CHAPTER - III

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN THE STUDY
3.1: INTRODUCTION
In this chapter the details about the design of the study are explained. The method, materials and devices used in the collection of data and the reasons for their selection are elaborated. The sample selection, the qualitative and quantitative techniques used in analysing and interpreting the data are also explained. Lastly, the limitation of the study is also presented.

3.2: THE METHOD
The present research being an exploratory study of the women weavers of Manipur, uses qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study examines the socio-economic conditions, problems, aspirations and social relations of weavers vis-a-vis the family and the community. This exploratory study is an attempt to understand the social world of the women weavers.

The qualitative data was collected by using observation, case study and personal interviews. The quantitative technique was also used to measure the attitudes of weavers. This data has been presented in the form of tables. Both, the qualitative and quantitative techniques complemented and supplemented each other in such a way to help us understand the world of the weavers.
3.3: SELECTING THE CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS AND VARIABLES

The women weavers of Manipur may be categorised in many ways. One of the ways of categorising them is in terms of the nature of working condition. Thus, on the basis of the working condition observed during the study, the weavers are categorised as – self-employed weavers (SEW, now onwards), weavers working under merchant weavers (MW, now onwards) and weavers working in weaving cooperative society (CW, now onwards). The socio-economic variables namely, age, income, material status, region, religion, clan and type of weaver were treated as independent variables during the process of analysis. On the basis of these independent variables the dependent variables which covered the economic, social and domestic dimension of lives of women weavers are also explained.

3.4: FORMULATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Being an exploratory study, I posed research questions for which explanations are sought. The questions formulated ranged from various types, orders and levels. Besides the present working condition, questions related to the weavers’ attitude, aspiration and future were also examined. The study attempts to answer the various research questions mentioned in Chapter 1. These are subdivided into specific questions, which are given below-

❖ How different are the weavers in Manipur from the weavers of other states of India?
❖ Is there any relation between the weavers’ educational level and attitude towards small family norm?
❖ What attitude do the weavers have about the weaving occupation?
❖ What are their job aspirations (other than weaving, if any) and what do they wish for their daughters?
❖ Which kinds of weavers are discriminated and how are they discriminated?
❖ What are the changes in the market structure and how does it affect the weavers?
❖ Do the weavers participate in the community programmes?
❖ Do the weavers belong to any organisation which protects their welfare?

These questions are framed as they attempt to present a holistic picture of the weavers’ world. Hence the study helps to understand the women weavers’ conditions and their relation in the context of the social structure of the society.

3.5: OPERATIONALISING CONCEPTS

The following terms are operationalised for the study.
1. **Annual income**- The annual income of the weavers’ household is calculated by computing salary and/or wages of all working household members and income derived from agricultural products in a year (from 1st January 2001 to 31st December 2001).
2. **Class**- The indicators of class status of the weavers’ household in the study are –
   • **Income**- the income of the family derived from agricultural products and salaries and/or wages earned by the members of the household during a year.
   • **Type of house**- depending on the material used in the construction, the weavers houses were divided into *kachha*, *semi-pacca* and *pacca* house. A *kachha* house is defined as a house made from thatch, mud
bamboo or other low quality material. A semi-

50 pacca house is made from galvanize sheet roof, cement or mud wall and using partly low quality and partly high quality material. While house made from cement, brick, iron or high quality materials throughout in the roof, wall and floor is considered as pacca house.

- **Cultivable land** - Besides the land used for making the house, to determine the class, the weavers were asked the amount of cultivable land owned by the weavers’ household.

- **Items owned in the household** - The status of a household was also indicated by having commodities like vehicle, bicycle, radio, fan, cooking gas and T.V. in the house.

On the basis of these indicators weavers’ households are classified into four groups namely, lower class, lower middle class, upper middle class and upper class. However, the income of the household correlated with other indicators of the class (land, type of house, items owned in the family). So, income per annum was taken as a determinant of class for the analysis. Thus, the income fixed for the four classes were –

1) Below Rs. 11,000 p.a. - lower class
2) Rs. 11,001 - 50,000 p.a. - lower middle class
3) Rs. 50,001 – 1,50,000 p.a. - upper middle class
4) Above Rs. 1,50,000 p.a. - upper class

During the study some respondents gave an impression of saving a lot of money or they stated an income figure which seemed to be higher than the kind of life style they led. In these cases, the income was cross-checked by calculating the weaver’s income and household income. If the saving was found to be more than the income then, the weaver was asked to explain the anomaly, and discrepancies were corrected.

