Qualitative Data
CASE STUDIES

Introduction

After presenting the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data, it will be useful to present some case studies of some of the artisan women, who are the real producers of the handicraft items. These case studies will help us in getting a better understanding of the role women play in handicraft industry and make the invisibility phenomenon of women's work more visible. They will also give us a glimpse of their life, their problems, their aspirations, their dreams, and their prospects and above all their contribution to their family in particular and handicraft industry in general. This section also includes a brief about the workers, the middlemen and the trade.

The case studies have been broadly categorized into:

a) Case studies of married artisan women, and

b) Case studies of unmarried artisan women

Case Studies of Married Artisan Women

Case No. 1

Aisha was a fifty-year-old widow, who lost her husband some five years back. Her husband was a mason by
profession and used to earn Rs. 1500-2000 per month. She herself used to spin *pashmina* and earn Rs. 500 per month to supplement family income. Though her income was not much, yet together they were able to raise their family nicely. After the death of her husband she was left alone and poorer. She found it very difficult to run the family of seven members including her five beautiful daughters and a 10 year old cute son. Therefore, to supplement their family income, her daughters started *crewel* work.

One of the daughters was married last year. The family was run on the meager income of *Aisha* and her three daughters. One of the daughters who was twenty year old earned Rs 1500 a month due to her hard work and skill. Since she had to sit at one place for more than 10 hours a day working on *crewel* she had developed some problem in her legs and knees. The other two younger daughters earned about Rs.300 each a month. The youngest daughter and the son used to go to school.

*Aisha* herself continued to spin *Pashmina* and earned Rs 500 a month besides doing all the household work. It sounds strange that over a period of five years *Aisha's* income had not gone beyond Rs. 500 a month. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the wages of handicraft workers
especially the spinners have not been revised and secondly due to the death of her husband, her health deteriorated and she was not able to spin much.

Before marriage Aisha never did any handicraft work. Since the income of her husband was meager, she learnt this craft, from one of her friends, immediately after her marriage. Even today, in spite of her ill health, she worked for almost 12 hours a day including six hours on handicraft work. She cooked food for the family herself. However, her daughters provided her helping hand in other domestic activities. When her daughters took a brief nap after the lunch, she used to go to the nearby market to buy vegetables and other household items. She hardly found any time to visit her relations and socialize with the other women in the neighborhood.

She was conscious of the exploitation of artisan women, but said with a heavy heart, "it is a helpless situation and no one can help it". She felt that the wages given to her as well as to her daughters were very low and wanted that the wages should be enhanced considering the amount of hard labour they had to put in. She was highly critical of the big dealers and brokers who according to her were making huge profits by exploiting the poor workers and
eating the fruit of their hard labour. She wanted the intervention of the government in this regard so that the real and genuine workers were benefited. This she felt would not only help them to become financially sound but would motivate more and more people to learn and practice handicraft work and will go a long way in helping the handicraft industry of the valley.

She regretted she could not send all her daughters to school because of poverty. Education of her two youngest children was now her only dream and hope for the future. She felt there was no difference between a son and a daughter. However, while as the sons could go anywhere any time and do all type of odd jobs, the daughters could not be given that freedom. Her son was a safeguard to her daughters; if somehow they were not happy at their in-laws they could always return to their brother at least for the shelter. Unmindful of the fact that Muslim women get one third of the parental property, she still considered her son’s house a shelter for her daughters during turbulent times.

After the death of her husband, Aisha’s brothers gave her due share from the parental property. With that money she renovated her husband’s house. After taking a long breath, Aisha said that women were born for troubles only.
They had to do all types of household activities and at the same time earn to run the family. Still there was no recognition of their contribution. Her last wish was to marry her daughters in some economically viable families and also to see her younger children attain higher education.

Case No. 2

Eighty year old, Khateeja was quite dejected with life and said that life had given her nothing but tears. She was just 10 years old when she learnt Pashmina spinning from her mother and till date she continued to do so. She was the only child of her parents and therefore her husband came to stay at her parent's place after the marriage. She still lived in the same house, which was now in a dilapidated condition.

