Chapter 1
Introduction

This chapter discusses the handicraft industry of India in light of its history and future growth trends. In addition to this, the chapter focuses on the concept of quality of work life of the employees working with handicraft industry in India. Various definitions pertaining to this research are also explained in the chapter.

1.1 Handicraft

Handicraft is a form of creative art and craft work which involves making of products by one’s own hands. Since time in memorial human beings have been relying on handicrafts for earning their livelihood or pursuing it as a hobby. This creative practice is basically considered conventional as it manifests the traditions deeply embedded in the culture of a region. It also reflects the skills of craftsmen of specific geographic regions who use different tools, techniques and patterns which are unique to a particular cluster to create an object. Handicrafts epitomize centuries of evolutionary tradition and include the products having religious sanctity and cultural significance, like metalware, pottery, Jewelry, needlework, quilting, and weaving, are the main items which constitute Indian handicraft industry (Tyagi, 2008).

Handicraft industry plays a prominent role in economic growth of the nation in terms of its contribution to employment generation, usage of indigenous raw material and thus supporting the economy and exports. The term ‘handicraft’ has been defined by various authors, researchers, government and non government organizations. According to Viswanathan (2013), “handicraft is an occupation of making by hand usable products graded with visual appeal. Handicrafts encompass activities that require a broad range of skills and equipment, including needle work, lace-making, weaving, printed textiles, decoration, basketry, pottery, ornamental metal working, jewelling, leather working, wood working, glassblowing, and the making of the stained glass.” This definition was further clarified by an apex court ruling in India as to what kind of products qualify as handicrafts. The court’s ruling was that there are two pre requisites for a product to be qualified as handicraft and if both the requisites ‘skill of the worker’ and ‘made by hand’ were not simultaneously satisfied it did not qualify as a handicraft. A similar issue was brought up
again to the Supreme Court in another dispute on whether readymade garments qualified as ‘handicrafts’ so that they could be exempted from excise duties. This time in consultation with the Development Commissioner Handicrafts, the court indicated that if it had the following properties than it could classify as handicrafts:

(a) “It must be predominantly made by hand. It does not matter if some machinery is also used in the process.

(b) It must be graced with visual appeal in the nature of ornamentation or in-lay work or some similar work lending it an element of artistic improvement” (Ministry of Finance, Government of India, Circular No.789/22/2004-CX, (May 31, 2004)).

The Central Board of Excise & Customs, Government of India (2004) elaborated further that “such ornamentation must be of a substantial nature and not a mere pretence.”

The definition of handicrafts according to the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts, (DC-H, henceforth) Ministry of Textiles, Government of India defines handicrafts as artistic and traditional products that are crafted by hand, by using simple tools. These products can also be objects of utility besides decorative items (Report of Development Commissioner Handicrafts, 2011).

The definition given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Information Technology Community (UNESCO/ITC) is a slightly expanded version of the DC-H definition. The definition of (UNESCO, 1997) goes like “Artisanal products are those which are produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restrictions in terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant”. This definition is a further elaboration of the DC-H definition with a little more emphasis on the individual component. It also tries to additionally qualify by distinguishing it from arts and crafts.

“Usually, what distinguishes the term handicraft from the frequently used category arts and crafts is a matter of intent: handicraft items are intended to be used, worn, etc, having a purpose beyond simple decoration. Handicrafts are generally considered more traditional work, created as a necessary part of daily life, while arts and crafts imply more of a hobby
pursuit and a demonstration/perfection of a creative technique. In practical terms, the categories have a great deal of overlap.” The Wikipedia definition comes from an informal source but clearly in all these definitions, the emphasis is on the following aspects: skill or knowledge of the individual involved in producing it, traditional/cultural technique of production, and the utility and decorative value of the items produced. The last aspect makes the production of such items as a source of income generation.

According to Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts (EPCH, 2011) “handicrafts may be defined as items or products produced through skills that are manual, with or without mechanical or electrical or other processes, which appeals to the eye, due to characteristics of being artistic or aesthetic or creative or ethnic or being representative of cultural or religious or social symbols or practices, whether traditional or contemporary. These items or products may or may not have a functional utility or can be used as a decorative item or gift” (EPCH Circular, 2011).

