

Working Women in Urban Sikkim: A Study on Changing Roles and Relations

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By

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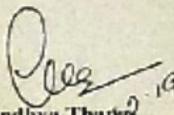
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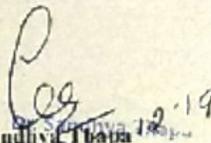
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This thesis is dedicated to my

Pala and Amla

*For their endless love, support and
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
ICSSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SHDR	Sikkim Human Development Report
SSEC	State Socio Economic Census
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WEF	World Economic Forum

Summary

The social construction of gender is a widely accepted and contested discourse today. The gender differences that are largely produced and reproduced in everyday life is deeply rooted in the social structures in our society. If gender and the inequalities that accompany it is socially constructed and is determining, individual as an agency can also reconstruct the gender roles and reinforce it in the social structure as argued by Giddens in his concept of Structuration. Therefore, this reconstruction in gender roles is taking place, although slowly through the visibility of women in the public sphere such as the paid work arena. No doubt, women have always been a part of the workforce. However, as societies and cultures advanced and women began their entry into the paid work force, the role and status of women changed – though not proportionately i.e. the acknowledgement of their importance did not grow as much, held back by archaic and tradition bound customs. Nevertheless, especially after the two world wars, their entry into the work force became an irreversible trend. Since then, women have made inroads into what was earlier male domains. The stronghold though, of the dual role women must play and still do so, as passed down from the earlier generations, of a care giver as well as a contributor to the economic well being of the family, continues to persist. In a country like India, where cultural norms bind families and customs to the society, working women are expected to make great sacrifices and valiant efforts to combine the dual role of taking care of the family and earning too. The repercussions in the discharge of this dual role are many and intrude into her sense of self worth and happiness. Establishing a conducive balance between work place and home becomes tricky and difficult.

The working women today, are juggling multiple roles while simultaneously adapting to the seminal changes modernity has brought. Negotiations and compromises between different roles, work and family are constantly being carried out on a day to day basis by women all over the world. The winds of modernity and technology have influenced the exterior part of our lives but our thoughts and values and outlook are still shrouded in traditional patriarchal values. Based on this backdrop the study is about the changing roles and relations of the working women in urban Sikkim.

Since the incorporation of Sikkim with the Indian Union, it has experienced a lot of changes in its social, cultural, economic, political and educational arenas. An important indicator of this change has been reflected in the increase in the literacy rate and a shift in occupational trend towards the non-agricultural sector and the increase of the urban population in Sikkim. Various statistical parameters indicate that Sikkim has a positive representation of women in the literacy rates as well as in the state government employment sector. The state's policy of 30 % reservations for women in public employment has led to a significant representation of women in the public sector although there are gender streamlining across various sectors. The state also has a substantial population working in the unorganised sector comprising of small scale enterprises and private business.

All these parameters has led to the general assumption of the Sikkimese women enjoying a high social status. However, the different ethnic communities in Sikkim experiencing a strong patriarchal ethos come in the way of balancing home and work for the working women. But at the same time factors such as educational achievement, urbanisation trend, rising expenditures and consumerism have pushed these women into new career roles. Thus, working women have to deal with issues such as

managing the house alongside caring for the children and the elderly in the family, fulfilling social obligations etc. More often than not these issues are translated into sources of stress and fatigue.

Therefore, in recognition of being caught in this dilemma of modernity and tradition, there is a need to study the working women's changing roles and relations. However, studies on women in Sikkim are at a very nascent stage and research on the working women in Sikkim is almost negligible. This study has therefore, attempted to explore and understand how working women in urban Sikkim balance the dual roles of home and work while also examining the problems, challenges and dilemmas faced by them as a result of their dual role. It further seeks to assess if various socio-cultural and economic variations play a determining role in work-family balance and to identify if any traditional gender roles is being reproduced in the everyday work routine.

With these objectives in view, a field based study was conducted among 120 working women in Sikkim belonging to the three notified towns in East Sikkim, viz. Gangtok, Singtam and Rangpo. The relevant information has been collected through purposive and stratified sampling and semi structured interview schedule. Women belonging either to the Lepcha, Bhutia or the Nepali community in Sikkim and working in the administrative sector, technical sector and the unorganised sector were taken as the sample population for this study. To augment phenomenological essence in the study, open ended questions with qualitative aspect of this study were included wherein the lived experiences of women, their life narratives and case studies has been explored so as to see the reflections of patriarchy in their daily lives vis-a-vis one's social-cultural background and the influences it has on the balance between work and family.

