

Cooperatives, Welfare Societies and Self-Help Group for promoting Handicraft Industry and Role of Sikkimese Women

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ABSTRACT

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-a-vis the role of women in these cooperatives, welfare societies, etc.. In fact, this article is based on the information drawn from the facts collected during the field survey in Sikkim.

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.

M/S Dzongri 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 woollen 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 .

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 saleswoman namely Sukhmaya Rai used to look after the selling of various handicrafts like, Lepcha Bag, Lepcha Shawl, wall hangings like Lucky signs,

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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.

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 Khadi materials like towel, bed cover, kurta, bag etc. are sold here.

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 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.

Lotus Associates Pvt. Limited

This enterprise is located in the village known as Baqthanq 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. 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.

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.

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 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.

Srishti Samity

It is a small scale industry located in Sarmasa-Jalipool area under Ranipool post office, which is about 13 km. away from Gangtok towards Pakyong. This Samity was established under the small scale industry scheme of NABAD, Government of India. Apart from imparting training this Samity produces and also sells its various jute products like, table mats, foot mats, carpets, telephone mats, sofa seat covers, chair cover, wall hangings and chains for decorative purposes, etc. In this Samity, 26 women were already trained. Among them 3 are Bhutia women, 22 Nepali women, and 1 Lepcha women. The training was imparted by one Bengali man as a instructor who came from Cooch Behar of West Bengal. At present, out of 26 already trained woman, 12 of them have been running this Samity together as a Private Cooperative dealing with production and selling of various type of jute products.

The details of price according to size of their products are given below.

Product item	Size	Price in Rs.
Foot mat	24 inches/18 inches	60.00
Telephone mat	11 inches/11 inches	30.00
Sofa mat (big)	48 inches/18 inches	600.00
Sofa mat (small)	18 inches/24 inches	600.00
Carpet (designed)	36 inches/60 inches	700.00
Carpet (plain)	36 inches /60 inches	400.00

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

The member including Secretary do not get any salary from this Samity. While, they in respect of the Samity normally take part in various trade fairs (me!a)/exhibitions (pradarlhani) and sell its products . And whatever earn after selling their products in various trade fairs (mela)/exhibitions (pradarshani) etc. , they used to divide the entire cash into two equal parts. One part of the cash used to be kept for purchasing raw materials and for other necessary requirements for running the Samity, and the another part of the money they used to distribute among themselves equally.

Educated Unemployed Women's Weifare Cooperatives Society Ltd This cooperative is located in Nop Gao area of Pakyoung about 30 km. away from Gangtok This cooperative runs as a training center dealing with tailoring, cutting, stitching of various dress materials and garments including fabric painting, and also knitting of various woolen garments. All the trainees of this cooperative are women. Of which 33 are Nepaiese, 4 Lepcnas, 1 Bhutia , and 4 others. The training is imparted by one woman instructor namely Mrs. Pabitra Sharma who belong to Nepali community. AH 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 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.
Chow Bandhi (Nepali traditional dress)	200.00
Dawra (upper part of traditional dress for Nepali boy)	200.00
Surwale (trouser or lower part of traditional dress for Nepali boy)	200.00
Shawl	250.00
Blouse	30.00
Frock	40.00
School dress (full set)	60.00
School dress (any part)	40.00
Salwar-Kamiz	60.00
Wall hanging (big size fabric paintings on canvas)	15000.00
Wall hanging (small size fabric paintings on canvas)	5000.00
Table -cloth (fabric paints, single shed)	150.00
Table -cloth (fabric paints, double shed)	200.00
Fabric paints on frock, kurta, night dress etc.	20.00 to 40.00

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

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 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 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 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.

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

Source : Field Survey , 2002-2005.

Stitching Rate for the daily paid worker

Item	Rate in Rs.
Cushion cover stitching with tassels	10.00
Shirt stitching	20.00
Panf stitching	15.00
Half shirt stitching	10.00
Full shirt stitching	12.00
Tunic without plate	10.00
Salwar suit stitching	40.00
Lamp-shed	40.00
Napkin 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 (ail 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 Rest each minute	5.00 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

Item		Rate in Rs.
Lamp-shed	Small Middle Big	150.00 200.00 300.00
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
Cardomom 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/-.

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.

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 share-holders. 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 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 .

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	OCM (60% Tibetan wool and less knots (140 knots)	NEWZEALAND (40% Tibetan wool and more knots (180 knots)
		Rs.	Rs.
Bed and Floor Cushion	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/-
Sofa Set Cushion	5 ft. X 2 ft. / 2 ft. X 2 ft.	3150/-	3870/-
	46 inches X 18 inches 18 inches X 18 inches	1794/-	2204/-
Chair Cushion	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 yam 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-a-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 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.
School Pant	Material and Stitching	Bigger Size	105/-
		Smaller Size	85/-
		Smallest Size for Kid	65/-
School Shirt	Material and Stitching	Bigger Size	75/-
		Smaller Size	45/-
Tie	Material and Stitching		10/-
School Pant	Only Stitching		40/-
School Shirt	Only Stitching		25/-
Gent's Shirt	Material and Stitching		125/-
	Only Stitching		50/-
Lady's Shirt	Material and Stitching		90/-
	Only Stitching		20/-
School Skirt	Material and Stitching	Bigger Size	150/-
		Smaller/Smallest Size	110/-
Lady's Chupa	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.

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.

Tibetan Refugee Carpet (Den) Training Center

Locales of one Tibetan settlement namely Pegong 3 km. 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. Locals 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.

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.

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 supermarket 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
1st Batch	31 (Sponsored by Deptt. of Welfare)	2	3	4	–	10	12
	7 (Privately bu came through assessment)	2	–	–	–	1	4
2nd 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 iike 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.

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.

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 Rasaily. 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
Apron	Rs. 5/-
Night Dress	Rs. 20/-
Nightly	Rs. 15/-
Blouse	Rs. 20/-
Pettycoat	Rs. 10/-
1 Flower (machine embroidery)	Rs. 25/- to Rs. 100/-
Baby suit	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 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.

Panchayat Weaving Center

It was established on 16th march, 2005 at Darap of West Sikkim (7 kms. from Felling) 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 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	Time (in Rs.)	Type of takes	Design wool yarn
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.

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 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	Size	Price
3 piece set	2'5'	Rs. 3200/-
Car set	18'18" and 18"5"	Rs. 3500/-
Single Bed Carpet	376'	Rs. 4000/-

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 Gantok. 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 from Gangtok

and Kalimpong. Tans and frame were provided by Sikkim Rural Development Agency (SRDA).

Order of items taken by Rural Marketing Centre (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 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.

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-a-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.