3. **Discrimination** - Following the Encyclopedia of Sociology, discrimination has been defined as ‘unfavorable treatment (or unequal
treatment of groups of people on arbitrary grounds), a form of control that keeps the groups socially distant from one another. This separation is accomplished through institutionalised practices that attribute inferiority on the basis of notions that frequently have little or nothing to do with the real behaviour of those who are discriminated against' (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974:83). When the unequal treatment takes the form of systematic abuse, exploitation and injustice, then it becomes social oppression (Johnson 1997:213-14).

After examining the definitions of discrimination, it is essential for the study to adopt an operational definition of discrimination against women weavers in the IS. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted in 1976 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. The operational definition of discrimination by CEDAW has been used in the study. The Convention defines discrimination against women in Article 1 as:

1) Anything, action/non-action which nullifies or impairs women’s enjoyment of rights.
2) Anything which has the intent/purpose or effect of nullifying, impairing or denying the enjoyment of rights.

These rights include:

i) The right to life
ii) The right not to subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
iii) The right to equal protection according to humanitarian norms in time of international or internal armed conflict
iv) The right to liberty and security of person
v) The right to equal protection under the law
vi) The right to equality in the family
vii) The right to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health
viii) The right to just and favourable conditions of work

One of the principles of the Convention is based on the understanding that discrimination is socially constructed, that it is not an essential or natural principle of human interaction. This approach recognises the need for and paves the way for concerted action against inequality and the institutional mechanisms which perpetuate it.

4. Self-employed weavers- SEW are also known as independent weavers. They financed their working capital rather than depending on merchants or weavers’ cooperative societies. They sell their finished products either by themselves or through agents. They generally hold their own looms and work at their places with or without the assistance of her family members. SEW may be either full time or part time weavers.

5. Merchant weavers- Those weavers who work for the cloth merchant or traders are referred here as ‘merchant weavers’. The merchants supplied raw materials like yarn, design (to be used in the production) and sometime loom accessories like reed and bobbins, but generally weavers used their own looms. Wages were paid on piece rate basis. Weavers do not have the right to sell the finished products but in some rare cases they sell one or two pieces when they are urgently in need of money. Generally such weavers lack capital even though they possessed the loom. They work either at their own places or on the merchants’ premises.

6. Cooperative weavers- Weavers who are working in any primary weavers’ cooperative society, registered under the Manipur Cooperative Societies Act, 1976 were referred to as cooperative weavers. The societies provided facilities like raw materials, credit facilities, looms and
accessories, training and marketing. In the present context, the CW are either those who are actively working at the time of the interview or who had worked in the society but were not weaving at the time of the interview. In the case of those who had worked in the society in the past, only those persons who had their names in the membership register were considered as CW.

7. Leisure- Leisure meant activities which are not meant for market and which are performed for one’s own interest.

3.6: TYPES OF DATA USED IN THE STUDY

Data were collected from two sources namely, primary and secondary.

1) Primary data- The primary data were collected in two different ways. Firstly, 300 weavers from Meitei community were personally interviewed by using interview schedule method. Secondly, data were also collected by the case study method. 12 case studies of weavers belonging to different ethnic communities of Manipur namely, Scheduled tribes, Scheduled caste, Manipuri Muslims, and Meiteis were conducted. Before collecting the primary data, observation and pilot study were also conducted.