The empirical work in the study has been interpreted from the sociological lens using various concepts but mainly revolving around the theoretical and conceptual paradigm of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu and the reproduction of the phenomenological experience on everyday life.

The introductory **Chapter 1** deals with the design of the study containing the statement of the problem in the global context, the Indian context as well as in the context of Sikkim. It also includes a thematic literature review of the study, rationale of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, as well as the methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 entitled "Tracing Gender and Work" gives an overview of the growth and development of women's entry into paid work. The historical perspective shows that in the global context, the industrial revolution and the two world wars played a significant role in ushering changes in the gender roles by encouraging women to participate in the public sphere. Examining it in the Indian context, the nationalist movement played a significant role in pushing middle class Indian women to participate beyond the private domain. The evolution of the gender division of labour has also been examined in order to have a clearer picture of why women continue to be delegated with responsibilities of a carer despite the vast changes that are taking place around her.

Chapter 3 entitled "Sikkimese Women in Changing Perspective" examines the status of women in Sikkim in the post merger period taking into consideration various statistical parameters like education, employment, literacy and their political participation against the socio-cultural backdrop. A positive reflection towards women's literacy has been highlighted with the narrowing of the gender gap in

literacy. This increase in literacy and education has led to a positive representation of women in the workforce in the state. Political participation of women in Sikkim is also seen as encouraging with many young educated women coming forward to actively participate in the democratic decentralisation process even though at the macro level, the representation is not very encouraging. The historical background of the state along with the ethnic profile of the various communities of Sikkim has also been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 entitled "Understanding Working Women of Sikkim- An Empirical Analysis" is based on the field setting and deals with the socio-economic background of the respondents. The empirical observation showed the unorganised sector had more number of women in the younger age group which was likely because the respondents in this category were women with education below the secondary level and had hence, started working at an earlier age. Entry in to the workforce when they had no children but they left their job when they became mothers was revealed in the study and this was in contrast to the findings of other studies done in the unorganised sector in India. Working late or on night duties for the medical personnel and police women was considered problematic especially when the children were small and being breast fed. Even though narratives from the field revealed the persistence of patriarchy with the women seeing themselves as responsible for housework, there were instances where the younger respondents from the unorganised sector had their husbands helping them with domestic chores thereby, indicating some degree of changing gender roles. Class variation also comes into play in this case, because higher number of these respondents belonged to the unorganised sector. There was little or no ethnic variation reflected in the above instance. Participation in decision

making at the work place was influenced by whether the respondent was in a temporary or a regular job.

Information pertaining to the work culture of these women was examined in the later part of this chapter. Mental stress, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and depression were some of the problems that were reported from workplace. Mental stress was found to be high among those working in the technical sector. Women doctors experienced gender bias from the patients with many of them doubting their judgements and treatments. Similarly, the police women were often taken for granted by the convicts and the offenders. These instances project that the entry of women into professions which were traditionally male dominated is yet to be completely accepted by the society thereby revealing a slow change in the values of the society. Another instance of this slow change in the attitude of people due to a strong patriarchal habitus is the admission of the women officers themselves practising gender discrimination. This was especially noticed when choosing their subordinates as they felt that women especially in the police force have too many domestic problems relating to children and family and thus, it would be easier for them to work with male subordinates. This therefore, proved to be a very contradictory situation where women in positions of power discriminated against women in lower positions.

Chapter 5 entitled "Redefining Gender Roles and Relations: Intersectionality of Ethnicity, Class and Gender" is based on empirical study and explores the life of the working women in urban Sikkim. Highlighting the objectives of employment it was revealed that these women took up paid work for various reasons. Financial compulsions to take up paid work occurred after the death of a spouse or when husbands became alcoholics and were unable to provide monetary support or in some

cases when the husbands remarried. More of these respondents came from the unorganised sector or worked in the Group C and D jobs. In such situations, paid employment for these respondents brought in a form of security and a sense of purpose. Alcoholism among men belonging to *matwali communities* is attributed to the cultural use and acceptance of alcohol thereby forcing their wives to take up paid work, revealed ethnic variation indicating the problem to be rooted in the structure.

