Conclusion
CONCLUSION

The economy of Kashmir is based on handicraft and agricultural sectors. Handicraft industry provides employment to around 3 lakh artisans. However, the total ratio of females vis-a-vis males is not known. There are certain crafts in which men are predominant and certain crafts in which women are predominant. The industry is an export-oriented industry. The present study was an effort to throw some light on this export-oriented industry in which the women earn their livelihood within the four walls of their home.

The study was conducted in Srinagar the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. Srinagar as per 1981 census has a population of 708328 lacs in which 378189 lacs are males and 330139 lacs are females. Around 80% of the population is urban in character. Srinagar was chosen as the locale of the study as the handicraft industry chiefly rests in Srinagar. The study made an humble attempt to highlight the role women play in handicraft sector. Their socio-economic and demographic characteristics, their educational background, nature and type of work done by them, their earnings and expenditures, their perceptions and aspirations, their
problems and prospects and above all their contributions to family and society at large were some of the objectives the study was focused at. To assess these objectives certain hypothetical presuppositions were also made. The study is exploratory in nature. Both the quantitative analysis and the presentation of some case studies were marshaled to support the hypothetical pre-suppositions.

A summary of all the findings and the conclusions which emerge from them are being outlined as hereunder:

1.1 An analysis of the demographic features of the artisan women permitted us to classify them in different age groups. The analysis revealed that the lower age limit among unmarried artisan women was 15 years and among married artisan women it was 25 years. Majority of unmarried female artisans 59.25% was in the age of 15-20 years and majorities of the married female artisans 50% were in the age group of 26-45 year.

The conclusion, which can be drawn from this, are that there is no upper or lower age limit for these artisan women. It all depends on their struggle for survival. Once they attain the age of puberty, they get involved in the handicraft work.
The analysis of the marital status of the respondents revealed that 56.84% of the respondents were unmarried and, 36.31% were married and the rest were either widows, divorcees or separated. That means the sample comprised of more of unmarried artisan women rather than married ones. However, the case studies disclosed that married women and unmarried women were equal in number.

The marital status and age of the respondents was not a criterion for the analysis of the data, however, it was taken into account wherever a difference was found between the married and unmarried artisan women's responses.

1.2 The analysis of the educational level of artisan women revealed that illiterate artisan women outnumbered the literate artisan women. The percentage of illiterate married women artisans was higher 87.80% as compared to unmarried ones, which was 51.85%. A disparity in the educational level of married and unmarried female artisans was also registered, as the educational level of unmarried artisan women was comparatively higher than the married artisan women.

The disparity in the literacy levels of married and unmarried artisans is due to the fact that with every
passing decade the importance of women's education is being realized, and more and more people are sending their daughters to schools. This is further substantiated by the fact that among artisan women the lower the age of the respondent, the higher is the educational level of the respondent.

1.3 To know the socio-economic and educational background of the artisan women, the following aspects were examined. The married artisan women were asked about their husbands and unmarried artisan women about their parents.

1.3.a The study revealed that among the artisan women's husbands 63.41% were illiterate and among the unmarried artisan women's parents 75.29% fathers and 100% mothers were illiterate.

1.3.b Since the majority of respondents' husbands or parents were illiterate, the analysis, therefore, showed that majority of them were involved in such professions, which did not require much educational qualifications. The artisan women's parents/husbands worked as artisans, businessmen, drivers, labourers, shop-keepers, private employees and menial or ministerial govt. employees such as peons and clerks. When the unmarried artisan women were asked about their mother's profession, majority of
them said they were not involved in any economic activity other than domestic chores. Only 42% respondents mothers were "Artisans" by profession.

1.3.c The income of the majority of respondent's husbands/fathers was noted to be between Rs. 1000-3000. The income of the unmarried respondent's mothers was even lower than this. It was below Rs. 1000 in majority of the cases. About 7.3% of the married artisan women didn't know about the total earnings of their husbands.

