterate or very lowly educated, and due to lack of their knowledge about how to apply for Government monetary assistance in the form of household industry loan, they are very much afraid to apply for loan and never applied for the same. Moreover, they have the belief that the Government used to provide loan only to large scale enterprises/cooperatives, and the small scale enterprises/small carpet centers would not get any loan assistance. It articulates to the fact, that they are completely unaware about the procedures of applying the loan as well as about the Government's

assistance for small scale/household industries development programmes. Resultantly, all the workers now either have opened wine shop, grocery shops, petty restaurants etc. at *Swastic area*, or doing only household work. Whenever enquired about that why they did not form a cooperative, then they opined that the Government is interested only to those cottage industries and training centers run by Government.

5.1.7 Carpet (Den) Weaving Training Center

Carpet (*Den*) Weaving Training Center is located in Ranipool about 11 kilometers away from Gangtok. This training center was started since 27th November, 2001 under the scheme of *Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana*. There are now 15 women trainees particularly for a period of one year

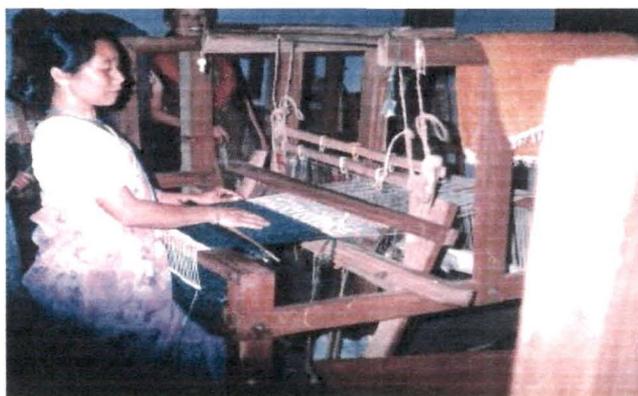


Women of Carpet Weaving Training centre in Ranipool weaving carpet (*Den*) under the scheme Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana

training session (November, 2001 to October 2002). Of which 8 trainees belong to Bhutia community, 1 Lepcha and 6 Nepali women . The teacher of that center is a Nepali women, namely Mrs. Vandana Biswakarma. Each trainees gets Rs. 250/- per month as stipend. After completion of training each of the trainees will get completion certificate and can get job in any cooperatives, training institutes, Government showrooms and other private enterprises related with handicraft productions and selling.

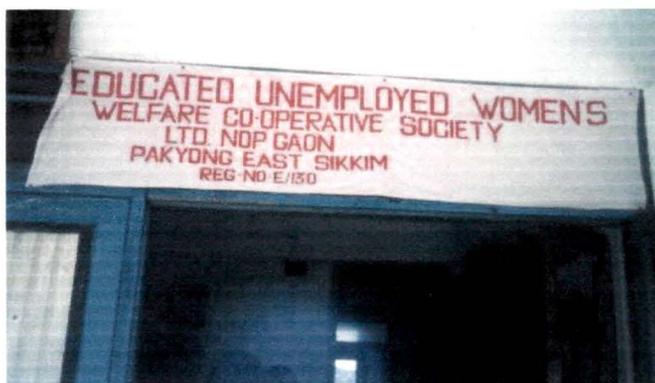
5.1.8 Srishti Samity

It is a small scale industry located in Sarmasa-Jalipool area under Ranipool post office, which is about 13 kms. away from Gangtok towards Pakyoung. This Samity was established under the small scale industry scheme of NABAD, Government of India.



One woman weaving doormats in the loom of 'Srishti Samity' located in Sarmasa-Jalipool, East Sikkim

4 Lepchas, 1 Bhutia, and 4 others. The training is imparted by one woman instructor namely Mrs. Pabitra Sharma who belong to Nepali community. All the trainees of this cooperatives has to pay Rs.150/- per month as a training fee. The training is imparted for a duration of two hours for each trainee in three shifts per day for 6 days in a week. An woman can be a member of this cooperative only after completion of her training in this cooperative. Indeed, the trainees and also the members of this cooperative used to collect orders for supplying their products privately. Besides, the members of this cooperative also participate in trade fairs/exhibition for selling their products. For instance, they



Women members of Educated Unemployed Women's Welfare Cooperative Society in Pakyong, East Sikkim, sewing dress materials

participated in one exhibition held during April 26 to May 6 in Gangtok town. The details of the price according to size and quality is given below :-

Product item	Price in Rs.
<i>Chow Bandhi</i> (Nepali traditional dress)	200.00
<i>Dawra</i> (upper part of traditional dress for Nepali boy)	200.00
<i>Surwale</i> (trouser or lower part of traditional dress for Nepali boy)	200.00
<i>Shawl</i>	250.00
<i>Blouse</i>	30.00
<i>Frock</i>	40.00
<i>School dress</i> (full set)	60.00
<i>School dress</i> (any part)	40.00
<i>Salwar-Kamiz</i>	60.00
<i>Wall hanging</i> (big size fabric paintings on canvas)	15000.00
<i>Wall hanging</i> (small size fabric paintings on canvas)	5000.00
<i>Table -cloth</i> (fabric paints, single shed)	150.00
<i>Table -cloth</i> (fabric paints, double shed)	200.00
<i>Fabric paints</i> on frock, kurta, night dress etc.	20.00 to 40.00

Source : Field Survey, 2002-2005.

5.1.10 Nayuma Women Cooperative Society Limited

Nayuma Women Cooperative Society Limited is exclusively run by women at Tadong of Gangtok. This cooperative was established in the year 2001 due to initiatives taken by Mrs. Chamling, the wife of present chief Minister of Sikkim. Indeed, after taking training by her at Delhi in the field of operational use of modern equipments for sewing, she aspired to impart her knowledge among the educated unemployed women in Sikkim through this cooperative. The reason behind has been that after training in this cooperative some women can earn as well as to introduce modern equipments/machines like computerized sewing machines, computer etc. among the women of Sikkim. This would obviously help the women to get themselves empowered financially to some extent. Thus, it would have contribution in reducing unemployment among educated women to some extent.

After establishing Nayuma Women Cooperative, and with the initiative taken by Mrs. Chamling the announcement through Radio and TV was made for interested women to join in the Cooperative. Besides, with help of MP and MLAs meetings were arranged in their constituencies for letting the women know about this Cooperative as well as to create interest among them for training on handicrafts. Thereafter, some of the educated women were selected through formal procedures. The educational level of those selected women were in between Class VIII to Graduate.

First training of this Cooperative started in the month of April, 2001. The training period was six months and the total number of first batch of trainees was 32. The admission fee of each trainee was Rs. 500/-. Moreover, each trainee had to purchase shares of this Cooperative for which they deposited an amount of Rs. 5,000/-. Thus an amount of Rs. 1,50,000/- fund of Cooperative was raised. Which was later deposited to Sikkim State Cooperative Bank (SISCO) under fixed deposit scheme for getting loan. On the basis of that fixed deposit amount, the SISCO Bank sanctioned an amount of Rs. 50 lakh loan for the Cooperative. All formal procedures behind was done by Department of Cooperative, Government of Sikkim. Of the total loan amount, 80% was subsidy provided by Department of Cooperative, Government of Sikkim, and rest 20% had to be repaid by this Cooperative. Indeed, as per condition an amount of Rs. 2,80,000/- had to be repaid per year. Of which 20% i.e. Rs. 56,000/- had to be repaid by Nayuma Women's Cooperative yearly. And till September 2002, this cooperative already repaid an amount of Rs. 1 lakh. It shows that this Cooperative has also been earning.

After this Cooperative started functioning on its own, Mrs. Chamling handed over the charge to its members. Interestingly all the first batch trainees (32 women) became the members of this Cooperative. At present, this Cooperative has now its own permanent building at Amdogoli, Tadong,

Gangtok. Apart from its main center at Amdogoli, there are other three centers. Of which one is located at Namchi in South Sikkim, one at Mangan in North Sikkim, and another one at Geyzing in West Sikkim. Indeed, 2nd training in its main center at Amdogoli was started on 10th May, 2002, and the number of total trainees was 55. The training was completed by October, 2002. Besides, in its other three centers the training was also started since 2002. In Mangan center the training was started on 15th May, 2002, in Namchi center on 25th May, 2002, and in Geyzing center on 20th May, 2002. At present each of the trainees of this Cooperative used to get Rs. 450/- as stipend per month from the fund of State Rural Development Agency (SRDA) under Government of Sikkim.

The entire six months training is divided into two parts i.e. the first and second year. Though each trainee can learn any course of the training according to her choice. But the scheduled courses are on Tailoring, cutting, stitching, hamming, varieties of embroidery, work (both manual



Women of Nayuma Women Cooperative stitching dress materials

and machine techniques), lamp-shed technique, making of Lepcha and Bhutia bags, pillow and cushion covers etc. Taking the staff position of this cooperative, at present it is having one President (Smt. Sheela Rai by name, she is higher secondary passed), and one Secretary (Smt. Arti Rai by name, she is a graduate). Besides, there is also one accountant. Moreover each center is having one center-in-charge, and one Tailoring Master. All of them are getting monthly consolidated salary from this



Woman of of Nayuma Women Cooperative working in computerized sewing machine (Asia Pacific Fashion Machine)

Cooperative, and their salaries range from Rs. 1,200/- to Rs. 5,000/- according to position.

Presently, Nayuma Women Cooperative is having the following modern equipments for training of women workers.

- i) Two computers purchased from Delhi.
- ii) Ten computerized sewing machines known as *Asia Pacific Fashion Machine* purchased from Delhi. It is used for different embroidery work

- with varieties of designs done with the help of computer.
- iii) Twenty sewing hand machines given by Social Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.
 - iv) Five puff machines which are purchased from Delhi and used for putting button, and doing varieties of designs like zigzag lines, hamming, comb-like design etc.



Puff Machine of Nayuma Women Cooperative



Computer of Nayuma Women Cooperative for making computerized design and fashion

Interestingly, after completion of the training, each trainee can work as daily paid worker. The details of rate according to item is shown in the preceding page.

Cutting Rate for the daily paid worker

Item	Rate in Rs.	
<i>Cushion</i> both side cutting	10.00 (per set)	
<i>Shirt</i> cutting	5.00	
<i>Pant</i> cutting	4.00	
<i>Half shirt</i> cutting	2.00	
<i>Full shirt</i> cutting	3.00	
<i>Tunic</i> without plate	2.00	
<i>Salwar</i> suit cutting	10.00	
<i>Napkin</i> cutting	1.00	
<i>Bed-sheet</i> with pillow cover cutting	9.00	
<i>Lamp-shed</i> fitting	Big	20.00
	Small	10.00

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Stitching Rate for the daily paid worker

Item	Rate in Rs.
<i>Cushion</i> cover stitching with tassels	10.00
<i>Shirt</i> stitching	20.00
<i>Pant</i> stitching	15.00
<i>Half shirt</i> stitching	10.00
<i>Full shirt</i> stitching	12.00
<i>Tunic</i> without plate	10.00
<i>Salwar</i> suit stitching	40.00
<i>Lamp-shed</i>	40.00
<i>Napkin</i> hamming	1.00

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Making charge in Rs. taken by Nayuma Women Cooperative

Item		Rate in Rs.
School dress stitching		25.00/35.00
Emblem of Police (each)		30.00
Bottom flower (all types)		35.00/45.00
Bhutia brochet bag (purse made in brochet cloth according to size)		15.00 to 75.00
Lepcha bag (according to size)		15.00 to 150.00
Machine embroidery (according to duration of entire preparation)	For first minute	5.00
	Rest each minute	1.00

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Selling price of various products item of Nayuma Women Cooperative

Item		Rate in Rs.
Salwar suit		250.00 to 700.00
Choubandhi Choli (Nepali dress)		150.00
Kurta (General)		150.00
Night Gown		250.00
Nighty		150.00
Computer design (each)		200.00
Lamp-shed	Small	150.00
	Middle	200.00
	Big	300.00
Pillow cover set (depends upon material and design)		90.00 to 200.00
Bed sheet / bedcover with embroidery		250.00/300.00
Cushion cover set		350.00 to 700.00
Hand embroidery on salwar suit		200.00
Cardmom bag(made of small sized white cloth) according to size		30.00, 40.00, 50.00
Different types of Bhutia purse (gents and ladies)		15.00 to 75.00

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Various necessary raw materials are used to be purchased from Siliguri and Delhi as per availability. This Cooperative normally gets order of work of various items particularly from number of government departments like Police under Home department, Forest, Zilla Panchayat, CM's and other Minister's residences etc. The Cooperative also advertises its various products through local TV channel. Besides, the common people also place order for making different products as per their requirement. Moreover, people also can purchase various product items directly as per their choice from its showroom located in the Supermarket of Gangtok town. Apart from this, the Cooperative also used to take part in Exhibition, Trade Fair etc. for selling its products as well as for advertisement too. In the month of January 2003, it was reported that this Cooperative got order from Department of Rural Development, Government of Sikkim for production of 34 quills which cost Rs.1,60,000/- .

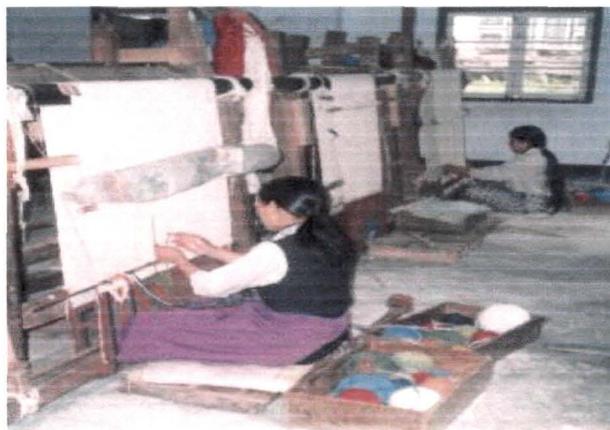
5.1.11 Vijra Carpet Center

This center is a manufacturer and exporter of various handicraft items located at Super market, Gangtok . It is owned by a Tibetan Bhutia a widow woman namely Mrs. Y. Dolma Shay . She is educated up to class X, and her husband was graduate. Their parents were not having any formal educational qualification but they could sign only. Her husband was school teacher and father was businessman. She is a full-fledged business woman and her family entirely depends on the income from selling of various handicraft items of this center. In her shop various handicraft items like carpet, woolen sweater, Bhutia dress like *Bokhus*, and other items for women are sold. She normally bring carpet from his brother at Ravongla, South Sikkim.

5.1.12 Kumphenling Tibetan Multi-purpose Co-operative Society Limited

This cooperative society is located in Ravongla, South Sikkim. This was formed in the year of 1978 with the total number of 548 individual shareholders. The minimum amount of share initially was Rs. 10/- , but now it is enhanced to Rs. 50/- per share, and anyone can purchase any number of share according to his/her financial ability. This cooperative society is registered under the Sikkim Cooperative Societies Act of 1978 and is also registered under the Small Scale Industrial Unit of the Indian Government. Undoubtedly, this cooperative society has been playing crucial role for income generation as well as continuity of traditional arts and crafts and vocational training for the women of the settlement.

The cooperative has one chairman and the 5 members of Board of Directors elected by its shareholders of the respective camps of the settlement. The group leaders of the respective camp leaders are also the committee members of the society. Under the supervision of chairman, it has a secretary, one accountant and a cashier. Chairman makes the major decision in consultation with the Board of Directors and Secretary. This cooperative society is having its own office in the settlement area in Ravongla. Its office is well furnished with computers and Xerox machine. Its major section is carpet-weaving section in which there are 45 carpet weavers and 6 carpet scissors along with one instructor. Besides, it has also one tailoring section with 6 trainees and one instructor . It



Women of 'Kumphenling Cooperative Society Ltd.' weaving carpet

has two well-organized showrooms (with one sales-woman each) that serves a promising carpet and garment out-let apart from selling of carpet from the

society's office directly to the customers. Indeed, 99% of the total workers engaged in this cooperative society are women. All the trainees in carpet section and tailoring sections, instructors, carpet weavers and scissorers are women. The working hours of both carpet and tailoring section is from 0800 hrs. to 1600 hrs. including 1 hour lunch –break at 1200 hrs. and 6 day working in a week . In fact, all the trainees of both carpet and tailoring section including the permanent carpet weaver and instructor should be a share-holders as per rule of the society. At present, in carpet section there are 27 permanent carpet weavers and 2 carpet weaving trainees, particularly due to retirement of 18 carpet weavers after their completion of 20 years service as carpet weavers.

The number of trainees (all women) in carpet weaving and tailoring sections in the last four years is shown below.

Number of women trainees since 2000

Carpet Weaving Section		Tailoring Section	
Year	Number of Trainees	Year	Number of Trainees
2000	7	2001 – 2002	8
2001	5		
2002	6	2002 - 2003	6
2003	2		

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

In general, working span of permanent women carpet weavers is 20 years as per the society's rule. But, depending on ability any woman can do such work even after her retirement . For instance, Mrs. Chewang Tenzing who worked as permanent carpet weavers for 20 years and even after her retirement she is continuing the work as carpet scissorer on wage basis due to her interest and ability in this regard .



Women carpet scissorer of 'Kumphenling Cooperative Society Ltd. cutting for finishing the carpet product

Apart from her work in the carpet section as scissorer , she used to do carpet weaving privately on the basis of receipt of orders from her known persons from Namchi and Gangtok. Actually, in the evening particularly during 1900 hrs. to 2000 hrs. she used to spend for weaving carpet in her home.

All the carpet weaver used to weave carpet on wage basis e.g. for OCM variety of carpet @ Rest. 40/- per square feet and for New Zealand variety of carpet @ Rs. 54/- per square feet in the carpet section of the society. And the carpet scissorers used to do cutting of the woven carpet for finishing to make it final product. On the time of retirement a permanent weaver used to get Rs. 1850/- at a time and total amount of her savings under Saving Deposit Fund (SDF) which has been 5% of the total amount of monthly income of each weavers from carpet weaving. Besides, a good-bye tea party is also served on the day of her retirement. The women carpet wavers used to get 3 months leave during the winter season. These women during winter season used to go to various places in plain areas for selling woolen garments which they purchase from Ludhiana (Punjab State) along with their own hand knitted woolen garments.

Actually, both men and women can take training in this society. But only the women had has been taking such training from this society. Training course for Carpet weaving has been 6 months. And each trainee used to get Rs. 500/- each month as a stipend. After completion of training they may continue carpet weaving on wage basis in the carpet weaving center of this society. In such case, the cooperative used to supply the materials to this permanent weavers for weaving carpet. Selling Rates of Carpet produced by the weavers of this Cooperative is given below.

Selling Rates of Carpet produced by the weavers of Cooperative
(Rates as on 23/05/2002)

Nomenclature	Size	Variety	
		OCM (60% Tibetan wool and less knots (140 knots)	NEWZEALAND (40% Tibetan wool and more knots(180 knots)
		RS.	RS.
<i>Bed and Floor Cushion</i>	6 ft. X 3 ft.	3150/-	3870/-
	6 ft. X 4 ft.	4200/-	5160/-
	7 ft. X 5 ft.	6125/-	7525/-
	9 ft. X 6 ft.	9450/-	11610/-
	12 ft. X 10 ft.	21000/-	25800/-
<i>Sofa Set Cushion</i>	5 ft. X 2 ft. / 2 ft. X 2 ft.	3150/-	3870/-
	46 inches X 18 inches 18 inches X 18 inches	1794/-	2204/-
<i>Chair Cushion</i>	18 inches X 18 inches	394/-	484/-

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

As informed by the secretary, a quantity of 2.77 kilograms yarns is required for producing per square feet carpet. The cost of per kilogram yarn varies from Rs. 165/- to Rs. 205/- according to quality. All varieties of yarns are

purchased from Panipat in Punjab. The wooden loom for carpet weaving is made by local carpenters. The produced carpets of this cooperative society is normally sold through its two show rooms. Besides , on the basis of orders received from local peoples and the tourists, the cooperative also produces carpet according to their demand vis-à-vis orders and sell it accordingly. Some tourists and also the local people also purchase carpets directly from its center.

Tailoring section of this cooperative society started since the year 2000 with 8 trainees. In this year 2003, there are 6 trainees and one instructors, and all of them are women. In this section the training course is for 1 year and 6 months. Each trainee normally gets Rs. 500/- each month as stipend . After



Women of 'Kumphenling Cooperative Society Ltd. sewing clothes for preparing dress materials

completion of training the society provides them with Rs. 1500/- in cash as incentive and one sewing machine so that they can generate income for them from tailoring . The tentative making price of dress materials usually charged by the tailoring section of this cooperative has been , as follows -

Tentative making charge of tailoring section of the cooperative

Type	Size	Rate in Rs.	
<i>School Pant</i>	Material and Stitching	Bigger Size	105/-
		Smaller Size	85/-
		Smallest Size for Kid	65/-
<i>School Shirt</i>	Material and Stitching	Bigger Size	75/-
		Smaller Size	45/-
<i>Tie</i>	Material and Stitching	10/-	
<i>School Pant</i>	Only Stitching	40/-	
<i>School Shirt</i>	Only Stitching	25/-	
<i>Gent's Shirt</i>	Material and Stitching	125/-	
	Only Stitching	50/-	
<i>Lady's Shirt</i>	Material and Stitching	90/-	
	Only Stitching	20/-	
<i>School Skirt</i>	Material and Stitching	Bigger Size	150/-
		Smaller/Smallest Size	110/-
<i>Lady's Chupa</i>	Material and Stitching	Better Quality	200/-
		Inferior Quality	180/-

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Rate of stitching given to students by the cooperative

Type	Description	Rate in Rs.
School Pant	Stitching	40/-
School Shirt	Stitching	30/-
Gent's Pant	Stitching	80/-
Gent's Shirt	Stitching	50/-
Lady's Chupa	Stitching	85/-
Lady's Coat	Stitching	200/-
Skirt	Stitching	60/-

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Now this society is planning also to open a tailoring shop where the best three trainees will be given employment on the basis of monthly salary (yet to be fixed).

Indeed, the demand of the carpet is more and day by day increasing. So, if there is any feasible network of selling the produced carpets in various places of this country , as well as there is scope for exporting the same to other countries. Then such handicrafts may become one important source for income generation and employment for women and thus it can sustain the economy of the state too.

5.1.13 Training programme organized by Sub-Divisional Magistrate's (SDM) Office at Mangan

It was reported by a local Bhutia lady, that one 6 months training programme for tailoring was held in Chungthang organized by the SDM Office at Chungthang. This training was held for Bhutia and Lepcha women and the duration of course was from August 2002 to January 2003. More than 20 women both married and unmarried participated and received such training . After successful completion of the training each was given Hand Sewing Machine by SDM Office at Chungthang. The trainees came mainly from *Pegong, Thanga , Bop and Chungthang* areas. The entire training course was free of cost for the trainees. The instructor was a local tailoring master. The details could not be collected due to non-availability of tailoring master and any trainees as well as closing of SDM Office due to holidays during my stay at Chungthang.

5.1.14 Tibetan Refugee Carpet (Den) Training Center

Locales of one Tibetan settlement namely *Pegong* 3 kms. away from Chungthang towards Mangan reported that there was one *Tibetan Refugee Carpet (Den) Training Center* run privately by the refugees . But the same was closed down since few years back. Apart from offering training to the locales , this training center also used to take orders for supplying produced carpets to its various customers . This Center used to produce mainly 6ft. X 3ft. size carpet which was cost Rs. 3,000/- per piece. The main reason behind the

closing down of this center was that the younger generation of Tibetan refugees are now used to go to school and not interested in carpet weaving. Moreover, finished product of carpet has now been easily available in the market particularly GICI products, products from Ravongla or Dharmashala. Locales of this area used to go to Gangtok and Ravongla wherefrom they can easily purchase the carpet. As a result, the demand of carpet produced by this center had been gradually diminished and finally there was no demand, and as a result the said center was closed down.

5.1.15 Weaving of Carpet on the basis of wage only

In Chungtang, that there are some carpet (den) weavers who use to weave carpet on demand/hire particularly on the basis of daily wage with food (as reported), and the raw materials in this case used to be supplied by the concern customer too. One such lady namely, Miss Tshering Lachungpa of *Lachung* in North Sikkim performs weaving on the basis of such on wage. For instance, she was hired by Miss Norzing Lachungpa in Chungthang for weaving three numbers of carpet (size 2 ft. X 5 ft.) in her permanent residence at Lachung. For this purpose, Miss Norzing supplied the 11 Kilograms Wool to Miss Tshering along with daily wage @ Rs. 80/- per day and food. Miss Tshering took 6 days weaving to complete 3 numbers of aforesaid carpets.