1.2 About Indian Handicraft Industry

1.2.1 History of Indian Handicraft Industry

The origin of Indian handicrafts can be traced around the religious values and beliefs of people in addition to their need to earn livelihood. History reveals some interesting facts about the development of handicrafts. The ethnic Indian culture revealed in the artistic hand crafted products which appealed the entire world and made these exquisite, meticulously crafted products widely popular (Tyagi, 2008).

The history of handicrafts in India can be dated back to Indus Valley Civilization which provides evidences about several forms of handicrafts. The tradition of handicrafts in India is woven around the religious beliefs and sentiments, basic requirements of the people and also the requirements of the kings and noble men. Supplemented to this, trade has also helped in the growth of various forms of handicrafts in India. The handicrafts of India have stood steady against the passage of time, innumerable innovations and inventions, technological development, innumerable intrusions by plunderers, and foreign invasions. Handicrafts have stood the test of time and are very popular till today. The remnants of another most popular civilization- Harappa- also provide evidences that handicrafts were quite prevalent at that point of time. During those times the craftsmen catered to all the local needs and in addition to trade with other nations. In the Vedic age
numerous references are found with regard to the artisans involved in various kinds of handicrafts like weaving, pottery etc. In Rig Veda also reference of handicrafts items made out of clay, wood, and metal ware is found.

There was substantial growth of handicrafts, specifically sculpture during the Mauryan age. During this period more than 84,000 Stupas were constructed in the country, with intricate and detailed stone carving done on it. It was during the post Mauran era that handicrafts started flourishing in the Southern part of India. In South, during the Cholas, metalware handicrafts developed. They used bronze sculpture in temple making. Rich carvings in wood, stone and metal can be witnessed in the temples of Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (Tyagi, 2008).

Handicrafts like leather products, metal jewelry, textiles etc. gained prominence during the Kushana period. The murals at Ajanta and Ellora are living evidences of the development of handicrafts during the Gupta period. Similarly handicrafts like wood-carving, metal craft etc. flourished during the medieval period. The Chola and Vijaynagar empires contributed significantly towards the promotion of temple carving, silk weaving, bronze sculpture and silk weaving. The Mughal period is rightly interpreted as the golden era in the history of Indian art, craft and culture. The Mughals brought with them a highly cherished legacy of handicrafts to India. Methods like inlay- work, carpet weaving, glass engraving, brocades, enameling etc. were introduced by them. Similarly Rajputs patronized different kinds of art and crafts in the country. With the arrival of East India Company, handicrafts started witnessing deterioration as handicrafts had to compete with machine made goods (Tyagi, 2008).

1.2.2 Present Growth of Handicrafts

The sheen of handicrafts has passed hands from one generation to another. In contemporary times, handicrafts are widely preferred across the world. There is an ever increasing demand various kinds of handicrafts. Brocades and zari work on sarees, shawls or any other garment and metal-ware are in great demand (EPCH, 2013). There is a rise in the membership of handicraft firms with EPCH.

Figure 1.1 indicates the trend in the Export Handicraft Units in India.
Figure 1.1: Membership of Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts (EPCH) across India

(Source: An Overview, Export of Indian Handicrafts. A publication of EPCH, December 2013 Issue)

1.2.3 Future Growth of Handicraft Sector

Handicraft industry supports the growth of economy by providing employment to a number of people. A number of women from rural areas are involved in handicrafts. Over past years market of handicraft has been growing continuously. A number of handicraft units are coming up across the nation with a consistent growth rate of 20% (http://sourcing.indiamart.com/gifts-crafts/crafts-industry/).

According to S.S. Gupta, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Government of India (2011), the handicraft sector has immense potential to generate employment. The processes involved are normally passed on from one generation to another and are regionally centered.

