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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 (Hoebler , 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 Rohrllich-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 been 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.