5.1.16 Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs Service Cooperative Society Limited (SCESCOS)

This cooperative located in Gangtok was previously organized by 11 scheduled caste educated but unemployed young men and women together after collecting money as membership fee for the cooperative. But all of them could not deposit the money equally. While some of them deposited @ Rs. 525/- each, others deposited @ Rs. 3,000/- each. Thus, they collected a total amount of Rs. 25,000/- and thereafter hired a shop in the super market complex @ Rs. 1,300/- per month rent and deposited Rs. 5,000/- advance too which was later adjusted in monthly rent. Then they applied for registration of their cooperative and also for subsidy for pre-establishment cost of the cooperative to the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim. On 17th March 2000 this cooperative was registered under the Cooperative Act. It also received an amount of Rs. 25,000/- as subsidy grant for pre-establishment cost of the cooperative from the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim.

At present this cooperative is having 44 members. Out of them, 5 are executive members (all men), 11 promoters (3 women and 8 men) and 28 general members (13 women and 15 men). Now, anybody can become a member of this cooperative but he/she should belong to scheduled caste community. The membership fee (for one person) at present is Rs. 25/- only. This cooperative organizes various vocational training programmes and free of cost coaching for the students of classes X and XI who are not having

financial capability to take any such coaching outside . All these programmes are mainly sponsored by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim. One of such programme was *Vocational Training for Stuff Toys* . First batch vocational training given by this cooperative was in 3rd January 2002 to 15th April 2002. And 2nd batch training was held during the period from 14th September to 19th November. In case of both the above said trainings, the trainees either came on their own but through assessment of the cooperative or sponsored by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim. Among those trainees, only those who were sponsored by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim, they used to get Rs. 300/- per month as stipend. The number of trainees of two batches according to communities is shown below.

Number of Trainees by communities

Batch	Total No. of Trainees	Community					
		General	Lepcha	Bhutia	Sherpa	SC	OBC
1 st Batch	31 (Sponsored by Deptt. of Welfare)	2	3	4	-	10	12
	7 (Privately bu came through assessment)	2	-	-	-	1	4
2 nd Batch	30 (Sponsored by Deptt. of Welfare)	-	1	7	2	10	10
	13 (Came on their own but through assessment by the cooperative)	4	1	-	-	4	4

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

There were 2 women instructors (belong to Nepali community) who imparted training on the course of preparation of the stuff toys. Such training mainly was imparted to those trainees entirely about how to make stuff toys item like teddy-bear, panda , monkey , Giraffe ,dog and other likely animals of different size. During the training period, all



the trainees were given raw materials like fur, synthetic cotton, thread, button, etc. The raw materials are normally purchased from Siliguri. After completion of the training successfully each of the trainees were given completion certificate by this cooperative. It also helped the trainees. For example, some of the trainees were given the opportunities to prepare toys for the cooperatives. Some of the trainees after completion of training now prepare toys privately and sell the same to this cooperative. Besides, some of such trainees sell the produced items of toy to ICDS Department, Government of

Sikkim. Price of the toys has been Rs. 185/- each. In this cooperative, students were given raw materials and Rs. 25/- per toys. This cooperative also took part in the exhibition held in White Memorial Hall in Gangtok. During training session, the cooperative recruits teachers on temporary basis for three months with salary Rs. 3000/- per month.

This cooperative also gives Vocational Training for cutting and tailoring. Such training was started since 14th November 2002 and completed on 9th May 2003. In this training all of the trainees were women and sponsored by Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim.



Women participants during vocational training on 'stuff toys' organized by (SCESCOS)

Community-wise distribution of trainees

No. of total trainees	SC	OBC	ST		
			Lepcha	Bhutia	Sherpa
30	10	10	2	5	3

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

The number of instructor for such training was 2 (one is Lepcha woman and another Nepali man). Their salary was Rs. 4,000/- per month. After completion of the aforesaid training, all of the trainees were awarded certificate and one sewing machine, so that they can do it privately for earning as well as can work in the private sector, and thus can establish themselves in the society. Indeed, after completion of the training the SCESCOS organized one 'cultural function' in which important persons from the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim were attended. Secretary of this department had given the certificates to the trainees of Stuff Toys, and Honorable Minister of the same department had given the certificates to those trainees of cutting and tailoring and sewing machines each.

In fact, this Cooperative use to perform following activities :-

1. Arrange the vocational training of different handicrafts and typing work.
2. Guidance is given to its trainees even after completion of training i.e. post-training period.
3. Use to provide financial help to its trainees for starting their own business on handicrafts, and also help even in cases of official matters

e.g. for loan from government/other institution , other matters in view of making them self-sufficient.

4. Use to help those trainees after completion of their training for selling their produced items like toys and or dress materials who can not sell on their own .

This cooperative also organized different types of programmes sponsored by Department of Social Welfare , Government of Sikkim. These are :-

Name of the programme	Places where held
Health Programme	Gangtok
Metal Sheet Work Programme	Gangtok
AIDS concerned Programme	Namthang
General Awareness Programme	Gangtok
Nutrition Programme	Namthang, Sichey, Burthuk, Gangtok
Free Special Coaching Classes SC/ST/OBC	Gangtok

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

This cooperative also has planned to start very soon one *Vocational Training for Machine Embroidery* particularly for women. For this purpose, the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Sikkim already provided this cooperative with 15 number of *Singer Embroidery Machines*. Besides this, another *Vocational Training for Recycling of Hand-made Paper Products* is going to be organized by this cooperative. Both these training Programmes will be held in its Development Area complex at Gangtok. The working days of this cooperative has been six days in a week . Besides Sunday, there is 2nd Saturday as holiday and also other state holidays.

5.1.17 Women's Cutting Knitting and Tailoring Cooperative Society Ltd.

This cooperative was established and registered on 7th March 2003. Indeed, 10 women members together started this cooperative in the super market shopping complex of Development area of Gangtok particularly in a rented shop, and the rent is Rs. 800/- per month. For starting this cooperative,

Department of Urban Development and Housing Development, Government of Sikkim sponsored Rs. 25,000/- as subsidy for the pre-establishment cost of the cooperative. The membership fee is Rs. 125/- per head. Of the total 10 women members , 7 of them belong to Nepali community and rest 3 are Lepcha. Besides the members, there



is one President-cum-Secretary who belong to Nepali community. Her name is Mrs. Sudha Rasiyal. She has been doing cutting and tailoring since last 17

years in Gangtok, and also owns one tailoring shop in Gangtok and the name of her shop is 'Payel Dress Training Center'. Now she is running both of her shop and the cooperative together.

Indeed, the members of this cooperative initially took training from her 'Payel Dress Training Center'. After completion of training they proposed to Mrs. Rasaily to start a cooperative, and Mrs. Rasaily also contemplated to do so. Resultantly, all the members and Mrs. Rasaily jointly established this cooperative. This cooperative is now planning to have one show-room. Besides, Mrs. Rasaily also reported that they have planned to start one garment manufacturing factory in near future. At this moment, the cooperative does not have its own sewing machine. While, this cooperative is using sewing machine hired from Mrs. Rasaily on rent basis @ Rs. 500/- per month. But the members have already planned to purchase sewing machine, embroidery machine, inter-lock machine, and woolen machine etc. for the cooperative. Apart from members, 3 women are also working as paid worker in this cooperative, and they earn according to each item produced by them. The details of rate/price of making charge is given below.

Item	Price/making charge of each
<i>Apron</i>	Rs. 5/-
<i>Night Dress</i>	Rs. 20/-
<i>Nighty</i>	Rs. 15/-
<i>Blouse</i>	Rs. 20/-
<i>Pettycoat</i>	Rs. 10/-
<i>1 Flower (machine embroidery)</i>	Rs. 25/- to Rs. 100/-
<i>Baby suit</i>	Rs. 50/-

Source : Field Survey, 2002-2005.

In this cooperative, entire day work is used to be done in three shifts. In every shift, three members and instructor-cum-secretary Mrs. Rasaily used to work, and they used to work in all the three shifts. In case of 1st and 2nd shifts, three paid-worker also used to work along with members and secretary. In such shifts, one usually do the training and others used to do knitting of woolen garments. These three shifts



Women of 'Women's Cutting Knitting and Tailoring Cooperative Society Ltd.' sewing clothes for preparing dress materials

are 1000 hrs. to 1200 hrs. , 1200 hrs. to 1500 hrs., and 1500 hrs. to 1730 hrs. Among three paid workers, 2 of them are Nepali while another one belongs to Lepcha community.

The *mottos* of this cooperative are :-To work hard, increase in income, to make one self-sufficient, increase the number of members of the cooperative, and decrease unemployment problem through cooperative, etc.

5.1.18 Panchayat Weaving Center

It was established on 16th march, 2005 at Darap of West Sikkim (7 kms. from Pelling) by Mr. Harkaman Limbu a Panchayat member of Sidhbu Ward of Darap Panchayat . According to him some women of Darap village knew carpet weaving either trained traditionally or from different branches of GICI, Government of Sikkim . But these women did not have any capital and space to run any carpet weaving center , as a result they were not in a position to weave carpet and selling for earning. Thereby they had to remain as unemployed . Under consideration of making these trained women gainfully employed and to use their expertise in carpet



Researcher along with women carpet weavers vis-à-vis members of 'Panchayat Weaving Center' in Darap, West Sikkim

weaving , Mr. Limbu established this carpet weaving center in a rented room at lower Darap village nearer to Darap School by utilizing the money from Panchayat Fund allotted for development of his ward i.e. Sidhbu ward of Darap village . In this center , one woman is instructor-cum-weaver and other three women are weavers only. The instructor who is GICI trained also weaving privately for earning since last three years in her house. All these four women were trained from either GICI or SRDA and belong to Nepalese community. Indeed, the Panchayat is also very keen to employ more women in the center particularly those who have received training either from GICI or SRDA . The 4 numbers of loom (*Tan*) have been actually purchased by the Panchayat to run the Center apart from providing other infra-structural facilities . Panchayat actually takes the 'order' of weaving carpet for the center and provide cash for purchasing the raw materials from Gangtok. While designing , colour selection and completion of the carpet depend on the instructor and weavers themselves. The order of weaving carpets usually comes from Gayzing , Darap and nearby villages and Gangtok too. The working hours of this Center is daily 9.00am in the morning to 3.00 pm and Sunday is a holiday . At this moment the weavers do not have any fixed

wage structure while they will get commission depending on the number of carpet finished and sold.

In this Center the following size of carpets are woven .

Size	Selling price (in Rs.)	Time takes	Type of wool yarn	Design
3ft. – 6 ft.	1,500/-	45 days	New Zealand wool	Tibetan style.
2ft. – 5 ft.	1,200/-	30 days	do	do
18 inches – 18 inches.	750/-	20–25 days	do	do
3 pieces set (sofa set) (2ft – 5ft. + 18 inches – 18 inches + 18 inches – 5ft.)	3,600/-	2 months minimum		

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

When the center is visited on 26th May 2005, the weaver did not get any wage because a few woven carpets were ready for selling but the customer who made the order did not buy that time .

5.1.19 Self Help Group Rural Artisan Center

This Self Help Group is a group of Den (Carpet) weaver situated in Darap, West Sikkim about 7 km. away from Pelling and 16 km. from Gyalshing. All these weavers are women who got training from Sikkim Rural Development Agency. Previously , it was a training center only. While at present it is only a production center run by those members of self help group. It



Researcher in front of 'Self Help Group Rural Artisans' located in Panchayat Ghar (Bhawan), Darap Village, Pelling, West Sikkim

is situated in Panchayet Bhawan near Darap Bazar. Indeed , this center was started in 1982 under the supervision of Sikkim Rural Development Agency. The number of students in the first batch was 12 and training period was only 1 year. During training the trainees were also trained in preparing table clothes, TV cover making in frame with the help of nails and woolen yarn and sweater knitting. Only two batches of trainees were trained here. After that this center became a production center only and no one took further training here. Now this center has 10 women members. Among them 8 Nepalese, 1 Bhutia and 1 Lepcha . They are also the members of the self help group and members of the cooperative fund named as "Self Help Group

Rural Artisan". This cooperative has a bank account in State Bank at Pelling. Every member of this cooperative give Rs. 50/- per month individually. After collecting all money it is deposited in Bank. Any artisan can take membership of this fund. Male also can take membership . The details of carpet weaving according to type , size and price is given below -:

Carpet

Type (Carpet)	Size	Price
3 piece set	2'5'	Rs. 3200/-
Car set	18"/18" and 18"/5"	Rs. 3500/-
Single Bed Carpet	3'6'	Rs. 4000/-

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Woolen items

Woolen items	Size	Price
TV Cover	Small	Rs. 80/-
	Big	Rs 100/- to 150/-
Table Cover	Small	Rs. 60/-
	Big	Rs. 140/-
Sweater (Handmade)	Small	Rs. 180/- to 190/-
	Big	Rs. 300/- to 400/-
	Lady's sweater (cardigan)	Rs. 300/-

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

The type of wool is used only New Zealand quality. Wool and cotton yarn are usually brought from Gangtok. The price of cotton yarn (Dhaga) is Rs. 150/- per kg. And woolen yarn is Rs. 350/- to Rs. 380/- per kg. Some time they brought wool from Kalimpong also. The price difference between cotton and wool yarn is Rs.10/- to Rs.20/- taken



Woman private carpet weaver vis-à-vis instructor of 'Selp Help Group Rural Artisans' in Darap, West Sikkim

from Gangtok and Kalimpong. Tans and frame were provided by Sikkim Rural Development Agency (SRDA).

Order of items taken by Rural Marketing Centrer (RMC) of SRDA or production center itself in Darap collect directly. RMC of Darap is situated in Hostel Road of Pelling but nearer to Darap . Working hours of this center has been daily 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday is holiday. Wage of the each weaver is Rs. 1000/- per month along with commission depending on the number and size of carpet produced and sold. The instructor of this center is a Nepali young lady. She is also a carpet weaver here who also doing private carpet weaving in her resident. Carpets, sweaters and TV table cover are sold by center itself or through RMC. Designs they used for carpet

are Tibetan style and some shorts of Persian style. Some time customer/buyer gives or choose the design and colour of the carpet and some time by weaver themselves. Weavers mainly belong to Darap or nearby bustees. This is the oldest carpet weaving center in Darap.

Findings

In summing up it may be indicated that there are number of *Women Cooperatives Societies* which are run exclusively by women located in different parts of the state. For instances - *Tribal Women's Weaver and Handicraft Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Nambu of West Sikkim ; *Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.*, at Nam Nam of Gangtok, East Sikkim ; *Women Cutting and Tailoring Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Namchi of South Sikkim ; *Nayuma Women Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Tadong, Gangtok of East Sikkim ; *Mahila Broom Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Namthang of South Sikkim ; *Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Gangtok of East Sikkim ; *Carpet (Den) Weaving Training Centre* under Swarna Jayanti Saharey Rozgar Yojana at Ranipool of East Sikkim ; *Srishti Samity* at Sarmasa-Jalipool under Ranipool of East Sikkim ; *Educated Unemployed Women's Welfare Cooperatives Society Limited* at Nop Gao under Pakyong of East Sikkim ; etc. Besides, there are number of *Cooperative Societies* which are involved in carpet weaving. Apart from these, there are number of private business enterprises dealing exclusively with carpet, woolen and other handicraft items etc. where women have the opportunity to work there.

All these have access to exhibitions, retail outlets as sells emporium/center, trade fairs, tourism and other fairs, thorough which the handicraft items are sold. Besides, the handicraft product items are also sold/marketed directly to its customer in urban and rural areas by private entrepreneurs themselves involved in handicraft production.

Therefore, it may be said that the importance of cooperatives and private entrepreneurs involved in handicraft productions as well as its selling have also been no doubt significant in Sikkim and that play important contributing role in spreading as well as imparting handicrafts training, providing opportunities for self-help and earning i.e. employment, development of handicrafts, continuity of age old traditions, and local market economy etc.

It is the fact that the Sikkimese women play decisive contributing role in the functioning of these cooperatives. They are the producers of various handicraft items and at the same time sellers. They are also playing the contributing role in the continuity of these cooperatives and play the key role too either as a member or by occupying managerial positions vis-à-vis key port folios in different cooperatives and play pivotal role to run the cooperatives smoothly. Not only these, women also play the contributing role in imparting training on various handicrafts to other women in these cooperatives. In case of cooperatives run exclusively by women, they provide the job opportunities to other women for earning and also to make them self-dependent.

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 ^{handi}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 ^{handi}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

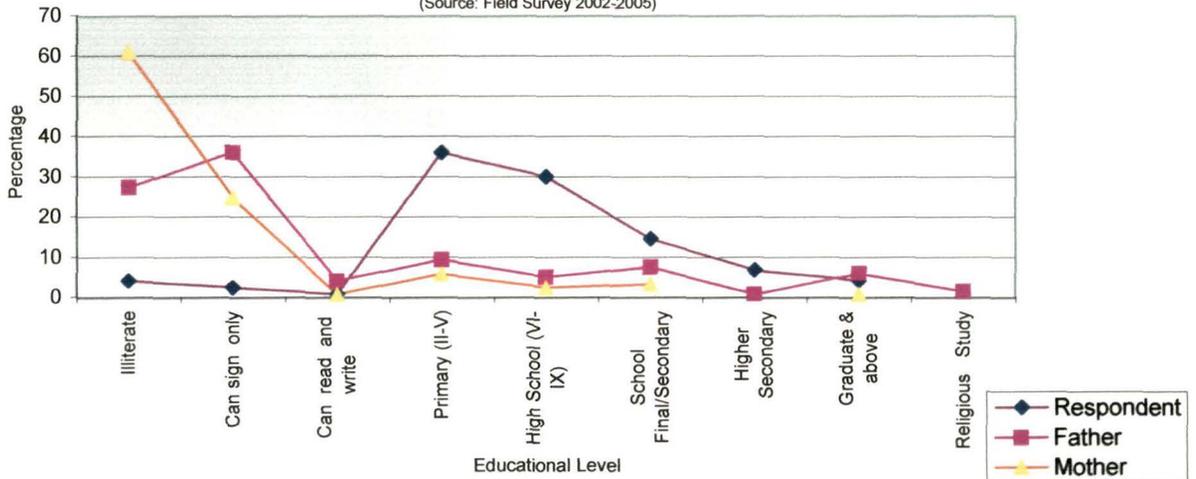
Educational level	(Percentage distribution)		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Illiterate	63.8	57.5	61.2
Can sign only	20.3	32.0	25.0
Can read and write	-	2.1	0.9
Class II	-	2.1	0.9
Class III	1.4	-	0.9
Class IV	2.9	2.1	2.5
Class V	2.9	-	1.7
Class VI	2.9	-	1.7
Class IX	1.4	-	0.9
School Final	2.9	4.2	3.4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

Occupation	(Percentage distribution)		
	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
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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 them 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.

CHAPTER VII

ROLE, STATUS AND EMPOWERMENT OF SIKKIMESE WOMEN INVOLVED IN HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION AND SELLING

Economic Participation, Earning and Social Position

Aspects of Employment/Job

Necessity of women's participation in gainful employment

Better job aspiration

Informants' feeling about their working condition

Resource/Property Matters

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CHAPTER VII

ROLE , STATUS AND EMPOWERMENT OF SIKKIMESE WOMEN INVOLVED IN *HANDICRAFT* PRODUCTION AND SELLING

This part of the present study is undertaken for a clear understanding of the role and status of women involved in handicraft productions and or selling with relation to some empowerment issues for women in Sikkim . The analysis in this section is based on the survey of 116 women informants (Bhutia 48 , Lepcha 21 and Nepalese 47) with the help of a interview schedule .

7.1 Economic Participation , Earning and Social Position

Access to economy by women has been very crucial for the role and status as well as empowerment of women in the society. Therefore, to examine the position of women in terms of economy the informants were asked regarding their views about the necessity of women's participation in gainful job , aspiration to get better gainful job , informants' feeling about their working situation , feeling of informants in doing both the work in job place and house , equal share in family property , informants' financial contribution to family , extent of amount normally kept by informants for own personal expenses, possession of bank account , type of bank account possessed , savings normally made, etc. The analysis in this regard has been presented in the following tables.

7.1.1 Aspects of Employment /Job

7.1.1.1 Necessity of women's participation in gainful employment

Women's participation in gainful employment and their aspiration towards such employment have been very important with a view to get them empowered in terms of financially self reliant and access to economy of the society. Governmental jobs are not only the most lucrative sector in Sikkim, they also indicate the extent of political clout, business connections, or in all respects influence that the incumbents exercise in etc. This has been very important for enhancing the status of women vis-à-vis their empowerment in the society . Taking this into consideration an attempt has been made in Table 84 to visualize their opinion regarding the necessity of women's' participation in gainful employment .

Table : 84 Women's participation in gainful employment is necessary
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	100.0	-	100.0
Nepalese	100.0	-	100.0
Total	100.0	-	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

All of the informants (100.0 per cent) have opined that the women's participation in gainful employment has been undoubtedly necessary in view that women should not remain idle and should participate in gainful job for getting them economically self-dependent (Table 84).

7.1.1.2 Better job aspiration

Table : 85 Aspiration to get better gainful job
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether aspired		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	73.9	26.1	100.0
Nepalese	78.7	21.3	100.0
Total	75.9	24.1	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Indeed, majority of the informants (75.9 per cent) have reported that they aspire always to get better gainful job, so that they can get handsome income for them . Their aspirations are mainly to get wider reputation and as well known handicraft producers , aspiration to do business on their own and to become successful business women in handicraft market, opening of own handicraft showroom , opening of carpet weaving center , government job in GICI and other jobs in government sector too , any other gainful job for earning. Thereby, it may be said that they are very keen and having the motivation to earn on their own through gainful job . Indeed, their aspiration is mainly centered around the handicraft industry .

While, rest 24.1 per cent of them viewed that they do not aspire in this regard as they are either happy and satisfied with the present job or having the feeling that they are not in a position to aspire any more in this regard .

Community-wise, similar trend has been discernible with little difference in percentage among Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities (Table 85).

7.1.1.3 Informants' feeling about their working condition

Informants' feeling about their working environment has been important in view to know the situation under which the women are working. In this context, Table 86 shows that majority of the informants (87.9 per cent)

Table : 86 Informants' feeling about their working environment
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Feeling aspect				Total
	Good	Satisfactory	Bad/not good	No liking	
Bhutia- Lepcha	85.5	2.9	1.4	10.2	100.0
Nepalese	91.5	4.3	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	87.9	3.5	1.7	6.9	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

opined that their working environment is good , followed by satisfactory (3.5 per cent). But 8.6 per cent of them on the contrary feel that they either do not like their working environment or feel bad . Here also similar trend is visible among both the communities except the percentage of informants who do not like the working situation has been comparatively higher among Bhutia-Lepcha (10.2 per cent) than Nepalese (2.1 per cent) .

Similarly , an attempt also is made to envisage the extent of feeling of these working women in doing both the work in job-place and house . This has been cited in Table 87 .

Table : 87 Feeling of informants for doing both the work in job-place and house
(Percentage distribution)

Feeling aspect	Community		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
No problem/ no tension used to face in doing both the work	39.1	31.9	36.2
Feel tension in household work	5.8	6.4	6.0
Feel comfortable in doing both the work	4.4	8.5	6.0
Feel tension in work place	15.9	21.3	18.1
Feel tension in doing both the work in job place and home	34.8	31.9	33.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Taking the informants' feeling in doing both the work in job-place and house, 57.7 per cent feel tension either doing both the work in job place and houses or feel tension in work place or household work . While 42.2 per cent of them reported that they feel comfortable/no problem/no tension in doing both the work in job place and houses (Table 87). It substantiates

to a extent that the gainfully employed women used to face tension/problems in performing the work both in work place and houses together as the women have to perform the huge household chores apart from duties in work place .

7.1.2 Resource/Property Matters

7.1.2.1 Share in family property

It is the fact that as per the rules of inheritance, traditionally the property is inherited only by sons and sons used to get equal shares . On the whole the succession has been by the eldest son. While women have no right of inheritance in general . This has been common among both the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities . Under such situation it is also important to envisage the views vis-à-vis opinion of the informants towards the sharing of family property by women equally with men , which has been presented in Table 88 .