2) Secondary data- The secondary data sources were in the form of statistical records, plans and policies of the Government of Manipur, handloom census published by the Ministry of Textile, India, and population census of Government of India and lastly, schemes and subsidies sanctioned by both State and Central Government. These were collected from related department functioning under the Government of Manipur namely, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Manipur Cooperative Societies, Statistics Department, Census office, Planning Department, Institute of Cooperative Management, Manipur Development Society, Manipur Handloom and Handicraft Development
and Imphal Municipality Council. Materials were also collected from non-governmental organizations in Imphal like RUFI (Rural Financial Institute), Khundrakpam; Friendship Center, Khurai; Green Cross, Minuthong; Rani Industries, Wangkhei. In Gujarat institutes from which data were collected were GIDR (Gujarat Institute Development Research), Ahmedabad; IRMA (Institute of Rural Management, Anand), and SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) Ahmedabad. In addition to this, published materials on women workers were also collected from books and journals including Seminar, New Delhi; Economic and Political Weekly, Mumbai; Human Organization, USA; Sociological Abstract, USA; Man in India, Ranchi; Shramshakti, New Delhi; Sociological Bulletin, New Delhi; Manushi, Delhi; Indian Journal of Gender Studies, New Delhi; Macha Leima, Imphal; Manipur Cooperative Society, Imphal. Survey reports and published as well as unpublished Ph. D theses from Manipur University, Manipur; Mumbai University, Mumbai; M.S University of Baroda, Vadodara and Gujarat University were also referred to. These secondary data were critically examined and analysed to provide a micro and macro level context about women working in IS, particularly the women weavers.

3.7: OBSERVATION AND PRELIMINARY ENQUIRES

I observed, particularly the women workers in the IS before conducting the in-depth interview. Such observations made me familiar and understand the weavers’ social world in their natural environment. It also provided me with the opportunity to observe the non-verbal behaviour namely, facial expressions, body movement of the workers, which were usually meant to express some feelings and other activities they performed. So, observation and interview were used as complementary research methods.
The kind of observation used in the study was non-participant observation. In the first visit, I remained passive and did not question them about their work and I only observed. The advantage of this was that I could choose the situation to be observed and freely record the data. On the other hand, the disadvantage of this method was that the respondent’s behaviour could be affected if they became conscious of being observed by someone. However, after this phase when the respondents became familiar with me, and I established rapport with them, their behaviour turned ‘natural’. The respondents knew the identity of the researcher and the purpose of the study. All observations were conducted in a systematic way i.e. what was to be observed and whom to observe was decided beforehand. Observation in the present context was concentrated more on social characteristics and social interaction. Reports were written after the observation.

Regarding preliminary enquiries, knowledgeable persons/experts in the field of handloom industry and other institutions dealing with weavers’ training and employment were contacted. Information was also collected from old as well as young weavers, merchants, president, or secretary of weavers’ cooperative societies and other experts in the field of weaving activity. This helped to ascertain the preliminary working conditions, labour recruitment, changes in the system, tradition and values attached with the handloom sector. They constituted the informants of the study.

3.8: PILOT STUDY
On the basis of this preliminary information and observation, an interview schedule was prepared for in-depth personal interview of the weavers. This was pre-tested by conducting a pilot study. In this process 30 women weavers- 10 each from SEW, MW, CW, were randomly
selected. The trial interviews revealed errors in the schedule which were rectified. Some of the open-ended questions were changed to close-ended questions. For instance, questions regarding weaver’s age, wages, size of the household, number of working days and number of looms were kept open at first, but after the data analysis of the pilot study the responses were categorised and pre-coded. Such pre-coded questions were used in the main field study. This saved time and labour which otherwise would have been spent in coding the responses. The pilot study also provided guidance on the suitability of the method of data collection and adequacy of the schedule in the following ways-

3.8.1: Suitability Of The Method Of Data Collection
Since all the respondents in the study were mostly illiterate or achieved low levels of education, interview method was considered appropriate. As far as possible, it could provide accurate responses and at the same time non-verbal behaviour of the respondents could be observed.

3.8.2: The Adequacy Of Schedule
This was probably the most valuable function of the pilot study. It offered a way to check the questions, the efficiency of its layout, clarity of definitions and adequacy of questions. During the process, if it was found that many respondents refused to answer a particular question, then the order of the question was either altered or it was framed differently so that one did not feel offended. For instance, during the pilot study a question on health problem as ‘What kind of ailment do you suffer because of weaving?’ Many respondents were reluctant to respond to this question. So, for the main study this was altered and asked in an indirect way as ‘What kind of ailments are suffered by weavers? Name them:
‘Do you suffer from any of them?’ This yielded more responses in the interview. Thus, the pilot study resulted in important improvements to the interview schedule. In fact, it was the researcher’s last safeguard against the possibility of an ineffective interview in the main field study.