The exports of handicrafts (excluding hand-knotted carpets) was Rs. 387.00 crores during the year 1986-87 and it increased to 17970.12 crores in year 2012-13 as shown in Figure 1.2 and 1.3.

5
India is a hub of a number of exquisite arts and crafts. In India, craftsmen use different metals to make art metalware. Metals like iron, copper, gold, silver and alloys like bell metal, black metal, white metal, bronze etc. are used to make a variety of art metalwares. Indian metal craft is famous world across for its stylish, elegant and intricate designs. The export of art metalware from India was Rs. 3328.64 crore in the year 2012-13. The figure is higher as compared to any other handicraft of India. This fact made this particular handicraft sector an important area of study. During the course of research it was found that art metalware export rose to Rs. 4317.21 crores in the year 2013-14 which
was again the highest as compared to any other handicraft sector (EPCH). Moreover, these craft clusters use indigenous raw material thus supporting the Indian economy.

Table 1.1: Export of Art Metalware from India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2012-13 (in Rs. crores)</th>
<th>2013-14 (in Rs. crores)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>52.26</td>
<td>84.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>39.94</td>
<td>70.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>92.87</td>
<td>144.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>170.39</td>
<td>283.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>74.56</td>
<td>108.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>35.94</td>
<td>39.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Netherland</td>
<td>83.88</td>
<td>125.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>379.75</td>
<td>502.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>32.27</td>
<td>36.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>926.52</td>
<td>1184.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>161.47</td>
<td>233.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>164.47</td>
<td>213.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>1114.06</td>
<td>12.89.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3328.64</strong></td>
<td><strong>4317.21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: EPCH)

According to the provisional data available the exports of Handicrafts have shown an increase of 1811.56 crores, from 8253.12 crores to 10064.68 crores, an increase of 21.95% in rupees term. In the terms of dollar, the exports have shown an increase of US $ 256.32 million i.e. the exports increased by 18.06% during. Table1.2 shows the detail of the increase in export of handicrafts to different nations.
Table 1.2: Export of Handicrafts to Different Nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>In rupee crore</th>
<th>Increase in % over 2013-14</th>
<th>In US dollar in millions</th>
<th>Increase in % over 2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art Metalwares</strong></td>
<td>2041.06</td>
<td>2148.45</td>
<td>18.49%</td>
<td>350.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wood wares</strong></td>
<td>1053.75</td>
<td>1336.45</td>
<td>26.85%</td>
<td>181.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hand printed Textiles</strong></td>
<td>988.36</td>
<td>1107.34</td>
<td>12.04%</td>
<td>169.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embroidered &amp; Crocheted Goods</strong></td>
<td>1721.08</td>
<td>1889.06</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
<td>292.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shawls as Art wares</strong></td>
<td>278.19</td>
<td>389.17</td>
<td>39.89%</td>
<td>47.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zari &amp; Zardozi goods</strong></td>
<td>147.14</td>
<td>161.23</td>
<td>9.58%</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imitation Jewellery</strong></td>
<td>419.96</td>
<td>614.36</td>
<td>46.29%</td>
<td>72.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Misc. Handicrafts</strong></td>
<td>1603.58</td>
<td>2148.39</td>
<td>33.97%</td>
<td>275.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: EPCH)

As compared to other handicrafts, art metalware has a significant contribution to exports. There are four important craft clusters in India for art metalware. These craft clusters are situated in Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh), Bidar (Karnataka), Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Balakati (Orissa).

The metal-craft sector plays a vital role in providing employment to our rural population. In India there are about three million handicraft artisans and most of them are
working in metal sector. These metal artisans display inherent creativity and play a significant role in protecting the traditional art and culture of our nation (Tiwari, 2002). There are several metal craft clusters in India like Varanasi (UP), Jamnagar (Gujarat), Kondagaon (Chattisgarh), and Bhainchua (Orissa) but the number of artisans and the export potential of these four selected craft clusters is the highest.