Her husband was a carpenter. His income was not enough. Therefore, Khateeja used to work on wheel to add to the family income. Khateeja was a gifted artisan. She mastered the art of spinning and used to spin fine and very thin thread from pashmina wool. "The thinner you spin the more you earn", said Khateeja. "I used to buy Pashmina wool for 2 Annas (12.5 Paisa) and it would fetch me a good amount. These days that quality Pashmina is not available. This time If I get 5 gm. Pashmina wool for about Rs.30, I
will earn a profit of only Rs.50". It took her one complete week to spin 5 gm. *Pashmina* wool and earns around Rs. 400 per month. She spun 4 hours a day and said "I cannot spin much due to my old age, my arms start paining if I spin much." Rest of the time she reposed and occasionally visited the nearby market or went to see her childhood friend who lived adjacent to her house. Her husband now did not earn anything. He was injured in a firing incident some years back. *Khateeja* had just one son who is now 50 year old. He was a menial govt. employee and earned about four thousand rupees a month. With that money he had to support the family of eight members including his wife, 3 daughters and a son. All of his children used to go to school. Though *Khateeja* and her husband stayed with their son, she bore all her expenditure on account of medicines, clothes, etc. She also bore the personal expenditure of her husband and occasionally contributed towards family.

This time *Khateeja* was suffering from heart trouble. Even at this old age she had to work to live. Therefore she was not very happy with her son. She believed that the wages paid to her were very low given the fineness of her work, the skills she possessed and the hard labour she put in. Even though the dealer to whom she sold her *pashmina*
thread admired her skill, he did not always pay her well in time. At times she had to go to the dealer (middleman) not less than ten times to get her own money. "Middlemen in this trade are the biggest exploiters", she said with a long breath.

With tears in her eyes in a highly emotional and charged tone she said, "the daughters are important for mothers in the sense that mothers can share all their problems with them and they are more sympathetic and useful especially in old age than a son." Remembering her childhood she smilingly referred to that period as more liberal and said, "there was freedom and all the girls and boys used to play together without any inhibitions or problems -something you cannot think of today. The times have changed. Today you can not afford to allow your daughter to play with boys. A 10 year old child today is more mature than a 30 year old man of that time". For this she blamed television and cinema, which she felt have induced all the filthy ideas in the young minds.

Regarding the husband-wife relation, she was quite contended and said she enjoyed equality. However she felt that "a husband should have more respect for his wife even if he is the sole breadwinner. If he has respect for his wife
then only will she command respect in the family". She further said that women should try to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. Spinning made her economically independent, so she continued to spin and cherish her work even now.

**Case NO: 3**

Farhat was a 25 year old. Married just a year before, she had studied up to 9th standard. Her husband was a businessman with an educational background of 12th standard. She had no idea about the total earning of her husband, but could give a rough estimate of the total income of the husband's family. Keeping in view the living standard of that family, their income may be around Rs. 40,000 per month. There were four male earning members at her in-laws and all were involved in a joint business. Women were not involved in any economic activity other than household chores. Her in-laws family was a joint family with a total strength of 11 people. Her mother-in-law was the head of the family who was a strong woman and controlled the finances of the family. In all matters her decision was final. Her sons including Farhat's husband could not take any independent decision vis-a-vis their wives or children.

She stayed at her in-laws place only for two and a half months. Afterwards she conceived and was suffering from
initial pregnancy related problems. She was asked by her mother-in-law to go to her parent's place for recovery and thereafter no one from her in-laws place, including her husband, visited her. She was with her parents for the last nine months. Recently she gave birth to a female baby. Still her in-laws had not visited her. She felt that her in-laws could have probably visited her had she given birth to a male baby. She further said that her pregnancy related problem was simply a pretext. Basically her mother-in-law was asking for her gold ornaments which were gifted to her at the time of her marriage from both the sides. She had refused to give them away. She wanted to assert for her rights, but was paying very heavily for it. She was confident she would win. She did not want to bow. She said that, if she bowed once then throughout her life she would have to make compromises. Her rights were inviolate. She would not allow anyone to violate them.

Her father was running a small business, earning Rs. 5000 per month and supporting the family of four persons. Though he was not affluent, he was leading a modest life. Her younger brother was doing his graduation. She was doing embroidery work also known as jalakdozi in local dialect on Crewel. She earn Rs. four to five hundred per
month. She worked for five hours a day at this job besides helping her mother in domestic chores. She was slightly less burdened with the domestic chores as her mother took the full responsibility of the house. She did handicraft work, just to earn for her own expenditures and did not want to be totally dependent on her father for every petty need. However, before marriage she used to earn only to save for dowry.