Bourdieu's notion of the possession of capital to gain access to power and position in the society can be applied to the other objective of seeking employment which was the utilisation of their education and the enhancement of their status in their family and society. Paid work was viewed as enabling for the respondents as it gave them a sense of purpose and they felt that it had a positive effect on their image and status.

The changing roles of the women was brought to the fore in the admission of the control these women had over their earnings and in their participation of the decision making process regarding their children and the household finances. Another aspect of the changing roles of the women in Sikkim was the increasing number of women in the study who revealed that they owned some form of property in their names. This acquisition of property took the form of land, house, gold, vehicles etc and were acquired either as gifts from parents or through purchase from their own savings.

Chapter 6 entitled "Challenging Social Constructions of Gender: Constraints and Coping Mechanisms" assesses the reproduction of patriarchy in everyday life as well as the constraints, challenges and the coping mechanisms adopted by the respondents to balance home and work. A research question addressed in the study was to explore if any traditional gender roles was being reproduced in the everyday work routine of the men and women. Women themselves admitted that child care and housework

were their responsibility revealing the deep entrenchment of a patriarchal socialisation. However, a gradual change was noticed in the case of the unorganised sector wherein it was shown that the respondents shared a more egalitarian relationship with their husbands when it came to the distribution of household tasks showing class variation. This change in the unorganised sector is likely due to the economic condition of the respondents wherein affordability of paid help and time saving household gadgets may not have been possible. Similarly, the case studies also showed that the working women in Sikkim also rely on other family members for the sharing of household chores and child care thereby, also indicating the continuity and significance of primary relations in Sikkimese society which are basically the features of the traditional society.

Child care too was seen as the responsibility of the working mothers especially when the children were ill thereby affirming the status of women as secondary or supplementary earners and giving primacy to her role as a mother and a wife.

The narratives in the study revealed instances of role conflict faced by the respondents which became more visible with small children who needed constant supervision or when the elders in the family fell sick. This conflict of roles got aggravated when the working women were caught in a dilemma between the standards laid down by the society as well as with their own internalized beliefs about what is expected of the proficient worker and a good mother - values which are sometimes incompatible. Another challenge that was brought up in the study were the misunderstandings that were created between family members and the working woman. This was especially obvious in the case of police women, forest guards and engineers where the working hours were erratic and not fixed. As a consequence, failure in the discharge of familial

duties was accompanied by guilt and regrets. Managing social obligations to one's community and neighbourhood as well as having no leisure time for themselves were other challenges and constraints discussed in the study.

Various strategies were adopted to meet up with these constraints and to balance home and work.

Support from one's spouse, help from one's extended family, sending children for private tuitions, use of time saving gadgets and hiring help were some of the coping mechanisms pointed out during the discussions which reflects that changes are taking place even if it is in a subtle form.

Yet, despite the difficulties confronted by the respondents in managing work alongside their homes, few of them spoke of quitting their jobs. The perks of having a job that brought income was seen as far too advantageous and outweighed the difficulties in balancing home and work.

Although the Sikkimese society is traditionally rooted in strong patriarchal ethos yet, today the various statistical parameters for women indicating a positive reflection show that the society seems to be in a state of transition. Caught in this flux between tradition and modernity are the working women in Sikkim. The demands of a modern society demand her participation and involvement yet her patriarchal socialisation nudges her in fulfilling and retaining her traditional roles. Therefore, some degree of stress is bound to be present until the society reaches some form of stability and become open to the acceptance of gender roles in egalitarian principle. Notwithstanding, there are positive implications that affirmative changes are taking place in the working women's roles and relations within the family and the society at large.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Industrialization in the twentieth century profoundly altered the nature of work and family life across most industrialized nations. The most fundamental change involved the large scale movement of women into the paid labour force. Prior to this it was believed that work and family were “separate worlds” and women and men had distinct, non overlapping responsibilities and roles. However, women's movement into the paid labour force was accompanied by a recognition that work and family are not separate but rather they intersect in complex ways (Wharton, 2012).