The art metalware cluster of Moradabad specializes in metal casting in which molten metal is poured into moulds and allowed to solidify into the shape of an object. According to NCAER (2012), 29 per cent of India’s art- metal handicraft artisans are in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The cluster is known for brass ware all across the world. Appealing brass ware crafted by artisans has provided fame to the city. Brass ware is exported to several countries of the world like Canada, USA, Germany, Britain, and Middle East Asia. There are about 285 export units under Moradabad Handicrafts Exporters Association (MHEA) and 5000 total metal craft industries in Moradabad district. A total of four lakh artisans earn their livelihood making shade lamps, candle stands, flower vases, table decoration items, cutlery, metal racks, statues of deities, and decorative figurines in their factories as well as 3,000 ancillary units. Moradabad was declared as an industrial corridor by the state government in industrial policy 1999-2002. Moradabad also has an SEZ spread on 450 acres of land (Uttar Pradesh Developmental Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2011). According to a study conducted by ISB Hyderabad (2013) in collaboration with NInC and IL&FS, out of the annual turnover of Rs. 3,500, the cluster exports handicrafts worth approximately Rs 2,700 crores which in turn is approximately 20 percent of the total handicraft exports from India. As mentioned in the report, “there are 1,200 registered exporters who outsource work orders to small scale manufacturing units who, in turn, employ the artisans”. The diagnostic study of Moradabad art metalware cluster, conducted by ISB, NInC and IL&FS (2013) reports that the exporters work directly with the artisans hence a high level of commitment and involvement of artisans is essential in handicrafts to understand the designing and intricacies involved in the making of the product. According to the report there has been a drastic increase in the number of exporters from 800 to a significant 1200 which is almost an increase of 150 percent. Out of these around four- five exporters have an annual turnover of Rs 20 crore or even more. “The cluster consists of 1,800 small scale manufacturing units, locally called ‘karkhanedars’, and 25,000 unregistered household units. In 2008-09, these units together
employed 3,60,000 people. According to local industry exporters, the number has now come down to around 1,80,000 artisans”. These artisans, who have kept this handicraft alive, form the backbone of the cluster and there is a dire need to improve their socio-economic conditions (Sachan, et al, 2013).

The second art metalware craft cluster of the study was Bidar, Karnataka. During the Mughal period, a distinctive metalware tradition known as bidri-ware evolved in the Deccan region (south-central India). Bidri-ware was initially used in temples of Southern India in the early fifteenth century especially in Bijapur, Karnataka. An offer of full royal patronage by ‘Ala’ al -Din Ahmad Bahmani II (reigned 1436 – 1458) lured the artisans to his kingdom in Bidar near Hyderabad in modern Andhra Pradesh. Bidar is now the only town that manufactures the unique metal-ware Bidri which is a beautiful handicraft known for its intricate floral, geometric designs, in-laid in gold, silver and brass on to a matte-black or glossy surface. Bidri-ware is made from a predominately zinc-based alloy, along with smaller amounts of lead, copper, and/or tin. Its technical process is complex and involves three metalworking specialists (metal smith, engraver, and inlayer) and five manufacturing stages (casting, designing and engraving, inlaying, blackening, and polishing) (Markel, 2006). In the year 2012-13 total export of handicraft from the state of Karnataka was 371.9 crore, according to the Industry Report of Karnataka state government. There are more than 2700 metal craft units in Bidar providing employment to 89,000 people. (Ministry of MSME, Retrieved from http://dcmsme.gov.in/dips/DIP-%20Bidar.pdf)

Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan was the third art metalware craft cluster of study. It is known for ‘Enameled Metalware’. The use of enameled decoration on Indian metalware is traditionally said to have begun in the late sixteenth century at Amber, near Jaipur in Rajasthan, when the Rajput ruler Man Singh (1592 – 1614) reportedly established a royal enameling workshop with five Sikh enamelers brought from Lahore in the Punjab. The art of metalware as practiced in Jaipur cluster is known for brass ware, enamelling, engraving and filigree work on silver. The engraving is done in three different styles. Firstly, Chikan-which is a bold floral ornamentation which stands out against the chased and lacquered surface. Secondly, “Marori” is minute lacquered pattern covering the surface while the third one, “Bichi” is a technique of settling minute leaves and flowers all over a chased and lacquered surface.
Traditional silver articles are crafted out by the artisans like ‘handas’ trays and baskets which are very popular in oversees market., water carriers (‘Badlas’) made of zinc and ‘Koftagari’ or damascening work, in which one metal is encrusted into another in the form of wire (Markel, 2006). The Rajasthan Micro Finance Report (Jagannath & Singh, 2013-14) elaborates the economy of Rajasthan and also the important role played by handicrafts in its economic development. In order to increase investment in the identified sectors and achieve global competitiveness, the State has accelerated industrial growth, thus promoting employment, ensuring sustainable development, and furthering the economic development of the State. Until December 2011, the sale of handicraft items contributed to an amount of Rs.76.89 crore through various agencies. With Khadi and Gramodyog Industries, there is a production of Rs.18.37 crore and Rs.91.89 crore respectively, during the year 2011-12 up to December, 2011. The Rural Non Farm Development Agency (RUDA) is also seeking to promote employment generation activities in leather, wool, textiles, stones, handicrafts, handloom and so forth (Department of Planning, Government of Rajasthan, 2012). According to the planning report of Rajasthan State Government, there are 4 lakh artisans engaged in different handicrafts in Rajasthan. In Jaipur cluster 3528 units are engaged in metal art which employ a total number of artisans in Jaipur engaged in enamel is 174972 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics. Planning, Jaipur, 2011-12).

The fourth art metal art ware cluster of study was Balakati, near Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Metal craft of Orissa can be featured with the socio cultural aspect of the state in association with the tradition. The temples and shrines widely spread across the state of Orissa reflect the rich cultural heritage. The interiors of the temples reflect heavy use of brass as well as bell- metal. People belonging to a minority community, ‘Kansari’ are known to have engaged in this craft. These artisans use different alloys like that of zinc and copper and tin and copper to design beautiful pieces of handicraft items. The artisans of Orissa are adept at creating brass and bell metals popular across the world for their intricate and unique craft, ‘tarkashi’. Since there is absence of literature on the bell metal handicrafts of Orissa, the exact number of artisans engaged in this craft is not known. However, the census report reveals that Orissa has approximately 24000 families of artisans having an annual production base of nearly one hundred crore rupees. Out of this about 3000 families (12.5%) are engaged in brass and bell metal craft. The involvement of
females and children in the engraving process of bell metal craft is significant which involves high amount of physical labor. The artisan carefully weighs the required quantity of tin and copper and put them in “Koi” which is heated in excessively hot melting hearth (about 1500 degree Celsius ) with the help of the leather bellow or technical rotary blower and charcoal which is an important requirement in the processing of the bell metal products. To keep the furnace blowing, a person termed as Bhatia (blower operator) keeps on fanning the furnace in extremely inhumane and hot conditions. The technique involves synchronisation and high level of inter personal understanding between skilled and unskilled artisans engaged in bell metal workshops. A close observation of the process involved in the manufacturing of handicrafts in different craft clusters of the country reveal the unfavorable working conditions of the employees. Generally the temperatures at the work place are excessively high which lead to a number of health problems. The working hours are prolonged especially during the festive season and the working conditions of these artisans are a matter of grave concern (Dash, 2005).

These four craft clusters together account for substantial export of art metal ware from India and hence they were considered as the area of study.