She learnt crewel work from her aunt during her school days. She wanted to give up this craft once she went back to her in-laws, as her husband's income was reasonably good. However, if circumstances forced her to continue the handicraft work, she would do it with more dedication and vigor. She wanted to do something for the upliftment of the artisan women. She wanted to make a union or a co-operative sort of a thing through which the wages of the artisans could be enhanced and regulated so that the exploitation is minimized. She further said, that Kashmiri handicraft industry was dependent mostly on women because the wages were low and women did it as a part-time job. Men on the other hand could not work on such low wages. They could not afford to be part-time workers.
**CASE NO. 4**

Tahira was a young and beautiful woman. She was a divorcee and approximately thirty years of age. She never had the opportunity of going to the school, but could read and write Urdu and Kashmiri. She got married at the age of twenty three and was divorced three years later. She had a five year old son. At the time of her divorce her son was just eight months old.

Her husband was used to weave carpets and was also owner of some carpet looms. She was not knowing his exact income, but said his income must have been reasonably good. It was she who initiated divorce. She said, "I love cleanness, I used to keep my home, surroundings, clothes and everything clean but my in-laws had no concept of hygiene. Their language was also unrefined. I felt suffocated in that atmosphere. I tried my level best to keep the home clean, but no one was co-operating. My husband too was uncultured and had no manners. I felt ashamed when he talked non-sense in every body's presence. Then I requested my mother to help me in getting a divorce". As per the Islamic jurisprudence, a Muslim woman is entitled to *Mahr* (Dower money) at the time of her marriage. Her husband
didn't pay it to her. She, therefore, claimed the custody of her son for that.

Tahira was doing embroidery on crewel. She learnt this craft during her childhood from a craft master in their neighborhood. She was paid on "piece rate basis". She did embroidery on small pieces of crewel, which were latter used for making handbags. She got Rs.13 per bag for embroidery work. She finished two and a half bags per day, thus, earning around Rs.1000 a month. Before her marriage she used to do this work to earn for her own expenses and dowry, but now she earned to bring up her son. Right from her divorce Tahira was staying with her elder sister's family. Her brother-in-law was running a small business and earning about Rs. 15000 per month. Tahira said that her brother-in-law was generous and affectionate. He treated her well. He also loved his family. He willingly provided her space under his roof. He never made her to feel that his house did not belong to her. Her own father was quite old now and owned a small house in which three of her brothers lived together. She did not want to disturb the privacy of her brothers.

Though her brother-in-law took care of her food, shelter and clothes, she spent her earnings on her son's
school fee, books, uniform and a little bit on herself. Every day she worked almost nine hours on handicraft work.

    Though she was not solely responsible for domestic chores, she provided constant help to her sister in everything. Whenever she found time she loved to chat with other fellow women. She could not make any comment regarding the wages given to her. She said, "I am satisfied and happy that at least I know crewel work, how can an illiterate woman like me otherwise earn livelihood in a dignified way"? She further said that her husband never gave her a single penny. Whenever she asked for it he used to avoid by saying..."what for do you need the money, you are provided food and shelter in the family. As if beyond that there was no need." Then she used to do crewel work and earn to fulfill her needs. Tahira strongly advocated that women should try to learn some skill so that they could earn to become economically independent.

Case No 5

    Zoona was a literate lady. She was old but a stout lady of 75 years of age. She had studied up to 9th standard. She was married for the last 55 years and was leading a quite happy married life. Her husband had done matriculation and was working with some private
organization. She was not quite happy with her husband's achievements as she said "he was always lethargic, though he was a matriculate of his times, he could not find a suitable job for himself". However, with a big laughter she said, "He loved me a lot, he was mad in my love. I was the most important person in his life. He never does anything that hurts me. My decision in the family are absolute and my husband follows it with happiness even at this stage. He always used to give me more respect and I commanded higher status in the family because of his affectionate and loveable attitude."

Zoona exclaimed with joy that her parents were quite broad-minded. Her father had passed 8th standard and was in govt. service seventy years back. She was the only daughter of her parents along with two younger brothers. Her brothers attained higher education and later on became officers in the state government. She was also appointed as a govt. school teacher after passing her 6th standard examination, but was not allowed to join by her prospective husband as well as in-laws. They were too conservative vis-à-vis women's education.

She had three daughters and a son. All her daughters did post-graduation and were in government service as
school teachers. They were happily married in educated and economically well off families. She was dissatisfied with her son who didn't study much and managed to pass only 12th standard. He was a shopkeeper and earned Rs.4000 per month. He was yet to get married and was about 30 years of age. Her husband was too old and did not earn anything now. She lived in her father's house along with her son and husband. The house was now in a shabby condition and without any proper ventilation.