Table : 88 Opinion that women should get equal share
In family property

(Percentage distribution)

Opinion	Opinion			
	Yes	No	No comment	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	91.3	7.3	1.4	100.0
Nepalese	89.4	8.5	2.1	100.0
Total	90.5	7.8	1.7	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

In case of sharing of family property by inheritance, majority of the informants (90.5 per cent) opined that the women should get equal share of family property with male by inheritance. At the same time, 7.8 per cent of them did not opine favourably in this regard because traditionally women do not get any share of the family property in normal cases except the gifts and assets during marriage and that too depends upon parents'/brothers' desire and capability .

Taking the actual cases of equal sharing of family property by the informants, it is reported that the married informants received only the gifts and assets including livestock, utensils , ornaments etc. during their marriage from their parents and which were taken by them in husbands' houses after marriage . And those who are yet to be married they also reported that they would get only the gifts and assets during their marriage. In cases of those parents who are having the daughter only . In such cases the unmarried daughter may get the share of family property depending on the desire of parents and if they look after their parents even after marriage .

7.1.3 Aspects of Financial contribution

Indeed, the extent of monetary contribution usually made by the informants to their families is another query in view to know that how far the women normally provide the financial support to their families and thus play important role to supplement the income of the family. This is presented in Table 89, which also gives the extent of such contribution.

Table : 89 Informants' financial contribution to family
(Percentage distribution)

Type of contribution	Community		
	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
No contribution	13.0	23.4	17.2
Half of my income	23.2	25.5	24.1
Maximum amount of income	4.4	4.2	4.3
Entire amount of income	14.5	6.4	11.2
Three-fourth of income	2.9	2.1	2.6
Rs. 200/- to 300/-	8.7	4.2	6.9
Rs. 500/-	2.9	-	1.7
Rs.600/- to 700/-	1.4	-	0.9
60% to 70%	5.8	-	3.4
70% to 80%	1.4	-	0.9
Almost entire amount	1.4	6.4	3.5
Rs. 1000/- to 1500/-	4.4	2.1	3.4
Rs. 3000/-	1.4	-	0.9
Yes make contribution according to capability	7.3	-	4.3
Some amount	7.3	25.5	14.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

From Table 89 it is clear that majority of them (82.8 per cent) contribute portion of their income to their family. And 17.2 per cent of them (who are unmarried mainly) do not make any financial contribution to their family, in which percentage of informants among the Nepalese has been more (23.4 per cent) than that of Bhutia-Lepchas (13.0 per cent). It attributes to the fact that the women make financial contribution to their family, and thus help their husbands/parents and kin of their families.

7.1.4 Keeping of earning for self expenses

It is seen in Table 90 that majority of the informants normally contribute financially to their families. So it may be relevant also to have a grasp over the extent of keeping the amount of income by the informants for their own expenses. In this context, it is clear from Table 90 that majority

Table : 90 Amount (Rs.) normally kept by informants
for own personal expenses

(Percentage distribution)

Amount (Rs.)	Community		
	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Used to take from family fund as per requirement	4.4	-	2.6
*Parents/husbands/elder sister used to provide as per requirement	14.5	21.3	17.2
Nothing normally keep	7.2	2.1	5.2
Unmarried son gives	1.4	-	0.9
Personal expenses are restricted to very minimum	4.4	-	2.6
Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 2000/-	20.3	2.1	12.9
Rs. 500/- to Rs. 750/-	2.9	4.2	3.4
Rs. 300/- to Rs. 450/-	10.1	8.5	9.5
Rs.100/- to Rs.250/-	21.7	19.1	20.7
Some amount	8.7	17.0	12.1
Entire amount	4.4	2.1	3.5
One third of income	-	4.4	1.7
50% of income	-	19.2	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

2. * As the woman respondent normally gives her earning to parents/husband/elder sister etc.

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

of the informants (74.1 per cent) normally keep portion of their income for their personal expenses. This has been 72.5 per cent among Bhutia-Lepchas and 76.6 per cent among Nepalese.

On the contrary, 20.7 per cent of them normally do not keep any amount for such purposes, while used to give their earnings to the parents/husbands/elder sister/unmarried son or keep it in family fund. Therefore, they used to take money from their husbands/parents/other kin or family fund etc. as per their requirement. Similar trends are discernable among the informants belonging to both the communities . Indeed, 5.2 per cent (7.2 per cent Bhutia-Lepcha and 2.1 Nepalese) do not normally keep any amount for their personal expenses while spend entire amount of earnings for the family .

7.1.5 Possession of Bank account

In fact, possession of bank account , type of account possessed and savings by women have been crucial in view to have their access to credit and savings in present day society . These are analyzed in Tables 91 to 92.

Table : 91 Possession of Bank account by informants
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	50.7	49.3	100.0
Nepalese	61.7	38.3	100.0
Total	55.2	44.8	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Taking the possession of Bank Account by women, Table 91 substantiates that 55.2 per cent of the informants is having their own Bank Account . Community-wise variation in this regard indicates that such possession of bank account has been more among the Nepalese (61.7 per cent) as compared to Bhutia-Lepchas (50.7 per cent) .

Even then, 48.3 per cent of the informants do not have any Bank Account.

7.1.6 Type of Bank account possessed

Table : 92 Type of Bank account possessed by informants
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Type of Bank Account			Total
	Single	Joint with husband/ parent/brother	Both single and joint with husband	
Bhutia- Lepcha	65.7	34.3	-	100.0
Nepalese	55.2	41.4	3.4	100.0
Total	60.9	37.5	1.6	100.0

Note : Bhutia-Lepcha N= 35 ; Nepalese N=29 ; Total N= 64 .

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Taking the type of Bank Account the informants are having , Table 92 in this context shows that 60.9 per cent have single account i.e. on their name only. While 37.5 per cent are having joint account either with husband or parent. Only 1.6 per cent are having both the single and joint account . Interestingly , the percentage of informants having single account in bank has been more (65.7 per cent) among Bhutia-Lepchas than that of Nepalese (55.2 per cent) .

7.1.7 Savings

Table : 93 Savings normally made by informants
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	60.9	39.1	100.0
Nepalese	68.1	31.9	100.0
Total	63.8	36.2	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

In case of savings normally made by the informants, it is clear from Table 93 that 63.8 per cent used to make savings from their income either in Bank , LIC, GPF or home. It substantiates that the women are having the vital access to bank account, credit and savings .

7.2 Role and Status in the Family

Family is a primary social group . The joint family system vis-à-vis large family size had has been prevailed in Sikkim like other states of India . It is also obvious that more the size of the family , more involvement of women in performing the huge household chores , in turn the burden resulting into the backwardness of women and that also impede their progress in the society. Moreover, the women in the family used to be under the guidance and domination of men members of a family since time immemorial . The women were not the part of the decision-making and even there had been hardly any consultation with women in decision making process of the family in the patriarchal society . So, the questions which were asked for the purpose are mainly concerned with the number of children the family should have , preferred size of the family , preference to have girl child , extent of participation of women in family’s decision –making process, including their feeling regarding discrimination in between men and women in the family vis-à-vis society , etc. All these questions were directed to find out what the informants feel about and to ascertain the thinking of informants towards these empowerment issues in the family. This has been cited in the following tables.

7.2.1 Composition of family

In fact, the number of children in a family and the size of family have been very important because women normally perform huge task of looking after the children as well as other household activities. Taking this into consideration an attempt also has been made to know the inclination of women towards having the number of children in a family and the size of family.

Table : 94 Opinion about number of children the family should have
(Percentage distribution)

Number of children	Community		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
1	7.2	2.1	5.2
2	50.7	63.8	56.0
1 - 2	7.2	6.4	6.9
2 - 3	14.6	8.5	12.1
3	10.1	14.9	12.1
3 - 4	2.9	-	1.7
4	7.2	-	4.3
No comment	-	4.2	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

It is clear from Table 94 that 68.1 per cent of the informants opined that a family should have 1 to 2 number of children. Such trend has been comparatively more among the Nepalese (72.3 per cent) than that of Bhutia-Lepchas (65.1 per cent).

Besides, 12.1 per cent viewed that a family should have 2 – 3 children in which the percentage among Bhutia-Lepchas being 14.6 per cent as compared to 8.5 per cent among Nepalese. Apart from these, 18.1 per cent opined that a family should have 3 – 4 children (Bhutia-Lepchas 20.2 per cent and Nepalese 14.9 per cent).

Indeed, the married informants who are having more than 2 children in actual cases, they reported that 'due to having desire to get son'; 'due to wish of husband for daughter even after having two sons'; 'due to birth of child by chance though not desired'; 'both husband and wife's decision together to have children more than two'; 'no specific reason but on the way of spending normal conjugal life i.e. without any thinking about the number of child to be born'; etc. were the main reasons behind having more than 2 children.

Table : 95 Opinion about convenient size of the family
(Percentage distribution)

Number of members	Community		
	Bhutia-Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
3	4.4	2.1	3.4
3 - 4	1.4	4.2	2.6
4	52.2	31.9	44.0
4 - 5	1.4	17.0	7.7
5	23.2	19.2	21.5
5 - 6	-	10.7	4.3
6	11.6	12.8	12.1
6 - 7	-	2.1	0.9
7	4.4	-	2.6
7 - 8	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.

As regards to convenient size of the family, the half of the informants (50.0 per cent) opined that the convenient size of the family has been 3 to 4 members in a family. Such trend has been more among the Bhutia-Lepchas (58.0 per cent) as compared to Nepalese (38.2 per cent).

Besides, 7.7 per cent have viewed it in between 4 to 5, in which percentage is comparatively more among Nepalese (17.0 per cent) than Bhutia-Lepchas (1.4 per cent). Moreover, 21.5 per cent (Bhutia-Lepchas 23.2 per cent and Nepalese 19.2 per cent) opined that the convenient size of

a family is 5 . On the whole 16.5 per cent have the opinion in this regard being 6 and above (Bhutia-Lepchas 17.4 per cent and Nepalese 14.9 per cent), as shown Table 95 .

7.2.2 Participation in Decision-making

In the preceding discussion, the elaboration is done in relation to the access and participation of women in decision-making of the family.

7.2.2.1 Access to Decision -making

In case of participation of women in decision-making in relation to purchasing any items on the basis of own decision of the informants,

Table : 96 Purchasing of items on the basis of own decision or guided by husband/parents

Aspect	(Percentage distribution)		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Own decision	42.0	44.7	43.1
Guided by husband/parents/mother-in-law/father-in-law/ brother/sister	53.7	46.8	50.9
Sometimes consult with husband	1.5	4.2	2.6
Purchasing done on the basis of mutual understanding	2.8	-	1.7
Own decision and consultation with husband both	-	4.2	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Table 96 delineates that 43.1 per cent used to purchase on their own decision . Community-wise , this has been 42.0 per cent among the Bhutia-Lepchas and 44.7 per cent among the Nepalese. Besides, 6.0 per cent of them (Bhutia-Lepchas 4.3 per cent and Nepalese 8.4 per cent) reported that they either sometimes consult with husband in such purchasing or on the basis of mutual understanding with husband or own decision as well as consultation with husband both.

On the whole , it may be said that there has been good percentage of women who used to incur expenditure for purchasing on their own decision. This might have been possible as they are gainfully employed . This was not so in the past with some exception like women being the head of the family due to death of husband/ divorce/separated etc.

While more than half of the informants (50.9 per cent) are guided by husbands/parents/mother-in-law/father-in-law. This is discernible more in case of among the Bhutia-Lepchas (53.7 per cent) as compared to Nepalese (46.8 per cent) . It substantiates that even after gainfully employed and earning a substantial percentage are guided by parents//husbands/father-in-law/brother etc.

Table : 97 Opinion about women should be consulted in family's financial matter

(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	95.7	4.3	100.0
Nepalese	97.9	2.1	100.0
Total	96.6	3.4	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Table 97 indicates that majority of the informants (96.6 per cent) opined favourably that women should be consulted in family's financial matters. Similar trend is visible among both the Bhutia-Lepchas and the Nepalese communities. It attributes that the women are more aware and confident about their importance in the family's financial decision making process .

While a nominal 3.4 per cent did not favour in this regard. It articulates to the fact that there has been also women who are guided by their traditional experience and feeling that the woman does not have any role in the financial decision making process of the family .

In case of actual happenings of such consultation done with women , the following comments of the informants may be the better revealing fact in this regard.

- i. Indeed, experienced no consultation done with the women in family's financial matter/decision.
- ii. In absolute major cases such consultation with woman done by male member of the family .
- iii. The decision in family's financial matter taken by both the man and woman together .
- iv. Decision in family's financial matter taken by woman herself being head of the family after the death of husband/divorce/ separated from husband/ living separately due to husband's job in other places.

Table : 98 Opinion about women should be consulted in children's education , marriage and other family matters

(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	97.1	2.9	100.0
Nepalese	97.9	2.1	100.0
Total	97.4	2.6	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Majority of the informants (97.4 per cent) have favoured that the women should be consulted in cases of children's education, marriage and other family matters. Similar trend has been discernable both among Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalese communities. Though a nominal 2.6 per cent of them also opined that they do not favour in this regard (Table 98).

Table : 99 Women were consulted in children's education, marriage, other family matters in actual cases
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether consulted			
	Yes	No	No comment	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	46.4	37.7	15.9	100.0
Nepalese	68.1	27.7	4.2	100.0
Total	55.2	33.6	11.2	100.0

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

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Taking the cases of consultation actually done with women in the informants' families, it is clear from Table 99 that such consultation among 55.2 per cent had been done in cases of children's education, marriage and other family matters. Taking the community-wise variation, such consultation with women had been higher among Nepalese (68.1 per cent) as compared to Bhutia-Lepchas (46.4 per cent).

On the contrary, 33.6 per cent reported that in no such cases the consultation with women was taken place in their families. Such cases had been more among the Bhutia-Lepchas (37.7 per cent) than that of Nepalese (27.7 per cent). Besides, a considerable 11.2 per cent of them as a whole did not make any comment on this aspect.

Table : 100 Opinion about women should be given due importance equally with men in family's decision making
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia -Lepcha	98.6	1.4	100.0
Nepalese	100.0	-	100.0
Total	99.1	0.9	100.0

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

Source : Field survey, 2002-2005.

Interestingly, almost all (99.1 per cent) agreed and favoured that the women should be given due importance equally with men in the family's decision making process (Table 100). It articulates to the fact that they are much aware about their importance and position in the society.

7.2.3 Attitude towards girl child

In fact, attitude towards girl child has been very important taking the context of empowerment issues of women in the society. It has been the fact the parents usually do not desire to have girl child taking the instances in other parts of the country. Therefore, it may be more comprehensible to have the idea of the women informants regarding their preference towards having the girl child in a family. This has been cited in Table 101.

Table : 101 Opinion about one should have at least one girl child/desire to have girl child

(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion			
	Yes	No	Both	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	62.3	13.0	24.7	100.0
Nepalese	72.3	4.2	23.4	100.0
Total	66.4	9.5	24.1	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

In case of preference of having at least one girl child in a family, it is clear from Table 101 that 66.4 per cent opined instantly 'yes' i.e. desired that a family should have at least one girl child. Community-wise variation in this regard shows that such preference has been more among the Nepalese (72.3 per cent) as compared to Bhutia-Lepchas (62.3 per cent).

While, 24.1 per cent of them opined that they desire both i.e. boys and girl child together. Interestingly, 9.5 per cent of them opined 'no' i.e. that they do not favour that a family should have at least a girl child (Table 106).

Those who are in favour of at least one girl child in a family, all of them stressed that there is no difference in between the girls and boys. Besides, they also emphasized that the girls are good friend to parents and help them always but the boys are not like in this regard.

7.2.4 Discrimination in between boys and girls / men and women

On the whole, the informants who affirmed the existence of discrimination between men and women have delineated several points in this regard, which has been summarized below :

- i) In major cases the parents have the feeling that the girl child would have to leave their parents after marriage. While the boys would normally remain always with them along with continue and maintain the tradition and generation of their parental families. Thereby the parents used to behave accordingly which would certainly have the mark of discrimination in between daughters and sons.
- ii) Traditionally men vis-à-vis sons of the families used to get the equal share of the family property as per rules of inheritance that persist in the society. While the women vis-à-vis daughter normally do not have the property right and normally get gifts and assets only during

- marriage which are used to be given by their parents/brothers as per their desire and capability .
- l) Consumption of liquor by men is allowed and acceptable in the society , but if a woman consumes it then the society does not accept or allow it .
 - ii) Free mixing in between boys and girls has been common and acceptable in their society . Thereby , it is the common cases that the boys and girls used to be fallen in love affairs each to other and which in turn yield into the pre-marital sex and pregnancy among the girls. In such cases the concern boys may marry or reject the girl for marrying. Under such denial to marry, the girl has to face lot of difficulties including social humiliation in the society while the boys normally do not face any difficulty.
 - iii) Whenever any unmarried girl used to become pregnant due to premarital sex and the boy/man responsible also for such pregnancy do not marry her , then it used to be very difficult to get that girl married through marriage of arrangement/ negotiation. While, it used to be very compulsion of that girl to marry a very poor boy/man in the society . On the whole it used to create lot of social difficulties for arranging marriage for that girl. While the boys/man even being also equally responsible for such happening do not face any difficulty and can marry any girl/woman .
 - iv) Women/girls are restricted to visit/move any place which has not been so in cases of boys/men .
 - v) If a woman marry more than one (due to husband's death or being rejected by the husband/divorce etc.) which is not socially acceptable as well as create social uttering/slander against that woman in the Nepalese society. But this is not so while man can marry easily and that too is socially acceptable.
 - vi) Spending of night alone by girl/woman in a house other than parents' house or without taking prior permission from parents even staying in relatives'/friend's houses at night , or returning home late night ultimately create lot of social uttering/slander/ scolding for that girl/woman in the society. This does not happen in case of boys/men.
 - vii) There is a trend in the society among the parents that if the income of daughter is accepted and utilized by them , then they may not get the berth in heaven after death.
 - viii) More education including higher education is required for women and are to be given enough scope for education to women. If they are educated then they can become equal to men. But in reality the men are getting more scope in education than that of women. It should not be there. There should be equal opportunity for the education of both men and women.
 - ix) Even today every parents are greatly desired to have at least one son for the inheritance of the family property , family tradition and family name in the society.
 - x) In both the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese society the family property is normally inherited by male child only while the female child does not have any right to family property.
 - xi) There is no discrimination in between men and women and both are equal in the society.
 - xii)
 - xiii)

- xiv. Women are always restricted to move on their own in both the parents' houses and also even after marriage in father-in-laws' houses, though there is free mixing in between male and female in the society.
- xv. Parents remain more in anxiety for their girl child than boys .
- xvi. Practically some discriminations in between men and women still persist in the present day society in which the men are always favoured than women.
- xvii. If a woman left her husband and marry another man then she used to be calumniated by the society while this is not so in case done by man.
- xviii. Till now the girl child in reality is neglected than boys .
- xix. In our society the men are given the food to eat first and thereafter the women . But it would be more acceptable and desired that whoever comes first get food without such discriminative trend.
- xx. The men and women in the present day society are equal . That is why the women are also is required to be given the opportunity for training and painting in Thangka painting , which is prohibited for women.
- xxi. During Pujas and religious rituals the men used to get more preference and importance than the women. Which should not be like that and the women is also required to be treated equally.
- xxii. In case of selection of life mate the men used to get more preference and advantage even first preference than that of women .
- xxiii. For any ill happenings in the family the women are used to be given more blame and treated responsible than that of men .
- xxiv. In Bhutia society when parents distribute yaks among the children the boys normally get more while girls get very few comparatively .
- xxv. In Bhutia-Lepcha society the parents used to prefer mainly boys for making them 'Lama' .

7.3 Marriage and the Position of Women

Marriage is an important social institution which leads to the formation of a universal primary group. It plays the vital role towards the establishment of primary social as well as physical relationship between a man and woman. Traditionally, the marriage among the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities are normally arranged and settled by the parents vis-à-vis elderly relatives in which the decision of father or elderly male members had has been final, and the prospective bride i.e. woman does not have any final say in choosing her life partner. And it is so happened that the final decision has been usually imposed upon the prospective bride i.e. woman.

In fact, the specific age for marriage of a woman is also another query in view of knowing the preference of women whether towards early age marriage or not i.e. their preference of specific age for marriage of women.

Because there are considerable cases of early age marriage either due to love marriage or through elopement as well as may be due to parent's decision for this or that reason in Sikkim.

Apart from this, it has been also important to know the attitude vis-à-vis expectation of women as regards to the final selection of life partner for marriage by women. Therefore informants were also asked in this regard and their responses are depicted in the following tables.

7.3.1 Age at marriage and type of marriage

Table : 102 Informants' opinion about minimum age for marriage of women
(Percentage distribution)

Age (in years)	Community		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
16 - 19	18.8	8.5	14.7
20 - 22	27.5	46.8	35.3
23 - 24	4.4	10.6	6.9
25 - 26	36.2	27.7	32.7
28 - 30	11.6	6.4	9.5
Above 30	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.

Table 102 indicates that majority of the informants (85.3 per cent) opined that the minimum age for marriage of a woman should be 20 years and above, and their such opinion range from 20 years to above 30 years. According to community, such trend is comparatively more among the Nepalese (91.5 per cent) than the Bhutia-Lepchas (81.2 per cent).

It substantiates that majority of them are quite aware and conscious about the suitable age for marriage of woman and do not prefer/favour early age/child marriage. Their such attitude no doubt may influence positively in this regard. But at the same time 14.7 per cent of them also opined that the minimum age for woman's marriage have been below 20 years and that range in between 16 years to 19 years. Such trend has been higher among the Bhutia-Lepchas (18.8 per cent) than that of Nepalese (8.5 per cent).

It is the fact that Traditionally, the marriage among the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities are normally arranged and settled by the parents vis-à-vis elderly relatives in which the decision of father or elderly male members had has been final, and the prospective bride i.e. woman did not have any final say in choosing her life partner. In this context,

Table : 103 Women should have final say in choosing life mate
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	84.1	15.9	100.0
Nepalese	91.5	8.5	100.0
Total	87.1	12.9	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Table 103 indicates preference vis-à-vis opinion towards the decisive role to be taken by women in choosing life mate . It gives that majority (87.1 per cent) opined and favoured that the women should have final say i.e. take final decision in choosing their life mate . Similar trend though visible among both the communities but the percentage having such trend is more among Nepalese (91.5 per cent) than the Bhutia-Lepchas (84.1 per cent).

Besides, 18.3 per cent on the contrary opined that they do not agree/favour that women should have such final say in choosing their life partner (Table 108) . It indicates that even there has been some women who are still guided by the traditional ways .

7.3.2 Marriage payment

In fact , the prevalence of dowry and its increase demand in the society overwhelmingly derogate the position of women in the society and which also the result of ongoing torture, murder related to dowry against women , detection of female fetus and consequent abortion etc. are notable features in various states at national level. In case of Sikkim , as there is no hard and fast dowry while maintained as a token only without cash and kind even among Hindu Nepalese like other areas of the country and while among the Bhutias and Lepchas the token bride-price is prevalent, the Sikkimese women never experience such incidences . Traditionally there has been no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society. In Sikkim , the girls and boys are given equal status in the family and no cases of female foeticide and dowry death have been reported. All these may be the reason behind the lack of incidences of crime against women in Sikkim .

In this context , an attempt also has been made to find the attitude of women towards the necessity of such marriage payments . This is reflected in Table 104 .

Table: 104 Opinion of women towards the necessity of marriage payments
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	4.3	95.7	100.0
Nepalese	-	100.0	100.0
Total	2.6	97.4	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

It is apparent from Table 109 that nearly cent per cent i.e. 97.4 per cent opined that any sort of marriage payment i.e. bride price or dowry they do not feel necessary during marriage. Taking the community-wise , cent per cent of the Nepalese informants are not in favour of dowry. While among the Bhuia-Lepcha women informants though nearly cent per cent of them are not in favour of bride price . Even then a very nominal 4.3 per cent of them feel that marriage payment like bride price as necessary during marriage .