This intersection of roles can be located in the structuring of gender relations which has consistently been reflected in the division of labour between the two sexes (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 1996). In the earlier societies, the numbers of women working outside their homes were few and far between because for the earlier non industrialized societies, traditional gender roles were accepted as functional. Women were considered to be submissive, dependent, emotional, sympathetic, patient, moral, lacking leadership qualities but responsible for running households and was a mere reflection of the man she was married to. However, in today's modern industrialized world where women along with men are recipients of modern education and technological skills, these traditional gender roles remain a "dysfunction" (Merton, 1968). Moreover, it is an acknowledged fact that the development of any society rests on the opportunities and participation for all sections of the society including women. To add to it, majority of the countries in the world today recognise men and women as equal citizens in the eyes of the law. Accessibility to education, efforts to achieve 100%

literacy, rising expenditures are all working together towards pushing more women to take up paid work. Consequently, the family balance has shifted more towards a dual-earner model (Kapur, 1972; Philip, 2002). Despite this shift women continue to be largely responsible for the majority of the housework and child care (Rout, Lewis and Kagan, 1999). Therefore, the pertinent question arises why is there a lack of change in this arena of gender roles when it comes to the distribution of housework and childcare?

Further, why do societies continue to function in a manner with little modifications especially when it comes to attributing different roles, rights and obligations for men and women? To illustrate, housework, child care and taking care of the elderly and the sick are considered feminine and traditionally attached to women and continue to remain as tasks attributed to women folk irrespective of her role outside the house (Ross, 1977; Ahmad, 1984; Ramu, 1989; Mantri and Krishnaswamy, 1994). Similarly, authority and decision making responsibilities are usually vested among the males of the family. Borrowing from Marx, power which is found in a limited amount is retained by the male group who thereon use it to control their women and their families. This control often translates into authority and ideas leading to what Gramsci addresses as the "cultural hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971). Taking it a step further, Joan Acker (1992) points out that child rearing and housekeeping, tasks assigned to the women is what serves to perpetuate the oppression of women. Studies (Ross, 1977; Desai, 1996; Soman, 2009) show that this emphasis on feminine roles and masculine roles are a result of gender role socialisation which takes place during the early childhood years and becomes intrinsic to the personality of the girls as well as the boys so much so that any deviation from one's socialised role leads to feeling of guilt for not doing their job properly. Socialisation shapes and determines our

perceptions about what to expect out of men and women's behaviour. Therefore, if discrimination is a defining feature of our socialisation process then discrimination along gender lines will be perceived as natural and right to the extent that it may not be perceived as discrimination at all (Ahmad, 1984). Subsequently, men and women are socialised into learning and expecting different and unequal roles in life. Gender socialisation alongside cultural socialisation which often gets justified on religious grounds is a crucial factor in this allocation of roles between men and women and is a prominent feature of societies dictated by patriarchy. Gender socialisation in India can be found to be very patriarchal often relegating women's primacy to the domestic sphere (Amin and Al-Bassusi, 2004).

As a result, today, when the women have entered the world of paid work, society including women themselves take it for granted that paid work has to be managed alongside house work exclusively by the women themselves and this notion is prevalent especially in a patriarchal country like ours. This is because domestic work or housework is traditionally linked with women and is seen as women's work (Evertsson, 2014; Kmec, 1999). Paid work no longer remains a male domain yet domestic work continues to remain the domain of women (Ransome, 2011). The work organisation in the present time is very demanding and competitive with long working hours, often involving work related travel to distant places. Hence a working woman is often pushed outside of her comfort zone. Women after a busy day at work tend to take on the "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989) at home where they have to fulfil the domestic responsibilities and parenting duties. The scenario gets worse if she has elderly family members who are conservative regarding their expectation of the traditional role of the woman. This conflict between the traditional role of a woman and the role of a working woman is what creates stress for the working woman.

Sociologically, role can be conceptualised as a set of behaviour to accomplish certain tasks (Haralambos and Heald, 1980) and are reciprocal (Damico, 1975). However, the traditional role of the women has been widely challenged with the changing times as the women are required to take up a number of new roles in addition to the already existing traditional roles. For instance, the modern woman today is expected to bring up her children with more care and attention, she is supposed to be a good homemaker, a perfect and a spontaneous host, a modern wife who should be presentable, a member of the different neighbourhood organizations along with being a contributor to the family income. She is also expected to be educated, successful with a paid job while at the same time she is also required to be traditional in discharging her domestic duties and her roles with family and home as her only priorities. In other words, women were now expected to perform the dual roles of fulfilling domestic responsibilities alongside managing paid work (Reddy, 1986). Consequently a woman's position in the present times is surrounded with confusion and uncertainty. More often than not, the social and cultural factors lend legitimacy to patriarchy and this may prove to be an obstacle for the working women who are understood as those who work outside their home for wage or salary (Anjana, 1993).