When Zoona gave birth to three daughters and a son her husband's income was quite moderate but still she was able to feed them nicely with that income. One question that constantly disturbed her was how the children could get proper education and what would be their future? She used to spend long hours in pondering over this issue, till one day she decided to learn some craft so that she could supplement the family income. "That is when I learnt spinning pashmina wool from my neighbour". Since Zoona was active and intelligent therefore she learnt the art quickly. She used to spin very fine threads, which would always fetch her more money. She said "thinner you spin, more threads you can take out of pashmina wool. So naturally if the threads are
spun thinner it will fetch more money as the middleman counts the number of threads and pays money accordingly".

Her mother also used to spin *pashmina*, but never taught her as she wanted her to attain education and become a school teacher. Her mother's dream remained unfulfilled. *When Zoona* learnt spinning, her mother was too old to spin. Therefore she gifted *Zoona* her own spinning wheel. *Zoona* still spins with the same wheel and had a very high reverence for it. She treated it not only as a wheel that fetch her some money, but a token of love and a gift from her mother. *Zoona* wish her younger daughter to take the wheel after her death, but her daughter was reluctant as she did not want to spin the wheel.

After learning the art of spinning *pashmina* wool she used to work hard and earn some money. She would spend all her earnings on her children's education, clothes, health etc. With her husbands income she used to manage the household. She managed all the household responsibilities alone. Though she used to feel exhausted at the end of the day, she would never neglect her children. She was happy that all her daughters at least did post-graduation. She said that her children's education was paramount, rest of the things were secondary.
This time Zoona earned Rs.600 per month. She spent this money on medicines, her clothes and also on the clothes of her husband. She also bought chocolates, chips and other things for her grand children. Even at this age, she looked quite energetic and enthusiastic. She said that when she get money after spinning she was extremely happy and satisfied. She still cooked food, washed utensils, and cleaned the house herself. However her son occasionally rendered some help. She worked for around 12 hours a day and spends five hours on spinning. She got up at five in the morning and went to bed at eleven in the night. She was also fond of watching television. 'Kaun Banega Crore Pati', a popular programme on star television network was her favourite program these days. She also did knitting but only when she did not feel like spinning. She proudly said, "earlier girl child was discriminated but now the things have changed and the discrimination against the girl child has diminished to a great extent". Narrating her own story she said, "though I used to take firm decisions, and commanded respect but still my husband enjoyed the superior status".

Zoona loved spinning and wanted to do so till death. She did not want to be dependent on her son as she said that her son's income was not much and he had to save for his
children. She further said that the wages given to the spinners are very low and should be increased. Her last wish was that her son could get a government job and could construct his own beautiful house.

**Case studies of unmarried women**

**Case No 6.**

Tawheedha was unmarried and around 27 years old. She was of average looks and height. She was totally uneducated. Her parents too were illiterate. Her father was 55 years of age and was a labourer. He did not earn anything as he was suffering from some stomach ailment. Her mother was around 50 years old and she too was not keeping a good health. She lived in a nuclear family. Her two younger brothers had done graduation in science and both were still unemployed. In a family of six, Tawheedha and her younger sister were the only two bread winning members.

She worked on Namdha. She did embroidery work on woolen yarn. She was paid Rs 43 per Namdha of the size of 5ft.x5ft. She finished one and a half Namdha per day and some times even two. Therefore her monthly income was around Rs1800 to Rs2000. Her younger sister too was an artisan & was involved in the same craft. Her sister finished sometime one Namdha per day or at times one & a half
depending on the availability of time. She too earned about Rs 1500 per month. With a total amount of Rs. 3500, they managed the household. Every day Tawheeda & her sister spent around 10 hours on handcraft work. Since Tawheeda worked faster than her sister therefore she earned more than her sister.

Both the sisters worked 18 hours a day including the work they spent on household chores and handicrafts. They usually got up at 6 AM and worked till 11 PM. The whole family was economically dependent on the earnings of the two sisters. They worked very hard for the family and hardly found any leisure time. They finished the household work together. If Tawheeda cooked the food, the other sister cleaned the house in the mean time. In late evenings Tawheeda made the balls out of the yarn with which she had to do embroidery next day. She hardly went to market, but being the eldest offspring of her sick parents, she managed to go for social calls when it was necessary. Though she loved her craft, but wanted to change it if she got something better which would fetch her more money. She said that the wages she was getting were quit low, notwithstanding the fact that the embroidery work had an adverse effect on the eyes and health of an artisan. She further said, "my left
thumb and index finger start bleeding when I work for longer hours as the hook with which I work constantly pricks them. Then at night before going to bed I apply some Henna on the injuries so that I can work the next day. At times it does not get healed up as the pricks are severe. I have to stop the work for days together resulting in the curtailment of my earnings. I cannot afford to stop the work as the money is badly required by the family."