7.4 State of Education

Education is the prime indicator of the modern impact on women and also prime determinant of change in the position of women in the society. Besides , education influences the direction of behaviour and action of an individual and then in turn influence the role and status of that person. Therefore, the necessity of education and educational aspirations are part and parcel of popular hopes for assured career and future for women and the children. Educational aspirations are significantly affected by the educational situation in the family. So the perception of women towards the necessity of education, their educational aspirations and educational aspirations for their children would in turn ultimately affect the educability of the children.

We have seen in earlier chapter that there exists a considerable inter-generational difference in the educational achievement of the informants . The 68.0 per cent of informants' fathers and 87.1 per cent of their mother are either illiterate or marginally literate with ability to sign their names only and read in the mother tongue , as compared to only 7.8 per cent of the informants in this regard. Therefore , it was obvious to know the perception of informants towards necessity of education along with their educational aspiration level with a view to examine the attitude of informants towards education which has been very important for enhancing the status of women vis-à-vis their empowerment in the society . In order to examine in this regard the informants were asked regarding their thinking about the necessity of education , their educational aspirations for self and children including the influence of parents towards continuity of education they experienced during their educational career. The response to these questions have been analyzed in the following tables .

7.4.1 Necessity for women education

The opinion regarding the necessity of education for women has been given in Table 105 .

Table : 105 Education for women is necessary
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	98.6	1.4	100.0
Nepalese	97.9	2.1	100.0
Total	99.1	0.9	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Almost cent per cent of the informants not only affirmed the necessity of education for women but also have shown their awareness of the necessity and importance of education for women's development (Table 105). A very negligible 0.9 per cent felt education is not necessary for women as per their experiences . Such informants believe marriage is obvious for women and thereby their first duty has been to cook for the family and performing household chores mainly. And they also expressed that the job prospects for educated women is very little while handicraft work has been sufficient for them to earn . But at the same time they agreed that the education is necessary for future generation . Therefore , on the whole it may be said that almost all of them agreed that there has been the necessity of education for women.

They asserted the necessity of education for women as must because of several reasons like :

- i) Education for future generation of women is necessary though there is very little scopes for government jobs for women ;
- ii) Educated women can get better jobs in various sectors both government and non-government jobs ;
- iii) Can read news paper and teach others including children;
- iv) For movement from one place to another for visiting places and/or for works education for women is must , so that she can not face any problem, even faced can solve the problem. As a whole, an educated woman can face efficiently any situation in the society ;
- v) In case of marriage, the women must have education to teach her children, family , others properly and uneducated women used to be dominated by members in father-in-law's house ;
- vi) Education helps the women to earn great respect , honour and higher status in her own family, husband's family , in neighbourhood and society ;
- vii) Being uneducated women have to face many problems in life . So women should have education ;

- viii) By utilizing education, women also can earn money by doing job and teaching others. Thereby, she is not to be dependent on others while can be financially independent;
- ix) Education helps the women to become self-reliant and can participate in any conversation in relation with knowledge and experience. They can transmit their knowledge and educate others and thus can improve the educational standard in the society;
- x) Education of women can bring prosperity in their families and can look after family in a better way; Women's education help to get gainful job and make them conversant and confident in work;
- xi) Education make women better understanding her surroundings, society, and can know the development and have other knowledge about the nation and world. Thereby, none can misguide educated women;
- xii) Educated women can do the business in a more better way towards prosperity than that of an uneducated women and even also better than men;
- xiii) Felt that without education no one can live in such a modern and competitive society;
- xiv) Education is essential in day to day life and it also helps to achieve better life for women;
- xv) On the whole education makes the women able to read, write and learn many things in the society;
- xvi) Education is an instrument to lift the women from their socio-economic backwardness. It instill power that make women confident to fight social injustice against women that prevails in the society;
- xvii) Education makes the women equally in position with men in the society; Educated women can do gainful works and business and thus can become equal to her husband; etc.

7.4.2 Educational Aspiration

Indeed, educational aspirations are part and parcel of popular hopes for an assured future. Besides, educational aspiration vis-à-vis achievement also greatly enhances educational aspirations for her children. Thus it has been important which in turn bring about the development of education vis-à-vis society. So, an attempt has been made to delineate the educational aspirations of the informants for their own as well as their children.

Table : 106 Aspiration to get more education
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether aspired		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	69.6	30.4	100.0
Nepalese	42.6	57.4	100.0
Total	58.6	41.4	100.0

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

Educational aspiration according to community is presented in Table 106 . It depicts that 58.6 per cent have reported their aspiration and interest to get more education. At the same time 41.4 per cent have reported about their lack of interest due to old age, getting no time, family problems and also due to having very low educational level . Community-wise , greater percentage of the informants among Bhutia-Lepcha community (69.6 per cent) have aspired to get more education as compared to informants belonging to Nepalese community (58.6 per cent) .

In fact, the informants have cited several interesting points in relation with their aspiration to get more education, like :

- i) Repented as she could not continue education, while at present have the desire to go for education further ;
- ii) Aspired greatly to get higher education as because her parents compelled her to discontinue her education when she was in class ix ;
- iii) Aspired now because during childhood her education was discontinued by parents while made her more devoted to look after her small brothers and sisters and to assist mother in preparing food and other household works too ;
- iv) Due to having number of younger brothers and sisters and monetary problems could not continue while looking after them and resultantly could not attend school ;
- v) Parents being daily labour-cum-porter could not afford her education, while parents insisted her to do the labour work for earning, but she was not prepared to do so. While after passing VIth class she joined handicraft training and now earning . (In this case the handicraft training made her able to earn as well as not to follow her parents' occupation as daily labour) ;
- vi) She could not continue education due to poor economic condition of her parents though desired to get more education ;
- vii) Really aspired to get further education now if get chance to do so ;
- viii) Could not go further after primary education due to non-availability of school in the locality ;
- ix) Failed in class examination and left the school , but now realized the necessity of education and feel shame for leaving school so early after failure. That is why now have aspiration to go for further education ;
- x) While in class V , due to serious illness of father she had to be engaged to look after father , and resultantly could not continue while dropped herself from schooling finally . But now she aspire to continue education ;
- xi) Facing monetary problems to look after family though having aspiration ;
- xii) Due to non-availability of schools in the locality or nearby village during childhood resulted into not attending school ;

- xiii) Have the aspiration to complete matriculation and thereafter graduation, and after completing would seek government jobs in GICI and at the same time would do business of carpet production and selling.

Indeed, the informants who reported that they do not have aspiration to go through further education, but are having inert aspiration to continue for higher education from the level where they left, though they are not in a position due to age factor, service condition, demand for performing household chores and vis-à-vis situation, looking after families etc. And those who aspired positively in this regard, asserted that they are having strong desire towards getting further and higher education if they get chance to do so. All these articulates to the fact that such aspiration of women towards higher education in turn obviously motivate their children for continuity of education towards higher level.

7.4.3 Educational aspiration for boys and girls

It may be the fact that the positive attitude towards the necessity of education and educational aspiration in turn would affect the aspiration level for the boys and girls. This has been reflected in Tables 107 and 108.

Table 107 shows the aspired level of education for boys. It indicates that more than half the informants among both the communities though did not specify the level, but have aspired higher level of education depending on the interest, desire and aptitude of boys. Besides, 40.5 per cent (Bhutia-Lepcha 39.1 per cent and Nepalese 42.5 per cent) have aspired the

Table : 107 Level of education aspired by women for boys

(Percentage distribution)

Aspired level of education	Community		
	Bhutia-Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
Religious Study	2.9	-	1.7
School Final	4.4	6.4	5.2
Higher Secondary	2.9	-	1.7
Graduate degree	15.9	19.2	17.2
Graduate degree in medical/engineering science	5.8	14.9	9.5
Graduate with B.Ed.	1.4	2.1	1.7
Higher studies more than post-graduate	4.4	2.1	3.4
Higher level depending on the desire and aptitude of boys	50.7	51.1	50.9
Master degree	11.6	2.1	7.8
Ph.D.	-	2.1	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.

level of graduate and above including higher studies more than post-graduate. Interestingly, 2.9 per cent among them also have aspired religious study for their boys (Table 107).

Table 108 depicts the aspired level of education for girls. It indicates that 47.4 per cent (Bhutia-Lepcha 47.8 per cent and Nepalese 46.8 per cent) though did not specify the level, but have aspired higher level of education depending on the interest, desire and aptitude of boys.

Table : 108 Level of education aspired by women for girls
(Percentage distribution)

Aspired level of education	Community		
	Bhutia - Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
School Final	8.7	4.2	6.9
Higher Secondary	4.4	2.1	3.4
Graduate degree	18.8	21.3	19.8
Graduate degree in medical/engineering science/other technical	5.8	19.2	11.2
Master degree	8.7	6.4	7.8
M.A. B.Ed.	2.9	-	1.7
Higher studies more than post-graduate	2.9	-	1.7
Higher level depending on the desire and aptitude of boys	47.8	46.8	47.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Similarly , 40.5 per cent (Bhutia-Lepcha 39.1 per cent and Nepalese 46.9 per cent) have aspired the level of graduate and above including higher studies more than post-graduate .

Taking the variation in percentages of aspired level of education in between boys and girls , it may be seen from both the Tables that 10.3 per cent have asserted the level of education as secondary/higher secondary for girls. While this has been 6.9 per cent for boys . Moreover , 52.6 per cent of them have aspired the specific level of education for girls. While this has been 49.1 per cent in case of boys . Moreover , 2.9 per cent also have aspired religious study for their boys but nobody for girls, because such scope for girls is not available. The profession of Lama no doubt is lucrative with high social status for boys apart from maintenance of tradition . On the whole it may be said that both the Tables highlight that majority of them among both the communities have aspired higher level of education for their boys and girls together.

Therefore, it can be said that though the greater part of the informants are having either at primary or middle school level followed by school final/higher secondary level and are from families having either very low

level education or illiterate as per parents' educational background, even then they are having the aspiration of higher education for their children i.e. both for girls and boys. Moreover, the greater percentage of them have aspired to go for further education towards higher level from where they left.

7.4.4 Parents' influence behind girls'/women's education

An attempt has been made to envisage that during the period of women's education career whether their parents had influenced any way towards the continuity of education and for higher education. This has been analyzed in Table 109.

Table : 109 Whether the parents influenced during the period of women's' education

(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether influenced		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	68.1	31.9	100.0
Nepalese	74.5	25.5	100.0
Total	70.7	29.3	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Table 109 reflects that in major cases (70.7 per cent) the parents had influenced the informants' schooling i.e. education. But at the same time the rest 29.3 per cent reported that their parents did not influence any way in this regard. Community-wise, this is comparatively higher among Bhutia-Lepchas (31.9 per cent) than that of Nepalese (25.5 per cent).

In fact, the informants who affirmed the influence of parents during informants' educational career either positively or negatively have narrated several points in this regard, which are summarized below:

- i) Parents used to motivate for continuing education towards higher level, but completed the educational level as per capability, interest etc.;
- ii) Though encouraged by parents, but due to lack of interest and failure in class examination dropped herself from schooling;
- iii) Though encouraged by parents, but due to illness dropped herself from schooling;
- iv) Though parents encouraged for continuing education but to help mother in doing huge household chores and to look after brothers had to be dropped herself from schooling;
- v) When promoted to class VI, to higher class etc., the parents discouraged towards continuity of schooling for education due to not having school either in the village and/or in very nearby villages and availability of school in distant village/town;

- vi) Parents discouraged towards continuity of schooling due to poverty as they were not in a position to afford financially ;
- vii) Due to illiteracy of the parents they did not ever encourage for continuing education ;
- viii) Had to be dropped from schooling due to getting marriage in early age ;
- ix) Parents used to think that education for girls would not yield any benefit to them while it would be a wastage and resultantly forced daughter not to attend school ;
- x) Parents were always against daughters' education and never encouraged for continuity of education towards higher level ;
- xi) Being eldest of six children of parents did not get any scope for education while had to be busy in performing huge household chores as well as to look after younger brothers and sisters ;

Another aspect that though the parents initially got their girl child admitted in school located either in the village or in nearby village , but after few years that girl child had been dropped from schooling by them due to the aforesaid reasons.

7.5 Political Participation

The political institution play a very important role in the organization and regulation of the human society . In Sikkim, traditionally the headman-ship of the village were mainly male preserve specifically among the Bhutias in Lachen and Lachung areas and also Lepchas in Dzongu reserved areas. The women did have no right to take part in the election of headman. Besides, Mondal the village headman in other villages excluding the reserved areas were also male preserve. But after 1975 with the abolition of Mondal systems and emergence of democratic Panchayat system the situation has been changed in Sikkim. Though initially in Panchayat election the male domination was persisted but gradually in course of time the participation of women in Panchayat election has been increased . And now there has been good percentage of women (as already cited in earlier chapter) have been elected in the Panchayat in Sikkim. Moreover, the women aged 18 years and above can cast their votes in Panchayat, Assembly and Parliament elections from time to time. Under such situation it has been so important to understand the interest and attitude of the respondents regarding the participation of women in politics , which would certainly strengthen the pace of progress and development of women in the state. Therefore, in view to assess the perception of informants as regards to the women s' involvement in politics they were asked whether they are having interest in politics and think that women should join the politics . The responses to these queries have been given in the following tables.

Indeed, importance of women's interest and their participation have also equally important for the development of the society. Taking this into consideration an attempt also has been made in this discussion to analyze the situation of women and politics in the society .

Table : 110 Opinion about women should join politics
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Opinion			Total
	Yes	No	Depending on interest	
Bhutia-Lepcha	58.0	33.3	8.7	100.0
Nepalese	51.1	31.9	17.0	100.0
Total	55.2	32.8	12.0	100.0

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

Regarding joining to politics by women, Table 110 indicates that 55.2 per cent opined that the women should join to politics . Such favourable opinion has been observed more among the Bhutia-Lepchas (58.0 per cent) as compared to Nepalese (51.1 per cent). Moreover, 12.0 per cent viewed it as depending on the interest of the women.

They have such opinion due to feelings that the politics can help the women to understand the socio-political situation of the region , it will help the women to bring about development and progress of women in the men dominated society , it certainly also will help them to fight all sorts of social injustice against women in the society , women can become part and parcel of all round development of the society through politics, through politics women can earn higher status in the society , etc.

On the contrary , 32.8 per cent opined that they do not favour that women should join to politics due to this or that reasons.

Table : 111 Women's interest in politics
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether interested		Total
	Yes	No	
Bhutia-Lepcha	50.7	49.3	100.0
Nepalese	36.2	63.8	100.0
Total	44.8	55.2	100.0

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

Indeed, the interest of women in politics has been crucial which ultimately affects the active or otherwise participation in the politics of the society. In this context, it is clear from Table 111 that 44.8 per cent of them have affirmed that they have interest in politics. Taking the community-wise variation in this regard , higher percentage of respondents belonging to Bhutia-Lepcha community have the interest in politics (50.7 per cent) as compared to Nepalese (36.2 per cent) .

Taking the positive interest in politics among 44.8 per cent of women as is evident in Table 111, it may also be relevant to find out the extent of their participation in political activities. In this context, an attempt has been made in Table 112 to visualize the extent of their participation in political activities.

Table : 112 Involvement in political activities like attending meeting / procession
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether involved		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia-Lepcha	20.3	79.7	100.0
Nepalese	31.9	68.1	100.0
Total	25.0	75.0	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

Table 112 indicates that 25.0 per cent are involved in political activities . According to community , percentage of those who involved in political activities among Nepalese has been more (31.9 per cent) as compared to Bhutia-Lepcha (20.3 per cent) . In case of those who are involved in political activities , they used to manage the time for doing so particularly after finishing the household chores of the day apart from managing the time from work place. Among them , 4 (3 Bhutia-Lepcha and 1 Nepalese) are the member of a Political Party namely Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) including one who is also the member of Lepcha Association . At the same time few of them also reported that either their sister or mother and other women relatives are the active member of SDF Political Party in Sikkim.

7.6 Health Situation

Considering the geographical conditions of rugged steep terrain, heavy rainfall which in turn the women have to directly bear the burnt of all climatic hazards , along with heavy load of work in daily lives of women in the state have serious implications for their health . This is important because 45.7 per cent are in large family having six and above number of family members .

Table : 113 Facing of health problems by the women due to performance of both household work and work in the job place regularly
(Percentage distribution)

Community	Whether facing health problem		
	Yes	No	Total
Bhutia- Lepcha	49.3	50.7	100.0
Nepalese	57.4	42.6	100.0
Total	52.6	47.4	100.0

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

Source : Field survey , 2002-2005.

As the women in gainful employment normally have to perform dual activities i.e. looking after the children and doing the other household duties along with performing substantial handicraft work in their work place and or privately . Thereby, such women may have to face health hazards and strain in doing such dual activities in household and work place. Taking this into consideration, an attempt also has been made to visualize the experience of such women in this regard. In this context, Table 113 substantiates that 52.6 per cent have confirmed their health problems due to performing both the household work and the work in their job place regularly. Such suffering among Nepalese has been higher (57.4 per cent) than that of Bhutia-Lepchas (49.3 per cent). In fact, they have been suffering health problems like mainly weakness and anemia, headache and dizziness, problem in eye vis-à-vis vision, breathing trouble vis-à-vis asthma, stomach pain and digestive disorder, etc. While 47.4 per cent reported that they do not face any health problems in doing such dual job regularly.

Indeed, the gap period between the birth of one to another child is also important taking the aspect of health for women . And as per medical norm the required period in this context has been minimum 3 years for keeping good health for mother and the child. This has been so important taking into consideration of keeping and maintaining good health for both the woman and child. Therefore, it is also obvious to have a query regarding the expectations vis-à-vis attitude of the informants towards such gap period between the birth of one to another child . This has been shown in Table 114 .

Table : 114 Opinion about the gap of years in between the birth of one to another child

(Percentage distribution)

Gap (in years)	Community		
	Bhutia- Lepcha	Nepalese	Total
1 - 2	-	6.4	2.6
2	15.9	17.0	16.4
3	34.8	12.8	25.9
2 to 3	13.0	12.8	12.9
3 to 4	7.3	19.1	12.1
4	5.8	8.5	6.9
4 to 5	2.9	4.2	3.4
5	17.4	12.8	15.5
5-6	2.9	6.4	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Taking the gap in between the birth of one child to another, 68.1 per cent opined that such gap is required to be 3 years and above. Besides, 12.9 per cent also opined that such gap should be in between 2 – 3 years .

Community-wise, higher percentage among Bhutia-Lepchas (71.1 per cent) have the opinion to keep such gap of 3 years and above as compared to 63.8 per cent among Nepalese (Table 114) .

In case of those who preferred the gap of 1-2 years in between the birth of one child to another (19.0 per cent) their logic behind such preference has been that they can look after and the child can grow at a time .

Findings

The following summarized salient points may be relevant in view to envisage the role and status of Sikkimese women.

All of the informants have opined that the women's participation in gainful job has been undoubtedly necessary .

Indeed, majority (75.9 per cent) reported that they aspire always to get better gainful job. Their such aspirations are mainly to get wider reputation as well known handicraft producers , become successful business women in handicraft market, having own handicraft showroom , having carpet weaving center , government job in GICI and other jobs in government sector too , any other gainful job for earning.

Majority (87.9 per cent) opined that their working environment is good , and satisfactory (3.5 per cent) . But 8.6 per cent of them on the contrary feel that they either do not like their working environment or feel bad.

Indeed, 57.7 per cent feel tension either doing both the work in job place and houses . It substantiates to a extent that the gainfully employed women used to face tension/problem in performing the work both in work place and houses together as the women have to perform the huge household chores apart from duties in work place .

In case of sharing of family property by inheritance , majority (90.5 per cent) opined that the women should get equal share of family property with male by inheritance. Interestingly, 7.8 per cent of them did not opine favourably in this regard as they favour the tradition. In actual cases, married respondents received only the gifts and assets including livestock, utensils , ornaments etc. from parents during their marriage and which were taken by them in husbands' houses after marriage . And the unmarried respondents would get only the gifts and assets during their marriage.

Majority (82.8 per cent) contribute portion of their income to their family. It attributes to the fact that the women make financial contribution to their family, and thus help to sustain their families .

Majority (74.1 per cent) normally keep portion of their income for their personal expenses even after contributing to families. While, 20.7 per cent normally do

not keep any amount for such purposes and used to give their earnings to the parents/husbands/elder sister/unmarried son or keep it in family fund. And 5.2 per cent used to spend entire amount of earnings for the family .

55.2 per cent is having their own Bank Account . Among them 60.9 per cent have single account i.e. on their name only . While 37.5 per cent are having joint account either with husband or parent. Only 1.6 per cent are having both the single and joint account .

On the whole , 63.8 per cent used to make savings from their income either in Bank , LIC, GPF or home. All these signifies that the women are having the vital access to bank account, credit and savings .

Taking the family , 68.1 per cent opined that a family should have 1 to 2 number of children. Whereas, 12.1 per cent viewed that a family should have 2 – 3 children and 18.1 per cent opined it 3 – 4 children . Indeed, the married respondents having more than 2 children in actual cases reported that due to having desire to get son , wish of husband for daughter even after having two sons, birth of child by chance though not desired and both husband and wife's decision, and no specific reason but on the way of spending normal conjugal life etc.

In fact, half of the informants (50.0 per cent) opined that the convenient size of the family has been 3 to 4 members in a family. As a whole , rest of them viewed it more than 4 .

Majority (96.6 per cent) opined favourably that women should be consulted in family's financial matters. While a nominal 3.4 per cent did not favour in this regard..

In fact, 43.1 per cent reported that they used to purchase on their own decision. While more than half of the informants are guided by husbands / parents / mother-in-law/father-in-law. Besides, 6.0 per cent of them reported that they either sometimes consult with husband in such purchasing or on the basis of mutual understanding with husband or own decision as well as consultation with husband both.

Majority (97.4 per cent) favoured that the women should be consulted in cases of children's education, marriage and other family matters. In case of actual happenings, 55.2 per cent among the informants' families such consultation had has been done .

Interestingly, almost all agreed and favoured that the women should be given due importance equally with men in the family's decision making process. It reveals that they are much aware about their importance and position in the society.

Indeed, 66.4 per cent opined instantly 'yes' in case of opinion that a family should have at least one girl child. While 9.5 per cent of them opined that they do not favour that a family should have at least a girl child.

Majority (85.3 per cent) opined that the minimum age for marriage of a woman should be 20 years and above, and their such opinion range from 20 years to above 30 years.

The majority (87.1 per cent) opined and favoured that the women should have final say i.e. take final decision in choosing their life mate.

Nearly cent per cent of the women opined that any type of marriage payments like dowry and bride price are not necessary during marriage.

Almost cent per cent of the informants not only affirmed the necessity of education for women but also have shown their awareness of the necessity and importance of education for women's development.

Moreover, 58.6 per cent have asserted their earnest aspiration and interest to get higher education. While 41.4 per cent of them reported that though have lack of such aspiration for themselves due to old age, getting no time, family problems, looking after families and very low education, but even then have such aspiration inertly with repenting that if they could have done further education.

More than half the informants though did not specify the level, but have aspired higher level of education depending on the interest, desire and aptitude of boys. Besides, a good 40.5 per cent have aspired the level of graduate and above including higher studies more than post-graduate. Interestingly, 2.9 per cent among them also have aspired religious study for their boys.

Similarly, 47.4 per cent though did not specify the level, but have aspired higher level of education depending on the interest, desire and aptitude of boys. And a good 40.5 per cent have aspired the level of graduate and above including higher studies more than post-graduate.

Taking the variation in informants' aspired level of education in between boys and girls, 10.3 per cent have asserted the level of education as secondary/higher secondary for girls. While this has been 6.9 per cent for boys. Moreover, 52.6 per cent of them have aspired the specific level of education for girls. While this has been 49.1 per cent in case of boys. Moreover, 2.9 per cent also have aspired religious study for their boys but nobody for girls. So, it may be said that they have the aspiration of higher education for their girls and boys both.

In major cases (70.7 per cent) the parents had influenced either positively or negatively during the course of education of the informants. But at the same time a good percentage of them (29.3 per cent) reported that their parents did not influence them any way in this regard.

Interestingly, 55.2 per cent opined that the women should join to politics . Moreover, 12.0 per cent viewed it as depending on the interest of the women.

As a whole, 44.8 per cent have affirmed that they have interest in politics. Indeed, 25.0 per cent are involved in political activities . In case of those who are involved in political activities , they used to manage the time for doing so particularly after finishing the household chores of the day apart from managing the time from work place.