1.3.d In order to probe how many members of a particular family worked together to supplement or to raise the economic position of that family, the respondents were asked about the total number of male/female earning members. Majority of the families 65.78% had only one male-earning member. This is because of the fact that majority of the families were nuclear in character. However, with regard to total number of female earning members, a wide gap was found between married and unmarried artisan women. The majority of the married artisan women 65.85% had only one female earning member and majority of the unmarried artisan women 68.51% had two female earning members. That the more female earning members in the family raise the overall economic strength of the family is substantiated by the
fact that the total income of these families was enhanced. For example, majority of the female artisan's (both married and unmarried) fathers/husbands income group was between Rs. 1000-3000. The analysis of the respondents income from all sources disclosed a disparity between married and unmarried female artisans. This is due to the fact that majority of unmarried artisan women have two or more female earning members. Therefore, majority of the married respondents 37.80% belonged to the income group of Rs. 3001-5000 and 50.92% unmarried respondents belonged to the income group of Rs. 5001-7000 per month. This proves our hypothesis that the female earnings do enhance the overall economic status of the family.

1.4 The striking feature of traditional Indian society i.e. joint family system has almost lost its relevance as 87.89% respondents in our sample lived in nuclear type of families. Out of which 90% live under same roof with separate kitchen and can best be called as extended nuclear families. One important point with regard to female artisans is that majority of them were aware about the advantages of smaller families. 55.78% had 3-4 family members. Only 7.36% respondents did live in large families comprising of 9-10 members. These cases
were of those respondents who belonged to joint family system.

1.5 To examine the power structure of the respondent's families, the artisan women were asked about the head of their respective families. Majorities of the female artisan's 72.63% families were headed by a male. The remaining 27.36% household were headed by the female. But this should not lead us to the conclusion that the patriarchal power structure in these families has changed. The females heading the households were either widows, divorcees or separated. Very few females living with their husbands claimed to be the heads of their families. However, even in these households they had to play second fiddle to their husbands. The crucial economic and financial matters had to be decided in consultation with their husbands.

The above findings confirm certain key features in our hypotheses, e.g. the artisan woman come from lower socio-economic and educational background, their educational level is quite low and the overall earnings of these women enhance the overall economic position of their respective families. An overview of the case studies presented in chapter 4 Part II also confirm the above findings.
2.1 The handicrafts of Kashmir are famous world over. The handicrafts of Kashmir consist of a variety of crafts. The study revealed that female artisans were basically involved in the embroidery part of the crafts or in spinning operations. The female artisans were involved in the embroidering of the following crafts: *Namdha*, crewel, chainstick and shawl. In addition to this women were also involved in *pashmina* and *shahtoosh* spinning and the art of paper machine. Besides these crafts the artisan women were also involved in carpet weaving. However, their ratio in the urban Srinagar is almost negligible. Their concentration is mostly in the rural areas of Srinagar district. Majorities of the female artisans have learnt their professional skill from their family members.

2.2 The female artisan's dividends are very meagre in view of the amount of labour they put in. Majority of the artisan women earned Rs. 501 to 1000 per month. The second highest percentage of women artisans 21.57% earned between Rs. 1001 to 1500 per month.

2.3 Almost all the women artisans contributed their income towards their families in one or the other way. Majority of the married women 58.53% spent their earnings for the very sustenance of their families. Also a considerable percentage of married respondents 21.95%
saved their earnings. However, they saved considerable amount of money which was later on handed over to the husband with a view to meet out some exigency or purchase some consumer durables. Among the unmarried women artisans again 35.81% gave away all their earnings to the family. 24.07% saved their earnings and 20.37% spent on personal needs. These women revealed that they didn't want to be a burden on their otherwise poor families. They wanted to help their parents by looking after their own needs. Some female artisan 16.66% also contributed a part of their income to their family besides meeting their own personal expenditure.

All these artisan women worked either to supplement their family income or to act as sole breadwinners of their family. Where the male members earned less, it is the responsibility of the women to earn in order to supplement and raise the economic position of the family. Sharma, 1986¹ broadly defines three different kinds of domestic situations in which a woman can find herself.

(a) A sole wage earner, also responsible for domestic arrangements;

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(b) a sole organizer of domestic arrangements, in some cases also contributing part of the household income, and

(c) as one of the larger team of people among whom the responsibilities for domestic work and for bringing in income may be divided in a number of ways.

The above classifications can easily be applied to the present study, the extracts of 3 of the case studies explain as to how the above classification is relevant to the present study.