1.4 Importance and Selection of Handicraft Industry for the Study of Quality of Wok Life

Indian economy is in dire need to induce employment opportunities, raise national income, and the standard of living of its people and thus become a more balanced and integrated economy. Handicraft sector is the best solution for achieving all these goals. It remains a fact that most of the handicraft items have hereditary links. The area of concern is that a number of craftsmen are fleeing the industry due to various reasons like low earnings, health hazards involved in certain processes of some handicraft units, lack of social security measures, and low prestige associated with these jobs. This is a matter of grave concern because if this art depletes or loses its sheen, a number of artisans will be rendered jobless. We must make efforts to preserve our rich culture. Highlighting the importance of handicrafts India’s Planning Commission reported in its report that handicraft is “an invaluable, and integral, part of the nation’s heritage, handicrafts command an importance, both cultural and economic. The sector yields a number of economic, social and cultural benefits such as: Highly dispersed and centralized; spread all
over the country, in rural and urban areas highly labor-intensive, especially helping weaker sections of society; high employment potential in relation to capital employed; high output to investment ratio; generation of subsidiary off-season employment; generation of foreign exchange from exports; high ratio of value addition; large-scale involvement of women, weaker sections and minorities” (Uttar Pradesh Development Report, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2011).

India has more than 744 clusters classified broadly as industrial, handloom, and handicraft clusters. Clusters reflect the cultural heritage of the country where specific regions are popular for a particular kind of product which is being manufactured by the artisans of that region since a long period of time. These handicraft clusters are a source of livelihood for approximately 130 lakh artisans, out of which a substantial percentage belongs to socio-economically backward parts of the society (Report of planning commission, 2012). Thus, the sector is an important contributor to the nation’s economy leading to empowerment of artisans. There are several issues that need attention both in form of policy intervention and ground level implementation. There are issues of securing steady, dependable and affordable sources of finance for the artisans, skill upgradation, bringing in new and useful technology and innovations in designs. Overall, the challenge is to ensure sustainable production and growth of the sector along with empowerment of the employees. The industry is environment friendly and is abstemious on consumption of energy. Off late consciousness on these issues is growing fast. This makes handicraft an important sector having the potential to influence the country’s economy and all the more it is a potent instrument for the empowering the artisans. Although a large skilled workforce has been engaged in traditional forms of craft in India for several hundred years; however, the occupational risks and hazards involved in these craft processes have not been researched and documented for relevant policy formation. Since majority of crafts workers in India are home based or work in small units not employing more than 10-12 workers, they are not covered under the provisions of labor laws in India. A study in this area is imperative as this huge work force employed in handicraft sector becomes a key driver of the economy in terms of its purchasing power.

According to the data provided by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), exports of handicrafts in India grew at an average rate of 10 percent per year. The export was USD 205 million in July 2013 as the demand in the countries like China, U.S.A
and Latin America rose. In July last year, these exports stood at USD 185.88 million, according to the data provided by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH). According to the EPCH Executive Director Rakesh Kumar (2013), “there has been an increase in the number of orders from emerging markets like China, Latin America and Africa.” He gives a clear indication that “the US and Europe together account for about 60 percent of the country’s total handicraft shipments. Besides, the exporters are exploring new markets like China, Latin America and Africa to reduce dependence on traditional markets”. Founder of R.K. Arts and former EPCH Chairman Ravi Passi reported, “We are expanding our presence in new markets like China and Latin America as our products are getting popularity in these markets. Also, we expect this trend to continue in the coming months.” During April- July 2013, handicraft items grew about 12 per cent to USD 869 million as compared to the same period during the previous fiscal. The country’s total handicraft exports have met the target of USD 3.3 billion for 2012-13. Moradabad, Jaipur, Saharanpur and Jodhpur are the major handicraft hubs in the country catering to global markets (The Times of India, August 16, 2013)

The bright side of handicraft sector was buoyant in an article in Business Times, “some workers have gone to offer their Friday namaz, and others have stepped out for lunch. A few are sleeping on the floor. But looks can be deceptive. These are extremely busy days at C.L. Gupta. Since January 2012, our workforce has grown from 1,600 to 1,850. By the end of September, we will add another 150 workers. We are targeting a 20% growth in business,” says Raghav Gupta, the company’s managing director. Fellow exporter Mohammad Mansoor is equally buoyant. “We are on a good wicket right now,” he says. “There are about 600 leading exporters in Moradabad”, says Satpal, General Secretary, Moradabad Handicraft Exporters Association (MHEA). Of them, 285 are MHEA members. A total of four lakh workers earn their livelihood making candle stands, flower vases, table top items, shoe rack items, umbrella stands, and decorative figurines in their factories as well as 3,000 ancillary units (Ghosh, 2013).