In fact, 52.6 per cent confirmed that they used to face health problems due to performing both the household work and the work in their job place regularly. In fact, they have been suffering health problems like mainly weakness and anemia, headache and dizziness , problem in eye vis-à-vis vision, breathing trouble vis-à-vis asthma, stomach pain and digestive disorder, etc.

As a whole, 68.1 per cent opined that gap in between birth of one to another child is required to be 3 years and above. Besides, 12.9 per cent of them opined that such gap should be in between 2 – 3 years. While 19.0 per cent preferred the gap of 1-2 years in between the birth of one child to another.

Though men and women are more or less equal in the Sikkimese society even then it has been reported that a subtle discrimination like, the men are still getting more facilities and advantages than that of women in the society, e.g. while girl child do the household chores the boys are allowed to play , the male child is much preferred than that of girls, etc.

On the whole , it may be said that the Sikkimese women under the study not only are confidence and much aware about their importance and position in the society as well as have the ideas to decide. But also they have the better position and access to the empowering resources like education, gainful employment, capital and other resources , credit and savings, decision - makings in the family vis-à-vis society, politics etc.

At the same time , it may also be said that though men and women are more or less equal in the Sikkimese society even then a subtle discrimination in between women and men still persists in Sikkim . Therefore, it can be said that despite having better position by women in the Sikkimese society a subtle gender disparity exist too in Sikkim.

CHAPTER VIII

A BRIEF RESUME OF WOMEN HANDICRAFT PRODUCERS, SELLERS AND ENTREPRENEURS - SOME CASE STUDIES

Case 1	Dolma Tibetan	Involved in carpet weaving and knitting woolen garments
Case 2	Tshiring Lepcha	Involved in tailoring privately and as instructor of tailoring
Case 3	Tina Pradhan	Involved in knitting woolen garments
Case 4	Kitchen Lachungpa	Involved in carpet weaving and knitting woolen garments
Case 5	Manmaya Chhetri	Involved in handloom weaving and production of Lepcha handicrafts
Case 6	Pasong Doma Sherpa	Involved in Knitting woolen garments and business
Case 7	Binita Rai	Doing business of woolen garments
Case 8	Tshering Keepa Chhoten	Involved in tailoring
Case 9	Suku Doma Sherpa	Involved in Carpet Weaving
Case 10	Gouri Lama	Involved in Knitting and secretary of a cooperative
Case 11	Pabitra Sharma	Involved in tailoring and cutting
Case 12	Bimala Rai	Involved in woolen garments production and business

Findings

CHAPTER VIII

HANDICRAFT

A BRIEF RESUME OF WOMEN PRODUCERS, SELLERS AND ENTREPRENEURS - SOME CASE STUDIES

Some case studies are presented in this chapter in view of envisaging the role i.e. women's involvement in handicraft production and selling which in turn contributed positively to strengthen the position of women in the society with self reliance as well as to supplement the family apart from performing household chores and other works for the family .

8.1 Case studies

The followings are some of the case studies which have been presented in support of the main study .

Case 1

Name	- Mrs. Dolma Tibetan
Sex	- Female
Age	- 56 years
Community	- Bhutia (Tibetan)
Marital Status	- Widow
Education	- Illiterate
Occupation	- Involved in carpet weaving and knitting
Religion	- Buddhist



Mrs. Dolma Tibetan

Mrs. Dolma Tibetan has been living in *Chungthang* (North Sikkim) market area together with her two daughters. Her two sons are living in their work places. Educationally though illiterate but have knowledge in carpet (*den*) weaving and knitting woolen garments which she learnt traditionally from her mother. Her father was illiterate farmer and mother was illiterate housewife in Tibet . Her husband was shepherd and owned number of 'yak'. When she was relatively young her husband expired in *Mukhuthang* (North Sikkim) , and she had to shift from *Mukhuthang* to present place of *Chungthang* along with four children. After shifting to *Chungthang* , she sold all her 'yaks', and the money utilized to start one wine shop in *Chungthang* market , and at the same time she started the business of weaving carpet and woolen garments knitted by herself with the help of her elder daughter .

She used to weave three types of carpet like 3 ft. X 6 ft. (making charge @ Rs. 1,200/- per piece) ; 2ft.X5 ft. (making charge @ Rs. 800/- per piece) ; and 1ft. X 1ft. (@ making charge Rs. 300/- per piece) . She used to weave on

Loom which was given by her mother. She used to purchase woolen yarn from *Chungthang* itself. But at present due to age factor as well as market situation she has left weaving of carpet. As per her experience that the people are now more inclined to have carpet with modern varieties and design and perfectly finished product available in GICI branches, cooperatives and the market instead of with Tibetan design in which she had has the expertise. Thus the demand of weaving carpet traditionally by her had has been gradually deteriorated day by day in the market. As a result she had to stop weaving carpet for commercial purpose and sold her traditional Loom. She has now concentrated herself more to do knitting woolen garments and woolen caps for selling the same in the local market. She is now producing hand knitted woolen garments as well as caps made of rabbit wool. She usually purchase woolen material for garment from the local market as well as from Gangtok. While rabbit wool she normally gets from German Angora Breed Rabbit Farm located at Ravom in North Sikkim. This Farm used to supply rabbit wools to her and pay Rs.25/- per cap as making charge. For knitting one cap she normally takes one day to finish the same. She also reported that the caps made of rabbit wool are more soft and shiny than that of caps made of sheep wool. Indeed, every day she used to spend 9 hours to 10 hours a day for knitting woolen garments.

The price of woolen garments according to size and item is as follows -

Item	Size	Days required for knitting to complete the item	Knitting Charge (in Rs.)
Full Sleeves Woolen Sweater	Big	10 days	400/-
Full Sleeves Woolen Sweater	Small	8 days	200/-
Woolen Cap	Big	1 day	50/-
Woolen Cap	Small	1 day (3 pieces)	30/-
Gloves	Full	2 days	50/-

Mrs. Dolma used to purchase wools from Gangtok @ Rs. 200/- to 250/- per kilogram. Apart from this, she used to get order for making caps of rabbit wool @ Rs. 25/- per cap as wage along with wool materials from Angora Breeding Rabbit Farm, Government of Sikkim, at *Ravong* of North Sikkim. The colour of such caps are white along with red or maroon border. She normally takes one day to complete the knitting of each cap. According to her, the cap made of rabbit wools is more soft and silky than that of cap made of sheep wools. It emphasizes that her involvement in handicraft production and selling has been gainful and that supplemented her family maintenance too after her husband's death and which helped her to become empowered in family maintenance.

Though Mrs. Dolma is having no formal education, yet she has favoured women's education. According to her, educated women can get jobs and

even do business more efficiently. She regretted that if she was educated then she could have made more progress in her handicraft business. Though her elder daughter is not educated due to her lack of interest. But younger daughter has passed higher secondary examination and now serving as school teacher in government school in *Chungthang*. As she reported that earlier time it was very difficult for women due to scarcity of schools in the then Sikkim.

She has also favoured that women should be involved in gainful jobs. She emphasized that women should be given the share of family property equally with men. She also has opined that the women should be given due importance in the family decision-making and women should have final say in choosing their life partner for marriage. The age of marriage for women should not be below 20 years of age. At the same time she has also preferred that the women should have at least four number of children both son and daughter (as she already had two daughters and three sons). In her case, though she got *Yak* owned by her parental family, but the cash and other properties were inherited by her brothers. She earns Rs. 2,000/- per month approximately. She does not have any bank account and do not make any savings. Normally she uses major portion of her earnings for family maintenance, and small portion i.e. Rs. 300/- to Rs. 400/- she used to keep for own expenses but not in all the month. She till now feels that the men are still getting more facilities and advantages than that of women in their society.

Case 2

Name - Mrs. Tshiring Lepcha
Sex - Female
Age - 45 years
Community - Lepcha
Marital Status - Married
Education - Graduate (B.Sc.) ,
Occupation - Involved in tailoring privately
and as instructor in tailoring.
Religion - Buddhist



Mrs. Tshiring Lepcha

Mrs. Tshiring Lepcha has been living in Upper Sichay of Gangtok, East Sikkim. Indeed she has got 11 months training in tailoring from the institute namely 'War Widow Women Association', at New Delhi. At present she is working as a tailor privately and also as a instructor imparting vocational training for cutting and sewing in Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs Service Cooperative Society Ltd. simultaneously. Her monthly emolument as a instructor is Rs. 2000/- per month. Besides, she also is doing the tailoring job privately on the basis of order received from neighbours, friends, relatives and so on and used to spend 5 hours daily for such work. The

materials/clothes are used to be supplied by the customers and she normally takes 'making charge/price' for cutting , stitching and preparing the dress only. The making charge according to items is , as follows -:

Type of dress	Making charge/price (in Rs.)
Salwar Suit	50/- for small
	70/- for adult
Nighty	50/-
Blouse	50/-
Night Dress for children	50/-

Earlier, she was a school teacher in Tezu of Arunachal Pradesh . But due to her husband's settlement in Delhi for courier service business she had to leave teaching job and thereafter she got this tailoring training there . After leaving Delhi along with her husband and their final settlement in Gangtok, Sikkim , she started this tailoring instructor job in Gangtok and also doing the tailoring job privately there at home since 1997 in view of more earning . Presently, she is living in a joint family. Though her father was class VIII passed and mother was illiterate, even then they supported her for education. She favours women education and feels that the 'education is the source of knowledge for a woman'. She also feels that 'education is the big property of woman'. She has stressed that women should be involved in gainful employment and should not remain idle. She has the aspiration to open a women's tailoring cooperative and to provide employment to a number of women in such cooperative apart from providing the vocational training on tailoring to the women. According to her, women should take part in family's decision-making process both financial and family affairs and women should be given family property equally with men. She opined that a family should have one girl child to make the family a complete form, and a mother should have maximum two child and the gap in between should be 3 years .

Case 3

- Name - Mrs. Tina Pradhan
- Sex - Female
- Age - 27 years
- Community - Nepali (Newar)
- Marital Status - Married
- Education - Higher Secondary
- Occupation - Involved in knitting woolen garments privately .
- Religion - Buddhist



Mrs. Tina Pradhan

Presently, Mrs. Tina Pradhan is living in Phoodong of North Sikkim along with her father and sister. Educationally, Mrs. Pradhan's husband is school final passed, while her parents 'can sign' only. Her husband is working in West Bengal. Occupationally, her father was a farmer and mother as housewife. But she is engaged in knitting woolen garments privately for a woolen garments supplier in Gangtok. Though Mrs. Pradhan does not have any formal training in knitting woolen garments while learnt it traditionally from her mother. Indeed, the sample design and the wools are supplied by the supplier while she used to do knitting work on the basis of wage (knitting price) only. Besides, she is also engaged in 'crush' knitting for her family. But in case of relatives and neighbours/known persons she normally does such knitting on the basis of wage. She used to do knitting of woolen garments of varieties in size and design along with woolen gloves and caps. Her rate of knitting woolen garments according to size is given below.

Type of woolen items according to size	No. of days Required	Making charge/price (in Rs.)
Big size sweater	7	250/- , 350/- 400/- (according to design)
Small size sweater	5	250/-
Small baby set	5	250/-
Cap	Half day	50/-
Gloves (one pair)	Half day	50/-

According to her, she is getting inspiration in knitting woolen garments privately always from her husband and parents. Her expertise in knitting woolen garments is well known and she used to get orders for production of woolen garments locally, from Gangtok, Jorethang and Namchi of Sikkim, and also from Delhi and Mumbai. She used to have monthly income Rs.1,500/- to Rs. 2,000/- on an average (as reported).

She favours education of women and feels that only the education can make the upliftment of women in the society. According to her, women should take part in family's decision-making process both financial and family affairs, and women should be given family property equally with men. She has opined that women should be involved in gainful employment. She has saving bank account on her name singly and make transaction by herself. Besides using 40% of her income for family maintenance and her son, she also used to keep 20% for self expenditure and rest 40% in saving bank account for future every month. She also feels that women should join politics. She has also opined that the family should have at least one girl child and maximum two children. The gap between the child is necessarily to be 5 to 6 years. According to her that there has been still some sort of discrimination in between a girl child and a male child persisting in Nepali society.

Case 4

Name	- Ms. Kitchen Lachungpa
Sex	- Female
Age	- 39 years
Community	- Bhutia
Marital Status	- Unmarried
Education	- Class VI passed
Occupation	- Involved in carpet weaving
Religion	- Buddhist



Ms. Kitchen Lachungpa

Ms. Lachungpa belongs to Lachung of North Sikkim . She is having only primary education and could not continue schooling due to unavailability of high school there and her parents were not in a position to send her to Gangtok for further schooling, as a result she had to be dropped from schooling. Educationally, her father was school final passed and mother was class VI passed. Both of them were farmer.

In fact , she took two years training in carpet (*den*) weaving from GICI at Gangtok. After completion of training she returned to Lachen and started carpet weaving privately . The loom (*tan*) made locally by a carpenter in Lachung was bought by her brother . She usually produces 3ft by 6ft sized carpet and sells the same locally @ Rs. 3000/- each . For carpet weaving she normally work 6 hours daily. After doing such carpet weaving business continuously for 2 years at a stretch , she joined the GICI Chungthang branch (carpet section) in its master role as a carpet weaving instructor permanently . At present she draws salary of Rs. 8,000/- approximately per month and is satisfied with her work .

She has aspired to get more education which she could not get due to her untimely death of parents as well as financial inability. But she used to spend her leisure hours in book reading in Bhutia/Tibetan language to increase her general knowledge as well as by knitting woolen garments for own use as well as for other family members. She favours that the children should be given higher education at least post-graduation . She also greatly favours women's education which has been most crucial for women in present day society. She feels that the women should be involved in gainful employment including business which has become utmost necessity for women in present day society . Besides, she also opined and favoured that the women is to be given share of the family property equally with male . In her case she did not get any share of family property. She used to contribute Rs. 3000/- per month to her family (living with brother) and used

to keep Rs.1000/- to Rs. 3000/- per month in her single savings bank account . The rest of the amount she keeps for own expenses . According to her that women should be given due importance in family's decision making process , women should be consulted in family related affairs . She has emphasized that woman should have final say in choosing her life partner . She has also opined that the size of any family is required to be 4 with 2 children . According to her that even in her society the boys are preferred more than that of girls .

Case 5

Name - Mrs. Manmaya Chhetri
Sex - Female
Age - 55 years
Community - Nepali
Marital Status - Married
Education - Class VI passed
Occupation - Involved in handloom weaving and production of Lepcha handicrafts
Religion - Hindu



Mrs. Manmaya Chhetri

Mrs. Chhetri has been living in Pakyong of East Sikkim . Her father was agricultural labourer and mother was housewife and both of them were illiterate . At present Mrs. Chhetri is working as a Field Level Organiser in GICI branch at Pakyong and getting salary @ Rs. 1200/- per month since June 2002. Indeed, she had taken training from GICI during the year 1963 to 1965 . At that time the name of GICI was 'Palsung Thendup Institute' during Chogyal's regime . After her marriage she left Sikkim and started living with husband (army personnel) in Bangalore . In Bangalore, she started production of *Lepcha Bag* (price of each bag was Rs. 2/- to Rs. 2.30/-) and *Lepcha Belt* (price of each belt was Rs. 1/- to Rs. 1.30/-) and used to sell these privately . Such production and selling privately she had continued for 11 years there in Bangalore .

Thereafter , in the year of 1980 she came back to Sikkim with her husband particularly after her husband's retirement from Army . According to her, even after returning to Sikkim she had has to continue production of such handicraft items for earning and self-sufficiency . Because her husband has been a great drunker/ addicted to alcohol and he used to spend all his money behind drinking alcohol. Resultantly , she is required to have one income source to maintain the family . Besides, she is greatly desired to be involved in working particularly in handicraft production. According to her this handicraft work has made her independent and self sufficient . As reported that she had participated in various Exhibitions organised in different

places of India like in Kolkata (1983) , Mumbai (1984) , Delhi (1984) , Bangalore (1985), Chennai (1985) , Pune (1986) , Vishakhapatnam (1986) and Chennai (1987) . After 1987 she did not participate in exhibition of handicrafts while joined to GICI and later got job in Master Role i.e. permanent job as a Field Level Organiser there . Apart from doing job in GICI, she also usually do knitting and stitching job for 2 to 3 hours for herself and other family members.

Mrs. Chhetri has no doubt favoured women's education and feels it as utmost necessity, as the educated women can do any kind of job. Besides, education helps the women to become well mannered and educated women can educate her children properly . She has lamented that parents never encouraged her to continue education as they were illiterate and resultantly neglected her education. She feels that the women's involvement in gainful occupation is also the utmost necessity. But according to her that the women have been still lagging behind, and the woman should come forward in every field particularly in the economy. Mrs. Chhetri has opined that the women should get equal share of the family property, and in her case she did not get any share of her parental property. She does not have any bank account as she had has to spend her entire earnings in family maintenance and children's education due to her husband's spending his earning in alcohol drinking . Moreover, she usually purchases according to her own decision . She has insisted that women should be given due importance in family's decision-making process and other family affairs equally with male members.

She feels that a family should have 2 child including one girl child and the gap between one to another child is required to be 1 to 2 years . She has the feeling that the girl child is more supportive to parents than that of male child . According to her that though no discrimination between man and woman in present day Nepali society is visible , even then there has been a subtle discrimination between men and women in present day society

Case 6

Name	- Mrs. Pasong Doma Sherpa
Sex	- Female
Age	- 35 years
Community	- Bhutia (Sherpa)
Marital Status	- Divorcee
Education	- Class VIII passed
Occupation	- Involved in Knitting woolen garments/business
Religion	- Buddhist



Mrs. Pasong Doma Sherpa

Indeed, Mrs. Sherpa has been in difficulty as her husband (working in Power Department, Government of Sikkim) left her and married another woman and living in Ravongla with 2nd wife. Due to this problem she started production of woolen garments on the basis of making-price as well as selling of woolen garments. From such production of woolen garments she used to earn Rs. 800/- to 1000/- per month as reported. Moreover, she owns one and half acre of land which she used to cultivate by employing farmer and under her supervision. Whatever she earns, she used to utilize that for family maintenance. Though her husband sometimes help financially for family maintenance and also for her three children's education. She normally does knitting of woolen garments 5 to 6 hours daily for 5 days and 2 days she used to do farming in a week. Indeed, she does not have any formal training in knitting woolen garments. But she has learnt knitting of wools from mother traditionally. Her rates for making hand knitted woolen garments are as followed :

Type of garment	Size	Making price in Rs.
Sweater	Big	200
	Medium	150
	Small	100
Cap	Standard	50 – 60 (as per design)
	Small	
Shock	Small	40 – 50 (as per design)
Gloves	Standard	50
Shawl (crush and needle made)	Standard	80

Mrs. Sherpa has stressed that women's education has been must, because educated women can do service and business in better way and also can be engaged in any gainful employment. She even has desired to get further education if she gets the opportunity in this regard. She has stressed that women's engagement in gainful employment is also must in the society for their self reliance and confidence. She has also emphasized that women should get equal share of the family property. She though received some money from her parental family but not the equal share of the family property because sharing of family property has been mainly by male section in the society. After divorce she used to make financial transaction according to her own decision, but before that she had to consult with husband in which husband's decision was final.

She also has favoured that the women should make savings of money in the bank. Besides, she also has emphasized that women should be consulted in family's affairs and due importance to women should be given in family's decision-making process equally with men. According to her the age of marriage for girls should be within 18 years and women should have final say in choosing life partner. She has opined that a family should have 2 to 3 children and size of the family is to be maximum 4 to 5. And the gap between one to another child must be 3 years to 5 years. She

has the opinion that a family should have one girl child as the girls are much cooperative, helpful and supportive to parents. Mrs. Sherpa feels that till today in her society there is overall discrimination between men and women and emphasized that a man always gets some more facilities from family as compared to woman .

Case 7

- Name - Mrs. Binita Rai
- Sex - Female
- Age - 46 years
- Community - Nepali
- Marital Status - Married
- Education - B.A., L.L.B.
- Occupation - Government employee and also doing business of woolen garments privately .
- Religion - Hindu



Mrs. Binita Rai

Mrs. Rai's father was a school teacher and educationally B.A. , B.Ed. While mother was illiterate housewife. Her husband has been involved in business. Presently, Mrs. Binita Rai is living in Gangtok of East Sikkim . She is doing business of selling woolen garments and engaged four women to do the knitting job for making woolen garments on wage basis. She used to purchase woolen yarns from Siliguri and Delhi and same are given to those women for making woolen garments as per requirement. The price of the woolen garments ranges Rs. 800/- to Rs.900/- depending on size and design. Besides, she also has opened one shop of selling ready-made garments of both woolen and clothes and sarees as well in Deorali of Gangtok, and the name of that shop is 'Maitighar'. Mrs. Rai also herself do the knitting job for making the woolen garments. Everyday she used to spend 3 hours in that shop and 9 to 10 hours in a week for knitting wools. The wages for knitting wool she used to give to those four women employees are, as follows -:

Type of woolen items according to size	No. of days Required	Making charge/price (in Rs.)
Big size sweater	7	250/- , 350/- 400/- (according to design)
Small size sweater	5	250/-
Small baby set	5	250/-
Cap	Half day	50/-
Gloves (one pair)	Half day	50/-

Besides, she used to give salary @ Rs. 900/- per month to her sales-women in her readymade garments shop 'Maitighar'. As per Mrs. Rai, women's education is very necessary which has been the only instrument to uplift women from their social and economic backwardness. It is a power that gives them confidence to fight against social injustice. Education to women she feels is the education of mother, daughter, sister and wife who are the pillars of the family and society. She still aspire to get more education and aspires higher technical education for her children. She greatly favours and feel that the women should be gainfully employed to supplement the family as well as to be a self-reliant. According to her that women should be given equal share of the family property, though she is not interested to get this because of her better educational and economic background. She has favoured that women should be given equal importance like their counterpart in the society and women necessarily be consulted in family affairs including women's participation in family's decision-making process equally with male counterpart. She has interest in politics and feels that women should join politics. In her opinion that a family may have three children and a family should have one girl child for completion of the family. She has also agreed that while girl child do the household chores the boys are allowed to play. But according to her that the boys also should be involved in doing household chores along with girl.

Case 8

Name - Ms. Tshering Keepa Chhoten
Sex - Female
Age - 20 years
Community - Bhutia
Marital Status- Unmarried
Education - Illiterate
Occupation - Involved in tailoring
Religion - Buddhist



Ms. Tshering Keepa Chhoten & Ms. Temba Doma

She belonged to a poor family in Mukuthang village, a very remote village located about 10 hours journey from Mangan by jeep including walking in North Sikkim. She is at present residing with her cousin (namely Ms. Temba Doma aged 26 years, unmarried, belong to Bhutia community, who is also illiterate and belonged to the Mukuthang village and from poor family, parents were also illiterate) in Mangan Bazar area. Education she is illiterate, as she could not go through the formal educational facility due to unavailability of school in Mukthang village. Her parents were also illiterate and were shepherd by occupation. She indeed took training on cutting and tailoring from a Training Center run by Tibetans in Namnang area of Gangtok along with her cousin Ms. Doma during the period 2000 – 2002 and during training course both of them received Rs. 500/- per month as

stipend . At present , she is involved in cutting and tailoring business in a rented house located in Mangan Bazar. In fact , she and her cousin together purchased two sewing foot-machines and started this business. The tailoring materials she and Ms. Doma used to purchase from Gangtok and sometimes from Mangan Bazar too . She along with her cousin Ms. Doma produce various dresses on the basis of making price according to size, item and design. And the orders for sewing of various dresses she and Ms. Doma usually get locally and also from surrounding villages of Mangan Bazar . The details of making-price normally charged by both Ms. Chhoten and Ms. Doma is given below :-

Item of dresses	Making price (in Rs.)
<i>Bokkhu</i> (long skirt of woman)	110/-
<i>Hanju</i> (Blouse)	40/-
<i>Pangden</i> (a piece of coloured apron which is usually hanged from waist to knee particularly for married woman as a symbol of married)	20/-
Gent's shirt	100/-
Sikkimese <i>Bokkhu</i> for woman	500/-
Gent's <i>Bokkhu</i>	250/-

She and Ms. Doma work 8 hours daily for making various dresses. Apart from tailoring Ms. Chhoten is also a carpet (*Den*) and blanket weaver, which she learnt traditionally from her mother . For this purpose she usually purchases 'fur' from her traditional village Mukuthang @ Rs. 50/- per kg. And uses the same for preparing woolen yarn in view of making carpet and blanket . She requires 4 kg. 'fur' for preparing blanket and 5 kg. for carpet .