Tawheeda case no. 6 in Chapter 4 (part II) worked on Natndba. Both her father and mother were not keeping a good health, so both of them did not earn anything. Her two brothers had done graduation and were yet unemployed. Tawheeda and her younger sister were the only two bread winning members of the family. Tawheeda and her sister worked for 18 hours a day and spent 10 hours on handicraft work and rest of the time in looking after domestic chores, taking care of their parents etc. They also make balls out of the woolen yarn with which they had to do embroidery the other day. The whole family was economically dependent on the earnings of these two sisters.

Aisha (case no. 1), is a widow and had five daughters and a 10 year old son. The family was run on the meagre income of
Aisha and her three daughters. Aisha spined *Pashmina* and earned Rs. 500 per month besides doing all the household work.

**Gulshan** case no. 7 worked on crewel. She earned around Rs. 800 per month. Since the total income of her parents was around Rs. 4000 per month, **Gulshan** earned for her own expenditure and also at times contributed a part of it to the family besides sharing domestic work with her sister and mother.

2.4 The wage pattern of artisan woman revealed that majorities of them were paid on piece rate basis 59.47% and 39.47% gave varied responses. Actually the wage pattern of one craft is different from another, craft. For example, *chainstich* wages are given on the basis of per square feet, *shawls* are paid on the basis of *Tola* - (one *Tola* is equivalent to 10- grams of staple), *Crewel* is paid on the basis per kg woolen yarn etc. The field survey revealed that a great disparity existed between the wage pattern of artisan women. The wages of the artisan women were not only less than the male artisans, but also a variation was found between the wages of one artisan woman from another. On demanding wages at par with men, the artisan women were often rebuffed by being told that men's work was often neater and up to the mark of perfection. However, the field survey could not establish this argument. It seems that in view of the male monopoly
of the trade, men succeed in circumventing the demand by female artisans for higher wages by manipulating such stereotypes. Secondly, since the middleman's earnings depend on the difference between the wages they pay to the artisan women and the selling price of the product, they devise tricks to underpay the poor artisan women. This is probably one of the reasons for not only the low wages of artisan women, but also for the intra-artisan variation in wages. The study, however, revealed that though the earnings of these middlemen are not high, it was definitely much higher than the artisan women. The loin's share is appropriated by big dealers and exporters.

2.5 The artisan women were aware that the wages they were getting for a particular job were low. Majority of the respondents 78.42% said that wages were inadequate, 15.26% said they were adequate and another 6.3% were not able to say anything in this regard. On being asked as to why did they work on low wages, on aggregate, majority of them said that they didn't have anything better to rely on. However, while analyzing the difference between the responses of married and unmarried respondents, it was found that this reason operated more prominently in case of unmarried women 57.14% than the married respondents who asserted that the
money was badly required in view of the domestic compulsions. So, they had no option other than to work on low wages. These responses particularly of married artisan women bring forth an important dimension, i.e. the Islamic law which assign the role of a breadwinner to a man and also makes him responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of his wife and children is least followed among the patriarchal families of these poor artisan women. Their earnings even if meager form an important part of family income and are, thus, essential for the very sustenance of their families. While discussing the issue of working on low wages, some of the artisan women said:

"We have to depend on the good will middleman. If he deceives us, we can't help it. If we bargain with him, he will stop assigning any work to us and will give it to other artisan women. We have no way to keep control over him. We cannot show or organise any kind of resistance against their exploitation as we don't have any kind of organisation or association. In fact, any organised effort against this exploitative mechanism, is difficult to sustained any organized effort against this exploitation in view of the fact that we hardly venture out of our homes. Only if we could unionize or put up a front against this exploitation".

2.6 In order to gain information about various types of activities and time they spend both on handicraft
work and housework, a list of all the activities of artisan women as well as time they spend on these activities was formulated and analyzed. Their statements revealed that a working day of an artisan woman consisted of a variety of activities most of which fall under the category of housework. These activities include cooking food, cleaning house, washing clothes, washing utensils, serving the family, child-care, ironing the clothes, attending and serving the guests etc., in addition to handicraft work. There did not exist any demarcation among these activities, which usually overlapped each other. An extract of Case no. 8 would shed some light on the different activities of an artisan woman in a day:

Tanveera who was 23 years of age had lost her parents. She was the only sister of her three brothers. She was, therefore, responsible for all the domestic chores. She would get up at 6 in the morning. After taking bath she would offer prayers and then prepare breakfast, tea etc. for the family. She would cook meals and then cleans the house. She would also wash and also cleans utensils. She would finish her household work by 11 A.M. After that she would work on Shawls till her bothers would come back from work. In between she would take lunch break for half an hour at 1 O' clock and again would engage in handicraft work till her brothers come back from work in the evening around 7. p.m. In the evening she would make tea,
snakes and serve to her brothers. She would also make evening meals. She again started working on shawls. After serving dinner she would wash utensils and cleanse the kitchen. In the late evenings she would iron the clothes. She would go to bed usually around 11.30 P.M."