Both Tawheeda and her sister gave all their earnings to their mother who was the head of the family. Tawheeda loved her parents and wanted to do something for them. She told, "had she been educated, she could have done better". She wanted to start a production unit of her own, but had neither the money nor the sufficient understanding of such business due to her illiteracy. When asked about the discrimination between men and women she was not able to say anything. She only know that her family required her help. However, she said that both man and woman are equal and both of them can be economically independent if they have the determination and will to do so. Though both of her brothers were unemployed, she had no regrets but felt for their future. She said that both of them had done graduation and unless they found a suitable government job, they could
not do anything. "It is none of their fault, as there are very few jobs available in Kashmir for educated youth", said Tawheeda.

She was not very keen about her rights and said that she will not take any share in her parental property nor would she claim any mehr from her husband. She would be marrying to stay with him for all her life and never wished to break it. So why at all should she claim it. This explains the ignorance or rather innocence of Tawheeda about Mehr.

Case No 7

Gulshan the resident of down town area of Srinagar was quite beautiful with pink and white complexion. She was 19 years of age and was unmarried. She discontinued her studies when she was in her 5th standard. Her mother said, "when arms struggle for freedom started in the valley way back in 1990 Gulshan was in fifth class. One day she got stuck in the school till evening due to heavy exchange of fire between militants and the security forces. When she came home she was looking quite frightened and from next day she refused to go to school. Despite our constant motivation she couldn't overcome her fear. This was how her school days were over". She was now mature enough and felt bad about the fear that resulted in her dropping out from
the school. This time she wanted like to continue her studies, but now the time had gone, as it waited for none.

She lived in a nuclear family consisting of her parents, two brothers and one sister. Her father was a tailor and earned about Rs. 2000 a month. Gulshan worked on Crewel. She did embroidery in thick woolen yarn on hand woven cloth by a pointed hook. She earned around Rs. 800 a month. Her sister also did the crewel embroidery. Gulshan had learnt this art from her mother. Her mother was an expert in this work and also earned around Rs 2000 per month. The dealer from whom they got work provided them the cloth and two or three kg's of yarn. For every kg she was paid Rs 425. She finished two kg's of yarn per month. She spent around 6 to 7 hours on handicraft work and also share the domestic work with her sister and mother, as her mother spent around 10 hours a day on handicraft work. Her mother had some backache problem, so she rendered very little help to her in the household chores. Inspite of being so busy, she found some time in the evening to relax and watch TV.

Gulshan's family owned a newly constructed small but a good house. Since the total income of her parents was around 4000/- Gulshan earned for her own expenditure and also contributed a part of it towards the family. Her elder
brother had done graduation in science stream, three years back and was still unemployed. She said, "for the whole day my brother relaxes in the room and watches TV in between he takes meals and tea and has nothing to do". She felt quite unhappy with her brother and said, "why cannot he also do something and earn like I do. Our parents discriminate between us. They do not say anything to my brother and in turn ask me and my younger sister to earn."

Mother always said that it was difficult to run the family on a meager amount of Rs. 4000. She always prayed for our brothers settlement. The younger sister who passed her matriculation last year also worked on crewel during her free time and earned around Rs. 200 per month for her own self. Gulshan said that the only motivation behind her work was to be economically independent and be no more a burden on her parents. She did not want to give up her handicraft work unless she got something better.

When asked to give her opinion about the discrimination of women in the family vis-à-vis men, she said, "a woman can not take any decision of her own, while a man can always do so. Firstly in her parent's house she is subservient to her parents or brother, then after marriage she is subservient to her husband or in-laws and after the death
of her husband she was under the control of her son. Male approval is always a must in one way or the other". Though she was quite happy with her crewel work, she did not want her children to do so. Regarding her rights she firmly said, "if my parents will not give me my property share, which is due to me as per Islamic law, I will claim it. This time it is me who maintain the house from cleaning, cooking, washing to everything. How can I be deprived of my rights. Daughters make the house and sons take the advantage". Regarding Mehr she said that she will claim it right at the time of her marriage.