For weaving blanket and carpet she uses a loom (*tan*) given by her mother and that she has kept in her Mukuthang village . When she visits Mukuthang village and stay there for 2 to 3 months , during that time only she weaves carpet and blanket there both for personal use and also for selling . She used to sell 3ft by 6ft sized carpet @ Rs. 1000/- per piece . Besides, she takes Rs.800/- for weaving a blanket . Particularly during rainy season she along with her cousin frequently go to their native village Mukuthang . In fact, she usually helps her mother financially by sending cash as per requirement .

Even being illiterate she has desired to get education and stressed that woman's education is necessary . According to her that women should be given equal share of the family property like male , and women should be involved in family's decision making process . Involvement of woman in gainful employment is a necessity for earning as well as to get self-reliance . She has planned to open her single savings account in State Bank of India branch in Mangan . She has the aspiration to get children highly educated

at least graduate and above after her marriage . She also feels that a family should have one girl child for completion of that family, because girls are good friends to parents and help them always . According to her that the male child is much preferred even in her society and the girl child is usually neglected . Ms. Doma also have the similar feelings like Ms. Chhoten

Case 9

Name - Ms. Suku Doma Sherpa
Sex - Female
Age - 23 years
Community - Bhutia (Sherpa)
Marital Status - Unmarried
Education - Class III passed
Occupation - Involved in Carpet Weaving privately
Religion - Buddhist



Ms. Suku Doma Sherpa

Ms. Sherpa is living in Lingzo Bustee about 2 kms. away from Kewzing of South Sikkim . Educationally she is class III passed and having training in carpet (*den*) weaving from GICI Branch at Kewzing . Her father is class VI passed and mother is illiterate . Both of her parents are involved in farming, and she also normally works in farming too . Her parents are having 3 acres of farm land in the village . Ms. Sherpa at present is working as carpet weaver in FLO Section (carpet) of Kewzing GICI Branch_ from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm. After producing each carpet she used to get Rs. 1080/- as wage per carpet. Apart from this , she also weaves carpet privately in her house particularly during 6.30am to 8.30 am and 4.30 pm to 5.00 pm on weekdays and usually spend more hours for weaving carpet on Sunday and State holidays. For weaving carpet privately she purchases woolen yarn from Kalimpong @ Rs. 230/- per kg. She generally weaves 3ft by 6ft sized carpet at home and sells the same privately @ Rs. 3,700/- per carpet .

She contributes 50% of her earning in the family and 40% usually keeps for self expenses , and rest she used to keep in her savings bank account which has been jointly with her parents . According to her the woman should be given equal share of the family property. And in her case she would not get any share due to having brothers. Because , in her society the family property goes to son only . She has emphasized that the women should be involved in gainful occupation . She has also stressed the necessity of woman's education in present day society. She feels that in family's decision-making process and other family affairs woman is required to be consulted and deserves that due importance should be given to women equally with male counterpart. According to her that the final decision in

choosing life partner should be taken by the woman herself. She has opined that the mother should have 3 to 4 children along with at least one girl child who would help mother in every context, and the gap in between the two children is to be 2 years. According to her feeling that the working women are accepted in her society. But still there has been some overall discrimination in between man and woman in the society.

Case 10

Name - Mrs. Gouri Lama
Sex - Female
Age - 50 years
Community - Bhutia
Marital Status - Married
Education - Class V passed
Occupation - Involved in Knitting and secretary of a cooperative
Religion - Buddhist



Mrs. Gouri Lama

Mrs. Lama is the secretary of 'Denzon Women Handloom Cooperative Society Limited' in Super Market of Gangtok town. She is living in Namnang area of Gangtok with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and grand-daughter. She informed that in earlier periods the education was not necessary and compulsory in Bhutia society while weaving and knitting had been traditionally must. But in the present scenario education has become necessary in Bhutia society too. Though her father was a graduate but she could not read more while left schooling after class V and later got married. Indeed, she desired to do some work in view of becoming self-sufficient as well as to help other women by engaging them in work. Therefore, she established one cooperative namely 'Denzon Women Handloom Cooperative Society Limited' where women are engaged in knitting woolen garments. Actually, though she does not have any formal training in knitting woolen garments but learnt it traditionally from her mother. She used to work in the cooperative from 10.00am to 5.00 pm.

Mrs. Lama is in favour of women's education because educated women do not depend on others as they can be involved in gainful employment as well as she can fight against all odds. She has also stressed that the women should be given equal share of the family property and should be involved in the decision-making process of the family as they have to maintain the family chores mainly. According to her a woman should marry in the age between 25 to 30 years and should have final say in choosing her life partner. She is also in favour that a family should have one girl child because girls support the parents i.e. family in all type of family's requirement. As per her opinion the gap between one to another child should be 4 to 5 years. She has preferred that a family should have one

child , because it is beneficial and the parents can give more attention to the only child . She has a feeling that in Bhutia society men and women are equal .

Case 11

Name - Mrs. Pabitra Sharma
Sex - Female
Age - 39 years
Community - Nepali
Marital Status - Married
Education - Matric (class X) passed
Occupation - Involved in tailoring and cutting
Religion - Hindu



Mrs. Pabitra Sharma

Mrs. Sharma is living in Nopgaon near Pakyong of East Sikkim . Actually she got training in cutting and tailoring for six months from Nepal where her parents were living . Thereafter, she also got such training for six days from Kalyani of West Bengal and participated in a workshop there on the theme 'cooperative' along with her 8 students . Her husband is B.E. in education and working in Dhanbad Mining College . Educationally , her father could sign only and mother was illiterate and both of them were farmer .

Mrs. Sharma is indeed having the training and expertise in cutting and tailoring and also she is expert in making fabric design on various types of clothes. In the year 2002 (April) she along with few educated women in her area together opened one women cooperative , where they teach knitting of wools , cutting and tailoring , toys making, fabric painting on clothes as well as sell the produced handicraft items . Besides they also make various dresses according to demand/orders on the basis of fixed making- price according to type of dresses mainly for women and children. Mrs. Sharma is the executive member and instructor as well of this cooperative. Actually, each student/trainee used to pay Rs. 150/- per month of which Rs.75/- is taken by Mrs. Sharma and the rest Rs. 75/- used to be deposited in cooperative fund.

Mrs. Sharma feels that the educated girls' future is always bright and they have equal status with men . According to her that the women should be involved in gainful employment and should get equal share of the family property. She has single bank account and operated by her only and used to make financial transaction according to her own decisions. She has also favoured that the women should make savings of money which she does normally in the bank . Besides, she used to spend earnings for her family maintenance too. She has stressed that women should be consulted in family's affairs and due importance to women should be given

in family's decision-making process equally with men . According to her the age of marriage for girls should be not below 25 years and women should have final say in choosing life partner . She also opined that a family should have not more than 2 children and the gap between one to another child must be 4 to 5 years. She has the opinion that a family should have one girl child as the girls are much cooperative, helpful and supportive to parents . Mrs. Sharma feels that till today in Nepali society there is discrimination between men and women and emphasized that a man always gets more favour from family as compared to woman .

Case 12

Name	- Ms. Bimala Rai
Sex	- Female
Age	- 28 years
Community	- Nepali
Marital Status	- Unmarried
Education	- Class VIII passed
Occupation	- Involved in woolen garments producing / business
Religion	- Hindu



Ms. Bimala Rai

Ms. Rai is living in Ravongla Bazar of South Sikkim with her younger sister and brothers . She is gainfully involved in knitting and selling of woolen garments . For doing such handicraft business she has one shop in a rented house on a monthly rent of Rs. 1500/- in the Ravongla Bazar . Ms. Rai started this shop since April, 1996 and the name of her shop is 'Nawa Knitting Center' . Even her parents encouraged she left schooling after she failed in class IX.

Educationally, her father can sign only and is a farmer . Her mother is illiterate and housewife . Indeed, Mrs. Rai took training in knitting of woolen garments on machine from 'Nehru Yuvak Kendra' at Namchi . But for producing hand knitted woolen garments she got the 'know how' from her mother traditionally and do not have any formal training in this regard. After completion of training she took an amount of Rs. 42,000/- as loan from Handicraft and Handloom Industry, Jorethang for the term of repayment within 5 years and with minimum monthly installment of Rs. 1000/- . In her shop along with woolen garments she also sells cosmetics, napkins, ornaments etc. She normally purchases wools from Siliguri in West Bengal @ Rs. 200/- to Rs. 400/- per kg. She used to sell both machine knitted as well as hand knitted various woolen garments including gloves, caps etc. The rates of various woolen garments according to size and machine /

handmade as well as quality of the wool and thickness , is cited below :-

Type of garment	Size	Machine/hand made	Price in Rs.
Sweater	Big	Machine made	250 to 280
		Hand made	400
	Medium	Machine made	140 to 150
		Hand made	200 to 250
	Small	Machine made	130 to 140
		Hand made	200 to 240
Baby set including caps and gloves		Machine made	200
		Hand made	250 to 250
Cap	Big	Machine made	50
		Hand made	60 to 70
	Small	Machine made	20
		Hand made	30 to 35
Glove	Big/standard	Machine made	30 to 35
		Hand made	50
	Small	Machine made	20

Actually, Ms. Rai's younger sister helps her to produce hand knitted and machine knitted woolen garments and whatever earning she used to have after selling the produced garments , both of them share that earnings equally .

Ms. Rai feels that the education for girls is must. According to her the women should be engaged in gainful employment for self reliance and confidence and should get equal share of the family property. Though in her case she is sure that the family property would be shared by brothers as the sharing of family property has been only by male section in the society. She has a single bank account and usually operated by herself only and makes financial transaction according to her own decisions. She has also stressed that the women should make savings of money which she does normally in the bank . Besides, she spends her earnings for family maintenance too. She also has emphasized that women should be consulted in family's affairs and due importance to women should be given in family's decision-making process equally with men . According to her the age of marriage for girls should be in between 28 years to 30 years and women should have final say in choosing life partner . She has opined that a family should have not more than 2 children and the family size maximum 4 to 5 . And the gap between one to another child must be 4 to 5 years. She has the opinion that a family should have one girl child as the girls are much cooperative, helpful and supportive to parents . Ms. Rai feels that till today in Nepali society there is discrimination between men and women and emphasized that a man always gets some more facilities from family as compared to woman .

Findings

The case studies discussed in this chapter reveals that their gainful involvement in handicraft mainly carpet, woolen , handloom , tailoring and stitching, fabric paintings , toys making etc. items production and/or selling in turn contributed positively to strengthen women's position in the society with self reliance as well as to supplement the family apart from performing household chores and other works including agriculture for the family .

It is observed from the preceding cases that unmarried women are now living separately alone and independently in distant place from their parents for their gainful involvement in handicraft production.

It is also found from the presentation made in the case studies that involvement of woman in handicraft production and selling has been gainful and that helped them to look after her family too even after husband's death, separation from husband due to 2nd marriage of husband/divorce and also living separately due to husband's employment in long distant place , husband's reluctance to maintain family due to his acute addiction and consumption of alcohol and resultant entire expenditure of his earning , etc. Such gainful involvement has no doubt helped women to become empowered in family maintenance.

All the cases favoured women's education , having aspiration to get more education if get scope though being low educated and could not continue due to parent's death, poverty , neglect from parents' end etc. and aspires higher education for children. They stressed that women should be gainfully employed to supplement the family as well as to be a self-reliant and not remain idle. Emphasized that women should be given the share of family property equally with men while in reality the women used to get gift from parents at the time of their marriage and in their cases they did not get any share of family property. According to them , women should be given equal and due importance in the family decision-making , women should take part in family's decision-making process both financial and family affairs like their counterpart in the society, women should have final say in choosing their life partner for marriage , the age of marriage for women should not be below 20 years of age while should be between 21-30 years , a family should have one girl child to make the family a complete form and because girls are good friends to parents and help them always, and a mother should have maximum two child and the gap in between should be 3 - 6 years , having interest in politics and feels that women should join politics .

All the cases of women earn money substantially from handicraft productions and or selling , handicraft business which they utilize for family maintenance , self-expenses and also for savings . The also produce handicraft items for own family use and thus supplement the family income . They are having saving bank account either singly or jointly with parent and operate transaction by themselves and make savings in the saving bank account too, favoured that

the women should make savings of money . They usually purchase according to their own decision i.e. used to make financial transaction according to their own decisions.

The cases are observed as self-reliant in collecting and purchasing raw materials from different markets for handicrafts production , dealing with the customers, collecting orders and selling too. They participate in various Handicraft Exhibitions organized in other states including different places within Sikkim .

Though men and women are more or less equal in the Sikkimese society .as reported earlier, even then according to feeling of the cases presented in this chapter a subtle discrimination like, the men are still getting more facilities and advantages than that of women in the society, while girl child do the household chores the boys are allowed to play , the male child is much preferred than that of girls . All they agreed that the working women are accepted in their society .

CHAPTER IX

MAJOR FINDINGS , CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Major findings

Concluding Remarks

Recommendations

CHAPTER IX

MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The anthropological studies on the participation of women in handicraft production and selling of the ^{handi}craft products are very limited, particularly in the state of Sikkim. The basic objective of the present study is to explore, examine and analyse the role and status of ^{handi}craft producing and ^{handi}craft selling women as well as the women entrepreneurs of Sikkim with particular reference to their problems and prospects of empowerment for development and change. In the foregoing chapters I have presented the empirical facts and figures of this study. In this section I shall present the major findings of the entire study as well as the conclusions drawn from them. Finally, some recommendations shall be made on the basis of the empirical study.

Indeed, this study carried out mainly through field studies and use of government records, books, journals and other publications to make an empirical analysis of the role and status of women involved in handicraft production and selling.

The handicraft industry and gainful involvement of women in it obviously has a positive contribution to enhance the position vis-à-vis bring a change in role and status of women in present day Sikkimese society. A summary of the main findings of the study has been discussed in this chapter.

I

Major findings

Indeed, the role i.e. involvement of women in handicraft productions varies from one to another. Many of the Bhutia and the Lepcha as well as the Nepalese women are engaged in traditional handicrafts production of Sikkim. Carpet weaving is a symbol of cultural expression and very important export oriented handicraft industry of Sikkim. Though it is a traditional ^{handi}craft, yet very few families follow it as a part of family tradition. But even in present day the carpet weaving is dominated by women. Handloom weaving is another important ^{handi}craft and women in Sikkim play a predominant role in handloom weaving. Wood carving is one of the most important handicrafts of Sikkim in which generally women do not take part in such wood carving, as it is very difficult to use and handle the heavy implements for the same. Women also do not take part in making wooden mask of various types

which has special socio-religious significance being used during religious dances by Lamas. The mask is normally prepared by men. Women do not do cane and bamboo work, while only men used to do bamboo work. Besides, there is paintwork known as 'Thangka Painting', which depicts different incarnations of Buddha. Traditionally, only the Bhutias and Lepchas were allowed to make 'Thangka' painting. Men mainly make 'Thangka' paintings, and women generally do not do such paintings.

On the whole, women are involved in producing marvelous pieces of exquisite quality and craftsmanship. The Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese women are predominantly involved in carpet weaving, handloom weaving, knitting of various woolen items, weaving and stitching of clothes for pillow cover, cushion cover, Lepcha bag items, traditional dress items for Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese, embroidery work, making of different kind of toys, traditional 'Jhalor' (used in the pillars of monasteries and also in houses) etc. Therefore, in handicraft industry the role played by women has no doubt been very crucial. Traditional handicrafts in Sikkim were mainly didactic and for religious purpose and not commercialized. But now craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized among both men and women, and so is the handicraft. When the earlier handicrafts had only cultural and religious significance, the present day handicrafts are also often taken for decorative purposes too.

The people have now the opportunity to get them employed in the training institutes (GICI headquarter in Gangtok and in its 20 training centers all over Sikkim) under Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom. They also have the opportunity to work in various Cooperative Societies including exclusive women cooperatives located in different parts of the state those are dealing with the making of handicrafts as well as selling of the produced handicrafts. They can do business independently on handicrafts. For commercialization of the handicraft the Government Institute of Cottage Industry (GICI) at zero point of Gangtok (previously known as *Palsuing Tendung Institute* during Chogyals' reign and only the lamas were entitled to go through various handicrafts training) and its different Training Centers have contributed significantly in popularization and commercialization of handicraft products apart from different cooperatives and business enterprises. A detailed discussions on the GICI including economy of handicrafts and role of Cooperatives have already been presented in Chapters IV and V.

In fact, there are number of Welfare Societies and Cooperatives Societies (including Cooperatives run exclusively by women) located in different parts of the state. For instances - *Tribal Women's Weaver and Handicraft Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Nambu of West Sikkim; *Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.*, at Nam Nam of Gangtok, East Sikkim; *Women Cutting and Tailoring Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Namchi of South

Sikkim ; *Nayuma Women Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Tadong, Gangtok of East Sikkim ; *Mahila Broom Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Namthang of South Sikkim ; *Denzong Women Handloom Cooperative Society Ltd.* at Gangtok of East Sikkim ; *Carpet (Den) Weaving Training Centre* under Swarna Jayanti Saharey Rozgar Yojana at Ranipool of East Sikkim ; *Srishti Samity* at Sarmasa-Jalipool under Ranipool of East Sikkim ; *Educated Unemployed Women's Welfare Cooperatives Society Limited* at Nop Gao under Pakyoung of East Sikkim ; etc. Besides, there are number of Cooperative Societies which are involved in carpet weaving. Apart from these, there are number of private business enterprises dealing exclusively with carpet, woolen and other handicraft items etc. where women have the opportunity to work there. All these have access to exhibitions, retail outlets as sells emporium/center , trade fairs , tourism and other fairs , thorough which the handicraft items are sold. Besides , the handicraft product items are also sold/marketed directly in urban and rural markets by private producer vis-à-vis entrepreneurs themselves .

Human resource is by and large managed by GICI , cooperatives, private entrepreneurs etc. who also employ handicraft workers. Besides, number of women are also self employed in terms of doing handicraft production on wage basis only . Raw materials like wool are usually brought from Ludhiana, while wood and cotton are either procured locally or brought from the neighbouring state of West Bengal. The supply of finished products is also done through the Sikkim State Trading Corporation .

Until its merger with India, Sikkim had remained, administratively for many years in relative isolation and socio-political structure centered around an hierarchy of lamas and monasteries and the temporal ruler known as '*Chogyal*' . The kingdom with its system of feudal aristocratic bureaucracy was formed by the immigrant Bhutias in co-operation with the local Lepcha Chiefs. And till its merger with the Indian Union, Sikkim remained mostly in relative isolation and outside the influence of greater society. But, during the last few decades or so, Sikkim has experienced a number of major changes in the functioning of the state power. There has now been the growth of state power as the independent force subjected to the Indian Constitution. The acceptance of the principle of welfare arises from the necessity of inclusion of its people into citizenship in the society. Allocation and the distribution of the state's resources and rewards are carried out in an equally democratic way which is meant for the state's citizen. Therefore the situation what was prevailed during the pre-merger period has now been obviously changed .

Similarly, there might have been changes in the pattern of handicraft production as well as in the organization of relation and its commercialization. Indeed, the development of art and crafts in Sikkim no doubt shows a close link with the development of general economy of the region. Though the history of arts and crafts of Sikkim is as old as the history of Sikkim itself. It

did not receive much attention of the outsiders during British rule. During Sino-Indian rivalry of 1962 the crafts were virtually abandoned as the import of raw materials like wood and silk were stopped from Tibet. That was why the then government established GICI at Gangtok in 1957 as a state patronage in order to sustain and develop arts and crafts of Sikkim, which had been a landmark in the industry history of Sikkim. But despite such patronage the arts and crafts did not develop much until 1977-78. But after 1975 i.e. merging of Sikkim with the Indian Union which flooded this new state with so much capital in turn increased the purchasing power of the people. This also resulted in a rapid development of the arts and crafts of Sikkim. There has been on the one hand the arts and crafts have a traditional and religious values, and on the other the techniques in the same have been secularized considerably. On the whole this has taken a market or commercial orientation at present.

Sikkim is a multi-ethnic State. The present population of Sikkim is primarily composed of Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalese, in which the Nepalese are numerically dominant. Both Social structure of Nepalese as well as Bhutias and Lepchas is patriarchal with the norms of patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. Male equigeniture prevails among them. As for rules of inheritance, property is inherited only by sons. Sons get equal shares. Women have no right of inheritance in general. Marriage is mainly arranged by the parents. The Bhutia and Lepchas have the tradition of polyandry (one common wife shared by all brothers) and bride-price in marriage. However, the practice of polyandry has been replaced by monogamy in contemporary time. Interestingly, Bhutia women have no right to take part in the election of the *pipon* (headman) and *gimbass* (assistants to pipon) in Lachen and Lachung (the Bhutia settlement) (Singh, 1993). Constitutionally, both Bhutias and Lepchas are scheduled tribes and they are not the subject to the Hindu marriage Act of 1955, which was extended to Sikkim in 1989.

Among Nepalese, the marriages are commonly arranged and at the time of marriage a non-compulsory gift known as 'daijo' is given, which may include household goods or livestock. As Hindus, Nepalese are subject to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, which governs property relations in marriage among Sikkimese Hindu Households. Nepalese are mainly monogamous but the cases of polygyny are also there. Marriage is mainly arranged by the parents. Among the Nepali Brahmins, divorce is not practiced by custom. Though widower remarriage and sororate taking place but widow remarriage is not practiced.

In Sikkim, the women have distinct pattern of life and culture under economically marginalized and geographically isolated region. There are variations among communities in respect to women's social position. Particularly in some ethnic groups who are Buddhists or animist, their traditions are more favourable towards

women, while to others, specially among Nepalese Hindu caste communities women have well defined roles and position which are not always favourable to them. In spite of these differential traditions it is observed that women are still lagging behind the men. It is the fact that the people living in Sikkim are ethnically and culturally heterogeneous and the followers of various faiths and traditions. However, there are some similarities among them owing to environmental, situational and cultural forces. Thus the women in Sikkim have some common features as well as problems.

The women do all the household work. They have their important role in animal rearing including grazing and feeding, cleaning sheds etc. It has been their responsibility traditionally, to collect fuel wood and fodder, and fetch water for drinking and other purposes including for ritual and social functions. Women collect water mainly from 'jhoras' (springs) and other sources in vessels which they carry in a *doko* (basket) on their backs. They participate in domestic business and play a significant role in agricultural operations starting from the preparation of bed, sowing, planting and weeding, down to harvesting, storing of crops, etc. but except ploughing. Women participate in economic activities and also exercise control over domestic expenditure and enjoy a status equal to that of men in some cases. They also manage the family affairs.

Indeed, participation of women in economic activities is high in Sikkim. Women also play a major role in trading activities, which allows them to participate in decision-making far more than in most other States in India. Women take part in family management and contribute to the subsidiary income of the family by involvement in trading activities, selling vegetables and other items in the markets, working as daily wage/agricultural labourers, construction workers and even porters. Besides, they are responsible also for the collection of fire woods. From forests, apart from fodder and fuel women collect non-timber forest products like fruits and medicinal plants. Besides, feeding and watering of the poultry, collection of eggs and their marketing are some key management practices carried out by the women. They contribute to the income of the family also through their gainful employment in handicraft industry and other services in government as well as private sectors. Women cast votes in the election.

The extent of gains in human development in respect of women in Sikkim revealed that women's relative status however varied from one ethnic group to another and also by gender. Even then their social position in the State seems to be better than those of the rest in the country. At the economic, social, ritual, religious and political levels the women have equal rights with the men as claimed. Although it is secondary to that of the men. A woman is considered to be an asset in the household hence commands a bride price, but she has no rights of inheritance. It is only when a daughter remains

unmarried that parents customarily transfer some property to her according to their desire.