2.7 An analysis of the hours of work done by women revealed that the average hours of married artisan women were more than their unmarried counterparts. Majority of the married artisans spent a total of 13 to 18 hours on different activities. Majority of the unmarried artisan women spent 9 to 11 hours per day on different activities. Regarding the hours of time spent on handicraft work, majority of married artisan women 31.70% spent 8-9 hours on handicraft work and another 23.17% spend 10-11 hours on the said work whereas among the unmarried female artisans majority 40.74% spent only 6-7 hours on handicraft and 24.07% spent 4-5 hours. This is the reason that unmarried artisan women have more leisure time than the married ones. The time spent on handicraft work varied firstly according to the overall economic status of the family. Where the economic status of the family was low, the women used to work hard on handicraft work for raising additional money. Secondly, some women worked for lesser hours, but earned more as they could do the embroidery work quite fast. Thirdly, the time spent on
handicraft work as well as on household work depended on the number of women and girls in a given household. However, an analysis of the hours spent on handicraft and other activities by majority of artisan women are equivalent to a factory worker and it is naive to call them as house-wives and not as 'workers'.

2.8 32.92% of the married women artisans didn't find any leisure time, whereas 12.96% unmarried artisan women found no leisure time. However, the average hours of leisure-time of unmarried respondents were much higher as compared to married artisan women. Majority of the married respondents spent their leisure time by taking a nap after lunch. However, unmarried artisans relaxed, chatted, watched TV etc.

2.9 When the respondents were asked about the amount of leisure time they got, initially 60% said they got lot of time. But when the researcher probed deeper in this regard a different story was disclosed. What they called leisure time was not a "leisure" in actual terms, but the time when they did embroidery or spinning, in fact the handicraft work. This shows that they themselves had internalised the common ideology of their work being no work in the real sense. After a lot of discussion between the researcher and artisan women regarding the importance
of their earnings for the sustenance of their families they also accepted that their work was not a leisure time activity.

2.10 A great difference was found between the responses of married and unmarried artisan women vis-a-vis managing household responsibilities. Since majority of the married respondents belonged to nuclear form of family, so majority of them 68.29% manage the household responsibilities alone and again majority of them 85.36% took care of their children themselves. There is a very small percentage 4.87% of female artisans who would get help in childcare from their husbands and other 7.31% respondents would get help from mothers-in-law.

2.11 Among the unmarried respondents majority 66.66 provide a helping hand to family members, that means housework is none of their responsibility, they render some help only if they wish to do so. However, 24.07% shared work with relatives. There is a very small percentage of unmarried artisan women (1.85%) who manage the household alone. They were usually those who had either lost their mothers or had sick mothers. Like most of the working women who go out of their home to work, majority of the artisan women said that they are experiencing fatigue because of the demands of their dual
role. The proportion of married artisan women 75.60% who experienced various degrees of fatigue was higher than the unmarried ones (40.47%). However, 57.40% unmarried respondents mentioned that they didn't feel over burdened.

2.12 In the Kashmiri society, the going out of women from their homes quite often is not a welcome feature. This is particularly true of those women who are not involved in some gainful employment outside their home. Since all these artisan women are involved in home based industry, so they hardly go for outings. The study revealed that these women went out only when an important piece of work was to be attended to. Their outings include going to the nearby market for buying personal things or grocery items, visiting their relatives or attending marriages/funerals etc. Though the scenic beauty of Kashmir is famous world over, but these artisan women have hardly visited any tourist spot except one or two visits to Mughal gardens in their lifetime or occasional visits to Muslim shrines. The unmarried artisan women relatively went out more frequently than their married counterparts. 37.03% went out once a week, a 27.77% once a month. 31.70% married artisan women go out occasionally
2.13 Paradoxically enough, although majority of the female artisans did express satisfaction with their job, yet at the same time most of them wanted to change it as well. They wanted to go in for such jobs as would fetch them more money. A considerable percentage of unmarried artisan women 13.67% mentioned that they would give up their handicraft work, if after marriage the income of the husband was reasonably good or if the husband/in-laws objected to it.