3.9: TIME SCHEDULE

On an average the interview took between 45 to 60 minutes per respondent. Since the respondents were women, it was very inconvenient to interview them in the morning and evening, as during these periods they were busy with their household work. Hence, the most convenient time to interview them was between 10.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. This was the time when they were free from household work. Besides this, in the agricultural season (January, July, August, December) the rural weavers left the loom and worked in the field, as they could earn more money (about Rs.70 per day) than weaving. So considering all this, the most convenient period was from February to June. For the present study the personal interview work was conducted between February to June 2001.

3.10: SAMPLING

Studying the whole universe within a limited time span is not possible. A proper sampling which represented the universe gives a greater scope in analysing the conditions and problems of the women weavers. For the purpose of the study, samples of Meitei women weavers (for personal interview) were selected from the two districts of Manipur namely, Imphal East and Imphal West. These two districts, the capital of Manipur, comprise a total geographical area of 1228 sq.km. and the Meitei community mainly dominates it (Directorate of Economics and Statistics 2001a:2). Although area wise Imphal is small in size (only 5 per cent of
the total geographical area of Manipur), the two districts together have 34.8 per cent of the state's population (Census of India 2001:9). They are the centers of power, culture and wealth of the state. For case study, a sample was selected of persons who stayed in seven districts of Manipur namely, Churachandpur, Imphal East and Imphal West, Senapati, Thoubal, Tamenglong and Ukhrul.

The study focuses mainly on the Meitei community because they constitute the highest proportion of the population and have high social, political and economic power among the Manipuris. At the same time, they are highly influenced by Hinduism. They have assimilated their old traditional values and culture with the new values and culture of the Hindu society. Thus, among the Meitei one sees a culture which reflects tribal egalitarian values on some dimensions and Hindu hierarchical values on another. The Hindu patriarchal and hierarchical values are reflected in the attitude and status given to women in the Meitei society. Such an influence of Hindu culture is not found in other groups among the Manipuris like the Tribals, Muslims and Lois.

Although there are many studies on women working in the IS in India, yet studying the weaving activity as a women's occupation among the Meitei community from a sociological view would increase our knowledge about gender relations in North-Eastern part of India. Further, when women exclusively owned the handloom sector, the Meitei women weavers are not accompanied by a significant redefinition of their status. Thus, the expectation of many feminist theorists who argued for female emancipation had shown signs of general deterioration among the women workers. So, development and recognition of women weavers' rights, which was part of the tradition and values, was indeed required.

The Meiteis have been classified as OBC (Other Backward Class) as per the Mandal Commission Report. So weavers selected on the basis
of stratified random sampling either belonged to OBC or upper caste but not to the scheduled caste. This was owing to the fact that of the scheduled castes who have settled in Imphal districts (Andro, Phayeng, Khukhrul and Sekmai), few have taken to weaving. Amongst the Andro, Phayang and Sekmai, women were involved in distilling liquor which was a household occupation. Since they could easily earn more money from it than weaving they preferred it. This does not mean that scheduled caste women are not weavers but in such places weavers are rare (this is mentioned in case study no.2 and 9). While in the case of Khukhrul caste, their traditional household occupation were rearing of silk worm and producing of silk thread. Here also weaving is not a mass phenomenon. To examine this situation, case studies of few scheduled castes have been given to supplement the data.

In terms of religion, in both rural and urban areas the respondents were followers of either Sanamahism or Hinduism. Sanamahi is an indigenous form of Meitei religion worshipping the Sanamahi and Leimarel as household deities and Pakhangba as their ancestor (Nilakanta 1993:35). In terms of marital status the weavers were either married or unmarried but very few were divorced or widowed at the time of interview.

The process of selecting a sample from the population was very difficult. It was difficult because weaving being in the IS there was no organisation or registration for the weavers. Thus, to solve the problem of sampling, sample frames were constructed. It provided a list of elements or norms of weavers from which samples were selected.