Case No.8

Tanveera was unmarried with medium height and attractive features. She was 23 years of age. She was totally uneducated and cannot read or write. Her dead parents were also illiterate. She lost her father when she was just four years of age and her elder brother was 12 years. They were brought up by the mother who used to spin pashmina wool. Her maternal uncle also was rendering some financial help. Her elder brother started doing business with his maternal Uncle. They were brought up in absolute poverty. Some five years back she lost her mother also.
Tanveera was the only sister of her three brothers. She was the youngest among the siblings and her elder brother was the head of the family. Her brother was running a small business of carpet and was earning about Rs. 4000 per month. The other two brothers were working as salesmen and earned Rs 1500 each per month. Since they lost their parents, so none of the brothers had the opportunity of going to school. In a family of just four members, Tanveera used to feel bored after all her brothers left for work. So she decided to learn some craft as an engagement for her spare time. She learnt embroidery on shawls with hook from her friend who was her next door neighbour also.

She got up at 6 in the morning. After bath she offered prayers and then prepared tea / breakfast for the family. Simultaneously she cooked meals for both the times as well as washed clothes and utensils and cleaned the house. She finishes her house hold activities by 11 AM. After that she works on shawls till her brothers returned from work. In between she took lunch break for half an hour. In the evening she quickly made tea for the family as well as evening meals and again started working on shawls. After dinner she washed utensils, cleaned the kitchen and ironed the clothes. Her brothers did not render any help in domestic
chores. While she was at work on shawls she used to catch glimpses of TV and listen to music. Tanveera said, "though working on shawls over burden me but I have no option. What will I do during my spare time. There is no one in the family with whom I can interact during daytime. My brothers don't allow me to visit the neighbors nor do I feel like".

Every day she worked for more than 17 hours and she spent not less than 10 hours per day on handicraft work. She earned 1500 to 2000 per month and saved all the money. She was the in charge of all the finances earned by her brothers but did not spent anything herself. She acted like a treasurer only and kept the record of all the incomes and the expenditures. She never went to market herself, her elder brother did all the shopping and buy/bring whatever was required at home. He even got her work from the craft master and kept the record of her earnings and the materials brought from and returned to the craft master. The craft master paid her on "piece rate basis", depending on the amount of work a shawl contained. She was satisfied with what ever she earned and was unmindful about the exploitation by her master craftsman as she felt that the craft master also had to earn his share from the work.
At present she saved all her earnings and planned to spent this money at the time of her marriage for buying clothes and dowry items. After the marriage she would have no hesitation in giving up this job as she believed that she would be subservient to her husband and the in laws. So it would be they who would decide her course of action. While at present she was fully under the control of her brother she was ready to give herself under the control of her husband and in laws after the marriage. Therefore she in a way had internalized the patriarchal social structure which legitimizes the male dominance.

She was not able to say whether she enjoyed equality vis-à-vis her brothers or not, but said it clearly that, "though it is difficult to say whether a girl child is or is not discriminated in comparison to a male child but parents do not believe and trust their daughters the way they believe and trust their sons."

"In family a women has no right to decision. Her opinion is always considered as a stupid remark," said Tanveera. Regarding husband wife relationship, she said, "husband should be a step ahead as he has to earn for the family. It is not the responsibility of a woman to earn".
Though Tanveera was happy and satisfied with her profession, she did not want her daughter or son to do the same. Her dream was that her husband should be a rich man, should have many cars, should be able to give her a lot of jewelry and fill her life with all the riches and happiness.

Case No 9

Rafiqa was unmarried and about 40 years of age with pale and sickly complexion and looked haggard. She was a heart patient right from her childhood and had a family history of heart ailments. Her eldest brother died due to heart attack; second eldest brother and sister were also suffering from heart trouble. The parents of Rafiqa died some 15 years back. She was the youngest of all her siblings. She lived with her youngest brother who was doing small scale timber business and earned about Rs. 5000 a month. With this money he managed a family of 7 including his wife, four children and sister Rafiqa.

Since her father was a very poor man, with a small income to feed a huge family, Rafiqa could not be sent to school. Her elder brother, who was now no more, had the opportunity of going to school as he was the first child in a joint family. Her sister in law was the head of the family and nothing could be done without her consent. Even her brother
shivered in her presence. Her sister in law was annoyed with her as she did not help much in domestic chores. Rafiqa said that her sister in law did not realize her health conditions. Her brother's family did not treat her well and considered her a big burden. She was always taunted and abused by her sister in law.