The estimated worth of Indian handicrafts industry approximately Rs 43,000 crore per annum. Despite having immense potential to support the country’s economy, the sector remains largely fragmented and unorganized despite. The handicraft industry became a natural choice of conducting this study as it is one sector which is helping the nation to preserve its glory of thousands of years. Since handicraft sector is labor intensive,
Manpower is the axis of these units. If the manpower of these units is happy and satisfied in different respects, the organizations are likely to progress. In India, majority of the labor intensive industries are facing issues of stress and employee burnout on a large scale.

The phrase “a happy and healthy workforce is a productive workforce”, seems to be true. There is a continuous to improve productivity in the industry. This can be done by deriving the optimum output from the resources thus invested. Nevertheless, increased productivity does not preclude a high quality of work life (QWL). Quality of work life refers to “employees’ perception of their physical and psychological well-being at work. It involves giving workers the opportunity to make decision about their jobs, the design of their workplaces, and ensuring work-life balance. Its focus is on employees and managers operating a business together” (Wayne & Nambudari, 2010).

An improvement in the quality of work life of handicraft workers shall lead to improved job satisfaction and hence better productivity. This is required for motivating skilled craftsmen and artisans to remain engaged in their profession of handicrafts and not quit it due to any adverse situation.

The quality of work life has an important bearing on the total quality of life of the people. High quality of work life is commensurate to better quality of life of the people and vice versa. Thus the quality of work life has been considered as a means and end, both. It is considered to be an end because the total quality of life can only be achieved through the quality of work life. As a means the experience gained through work life helps the workers to acquire excellence, high amount of civic competence and better skills which are necessary for the total development of manpower. A worker’s life cannot be divided into two watertight compartments, one inside the factory, and the other outside it. The two are closely bound together, so that the troubles and joys of job life cannot be put aside. This study intends to provide insights into the good and bad aspects of employees working conditions in handicraft units from employee’s perspective.

1.5 Quality of Work Life

Manpower is the most important factor of production. In fact the success of every business enterprise is dependent on its human element. Human beings are regarded as the dynamic factor of production. Hence, it is important to give due cognizance to this factor if the organization wants to flourish.
There are two ways of looking at what quality of work life means. One way equates quality of work life with a set of objective organizational conditions and practices (e.g. promotion from within policies, democratic supervision, employees’ involvement, safe and healthy working conditions). The other way equates quality of work life with employees’ perception that they are reasonably satisfied, they have reasonable work-life balance, and they are able to grow and develop as human beings. This way relates the quality of work life to the extent to which full range of human needs is met. In many cases these views merge. Workers who like their organizations and the ways their jobs are structures will feel that their work fulfills them. In such cases, either way of looking at one’s quality of work life will lead to a common determination of whether a reasonable quality of work life exists. However, because people differ and because the second view is quite subjective— it concedes, for example, that not everyone finds such things as democratic decision making to be an important component of a good quality of work life, and thus quality of work life can be defined in terms of employees’ perception of their physical and mental wellbeing at work (Wayne & Nambudari, 2010).

The total life space of human beings can be classified into three: family life, working life and social life. These three divisions of human life are closely intertwined. Failure of any one of these fronts affects the quality of life of the people. Hence, a balance between family life, work life and social life of an individual is essential.

Chakraborty (1986) explains the essence of quality of work life in his scholarly article saying that, “can we have a piece of fabric which has only the warp, and no weft; a balance sheet which has only assets, no liabilities? Truly, the entire creation is made up of both. When it is pleasure, we immediately appropriate it and consider it as fully deserved. But when it is pain, we disown it and never think we deserved it. We may examine in this light the performance appraisal or promotion examples given in the illustrations. To protect or gain such pleasure and to keep pain at bay, we are prepared to foul up the QWL. To tackle pain through pleasure is not a lasting response; because there are always new "pains' which could pop up from the wings. Moreover, each objective, dependent pleasure contains within itself the reaction of pain. So, if more and more people would grasp the true sense of nirdwandwa and internalize it— which requires great perseverance and mental strength— QWL in organizations should receive a much-needed fillip. Besides, theoretically, there cannot be a more foolproof basis than this for coping with stress in
organizational roles. For stress is, in the ultimate analysis, nothing but the experience of an almost constantly fluctuating range of mental states caused by dwmdwas”.