2.14 The study further revealed the multifarious factors which have motivated the artisan women to be in the handicraft work. Their views can easily be related with their responses as to how did they spend their earnings. As majority of the artisan women give all their earnings to their families, so the majority too reported that their motivation to be in handicraft sector was to raise the economic status of the family. The increasing trend particularly among young generation to be economically independent is substantiated by the fact that 37.07% unmarried artisan women worked to have an independent income.

2.15 A number of studies have shown that employment increased the decision-making role of a woman. The present study indicated that 39.02% married
artisan women did take an active part in respect of daily expenditures, education of children, marriage of children, purchase of real estate etc. However, 36.58% reported that their consent was sought, and another 24.39% reported that they did not take any part in any decision making. Whereas among unmarried artisan women 25% took part in the above decisions, 56.43% didn't take any part. The artisan women who did take decisions however revealed that the ultimate authority lies with the male i.e. husband/brother/father etc. They decide only relatively minor matters, which are mostly related to domestic chores. Regarding the other vital decisions, 'he' is the deciding factor.

2.16 It is quite axiomatic from our quantitative analysis of artisan women's work and family and from the illustrations of some of the case studies that the artisan women of Kashmir are a highly exploited lot. "Though the fact of exploitation is an open and stark reality, it is not easy to measure it in clear economic terms. The whole system of production and distribution is organised in such a way that a clear calculation of the costs of production and the extent of exploitation is hardly possible. The reason for this is not only the fact that the exporters carefully hide the figures about their profits, but also the typically hidden, unorganised and deliberately
confused way by which capital accumulation takes place in this industry. The main reason for their confusion is the fact that lace work (here it is applied to handicraft work) is defined as non-work or housework^2. The analysis further revealed that the income of these artisan women is used for the survival of the family. Additionally, her domestic chores are so arduous, inspite of all this, she gets no recognition for any of her roles.

3.1 Men enjoy more liberty, they are free to do whatever they feel like, they do not need any one's consent. A woman has no right to decide. Before marriage she is subservient to her father/brother and after marriage she is under the control of her husband and in-laws. Girl child's birth is not a welcome feature, because she is to be protected. She cannot take up those jobs, which a male can take and earn livelihood. These were some of the justifications, which the female artisans gave with regard to gender-discrimination. On being asked, whether discrimination of woman vis-a-vis man did exist or not, majority of the female artisans 61.05% replied in affirmative, 14.73% replied in negative and another 24.21% could not speak any thing in this regard. Extract from case no. 8 regarding discrimination of women vis-a-vis men.

"Tanveera was not able to say whether she enjoyed equality vis-a-vis her brothers, and further said, though it is difficult to say whether a girl child is discriminated or not in comparison to a male child, but parents do not believe and trust their daughters the way they believe in and trust their sons. In a family a woman has no right to decide. Her opinion is always considered as a stupid remark".

3.2 The perceptions and aspirations of female artisan women are changing with changing times. The younger generation artisan women have developed a more egalitarian outlook. This is amply substantiated by the fact that 76.85% of the unmarried artisan women said that husband and wife should enjoy equal status in the family and in the society. Only 23.15% of them said that husband should have a higher status than his wife. The study revealed that none of the un-married respondents advocated a higher status for a woman than her husband. However, among the married respondents 60.97% stated that husband should have a higher status and 2.43% stated that wife should have a higher status than her husband.

3.3 On being asked as to whether there are more job opportunities for a man than a woman, majority of the respondents revealed that both of them have equal opportunities provided they possess educational and
technical excellence. Further, the artisan women while commenting on the jobs that are easier for a woman of their educational and technical qualifications to get, majority of them stated that the handicraft work in which they were involved is the best way for a woman to earn a livelihood in a more dignified way. This work can be easily done by them within the four walls of their house, without roaming around in search of a job from door to door.