After the death of her parents she learnt the art of chain stitching to meet some of her requirements. Her brother was the only earning member of the family and had to feed a large family of 7. She was fed up with her life, as she felt suffocated in the given atmosphere of the family. For her all the relations were meaningless and she had no love or respect left for any of her relations. "Best relation", she said with tears rolling down her cheeks, "is the one that cares and shows concern".

She wished had her income been sufficient she would have loved to live on her own, without bothering her brother or sister in law. Even at present her brother provided her only food and shelter and she managed to meet all her expenditure on medicines, clothes etc. The financial constraints together with her heart problem induced lot of tension in her mind. This was precisely the reason why she learnt the art of chain stitching.
In this art the embroidery work is done all over with a hook on hand woven cloth therefore the wages are also higher than the crewel work. For a medium size cushion cover she got paid up to Rs 62 per piece. However, the embroidery work has to be very thick and even a centimeter of cloth is not to be left un-embroidered. Her work was neat and clean and could earn a lot of money. However, for that she would have to work regularly and continuously. Only her physical ailment deterred her from working more and earning more. She hardly spent three hours a day on embroidery work and earned about 25 to 30 rupees. Though she wished to work more but exertion due to more work was too dangerous for her. Since she had been advised by the doctor to take complete rest she spent remaining time taking rest. She also washed her own clothes, helped in light domestic work and occasionally visited the local market to buy some house-hold items for herself.

She wanted to give it up as working for even three hours on "chain stitch rug" overburdened her and she often got pain in her neck and shoulders. But she could not afford to do so as she said, "I have to pull my life till death is granted to me and I have to continue the work to earn for my medicines to live this painful life".
She was thankful to Almighty for bestowing her the skill of embroidery. She said that it made her economically independent to a great extent and also made her sustenance possible if not easy. She strongly advocated that the parents should make both their daughters and sons properly educated and economically independent so that they could live on their own and will not fight on trivial issues. Regarding the rights of inheritance she said, "parents should distribute it equally among their children during their life time. They should not keep things undecided. If they fail to do so in their life time it becomes a major problem for their daughters after their death".

When asked why women did not start their own production units she said, "it involves a good investment, and a lot of leg work to find the artisan women and then to find the proper market for the goods. Since women always remain busy with the domestic work and children, they hardly can find time to do all this. However if a woman has enough money and time she can also compete with the men equally".

**Case No. 10**

**Foziya** was unmarried and 17 years old. She was of a good height, with beautiful eyes and innocent looks. She
was very intelligent and loved to wear good clothes. She was a middle pass (8th class) and had to discontinue her studies due to family crisis—her mother's separation from her father. Her father was a tailor by profession and earned around three thousand rupees a month. Her mother was around 45 years of age and separated from her husband some 8 years back. Foziya's father was a scoundrel and never cared for his wife and daughters. He was a gambler and used to finish all his earnings on gambling. Foziya's mother was used to be strongly against his gambling and other malpractices. She would try again and again to motivate her husband to keep away from such activities. The motivation usually used to lead first to a heated exchange and then to a serious fighting. In the end her mother would often get a heavy beating from her father.

He was often scolded by his mother (Foziya's grandmother), but he did not pay any heed to anyone's advice or remonstrance. She later on died due to this shock. After the death of his mother Foziya's father disposed off the house and ran to some unknown place. Her mother was forced to leave that house and she moved to her parental house along with her five daughters. There she started earning her livelihood by working on shawls and sent all her
daughters to school. Foziya’s maternal grand father was also rendering some help. After one year her father appeared and asked her mother to come again to stay with him which she refused. Then one day some three years back he kidnapped three of Foziya’s sisters from school, and they still continued to live with him. Foziya along with her youngest sister is living with her mother in her maternal grandparents house. That five room house accommodates four families including the three families of her maternal uncle’s.

While her younger sister, who was 10 year old, would go to school, Foziya and her mother worked on shawls to keep the family running. Both of them work with hook on shawls. Her mother earned about Rs. 1500/- per month, Foziya earned Rs. 800-1000 per month. She was paid in terms of Tola. One tola is equivalent to 10 grams of thread (staple). For every Tola she is paid Rs. 40-50. Out of her own earnings she spent a part of it on her clothes which she was fond of and gave rest to her mother. She did not want to work on shawls, but worked out of sheer necessity and compulsion. She did embroidery slower than her mother, therefore, earned less than her. She spent 10 hours a day on handicraft work. She cleaned the house which took her
around one hour daily. Rest of the time she watched TV and loved to chat with her cousins, who lived in the same house.