Obstacles for the working women arise when the demands of work and family become incompatible. Combining domestic and professional life will at some point result in some degree of stress, fatigue and role conflict (Kmec, 1999) which refers to a strain in the relationship between various roles in the role system performed by an actor (Elman and Gilbert, 1984). The consequences of role conflict are many, ranging from physiological to psychological to emotional and mental disturbances (Gani and Ara, 2010). Numerous studies (Kmec, 1999; Dziech, 2007; Lippe, Jaeger and Kops, 2006; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2006) show that men along with women struggle in

maintaining the delicate balance between home and work but the challenge for women is more difficult taking into consideration the physical demands of motherhood, gendered expectations of family obligations and the ongoing disparity with which working women take on the second shift through maintenance of children and home. Therefore, this struggle between the different roles of women is of increasing concern among the sociologists (Rao and Rao, 1973).

The work that women do within the private sphere i.e. her home is everyday tasks that cannot be avoided nor be shifted according to one's convenience. These are chores that have to be attended to on a daily basis whereas the domestic chores that men do can be postponed or shifted according to one's preference. Thus, the obligation on the part of women to perform unpaid work at home establishes restrictions of location, time and availability, work choices, mobility which is compounded by limited education thereby, aiding her inferior position in the labour market (Krishnaraj, 1999). Consequently, the tension between house work and paid work is more pronounced among women limiting her dedication to paid work. Temporary jobs, convenient jobs in the unorganised sector therefore, prove to be the recourse. This may just go on to explain the high percentage of employed women in the unorganised sector in India. Moreover the technical skills required for employment in the organised sector is often found to be lacking in a majority of women. Women in the unorganised sector face a number of varied problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, limited technical skills, restrictions on mobility, poor working conditions, health issues, exploitation by the work superiors and more often than not they lack control over their own earnings.

In such a situation, domestic workers, waitresses, sales girls for small business enterprises, vegetable vendors are some of the occupations which fall under the non

agricultural category in the unorganised sector and fills up the gap as an additional or alternate source of income. However, workers in this group suffer from employment insecurity, long working hours, lack of minimum wages and any kind of welfare facilities.

This is in contrast to the general understanding among people that any urban area is likely to be more developed with more employment opportunities, with better infrastructural facilities and an improved standard of living. Migration of people from rural to urban areas is justified on the grounds of wanting to better one's life. There is no doubt that the exposure to the forces of urbanisation, globalisation and education compels everyone to aspire for better things in life. Hence, migration from rural areas to urban areas takes place. But, these social transformations have led to a lot of complexities such as the increase in nuclear families, individualistic attitudes, lack of extended family and collective support.

Therefore, presenting a comprehensive picture of women and their work is a difficult task because women do not belong to one homogeneous category. Rather, variations among them may be reflective in their caste, class, ethnicity, differing degrees of patriarchy. As a result of this intersectionality of caste, class, culture and patriarchy, different policies, situations, cultural backgrounds etc tend to affect different strata or groups of women in a different manner as a result of which the outcomes also differ.

1.2 Women in Indian Context

The various developmental activities initiated by the government along with the provisions laid down in the Indian Constitution for the upliftment of women have not affected the entire gamut of the Indian women in a uniform manner. Therefore, when we address the question of the status of women in India, we cannot give one standard

generalised answer (ICSSR Report, 1971-1974). However, the overall idea of patriarchy has always been an integral part of the Indian culture. A woman's position, her role, rights and duties in society are often determined by the socio-cultural structure and the value system of the society she belongs to (Geetha, 2002). Among these socio cultural structures, religion plays a pivotal role in influencing her status in the society. Hinduism idealises the role of a mother and a wife for a woman. Moreover, religion reinforces the idea of patriarchal values by attributing the responsibility of lineage carriers and other religious duties which are to be fulfilled only by males. Women were considered as naturally inferior to men and therefore had a number of restrictions imposed on her movement, roles and responsibilities. Offshoots of Hinduism such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism showed some improvement in uplifting the women's status but the patriarchal manifestations in the day to day practices still existed (Altekar, 1959).