❖ Construction of the sample frame:

By interacting with resource person lists of weavers (other than the CW) were formed. Only one person/weaver from one house was chosen while
listing. For the SEW, the persons or informants were the expert weavers, women who did the work of warping called *phihoubi* in Manipuri, panchayat women representatives and local women leaders (Secretary/President) of women’s voluntary organisations. For the MW, the informants were the traders, cloth merchant (*Phibu*), *phihoubi*, panchayat women representatives and local women leaders of women voluntary organisation. The various reasons for choosing the above mentioned informants are as follows-

1. **Expert weaver**- Weavers in the locality consult her for learning new skills hence easily recognised.

2. **Phihoubi**- Few women in the locality possess a warping machine. They know the skill of warping and so weavers contact her for pre-weaving works.

3. **Leaders in organisation**- At least one woman from each family joined the local women’s organisations like *Meira Paibi, Nisha bandh*. Such leaders can identify the weavers or help in developing rapport with the weavers.

4. **Traders and cloth merchants**- They supply work to the weavers, hence they can give the right information about them.

In the case of CW, lists of weavers’ cooperative societies (WCS now onwards) along with their membership lists were available. It was used as a sampling frame during the study.

### 3.10.1: Steps Undertaken For Sampling

For selecting the samples of SEW and MW, Imphal districts namely Imphal East and Imphal West was chosen. Each district was divided into several villages/ towns/ blocks, which were again divided into areas/ hamlets/ leikais. Each hamlet consisted of many households, which might or might not belong to similar surname, lineage and clan. For the sample
of SEW and MW 11 blocks from Imphal East and 11 blocks from Imphal West were selected. The blocks were selected purposively on the basis of information got from informants. The selected blocks are presented in the map of Imphal district, Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1: The location of blocks selected for interviewing the weavers

IMPHAL DISTRICT
MANIPUR

[Map of Manipur with marked locations]

STATE CAPITAL
SAMPLE AREA LOCATION
DISTRICT BOUNDARY
SUB DIVISION BOUNDARY

1. UPERPOK
2. SUPIOPOVINDA
3. SAGOLBAND
4. KHAMGETHEL
5. LANGTHABAL
6. GARI
7. KAKWA
8. WANGYONG
9. HARAOU
10. URIPOK
11. BIJOYGQVINDA
12. SAGOLBAND
13. KHAMGETHEL
14. LANGTHABAL
15. GARI
16. KAKWA
17. WANGYONG
18. HARAOU
The sampling method for CW was different from the other two types of weavers. A combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling was used in the case of the CW. The WCS in the Imphal districts were stratified. For this, the list of WCS from the Cooperative Society, Manipur was collected and divided into five blocks. Each block had different numbers of WCS. For instance Imphal East I had 188 WCS, Imphal East II-105, Imphal West I-57, Imphal West II –66, and Imphal Municipality-148. According to their proportion to the total number of societies samples were taken. Thus, three WCS from Imphal East I, two from Imphal East II and one from Imphal West were selected. Unfortunately, the stratified random sampling method could not be used beyond a point because most of the WCS were sick or defunct. So, I consulted the knowledgeable and other officials from the Manipur Cooperative Society, Imphal. After checking the balance sheet, production, sanction of loans and loan returns, 10 WCS out of 564, were pointed out to me as working efficiently. Even amongst the 10 WCS, there were more than 100 members in the membership list, but all were not weavers. Some leaders listed all the women in the electoral list as members but they were not necessarily weavers. This was done for political and economic reasons. The leaders organised the weavers so that they could get elected or created the WCS as vote banks. Further, if women weavers organised the WCS then they could apply for subsidies and for monetary facilities from the government. This of course, was one of the factors for declining of the WCS. The 10 societies selected belonged to the following areas-

- Imphal East I - 3 WCS
- Imphal East II - 2 WCS
- Imphal West I - 1 WCS
- Imphal West II - 2 WCS

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3.11: DATA COLLECTION - Personal Interview

In the study, structured interview schedule was used for collecting primary data. Adequate time was given between the questions so that the respondent could answer elaborately and accurately. Some advantages of using interview method are: firstly, the interview method enabled flexibility so as to probe for more specific answers; questions could be repeated when the response indicated that the respondent had misunderstood. Secondly, since a large number of the respondents were illiterate or achieved low level of education, questionnaire as a tool was ruled out. Thirdly, it enabled me to observe non-verbal behaviour and assess the validity of their responses. Fourthly, I could record spontaneous answers that might be more informative and which could throw light on the issue being studied.