The economic development of a nation lies in the improvement of the quality of life of its people. All economic activities pursued by different individuals are ultimately aimed at achieving better quality of life. Substantial time of people is consumed in some economic activities. The efficiency of each activity depends on the quality of work life of the people (Chakraborty, 1987).

An improvement in the quality of work life of employees of an organization can in turn lead to better utilization of the creativity of its people by involving them in decision making. A distinguishing characteristic of the process is that its goals are not simply extrinsic, focusing on the improvement of productivity and efficiency per se; they are also intrinsic, regarding what the worker sees as self-fulfilling and self-enhancing ends in themselves (Guest, 1979).

In this study quality of work life refers to values and attitudes contained in work life of an employee. A high score on quality of work life scale indicates “better quality of work life”. This research draws inspiration from the saying of the great guru of all times, Swami Vivekananda, “with means all right, end must come” (Vivekananda, (2001) [1907]).

1.6 Definitions of the Terms Used in the Study

**Adequate and Fair Compensation:** Compensation is said to be adequate if the income from the work meet socially acceptable level of sufficiency or the subjective standard of the recipient. It is said to be fair when the same remuneration is paid for the same type of job.

**Safe and Healthy Working Conditions:** Work environment which helps a worker to perform his duties in hygienic working conditions and such work will not injure any part of the body or mind of the worker.

**Immediate Opportunities to Use and Develop Human Capacities:** Provision of job which enable workers to use and develop their skills and knowledge, affecting their involvement, self- system and the challenge obtained from the work itself.
Opportunities for Continued Growth: Allotment of work which provides career opportunities for development of new abilities and improvement of existing skills on a continuous basis.

Social Integration in the Work Organization: The nature of inter-personal relationship in the organization helps in acceptance of the job in a better way. It generates a positive feeling and promotes a sense of oneness in the organization.

Constitutionalism in the Work Organization: Constitutionalism in the work place to protect employee from exploitative actions by employer or any other member in the organization.

Work and Total Life Space: The relation between an employee’s family life, social life and work life is described as work and total life space.

The Social Relevance of the Working Life: Provision of work which should not only be a source of material and psychological but a means of social welfare (Walton, 1975).

The following definitions have been derived after a thorough interaction with the employees and owners of certain handicraft units.

Manpower: Manpower includes all the employees working in a handicraft unit who are paid by the organization in lieu of their services which may include factory and office supervisors, managerial staff and office staff, and workers/artisans.

Managerial Staff: Employees who work as managers in the handicraft units in whom operational decision making is vested. They are employees having the power to control the employees of a department/section of the organization. They include production manager, quality control manager, purchase manager, sales manager and HR manager. These managers also take care of putting up display stalls of the manufacturing unit in the fairs and exhibitions.

Office Supervisor: Office supervisors are employees having the power to control and govern the office staff like clerks, attendants and office helpers. They include office superintendent and head accountant.
**Factory Supervisor:** Factory supervisors oversee plant operations and supervise workers/artisans.

**Office Staff:** The employees working in the handicraft units as clerks, attendants and office helpers. They have no power to control other office employees.

**Worker/Artisan:** All employees who are working in the factory under the control of another employee and have no power to control any other employee. In this study worker or artisan is considered as skilled labor who crafts items that are related to handicrafts.

**Cluster:** “Clusters are a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field linked by commonalities and complementarities. Clusters encompass a array of linked industries and other entities important to competition including governmental and other institutions – such as universities, standard setting agencies, think tanks, vocational training providers and trade associations” (Porter, 1998)

### 1.7 Chapter Scheme
The thesis is organized into five chapters as depicted in Figure 1.4

**Figure 1.4**