**Fodziya** was less burdened with work as compared to other artisan women, because her mother did all the domestic work and she only provided a helping hand and that too occasionally. Regarding discrimination between man and woman, she said that boys enjoy more liberty and were allowed to take independent decisions. They were not accountable to any one. She cited example of her mother and said, "my father not only spoiled my mother's life, but also deprived his children from being together and share the pleasures of a complete family". She further said that every woman should have some vocational training so that she could sustain herself if she was left alone. She reiterated the economic independence of a woman. However, she felt, "it is unfortunate that women even today are discriminated and paid less as compared to their male counterparts. Still she believes that handicraft industry in Kashmir is most suitable for the women to earn in order to be economically independent."
Conclusion

These individual case histories confirm our findings from quantitative analysis. The main conclusions one can draw from these cases are:

1. The artisan women mostly come from lower economic and educational background.

2. Artisan women do the handicraft work due to economic necessity. When male members earn less, then it is the responsibility of a woman to supplement and raise the economic status of the family.

3. The day in a life of most of the artisan women is quite hectic. Her domestic and handicraft work goes on simultaneously and she hardly finds anytime to rest.

4. Women are aware about their exploitation and inadequate wages, but cannot stop work as it is important and vital for their very sustenance.
A brief about the workers, the middlemen and the trader

The handicraft industry of Jammu & Kashmir is famous world over. Its use is not only limited to India or Indian market, but is fully integrated in the world market. Our study of the handicraft industry would be incomplete without an understanding of its working pattern. The women who are the real producers are linked to the world market through various channels. First there are agents, then the bigger merchants and the bigger merchants in turn are connected to exporters.

The most direct and visible contact the artisan women have is with the agents. These agents are of two types – the smaller and the bigger. The smaller agents were originally themselves the head craft-masters and used to run a small centre, where 20 to 30 girls used to learn the craft. These girls would also work on selected handicrafts and get paid for their work. The craft master used to pay them on daily basis and used to earn some profit out of their work. Since
the people now hardly send their girls to such centres, therefore, these craft-masters have invested from Rs. 5000 to 1,00,000 in purchasing raw material etc. and give it to women for embroidery work, spinning etc. The women take this work home and are paid wages according to the quantity and quality of work they do. The small agents at times do the handicraft work themselves as well, if they have time. Usually they do it for 2-3 hours daily. The bigger agents too were originally craft-masters, but due to their extended business, none of them is involved in actual production now. They have turned into material suppliers to the small agents and artisan women and are whole sale dealers for the exporters.

Both the big and small agents visit the artisan women at their residences, give them raw material, collect the products and give them wages. Some of the artisan women themselves go to the agent's house to get raw material. The agent's earnings are totally based on the difference between the wages he gives to the artisan woman and the wages he gets from the merchant or the exporter for his product. So he is always making the efforts to keep the wages of artisan woman as low as possible. For this they always exploit the poor artisans and use different tactics. For example, telling
the artisans that the market is down; their work is not very neat; or the pashmina threads are thick and not properly spun, etc.

While the agents blame the artisan woman for not finishing the work well in time, the artisan women blame them for not increasing their wages. Some of the agents revealed to the researcher that male artisans are paid Rs. 5-6 more than the female artisans because their embroidery work is better and more clean. They further said that if they get a photograph for a new design, women couldn't make the designs by simply looking at the photograph, while a male can. They, therefore, need a sample and that sample always is done by a male artisan. However, most of the women artisans do not know about this.

These agents further revealed that they give work to more women than men, which simply means there are more women artisans. When asked to state the reasons for giving more work to woman than men, they said that their wages are lower than male artisans, therefore, their savings are higher. Secondly, the men cannot afford to work on such low wages. A woman artisan after doing handicraft work for 11 hours can hardly earn Rs. 2000 a month. Since woman do it
at home while doing their other domestic activities, it is a
good leisure time activity for them.

These agents have their own association, who meet
once or twice in six months. The wages and other things are
decided by the association. The agents then sell their
products to big merchants or directly to the exporters. The
big merchants have business in lakhs and usually own
shop/shops in different parts of India, but most of them do
not possess the export license. They also sell their products
to exporters who later on bring it in the world market.

The women artisans are the real workers, the agents,
merchants and the exporters are the exploiters. All of them
take their share of exploitation. The agents share is also
limited. Big merchants and the exporters are the real
beneficiaries.