Traditionally there has been no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society as reported. Girls and boys are given equal status in the family and no case of female foeticide has been reported. In this background it is then somewhat surprising that women and girls on the whole continue to be under privileged in terms of education, early marriage and health. The relatively slow spread of education can be attributed to poverty, social customs, negative parental attitude, poor accessibility to school and the non-availability of women teachers. When employed but daily wages of women are normally less than those paid to men. Even then women in Sikkim enjoy many freedoms and have recorded significant gains in human development. But, like many parts of the country, they still live in an unequal world to a certain extent. In the year 1981 gender disparity in Sikkim had been higher than the national average. But in the year 1991 the gender disparity value has increased slightly, even then it has been less as compared to national average.

The fact is that in 1999 the number of women headed households in Sikkim's rural areas (143 per thousand) was higher than the national average but lower in urban areas than national average. It indicates not only the impact of migration but also the status accorded to women in the family of this State. Higher percentage of household in Sikkim is having large family size i.e. 5 members and above (56.2 per cent). Taking the present day trend of nuclear family rather than earlier joint family system, the existence of higher percentage of large family size in other way substantiates the heavy burden of huge family chores upon the women has been still continued. The greater number of the households (65.6 per cent) mainly use the firewood, crop residue and cow dung etc. as fuel. The women are mainly responsible for collection and arrangement of firewood and preparation of cooking. They also prepare fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. It reveals the important role played by women and their contribution in subsidiary family income in Sikkim. Moreover, a good percentage of rural households (31.0 per cent) depend on 'jhoras' (springs) and other sources of water. While such dependence has been only among 2.3 per cent of the households in urban areas. Traditionally the women are responsible to fetch drinking water from 'jhoras' (springs), nearby PHE taps and other sources. It also shows the another important role played by the women for the household.

There is an unfavourable sex ratio as a whole in the population of Sikkim. Though the decadal growth percentage of female population had has been increased in each decades since 1921 – 1931 onwards, but since 1921 onwards the number of females per thousand males had has been decreased every year in Sikkim. In all age groups, the percentages of female

population are comparatively less than males and this is more pronounced in each age groups from 30 years and above.

In fact, one tangible measure of women's status was their educational attainment. The female literacy rate has been significantly higher in the year 2001 (61.46%) as compared to 1971 (8.90%). So there has been rapid progress in the rate of female literacy since 1971. Moreover, the female literacy percentage has been comparatively higher than that of national average. Even then the rate of increases and percentage of literacy among females have been far short of the male level. Moreover, the literacy rate among females in rural areas has been conspicuously far short of female literacy in urban areas. Besides, in rural areas female literacy percentage has been significantly less than that of males. The rate of illiteracy has always been higher among females than that of males since 1981, though there has been the trend of decrease in the illiteracy percentage since 1981 to 2001 both among males and females.

The increase in age specific enrolment ratios since 1981 to 1991 in both 6 years- below 11 years and 11 years – 14 years age groups have been comparatively higher in which the percentages of boys have been higher than girls. But in the year 2002-03 the gross enrolment of girls has been higher as compared to boys in both the age groups. As a whole, it may be said that there has been the significant increase in the percentage of enrolment of girls in various classes from Class I to Class X in Sikkim.

There has been higher rates of drop outs both among boys and girls in Sikkim. Interestingly, such drop outs has been relatively lower among females as compared to males in Sikkim. While, this has been relatively lower among males as compared to females at national level.

There has been significant percentages of marriage in 15–19 and 10–14 years age groups in which the percentages of females are much higher than the males. Interestingly, percentages increase in married female population in 10-14 and 15-19 years age groups have been significantly higher than that of males.

It is important that though there has been the trend of decline in the percentage of both male and female agriculturists since 1981 to 2001. Even then the majority of the female main workers i.e. nearly three–fourth of the total female main workers (62.31 per cent) are in agriculture while this has been 40.84 per cent among males in 2001. It reflects the significant proportion of participation by women in agriculture. Interestingly, there has been substantial increase in the percentage of female other workers from 16.68 per cent in 1981 to 31.90 per cent in 2001. Besides, the percentage of female marginal workers has also increased substantially to 12.27 per cent in 2001 from 2.93 in 1981 as compared to male 6.65 per cent in 2001. The female work participation rate has been 38.59 per cent in 2001 against 57.58 per cent for

males. Indeed, the female work participation rate has been comparatively higher in Sikkim than the national average. The gender gap in work participation in Sikkim has been low as compared to National level .

As a whole there has been the trend of decrease in infant mortality rate since 1981 to 2002 . The child mortality rate in 0 years - 4 years has been higher in rural areas of Sikkim , even then it is less than of national level. The number of female per thousand males at birth has decreased since 1981 to 1991 . There has been decrease in death rate both among males and females in both rural and urban areas since 1981 to 1997 . The higher percentage of women and children in Sikkim are suffering from anaemia and percentages have been comparatively higher irrespective of community and levels of education. The percentage of 'no attendance' received by mothers at child birth has been much higher at national level than in Sikkim. The percentage of women attended by Government appointed doctor at child birth has been much higher in urban areas of Sikkim than rural areas, and that too comparatively higher than at national level. Similar trend is discernible in case of 'Government appointed nurse/mid-wife' and 'nurse/mid-wife' respectively. There has been the inequality in terms of adoption of family planning in between male and female in Sikkim . The huge number of cases of family planning were adopted by females as compared to males since 1992-1993 to 1995-1996 .

In Sikkim, there is no hard and fast dowry practice. Dowry is maintained as a token only without cash or kind even among the Nepalese Hindus. While among the Bhutias and Lepchas the token bride-price is prevalent. Indeed, the Sikkimese women never experience the incidences of torture, dowry related murder, detection of female fetus and consequent abortion etc. And traditionally there has been no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society. While the girls and boys are given equal status in the family and no cases of female foeticide and dowry death have been reported. All these may be the reason behind the lack of incidences of crime against women in Sikkim .

There has been considerable growth of employment for women in Sikkim during 1999 to 2000 and the percentage has been comparatively higher than at national level . Even then there has also been the higher percentage of incidences of unemployment among females as compared to males .

In case of the policies and measures taken for the upliftment of women in Sikkim, the gender concerns have been addressed by the state through various women specific welfare and empowerment programmes. Thirty percent reservation for women in Panchayats has been fully implemented. Both the Central and State Government have introduced number of programmes, for instance, Mahila Samridhhi Yojana, Swarna Jayanti Rozgar Yojana, Balika Samridhhi Yojana, and Smal Family Scheme, Widow Remarriage Scheme, Kishori Shakti Yojana , Swayamsidha (Self Help Groups), Training for Women,

Pension to Widows of Ex-servicemen, Women's Hostel, Crèches for Working Women's Children, Honorarium to Anganwadi Workers/Helpers etc. to promote both women's welfare as well as their empowerment. The Department of Women and Child Development imparted training of women to women for their upliftment and income generating activities like knitting, cutting, tailoring and weaving etc. Government Institute of Cottage Industry also playing pivotal role to impart training to women in carpet weaving, blanket weaving, and for preparation of various dress materials including making of cushion covers, bags, toys, hand-made papers etc. Besides these, various cooperatives are also providing such training to women. Department of Welfare not only provides financial grants to organize various training programmes for women, but also provides financial aid to the entrepreneurs involved in handicraft production, as well as to form cooperatives. Sikkim State Commission for women has started functioning from November 2002. The Commission is a powerful advocate for women's rights created with the purpose of safe guarding the interest of women all over the State. Educational facilities for girls like establishment of separate primary and junior high schools for girls, expansion of facilities for higher secondary education, exclusive girls' secondary schools at Gangtok, Deorali, Namchi and Gyalshing and free education in government schools in terms of books, uniform and mid-day meal up to the age of 5 years are some of the most notable programmes for women in Sikkim.

The status of women is indeed governed by cultural values of a society. In the case of Indian women, status measures through her personal rights, property rights, her duties, abilities and disabilities vis-à-vis her relation with family and society. In the context of specific societal variables, women's status in India is bound with social, political, cultural and economic factors that influence all aspect of their lives. There are strong cultural influences on fertility, preference for sons, education of the girl child, age at marriage, dowry, widowhood, decision-making, reproductive capability, child bearing practices, nutritional status, access to health care and the degree of access to the outside world. All these factors have profound implications on the status of women in India.

The role and status of women in this study has been considered from the points of view of familial status and role i.e. women as a mother, housewife and daughter in relation to empowerment issues in terms of women's rights to own resources, resource control, education, their participation in gainful employment for self earning as well as to supplement the family, access to credit and savings, active involvement in decision-making process of both household and economic affairs, participation in political affairs which includes political awareness, etc.

Indeed, this present study was conducted among 116 women (Bhutia 48 Lepcha 21 and Nepalese – 47) involved in handicraft production and or selling. Taking the background of the informants, 68.1 per cent are in 16-35 years and rest are in above 35 years age groups. Indeed, half of the total informants are unmarried and rest are either married or widow/divorcee.

In fact, 66.2 per cent are having education either at primary or middle school level and 21.6 per cent have passed either school final or higher secondary, followed by 4.4 per cent graduates and above. This has been pertinent both among Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities. All (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. In case of knitting woolen items, got the training on it both from their mothers/grand mothers for hand knitting woolen items traditionally as well as training for knitting woolen items by modern machine from concern organization.

Educational level of the informants i.e. artisan women 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, there has been progress in education among the informants' generation taking the educational background of their mothers in comparison. Therefore, it may 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.

It is the fact that all of the informants are gainfully involved in varieties of handicraft productions and/or selling. Nature of their daily work indicates that almost all of them are involved in household work apart from handicraft work either officially and or privately. Some of them are also involved in agriculture too along with handicraft and household work. It substantiates the multifarious roles normally played by the women in terms of their involvement in various activities for the family apart from their traditional role as mother, wife, sister and daughter and its income.

In fact, the economic participations and involvement in handicrafts production, selling, training have been mainly among the women informants' generation taking into consideration the occupational background of the informants' families vis-à-vis parents.

Indeed, 60.3 per cent are being the member of nuclear family followed by joint family (30.2 per cent). Community-wise, 40.6 per cent among Bhutia-Lepchas are being the member of joint family as compared to Nepalese (14.9 per cent). As a whole, 45.7 per cent belong to large sized family i.e. 6 members and above, and 19.8 per cent belong to families having members of 5. So, it may be said that a higher percentage of informants' families are being large-sized family. Moreover, 61.2 per cent of the informants' families are

having 3 and above female members. Thus, it may be said that the women in handicraft industry are mainly from those families having large size and which have more number of females. Actually, 15.9 per cent among Bhutia-Lepchas are living independently, and 7.3 per cent living separately due to either husbands' service in other places or for performing the handicraft production in the places distant from their native villages.

Indeed, 59.5 per cent are having land and rest 40.5 per cent are landless. All of the informants earn from handicrafts production either as service, selling, business, trainee etc. It also substantiates that the handicraft vis-à-vis cottage industry has opened the avenues for earning which in turn decrease the unemployment situation and induce economic development in the society. It is notable to be mentioned here that above all the handicraft industry has a positive impact to bring about the changes in the role and status of women. In other words, it might have played an important contributing role towards strengthening the position of women towards progress which in turn ultimately brought about empowerment to a extent among the women in the state.

In fact, anthropologists' interest in the study of empowerment grows with the realization that the process of empowerment originates first in the human mind reflecting changes in attitude, which afterwards bring in further changes in the life style and behaviour pattern. The changing attitudes in this regard undoubtedly provides an indicator of the changing position of women in the purview of role and status. It may also be said that each status position is expressed in terms of role, which in turn, indicates a set of expectations and obligations.

It may be the fact that the evaluation of the status of women involved in handicraft production and or selling no doubt has been a difficult task. Because, it is very important that status is neither an enumerable parameter, nor it can be evaluated by any quantifiable measure. Even then, the status of any one may be estimated by studying her achievements, attitude, relationship and other behaviour in the context of family vis-à-vis society. With a view to get an overall comprehension about the role and status in the context of empowerment issues among the women under the study, an attitude survey on the women involved in handicraft productions and or selling has been made.

Almost all informants not only affirmed the necessity of education for women but also have shown their awareness of the necessity and importance of education for women's development. They asserted the necessity of education for women because education contribute towards their development and can bring higher status and self-reliance in the society. Indeed, 58.6 per cent of informants have reported their aspiration and interest to get more education. At the same time 41.4 per cent of them have reported about their lack of interest due to old age, getting no time, family problems and also

due to having very low educational level . Such aspiration of women towards higher education in turn obviously motivate their children for continuity of education towards higher level . On the whole it may be said that the majority have aspired higher level of education for their boys and girls together.

In fact, 70.7 per cent of the parents of the informants had influenced the informants' schooling i.e. education either positively or negatively. But at the same time the rest 29.3 per cent reported that their parents did not influence any way in this regard. As reported, parents used to motivate for continuing education towards higher level , but the informants completed the educational level mainly due to - as per capability and interest - lack of interest and failure in class examination in turn dropped herself from schooling , self-illness , to help mother in doing huge household chores , to look after younger brothers etc.

The parents discouraged towards informants' continuity of schooling for education due to not having school either in the village and or in very nearby villages ; due to poverty as they were not in a position to afford financially ; due to illiteracy of the parents they did not ever encourage for continuing education ; parents' perception that that education for girls would not yield any benefit to them while it would be wastage and resultantly forced daughter not to attend school ; always against daughters' education and never encouraged for continuity of girls' education towards higher level; being eldest of six children of parents did not get any scope for education while had to be busy in performing huge household chores as well as to look after younger brothers and sisters ; had to be dropped from schooling due to getting marriage in early age by informant . Another aspect that though the parents initially got their girl child admitted in school located either in the village or in nearby village , but after few years that girl child had been dropped from schooling by them due to the aforesaid reasons.

Women's participation in gainful employment and their aspiration towards such employment have been very important with a view to get them empowered in terms of financial self reliance and access to economy of the society. All informants have opined that the women's participation in gainful job has been undoubtedly necessary in view that women should not remain idle and should participate in gainful job for getting them economically self-dependent. Indeed, majority of the informants (75.9 per cent) have the aspiration to get better gainful job, so that they can get handsome income for them. Their aspiration mainly concentrated to get wider reputation and as well known handicraft producers ; aspiration to do business on their own and to become successful business women in handicraft market ; opening of own handicraft showroom ; opening of carpet weaving center ; government job in GICI and other jobs in government sector too ; any gainful job for earning. Thereby, it may be said that they are very keen and having the motivation to earn on their own

through gainful job . Indeed, their aspiration is mainly centered around the handicraft industry . Majority of the informants (87.9 per cent) opined that their working environment is good .

In fact, 57.7 per cent of informants feel tension either doing both the work in job place and houses or feel tension in work place or household work . While 42.2 per cent of them reported that they feel comfortable/no problem/no tension in doing both the work in job place and houses. It substantiates to a extent that the gainfully employed women used to face tension/problem in performing the work both in work place and houses together as the women have to perform the huge household chores apart from duties in work place .

In case of sharing of family property by inheritance , majority (90.5 per cent) opined that the women should get share of family property equally with men by inheritance. Taking the actual cases of equal sharing of family property by the informants, it is reported that the married informants received only the gifts and assets including livestock, utensils , ornaments etc. during marriage from their parents and which were taken by them in husbands' houses after marriage . And those who are yet to be married they also reported that they would get only the gifts and assets during their marriage. In cases of those parents who are having the daughter only , the unmarried daughter may get the share of family property depending on the desire of parents and if they look after their parents even after marriage .

In fact , 82.8 per cent contribute portion of their income to their family. It attributes to the fact that the women make financial contribution to their family, and thus help their husbands/parents and kin of their families . At the same time, 74.1 per cent normally keep portion of their income for their personal expenses. On the contrary, 20.7 per cent normally do not keep any amount for such purposes, while used to give their entire earnings to the parents/husbands/elder sister/unmarried son or keep it in family fund for incurring family expenditure.

Taking the possession of Bank Account by women, it is notable that 55.2 per cent have their own Bank Account . Among those having Bank Account, 60.9 per cent have single account i.e. on their name , 37.5 per cent are having joint account either with husband or parent and only 1.6 per cent have both the single and joint account . On the whole, 63.8 per cent of the total used to make savings from their income either in Bank , LIC, GPF or home. It substantiates that the women are having the vital access to bank account, credit and savings .

In fact, 68.1 per cent of the informants opined that a family should have 1 to 2 number of children. Besides, a considerable percentage of them preferred to have more than 2 children in family. The half of the informants (50.0 per

cent) opined that the convenient size of the family has been 3 to 4 members in a family. Besides, 7.7 per cent have viewed it in between 4 to 5. Moreover, 38.0 per cent opined that the convenient size of a family is 5 and above.

Taking the access and participation of women in decision-making of the family, 43.1 per cent of them reported that they used to purchase on their own decision. Besides, 6.0 per cent of them reported that they either sometimes consult with husband in such purchasing or on the basis of mutual understanding with husband or own decision as well as consultation with husband both. On the whole, it may be said that there has been good percentage of women who used to incur expenditure for purchasing on their own decision. This might have been possible as they are gainfully employed. This was not so in the past in general with some exception like women being the head of the family due to death of husband/ divorce/separated etc.

While more than half of the informants (50.9 per cent) are guided by husbands/parents/mother-in-law/father-in-law. This is visible more in case of among the Bhutia-Lepchas (53.7 per cent) as compared to Nepalese (46.8 per cent). It indicates that even after gainfully employed and earning a substantial percentage of the women are also guided by their parents/husbands/ father-in-law/ brothers etc.

The majority (96.6 per cent) opined favourably that women should be consulted in family's financial matters. It attributes that the women are more aware and confident about their importance in the family's financial decision making process. While a nominal 3.4 per cent did not favour in this regard. It articulates to the fact that there has been also women who are guided by their traditional experience and feeling that the woman does not have any role in the financial decision making process of the family.

In case of actual happenings of such consultation, it is observed that the informants experienced no consultation done with the women in family's financial matter/decision; in absolute major cases such consultation with woman done by male member of the family; the decision in family's financial matter taken by both the man and woman together; decision in family's financial matter taken by woman herself being head of the family after the death of husband/divorce/separated from husband/ living separately due to husband's job in other places.

Nearly cent per cent have favoured that the women should be consulted in cases of children's education, marriage and other family matters. Though a nominal 2.6 per cent also opined that they do not favour in this regard. Taking the actual cases of consultation with women in the informants' families, such consultation among 55.2 per cent had been done in cases of children's education, marriage and other family matters.

On the contrary; 33.6 per cent reported that in no such cases the consultation with women was taken place in their families. Interestingly, almost all agreed and favoured that the women should be given due importance equally with men in the family's decision making process). It articulates to the fact that they are much aware about their importance and position in the society.

It is the fact that the parents usually do not desire to have girl child taking the instances in other parts of the country. In this context , 66.4 per cent opined instantly 'yes' i.e. desired that a family should have at least one girl child and 24.1 per cent desired both boy and girl child together. Interestingly , 9.5 per cent opined 'no' i.e. that they do not favour that a family should have at least a girl child .

Those who are in favour of at least one girl child in a family , all of them stressed that there is no difference in between the girls and boys. Besides, they also emphasized that the girls are good friend to parents and help them always but the boys are not like in this regard.

Marriage is an important social institution which leads to the formation of a universal primary group. There are considerable cases of early age marriage either due to love marriage or through elopement as well as may be due to parent's decision for this or that reason in Sikkim. In this context, majority (85.3 per cent) opined that the minimum age for marriage of a woman should be 20 years and above, and their such opinion range from 20 years to above 30 years . It substantiates that majority of them are quite aware and conscious about the suitable age for marriage of woman and do not favour early age marriage . Their such attitude no doubt may influence positively in this regard. Though 14.7 per cent of them also opined that the minimum age for woman's marriage have been below 20 years and that range in between 16 years to 19 years.

It is the fact that traditionally in marriage among the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities the prospective bride i.e. woman did not have any final say in choosing her life partner. Majority (87.1 per cent) in this context opined and favoured that the women should have final say i.e. take final decision in choosing their life mate . At the same time , 18.3 per cent on the contrary opined that they do not favour that women should have such final say in choosing their life partner . It indicates that there has also been some women who are still guided by the traditional ways. In case of marriage payments , nearly cent per cent of informants (97.4 per cent) opined that any sort of marriage payment i.e. bride price or dowry they do not feel necessary during marriage.

The political institution play a very important role in the organization and regulation of the human society . In Sikkim, traditionally the headman-ship of the village were mainly preserved for male. The women did have no right to

take part in the election of headman. But after 1975 with the abolition of such headman and emergence of democratic Panchayat system the situation has been changed in Sikkim. Though initially in Panchayat election the male domination was persisted but gradually in course of time the participation of women in Panchayat election has been increased. And now there is substantial representation of women in the Panchayat in Sikkim. Moreover, the women aged 18 years and above can cast their votes in Panchayat, Assembly and Parliament elections. Regarding joining to politics by women, 55.2 per cent opined that the women should join to politics. On the contrary, 32.8 per cent opined that they do not favour that women should join to politics due to this or that reasons.

Interest of women in politics has been crucial which ultimately affects the active or otherwise participation in the politics of the society. In this context, 44.8 per cent have affirmed that they have interest in politics. Taking the extent of their participation in political activities, 25.0 per cent are involved in political activities. In case of those who are involved in political activities, they used to manage the time for doing so particularly after finishing the household chores of the day apart from managing the time from work place. Among them, 4 (3 Bhutia-Lepcha and 1 Nepalese) are the member of a Political Party namely Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) including one who is also the member of Lepcha Association. At the same time few of them also reported that either their sister or mother and other women relatives are the active member of SDF Political Party in Sikkim.

It is important that 52.6 per cent of the informants have confirmed that they used to face health problems due to performing both the household work and the work in their job place regularly. In fact, they have been suffering health problems like mainly weakness and anemia, headache and dizziness, problem in eye vis-à-vis vision, breathing trouble vis-à-vis asthma, stomach pain and digestive disorder, etc. While 47.4 per cent reported that they do not face any health problems in doing such dual job regularly.

Indeed, the gap period between the birth of one to another child is also the another aspect of health for women which has also been important for keeping and maintaining good health for both the woman and child. In this context, 68.1 per cent opined that such gap is required to be 3 years and above. While 19.0 per cent preferred the gap of 1-2 years in between the birth of one child to another.

On the whole, taking the context of status of women in present day Sikkimese society, the informants have affirmed the existence of discrimination between men and women like as follows.

In major cases the parents have the feeling that the girl child would have to leave their parents after marriage. While the boys would normally remain always

with them along with continue and maintain the tradition and generation of their parental families. Thereby the parents used to behave accordingly which would certainly have the mark of discrimination in between daughters and sons ;

Traditionally men vis-à-vis sons of the families used to get the equal share of the family property as per rules of inheritance that persist in the Sikkimese society . While the women vis-à-vis daughter normally do not have the property right and normally get gifts and assets only during marriage which are used to be given by their parents/brothers as per their desire and capability ;

Consumption of liquor by men is allowed and acceptable in the society , but if a woman consumes it then the society does not accept or allow it. Free mixing in between boys and girls has been common and acceptable in their society . Thereby , it is the common cases that the boys and girls used to be fallen in love affairs with each other and which in turn yield into the pre-marital sex and pregnancy among the girls. In such cases the concern boys may marry or reject the girl for marrying . Under such denial to marry, the girl has to face lot of difficulties including social humiliation in the society while the boys normally do not face any difficulty ;

Whenever any unmarried girl used to become pregnant due to premarital sex and the boy/man responsible also for such pregnancy do not marry her , then it used to be very difficult to get that girl married. On such a case the girl bound to marry a very poor boy/man in the society . On the whole it used to create lot of social difficulties for arranging marriage for that girl. While the boys/man even being also equally responsible for such happening do not face any difficulty can marry any girl/woman ;

Women/girls are restricted to visit/move any place which has not been so in cases of boys/men ; If a woman marry more than one (due to husband's death or being rejected by the husband/divorce etc.) which is not socially acceptable as well as create social uttering/slander against that woman in the Nepalese society . But this is not so while man can marry easily and that too is socially acceptable ;

Spending of night alone by girl/woman in a house other than parents' house or without taking prior permission from parents even staying in relatives'/friend's houses at night, or returning home late night ultimately create lot of social uttering/slander/scolding for that girl/woman in the society . This does not happen in case of boys/men ;

There is a trend in the society among the parents that if the income of daughter is accepted and utilized by them , then they may not get the berth in heaven after death ;

More education including higher education is required for women and are to be given enough scope for education to women. If they are educated then they can become equal to men. But in reality the men are getting more scope in education than that of women ;

Even today every parents are greatly desired to have at least one son for the inheritance of the family property , family tradition and family name in the society . In both the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese society the family property is normally inherited by male child only while the female child does not have any right to family property ;

Women are always restricted to move on their own in both the parents' houses and also even after marriage in father-in-laws' houses, though there is free mixing in between male and female in the society . Parents remain more in anxiety for their girl child than boy child ;

Practically some discriminations in between men and women still persist in the present day Sikkimese society in which the men are always favoured than women . If a woman left her husband and marry another man then she used to be calumniated by the society while this is not so in case done by man ;

Till now the girl child in reality is neglected than the boy child . In the society the men are given the food to eat first and thereafter the women ;

The men and women in the present day society are equal . That is why the women are also required to be given the opportunity for training and painting in Thangka painting , which is prohibited for women ;

During Pujas and religious rituals the men used to get more preference and importance than the women. Which should not be like that and the women is also required to be treated equally as said by the informants ;

In case of selection of life mate the men used to get more preference and advantage even first preference than that of women ; For any ill happenings in the family the women are used to be given more blame and treated responsible than that of men. As a whole, the rituals relating to birth and marriage reflect a son preference ;

In Bhutia society when parents distribute yaks among the children the boys normally get more while girls get very few ;

In Bhutia and Lepcha society the parents used to prefer mainly boys for making them 'Lama' ;

II

Concluding Remarks

In summing up the whole discussion in this study, it may be said that under the situation of underdeveloped economy in terms of agriculture at subsistence level with declining per capita land due to increase in population day by day and lack of industrial development, the household i.e. cottage industry like handicrafts and handloom has been playing important role and has become an integral part of the household economy of the region. Various cooperatives apart from Government Institute of Cottage Industry have been also playing important effective role in the development of handicraft industry vis-à-vis state's economy. At present, there has been a rapid growth of Weavers' Society.