The patriarchal set up in India often finds favour with patriarchal socialisation whereby children from a very young age grow up with clear cut notions of the different responsibilities and roles of men and women. Moreover, women are socialised into being supportive partners of their husbands' professional pursuits, likes and demands while men, on the other hand, are not socialised into taking up supporting roles (Elman and Gilbert, 1984). In majority of the societies in India we find that activities such as cleaning, caring for the elderly and the sick, looking after the children, cooking and other housework are assigned to the women folk while men are given responsibilities of working outside the home and being the primary bread winners. Lee, Zvonkovic and Crawford (2013) in "The Impact of Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation on Women's Perception of Role Balance", also supports this argument by stating that although social norms regarding the distribution of family

and parenting roles are slowly changing, women continue to remain the primary providers of domestic and family care.

Various studies (Ghorayshi and Bélanger, 1996; Jose, 2012) shows that much of women's work especially in the developing countries is undervalued, taken for granted and discounted. If we look at the data or statistical representation of work participation rates we find that women's work such as housework and extensions of housework say in the agricultural field or as helpers in one's own private enterprises, often remain unaccounted for because it is often unpaid and therefore falls outside the purview of the definition of "work". Therefore, her contribution as a worker is undermined which leads to low wages, little or no control over resources and a heavier share of the work burden in both the public and private sphere (Suda, 1996). Often, social and cultural norms are significant in reproducing and sustaining rigidity in the distribution of household work (Okojie, 1996).

The scenario of women taking up paid work in the last couple of decades has changed drastically in India (Mohanty and Tripathy, 2005). Today, they have managed to carve out an identity of their own in the public world and have even gone on to hold significant positions in the professional world ranging from CEOs of national banks and multinational corporations, head of the states, police officers, astronauts, scientists, engineers, pilots and so on. However, these group of women represent a miniscule population if we are to compare it against the total workforce of women in India (Kishor and Gupta, 2004). Indeed, the picture would be bleak. The concentration of women in certain jobs or what we know as occupational segregation is a prevailing trend (Mohanty and Tripathy, 2005). Jobs with lesser responsibilities, which do not take the woman away from her primary responsibility i.e. her home,

jobs which demand less of a person's time, jobs traditionally attached to the role of women, are those that are much sought after. As a result of which under representation of women in eminent positions in the workforce is the harsh and present reality.

Furthermore, Krishnaraj (1999) mentions that economic reforms such as privatisation, commercialisation initiated in 1991 affected the position of Indian women adversely. Increasing privatisation and commercialisation has brought us to a situation where paid work is no longer a choice for women but an obligation since the middle class families will be able to sustain only with two earners. She argues that despite the various other advantages brought in by these policies, stress among working women in urban areas are bound to increase. Similarly, the ICSSR (1971-1974) report also substantiates that inequalities have intensified as a result of educational development, changes in the value system and structural changes in the economy, industrialisation, urbanisation and wider opportunities for participation in the social process while in some cases they have reduced disparity.

The women's participation in the world of work has brought about structural and functional changes in the family which are appropriate to a new division of labour between the family and other social institutions (Rao and Rao, 1973). The quintessential Indian woman as a wife and a mother is expected to be ready to sacrifice her own interests for the sake of her family's happiness and well being, cooperative, gentle and faithful towards the demands of her family. However, her occupational or working role seeks other qualities in her such as pragmatism, independent, tenacious and an individualistic attitude. These two role expectations from complete different personalities are expected to be fulfilled by a woman.