3.4 When the artisan women were asked as to whether they would like their sons/daughters to do the same job i.e. handicraft work, majority of them replied in negative. There 'No' always came in a louder voice. Majority of them wished their children to attain high education and further opined that their future will be decided by God, fate, destiny etc. This shows that an attitudinal change is registered towards the women's education. While expressing the importance of education, these women talked about the problems which they were facing without education in day to day life. For example they cannot help their children in their studies, cannot read or remember the names of medicines and keep the records etc. They wished that their children should get
education so that they do not face the problems, which their illiterate parents are facing.

3.5 The study revealed that the female artisans are very much aware about their rights especially their property rights and Mehr (dower). Besides their awareness they were also knowing about the share to which they are entitled. Though Islamic law provides 1/3rd of the property share to a woman in comparison to her brother, in Kashmiri Muslim society the customary law is most prevalent. The customary law neither prohibits, nor approves of a woman taking share of her parental property. This is substantiated by the fact that majority of the married artisan women 84.14% had not taken their share in parental property. These artisan women when asked as to why they have not taken their share from their parental property, majority of them mentioned that they did not want to have strained relations with their brothers. Only 20% of them said that the property was yet to be divided and another 10% of them said that their husband's property was sufficient for their family. With regard to Mehr 73.17% married respondents have not been paid their Mehr by their respective husbands. In the payment of Mehr too the customary law is followed. The question of inheritance rights and right to dower money was discussed
with the unmarried respondents as well. Their responses showed a change in their perceptions in comparison to their married counterparts. 50% of them wished to follow the customary law and another 50% stated that women should claim their property share even if it means straining relations with their brothers. They further revealed that unless a woman asserts for her rights she won't be given her due share. If the women keep on claiming their rights, a time will come when things will be settled in a peaceful manner. Regarding the payment of Mehr all the unmarried respondents stated that it should be paid at the time of marriage itself.

Significance of the Study

The present study falls within the sociology of women and sociology of work. Its main objective was to give a sociological outline of the household work carried out by female artisans of Srinagar. While sociology of women is a vital emerging area of sociological inquiry and is an inter-continental or global phenomenon, localized, empirical studies provide vital feedback to the overall theoretical formulations. Only by pooling together empirical area studies, can we hope to arrive at a judicious and balanced theoretical perspective on sociology of
women. Therefore, firstly, the present study may be deemed to be a humble contribution to the sociology of women's work. Secondly, a crucial objective of the present study may be said to be highlighting the invisibility phenomenon of women's work. The general perception that the urban women are parasites on the economy needs to be dismantled. Hopefully, the present study on the female artisans of Srinagar would be a contribution towards bringing out the economic role urban women are playing in our times. It is further hoped that the present work should also persuade the planners not to subsume the women's work under the general rubric of housework. The present work must also underline the need for persistent research to evolve methods and techniques of quantifying women's work, especially in the domestic sector. The significance and relevance of the study will be proportionate to the extent it draws our attention towards these objectives.

Suggestions and Recommendation

1. The present study has tried to investigate from a sociological viewpoint, the conditions of female artisans of Srinagar. The frame of reference of this study was to sociologically evaluate their role and contribution to the family as well as society. Other such empirical studies
need to be done concentrating on other relevant variables in this regard.

2. In view of the fact that there is no statistical data available on women's work, especially on handicraft sector, the planners and statisticians of Jammu & Kashmir government must evolve mechanisms that can be instrumental in providing us vital classified information on multiple aspects of women's work including handicraft work.

3. The definition of a worker needs to be drastically revised. Women working in household industries should not conveniently be deemed to be housewives, but defined as workers. Housework should be defined as work.

4. Researchers and planners should consistently and persistently try to devise methods of evaluating women's involvement in home-based industries so that their contribution can be made visible and quantifiable.

5. Discrimination in wages on the basis of sex should be abolished. The government can put reasonable checks to the capricious behaviour of middlemen who underpay women artisans, try to grab profits
disproportionate to their effort and often work as the agents of big dealers and exporters.

6. Female artisans in handicraft sector and their counterparts in other sectors should be organised so that a united struggle can be launched against exploitation.

7. Female artisans should be persuaded to set up handicraft worker's co-operative societies. Such an arrangement may minimize the exploitative role of middlemen.