Sikkimese women have been playing the predominant role in carpet, handloom, and blanket weaving, knitting of woolen items, making of traditional jhalor, pillow and cushion covers, bags and toys, paintings of lucky signs, 'Thangka' mounting and framing on brocade, tailoring of dress materials, embroidery work etc.

The Government Institute of Cottage Industry, various Cooperatives and Welfare Societies, and private business enterprises have been playing the vital contributing role in spreading as well as imparting handicrafts training, providing opportunities for employment, its commercialization, development of handicrafts and its local market economy in turn general economy. Therefore, these have been not only playing the decisive contributing role in the development of handicraft industry vis-à-vis market economy but also playing the crucial role in the continuity of age old cultural traditions of Sikkim.

The traditional ^{handi} crafts of Sikkim in the past were for religious purposes. While at present the craftsmanship is being more and more commercialized among both men and women, and so is the craft. Now there has been change in the local arts and crafts of Sikkim in terms of tradition, modernity and its demand in the market. There was no time limit for the preparation of a particular article in the past. But today the articles are produced after a fair calculation of the cost benefit ratio and more number of products at a time for selling and commercial gains. Undoubtedly, this has taken a market or commercial orientation. This is an important change in the handicraft industry in Sikkim which has opened up much avenues for the people specially the women and thereby contributing towards socio-economic development in the society. In this context, the Government Institute of Cottage Industry, different cooperatives and private entrepreneurs are contributing significantly in commercialization of handicrafts in Sikkim.

Taking the Sikkimese women in general, there has been progress in the spheres of education, economy, employment, politics etc. Besides, there has

been number of programmes and policies for the welfare and upliftment including constitutional provisions , rights and privileges for the benefit and protection of women in Sikkim . Even then , in spite of progress of women in all spheres of development like education, employment, economy , politics, etc. the women in Sikkim to a extent lag behind the men .

It is also the fact that the participation of Sikkimese women in general particularly in household work as main activity is exclusively dominant as compared to men . Indeed, the women are mainly responsible for collection , arrangement and preparation of cooking fuel, to fetch drinking water from sources , caring and feeding including management of livestock and tendering poultry along with its marketing to a great extent. Besides, there is significant proportion of participation by Sikkimese women in agriculture . Moreover , they have the domination in cottage industry. Thereby they used to make their contribution in subsidiary family income. These substantiate the important multifarious role played by Sikkimese women for the household apart from other household chores including looking after the children and other members of the family as well as other works in addition to their traditional role as mother, wife, sister and daughter .

Taking the back ground of Sikkimese women under the study , all are having either 2 years Diploma in Handicraft from GICI, or 6 months Diploma/training in Handicraft from different Cooperatives. While , in the past , the training on handicraft making had been usually from generation to generation traditionally in the family . 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. On the whole, 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 . Besides, 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.

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

Taking the status i.e. position of Sikkimese women in general, it may be said that in Sikkim, there is no hard and fast dowry while maintained as a token only without cash and kind even among Hindu Nepalese. While among the Bhutias and Lepchas the token bride-price is prevalent. In fact, no cases of female foeticide, torture on women for dowry and dowry death have been reported in Sikkim. All these may be the reason behind the lack of incidences of crime against Sikkimese women in the state. And no women under the study has so far faced such incidences in the society.

In fact, all of the women under the study have the opinion and stressed that the women's participation in gainful job, has been undoubtedly necessary. Majority of them reported that they aspire always to get better gainful job. In case of sharing of family property by inheritance, majority emphasized that the women should get equal share of family property with men by inheritance. They emphasized that women should be consulted in family's financial matter and be consulted in cases of children's education, marriage and other family matters as well as due importance equally with men in the family's decision making process. Almost all of them not only affirmed the necessity of education for women but also have shown their awareness of the necessity and importance of education for women's development. They have the aspiration of getting higher education including their children. Most of them favoured that the women should have final say i.e. take final decision in choosing their life mate. Almost all have the opinion that any type of marriage payments like dowry and bride price are not necessary during marriage. Interestingly, more than half of the total women under the study opined that the women should join to politics. Even from being large sized families, half of the total women under the study preferred small family with a convenient size of 3 to 4 members in a family. Taking the family in major cases they have the opinion that a family should have 1 to 2 number of children.

As a whole, majority of Sikkimese women under the study contribute portion of their income to their family. It attributes to the fact that the women make financial contribution to their family, and thus help to sustain their families. They also normally keep portion of their income for their personal expenses even after contributing to families. More than half of the total Sikkimese women under the study are having their own Bank Account either singly on their name or jointly with husband or parent. Majority of them used to make savings from their income either in Bank, LIC, GPF or home. All these signifies that the women are having the vital access to bank account, credit and savings. A substantial number of them reported that they used to purchase on their own decision. Besides, consultation with such women in children's education marriage and other family matters including family's financial matter used to be done by the men in the family. As a whole, substantial number of

women under the study not only have affirmed that they have interest in politics, but also a good number of them are involved in political activities .

Therefore , it may be concluded that the Sikkimese women under the study not only are confidence and much aware about their importance and position in the society as well as have the ideas to decide. But also they have the better position and access to the empowering resources like education, gainful employment , capital and other resources , credit and savings, decision -makings in the family vis-à-vis society, politics etc.

It may also be said that the handicraft vis-à-vis cottage industry has opened the avenues for earning which in turn decrease the unemployment situation and induce economic development in the Sikkimese society . It is notable to be mentioned here that above all the handicraft industry might have a positive impact to bring about the changes in the role and status of women. In other words , it might have played an important contributing role towards strengthening the position of women towards progress which in turn ultimately brought about empowerment to a extent among the Sikkimese women in the state.

Taking the problems and the disparity in between men and women , it is the fact that suffering from anaemia is significantly higher among Sikkimese women as compared to men in general. More than half of the women under the study feel tension either doing both the work in job place and houses . It substantiates to a extent that the gainfully employed women used to face tension and problem in performing the work both in work place and houses together, as the women have to perform the huge household chores apart from work in job place . Besides, more than half of them confirmed that they used to face health problems e.g. weakness , anemia, headache and dizziness , asthma, stomach pain and digestive disorder, mainly due to performing huge household work as well as the work in their job place regularly.

On the whole , there is also the existence of gender disparity in Sikkim . In 1981, such disparity in Sikkim was higher than national average . The gender disparity value has increased slightly since 1981 to 1991 in Sikkim. though less as compared to national average . Though there is considerable growth of employment for women , the number of incidences of unemployment among them in general has been higher as compared to men . There are the inequality in terms of adopting family planning in between male and female as the huge number of cases adopted by females for family planning as compared to male .

This has been common in nature that while girl child do the household chores the boys are allowed to play , and the male child is much preferred than that of girls, etc.

Sikkimese women by and large have access to resources but not control over significant assets such as land. Indeed, a woman is considered to be an asset in the household and commands a bride price, but she has no rights of inheritance and do not share the family property equally with men. It is only when a daughter remains unmarried that parents customarily transfer some property to her. In actual cases of sharing family property by Sikkimese women under the study, married respondents received only the gifts and assets including livestock, utensils, ornaments etc. from parents during their marriage and which were taken by them in husbands' houses after marriage. And the unmarried respondents would get only the gifts and assets during their marriage. Interestingly, land tenure is always registered in the name of the male head of household in Sikkim, regardless of ethnicity. Panchayat land records only note the name of the male head of household. Upon the death of the male head of household, women retain usufruct rights to the family holding, and continue to live there until their death, as reported during field survey in Sikkim.

In major cases the parents had the influence either positively or negatively during the course of education of the women under the study. But at the same time among a good number of them reported that their parents did not influence them i.e. did not take care at all any way in this regard. For political activities by women under the study, they used to manage the time for doing so particularly after finishing the household chores of the day apart from managing the time from work place.

So it may also be said that though men and women are more or less equal in the Sikkimese society even then a subtle discrimination in between women and men still persists in Sikkim. Moreover, the men are still getting more facilities and advantages than that of women in the society. Therefore, it may be said that despite having better position by women in the Sikkimese society a subtle gender disparity exist too in Sikkim.

This study is a small exercise in understanding the social dynamics of Sikkimese women in the present day Sikkim. It is certainly not a complete study in the sense that only one aspect of this dynamism, namely role and status of women has been discussed and that also confined only to the women informants involved in handicraft production and or selling. In fact, a more detailed study on women in general would be necessary in future.

III

Recommendations

In fact, though there has been the trend of change among the Sikkimese craft working women by sharing the fruits of development. Even then, it is seen that the women in general lag behind than that of men in many cases.

Under such situation , a number of remedial steps are needed to be taken to improve the situation of women to a extent in Sikkim Himalayas.

- i) The development of handicraft industry in Sikkim require more training and up gradation of knowledge of entrepreneurship at par with modern trend keeping the traditional aspects in totality . Creation of interest towards more entrepreneurships, easy availability of raw materials, developed infrastructure and marketing network, and flow of credit and finance are also very necessary.
- ii) It is greatly needed to keep sharp vigil and control to monitor the actual adherence during the implementation of programmes , policies , and legislations which are designed to improve the condition of Sikkimese women in the society.
- iii) Proper health planning and adequate infrastructural health facilities with sharp supervision are very much needed to eliminate anemia and tuberculosis among Sikkimese women.
- iv) Adequate measures are required to stop early marriages among the girls including proper education to aware the parents and girls regarding adverse effects of early marriages in the society. Moreover, the necessary steps are required to be taken to motivate and encourage the women and also men towards the importance and benefits of small family .
- v) To give equal status and position to women literacy and education is essential according to needs and interests of women for enabling them to understand their rights and privileges . Motivation programmes are also to be taken for parents so that they encourage their daughters from childhood for education. There should be necessary arrangements to encourage adult literacy.
- vi) The discrimination in between girls and boys as well as women and men in education , employment , sharing of property etc. are required to be eliminated .
- vii) Women should be given necessary support to create interest for involvement in politics of the state. Thereby, they can raise their voice in all issues for the sake of their empowerment and development . This would have certain impact to make them more organized to solve their own problems.
- viii) The most vital need is to include women's voice and their participation in policy formation and intervention on the issue of women's empowerment and development of the state .

Above all, no legislations and benefits would improve the position vis-à-vis role of women so long they themselves do not try to find out solutions to their problems. For this women should come forward and under such a context the positive role of family , society and state are very essential to generate and sustain the process .

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GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

- 'Bakhu'* A traditional dress of the male Bhutia which is a loose cloak type garment with full sleeves and is fastened at the neck on one side and near the waist with a cotton belt .
- 'Bhagaune pratha'* - A system of socially sanctioned elopement for marriage in Sikkim . It allows a boy and a girl from different castes and social backgrounds to elope.
- 'Bha-shey'* - The garden brush to roll raw wool for spinning.
- 'Bhodin'* - The local Bhutia term which means drawers .
- 'Bhumpa'(vase)* - The vase represents a repository of limitless material wealth, good health and long life .
- 'Bidi'* - Traditional hand made small sized tobacco for smoking .
- 'Birkhe Topi'* - It is cap wear by Nepali male .
- 'Bon'* - Male one is called as 'bon'
- 'Bongthing'* - Nature the God like spirits of mountain, forests , rivers, etc.
- 'Chak-tap'* - Comb beater in mainly to press weft thread firmly down.
- 'Charkha'* - It is a wheel used for reeling and plying yarns.
- 'Cheosum'* - The local Bhutia term which means altar .
- 'Chham Dance'* - It is the mask dance used to be performed by the Lamas .
- 'Choekyi Khorlo (wheel of dharma)* - It symbolizes the propagation of Buddha's teaching. The first sermon sitting in motion of the cycle of law is symbolist in a wheel with eight spokes , which stand for eight fold path .
- 'Choktse'* - The local Bhutia term which means table .
- 'Chortens'* - These are much a part of the lives of the Bhutias as faith in reincarnation.
- 'Choubandi'* - It is a double-breasted blouse held at four points across the body by the Tuna and wear by the Nepali women.
- 'Daijo'* - A traditional system of giving a non-compulsory gift or dowry to the bridegroom at the time of marriage among the Hindu Nepalese.
- 'Daura'* - It is a knee-length double breasted shirt wear by Nepali male.
- 'Den-thak-thi'* - The loom upon which the main carpet is woven.
- 'Den'* - A Tibeto-Bhuti a term which means Carpet . In Sikkim this local term is used mainly among the Sikkimese .
- 'Den-thi'* - It denotes seat for weavers to sit.

- 'Dhapli Canomena' - The tree bark .
- 'Dhi' - It is a knife used for cutting knots woven around the gauge-rod after hammering.
- 'Dhungkar'
(conch shell) - A conch shell that symbolizes reverberating sound of Dharma and signifies the awakening of sentient beings from the sleeping state of their ignorance. It persuades them towards the path of noble deeds that are beneficial to others. Gautam Buddha blew the conch shell when he decided to preach the law .The conch shell is blown in commemoration of this event whenever there is a special sermon by a high lama .
- 'Do' - It is used for contouring and shearing finished carpet.
- 'Doko' - The local term in Sikkim that denotes a basket .
- 'Dom' - It is a box for keeping rolled yarns for weaving.
- 'Domdyan' - It is a lower part of the dress which resembles a petticoat normally wear by Lepcha women.
- 'Dug' (parasol) - The parasol of authority symbolizes the authority of Buddha. The parasol protects the head from the scorching heat of Sun just as the law protects the mind from the scorching passion .
- 'Duree' - The Lepcha term of the weaving material made from woolen and cotton yarn.
- 'Dzongu areas' - The protected areas for Lepchas in North Sikkim.
- 'Dzumsa' - A traditional legal system which has been the meeting place of the people among the Bhutia in North Sikkim.
- 'Gho' - A Bhutia dress which is made of cloth used by only male married Bhutia people. It is also locally termed as 'bokhu' .
- 'Gonpas' - The monasteries.
- 'Gyak-shu' - Gauge rod around which the woolen pile is knotted.
- 'Gyaltzen'(banner of victory) - The symbol signifies the fortune of having victory of good over the evil forces which hinders the success of noble goals and also proclaims the victory of deity over evil. It is used in processions.
- 'Hembari' - It is a cloth which tie around the bust down to the hips and normally wear by Nepali women.
- 'Honju' - A dress of Bhutia woman consists of a silken which is a full sleeve blouse and a loose gown type garment fastened near the waist tightly with a belt.

- 'Jhalor' - A type of long fine silky clothes used in the pillars of monasteries and also in houses .
- 'Jhem-chey' - Scissor which is used for out lining the unwanted threads.
- 'Jhoras' - The local term in Sikkim that denotes springs.
- 'Kira' - A Bhutia term which indicates a rectangular Bhutia female dress used by married only.
- 'Majetro' - It is a triangular or rectangular piece of cloth which the Nepali women use to cover the head .
- 'Mayel' - The legendary Kingdom on the slopes of Khangchendzonga .
- 'Monn' - Female one is called generally as 'monn' .
- 'Namkhang' - A palace workshop for carpet weaving .
- 'Ne-shing' - Heddle rod which is attached by leashes of cord to each warp thread. Its function is to keep the warp tight.
- 'Pagi' - The male Lepcha dress made of cotton which is striped. The dress comes down to the knees. It is fastened on the shoulder by a pin and a belt is worn round the waist.
- 'Palbheu' (knot of eternity) - is the knot of eternity . It is law without beginning and without end which symbolizes eternity. The curly hair on chest of Buddha has the appearance of knot of eternity. It is also called as lucky net and symbolizes Brahamajala representing all the theories and philosophies of the universe.
- 'Pangdin' - A loose sheet of multi-coloured woolen cloth made of special design normally wear by Bhutia woman which they tie in their front portion . This is a symbol of married woman.
- 'Patuka' - It is a long strip of cotton cloth which held the Phariya at the waist and wear by Nepali women .
- 'Pema' (lotus flower) - The that symbolizes the ultimate goal namely enlightenment. As the lotus comes out of dirt but does not carry any dirt similarly law is free of all earthly matters.
- 'Pen-shing' - Spools which pushes weft threads across warp.
- 'Pewa' - A system among the Bhutia-Lepchas i.e. women and girls are given gifts and assets including livestock, utensils , ornaments and land etc. (depending upon the capability of the parents) at the time of their marriage.
- 'Phang' - The spindle for spinning yarn.

- 'Phariya' It is also called as Gunui which is worn from waist down and reaches to the ankle with tiny pleats in front .
- 'Pipon' - The village headman among the Bhutias in North Sikkim .
- 'Rong' - A totem which means the ravines .
- 'Rong-Folk' - Means those people who live in ravines .
- 'Rong-pa' - Means people who are living in ravines .
- 'Sernya' (pair of golden fishes) - Symbolizes resurrection of eternal life, rebirth, etc. The pair signifies the ability to swim with ease without obstruction in the ocean of this world. They may also be taken to symbolize the eye of perception as fish can see through muddy water . The fish couple suggests mutual aid and indispensability between male and female material life .
- 'Shyap' - Wooden pieces that help to adjust the length of warp.
- 'Sok' - Axis rod which holds the warp and functions as its main support.
- 'Suruwal' - It is the trousers normally wear by Nepali male.
- 'Tago' - It is a upper garment or blouse normally wear by Lepcha women .
- 'Tam' - Shed-sticks which eases way for spools to pass through warp and also separates warp threads.
- 'Tan' - It is a loom .
- 'Thangka' - A type of Buddhists Bhutia-Lepcha painting which depicts different incarnations of Buddha on silk clothes.
- 'Thowa' - It is a wooden hammer . After each row of knotting the gauge rod and knots are beaten down against the previous rows of knot with 'thowa' i.e. wooden hammer.
- 'Tuna' It is a string of cloth used to fasten the Daura at four points across the body wear by Nepali male .
- 'Zaru-shing' - The local term of light wood of the giant climber .

ABBREVIATIONS

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CSO	:	Central Statistical Organization
FIR	:	First Information Report
GICI	:	Government Institute of Cottage Industry
ICDS	:	Integrated Children Development Society
LPG	:	Liquid Petroleum Gas
MLA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	:	Member of Parliament
NCAER	:	National Council of Applied Economic Research
NGO	:	Non-Government Organization
NIPF & P	:	National Institute of Public Finance and Policy
NSSO	:	National Sample Survey Organization
RMC	:	Rural Marketing Centre
SCESCOS	:	Scheduled Caste Entrepreneurs Service Cooperative Society Ltd.
SDM	:	Sub-Divisional Magistrate
SHG	:	Self Help Group
SISCO	:	Sikkim State Cooperative Bank
SITCO	:	Sikkim Time Corporation
SRDA	:	Sikkim Rural Development Agency
UN	:	United Nations
UNICEF	:	United Nation International Children Education Fund
UNIFEM	:	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNO	:	United Nation Organization

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Serial No.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (A)
(Department of Anthropology, North Bengal University)

1. Name of Area : P.S. : District :
2. Name of the Woman Informant :
(involved in Handicraft Production and or Selling)
3. Address :
4. Age (in years) :
5. Marital Status : Unmarried/Married/Widow/Divorcee
6. Ethnic Group/Community :
7. No. of Family Members : M - F - T-
8. No. of Children : M - F - T-
9. Type of Family : Joint/Nuclear/Extended

8. Education :

Self	
Husband	
Father	
Mother	

9. Diploma/Training in Handicraft :

Self	
Husband	
Father	
Mother	

10. Occupation :

Self	
Husband	
Father	
Mother	

11. Land owned by the family (in acres/hectares) :

12. Living Status : Independently/ with husband/with parents/with brother/with sister/
with others (pl. specify)

13. Nature of work done daily

Nature of Work		Wage/Salary/by selling
Handicraft Work	Officially	
	Privately	
Household work		
Other works (Pl. Specify)		

14. Gross Monthly Income (approximately) :

Source		
Salary	Wage	By Selling

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (B)
(Department of Anthropology, North Bengal University)

Name of the Woman Informant :

1. (i) Do you feel women's education is necessary? If so then why?
- (ii) Do you aspire to get more/higher education?
- (iii) Up to what standard/level you want to educate your children?
Boys -
Girls -
- (iv) How did your father/mother felt/influenced your education whenever you were student?
2. (i) Do you feel that women's participation in gainful job is necessary? If yes, then pl. specify.
- (ii) Do you aspire to get better gainful job? If yes, then what type?
- (iii) How do you feel yourself in working environment?
- (iv) Do you feel comfortable in your work in job place and household work or feel tension in doing both the work?
- (v) Do you feel that women should be given an equal share of family property? What happened in your case?
- (vi) What financial/monetary contribution you make to your family/husband /parent per month?
- (vii) What amount you normally keep for your personal expenses?
- (viii) Do you have any bank accounts? If yes then pl. specify whether single or joint or both.
- (ix) Do you make all transaction according to your own decision or guided by husband/parents?
- (x) What amount you normally spend on your children/family members i.e. family? Pl. specify.
- (xi) What saving you make for future? Pl. specify.
3. (i) What do you think about that how many children one should have? (Pl. specify the reason of selecting more children in a family, if select)

Serial No.

- (ii) What do you think about the more convenient size of family ?
 - (iii) Do you make any purchase on the basis of your own decision or guided by parents/husband ? Pl. specify.
 - (iv) Do you favour that women should be consulted in financial decision of the family ?
 - (v) Did you take any decision or consulted with you in any financial matter of the family ? If yes , pl. specify .
 - (vi) Do you favour that consultation with women in children's education/ marriage and other family matters should be there ?
 - (vii) Have you taken any decision or consulted with you in children's education/marriage and other family matters ? .
 - (viii) Do you favour that women should be given due importance equally with men in family's decision-making ?
 - (ix) Do you wish to have girl child ? If yes or no , then pl. specify the reason.
4. (I) What do you feel about the age of marriage for women ?
- (ii) Do you feel that women should have final say in choosing their life-mate?
 - (iii) Do you favour that any marriage payments like dowry/bride price are necessary ?
5. (i) Do you feel that women should join politics ?
- (ii) Are you interested in politics ? If yes, then
 - (a) Are you involved in political activities, like attending procession/rally /meeting /discussion etc.?
 - (b) Are you member of any political party/trade union ? Do you chair any port folio of the party/trade union/association ?
 - (c) If yes , then how do you manage your household work, other work, work in job place ?
6. (i) Do you face any health problem due to performing both household work and work in the job place regularly ?
- (ii) What should be the gap of years in between the birth of one to another child ?
7. What is your views about overall discrimination in between men and women in the society ?