Recent studies in the west (Rout, Lewis and Kagan, 1999; Shirley and Wallace, 2004) suggest a trend towards more egalitarian values when it comes to sharing domestic work and child care among spouses. But what about the Indian society? We still remain conventional when it comes to gender roles in the private domain no matter what position or role we may play in the public domain. Traditional structures, customs, values, conservative upbringing, societal expectations are what compel us to be answerable to domestic responsibility alongside work responsibility. This also means that employed women have longer working hours compared to men employed full time. Farley and Flota (2012) mention that a review of over 200 studies conducted in America between the years 1989 and 1999 showed that despite the gender gap in domestic work narrowing a little, women still spend twice as many hours a week on household work. Therefore, working women tend to have less leisure time and experience more stress. Trying to match their career aspirations with the traditional expectations of different roles of a wife, daughter in law, mother; working women often gets caught in a dilemma of fulfilling expectations of career and domestic roles. This more often than not spills into what we would term as role conflict.

1.3 Contextualising the Problem in Sikkim

Sikkim was a Buddhist kingdom until its incorporation with India in the year 1975. Today, it is a multi- cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. The ethnic groups inhabiting Sikkim can be broadly divided into three main groups namely the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis. The culture of these communities is closely intertwined with their religious structure. The Sikkimese Lepchas are followers of three religions namely Shamanism or Animism, Buddhism and Christianity. It is believed that the Lepchas were originally followers of Shamanism or Animism. Later sometime around

the 18th century a huge majority of them converted into Buddhism under the influence of the then ruling Buddhist monarchy. Conversion of the Lepchas into Christianity began sometime around the 19th century as a result of the influence of the missionaries (Sinha, 2008). Today, by and large the Lepchas of Sikkim are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. According to the State Socio Economic Census (SSEC) 2006 the total population of the Lepchas in the state stands at 45,239 which accounts to 7.8 percent of the total population. The second group comprising the Bhutias are believed to be migrants from Tibet. It is a community largely dominated by Buddhists. With the installation of a Buddhist king in 1642 A.D Buddhism came to be accepted as a state religion. Today the Bhutias comprise the second largest community in the state with a population of 76,070 accounting to 13.1 percent of the total population. Among the Bhutias, 96.17% of them are Buddhists. 2.17% of the Bhutias are Christians, 1.62% are Hindus, 0.01% are Islam converts. Like the Lepchas the Bhutias are also patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. Although recognised as communities where the womenfolk enjoy a comparatively better position, both these communities exhibit and practice patriarchy in their everyday life. The third ethnic group of Sikkim is a generic category known as the Nepalis and comprises a large number of communities like Limboos, Khambu Rais, Sunuwars, Mangars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Bhujels, Thamis, Bahuns, Chettris, Kamis, Damais, Sarkis, Thakuris, Jogis, Sanyasis, Majhis and Newars (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013). They are largely Hindus by faith although many of them continue to practise their animistic religion and form the largest community in the state. Despite the differences in the culture and religion of these communities, all of them are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal in its structure. Since the incorporation of Sikkim with the Indian Union, it has experienced a lot of changes in its social, cultural, economic, political and educational fields. An

important indicator of this change has been reflected in the literacy rate which has increased from 34.05 percent in 1981 to 81.4 percent in 2011. This increase in literacy rate has led to a shift in occupational trend. Decline in agricultural work and a parallel ascendancy in the non-agricultural sector, is now arising and becoming trend. Today, the agricultural work force has diminished to 38 percent from 81 percent in 1971. On the other hand, a parallel increase of work force in the non agricultural sector rose from 15 percent in 1971 to 54 percent in 2011 (SSEC, 2006). Moreover increase in developmental activities mainly in the growth of administrative and commercial activities have led to a growth in urbanisation resulting in the increase of the urban population in Sikkim at 153.43 percent within the last ten years while reporting a decrease of 5.2 percent in the rural population (Census of India, 2011). This therefore, indicates that the urban population is fast increasing even though the majority of the population still resides in the rural area. Today, 24.97 of the total population in Sikkim live in the urban areas with the East district having the largest urban population at 79.59 percent.

Leading the gender parity performance among the north eastern states, Sikkim also has a positive representation of women in the literacy rates as well as in the state government employment sector. Women in Sikkim face no social taboos in working outside their homes (Thapa, 2009), but the struggle in balancing family and work exists for the working women in Sikkim. Factors such as one's culture, ethnicity, family background, education level, community mind, traditions etc influence the working women's status as well as her difficulties. In other words, the intersectionality or the interplay of various social, cultural and ethnic categories may reflect variations in the status among the working women. However, largely influenced by patriarchy, working women have to deal with issues such as managing

the house alongside caring for the children and the elderly in the family, fulfilling social obligations etc. More often than not these issues are translated into sources of stress and fatigue.