Stating the advantages does not mean that the present approach and method lacked limitations. Sometimes for those weavers who were busy, spending one hour was a great deal. It caused inconvenience in a few cases because I reached when the baby was crying or the respondent needed to take a bath. However, much care was taken during the fieldwork to reduce such inconveniences.

I studied 12 case studies. Of these twelve, four respondents belonged to scheduled tribes namely, Chiru, Tangkhul, Kabui and Hmar which belonged to Senapati, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Churachandpur districts respectively. Another four selected were scheduled castes who belonged to places like Khukhrul, Sekmai and Kakching. Khukhrul was selected because they were traditionally specialised in silk rearing while
Sekmai was known for their traditional job of brewing (it is widely practiced now). Brewing was not socially accepted by the society but it could earn more money than weaving. Thus in such a place what attitude the women weavers have towards weaving occupation is examined in the case study. In addition, one case study of a Muslim weaver and three case studies of Meitei were also conducted.

Information about the weavers from childhood through to adolescence, youth and old age (if the respondent was old) was collected. She was asked to narrate her life history and experiences of being a weaver and also her relationship with the family, community and society at large. During the narration, I only probed asking why, who, when, and what type of questions. Reports were written the same night at home.

3.12: PHOTOGRAPHS
Photographs of the weavers, their looms and their life have been taken and displayed at appropriate places, so as to present in graphic form the data presented in the thesis.

3.13: APPROACHING THE RESPONDENTS
The researcher being a Meitei and a woman had some advantages. However, this did not rule out the disadvantages. Being an insider it was easy to become a part of the culture and easily understand the values and customs, which affected the worldview of women. The disadvantage was that while approaching the scheduled caste weavers there were some tendencies among the weavers not to reveal their own occupation, identity and food habits. To decrease the curiosity among the respondents, I introduced myself by showing the identity card and other relevant papers which explained the reason and purpose of my study.
Respondents were assured that their responses and identity would be kept confidential if they so desired. Explanation was also given to them that they were not singled out personally for interview but chosen in an impersonal way, through a process of sampling. This stage was very necessary because it helped the respondent to understand her role and be free from the tension of why she was chosen and thus making her feel to be at ease to interact with me. This was especially felt by the CW and weavers who had got training. Such weavers got subsidies from the government but they were not utilising it properly for weaving purposes. Hence they got suspicious and assumed that I was a ‘spy’ of government who had come to check about how they had utilised the grants.

Usually each interview was completed in one setting i.e. one interview schedule was completed in one day. Occasionally a respondent who was truly unable to complete giving her responses, suggested to come back another day.

3.14: ANALYSIS OF DATA

Before analysing the data, editing and coding of interview schedule was carried out. Editing was needed to check out whether data was relevant, appropriate and readable. Errors were also corrected either at field or at home. Some questions like income, given on monthly basis, were later on calculated on an annual basis. Similarly some other questions like time and wages needed quantification.

Both pre-coding and post-coding methods were used during the data process. Pre-coding was used in those questions whose answer categories were known in advance. These were primarily closed-ended questions or numerical questions. For the open-ended question post coding was conducted. Coding classified the responses into an important general
pattern. After the process of coding, the data were analysed using the SPSS package in the computer.

3.15: LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some of the limitations of the study are given below-

1. The study focuses more on the Meitei community in the two districts of Imphal. The Meiteis who had temporarily migrated to other places or settled in other regions of Manipur are not included. So, the findings of the study may not hold true for them.

2. Even though case studies of different ethnic groups were conducted, it would have been more meaningful and interesting if these groups could have been interviewed to give a picture of the state as a whole. But that was much beyond the scope of a single researcher.

3. All the data are about women and from women respondents. So, the interpretation and analysis are done from the women's perspective. The male perspective is missing and it is deliberate. Some may consider this as a limitation.

4. The weavers could not be contacted throughout the year as the study area (Manipur) and academic area (Vadodara) was far apart.