Sikkim also has a substantial population working in the unorganised sector¹ comprising of small scale enterprises and private business. Structural constraints such as the topographical factors do not permit industrialisation on a large scale. Therefore, the state government remains the largest supplier of employment in the state. Women are often put at a disadvantageous position because of their limited access to education, information, land and work choices. As a result they often have to take up whatever comes their way in terms of work which is why they often end up working in the unorganised sector. Moreover the technical skills required for employment in the organised sector is often found to be lacking in a majority of women which is why the unorganised sector appears to be well suited for these untrained and unskilled women.

Workers in the organised sector² and those in the unorganised sector confront different situations, issues and challenges. Their coping mechanisms and strategies to overcome these issues may also differ. Variations may also occur with regard to the changing role of the working women as changes are often influenced by caste, class, ethnicity and other socio cultural factors such as education, religion etc.

Several studies (Rao and Rao, 1973; Kapur, 1974; Ahmad, 1984; Reddy, 1986) have focussed on the employed women and their social status in India but barring some

¹ Unorganised sector according to the International Labour Organisation has the following characteristics: ease of entry, reliance on local resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale operations, labour intensive work, and the use of skills acquired outside schooling and an irregular, competitive market (Bullock, 1994).

Unorganised Sector is also used synonymously used with informal sector (Breman, 2003)

² It is regulated by laws which seeks to protect the working conditions of the workers as well gives them a platform to engage in collective bargaining.

books and articles and reports on women in Sikkim (Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya, 2004; Diyali, 2006; Thapa, 2009, 2014; SHDR, 2014) there has been no comprehensive study done on the status and role of the working women in Sikkim. This study therefore attempts to explore the changing role of the working women in urban Sikkim along with the challenges and the strategies and coping mechanisms taken up by these working women to manage family and work.

1.4 Review of Literature

Women worldwide have faced continuous discrimination and suppression in one form or the other. Women in India until the later part of the 20th century had little choices regarding their role in the public sphere. With patriarchal ideology so deeply rooted in the Indian societal context, men were the prized sex while women were looked upon as individuals fit to be relegated to the private sphere with responsibilities of child bearing, rearing and housekeeping (Naqvi, 2011). The situation has of course, changed today with the influence of factors like education, government policies, urbanisation, laws and modernisation. Today the role of women outside the threshold of her private domain has widened and has become a significant feature affecting the social, political and economic life of the country (ibid.).

Further, to explore the changing roles that the women are embracing in this new scenario, reviewing the literature on the concerned topic formed an important part of the present study. Therefore, issues concerning working women, their status, their challenges, their coping mechanisms, their changing roles and relations is reviewed and addressed so as to know what has already been done on the issues related to the present study. Over the last couple of years a plethora of research work and literature has been conducted and presented in various areas of women's studies. Therefore,

books, journals, reports and research works were reviewed so as to get a deeper insight into the proposed study.

The present chapter discusses the literature and concepts pertaining to women and work. The studies on the relevant theme have been broadly grouped into the following sections:

1.4.1 Studies on Women and Work

Toner (1958) writes that the record of women working outside of home as a part of the labour force existed as early as the Middle Ages. Women in the United States worked in cotton mills even before the 1800s. Written more than 60 years ago Toner, states that economic necessity was what drove these women especially widows, divorced women to take up paid work even though there were some married working women who seem to be motivated by other reasons such as self development, use of free time, community service etc. Controversial to the present times, she mentions that women who are wives and mothers working outside of their homes have led to the institution of the family being devalued in America and have deprived children of parental love. The article concludes with suggestions from the Pope for the working women.

In "The Employed Mother in America", Nye and Hoffman (1976) bring to light the changes and the shift from the family to the factory as a result of industrialisation. One of these changes was the movement of women into paid work in the public domain. This book therefore gives us a historical account of the women's shift to paid work, the circumstances surrounding it and the impact it had on the family.

Ferber (1982) in her paper focuses on works published after 1976 and in the United States. The first section focuses on women's non market work followed by a discussion on labour market earnings especially on the earning gaps between men and women in the second section. All the earlier studies done on women and work shows that division of labour is a product of man made history rather than a biological necessity. Various studies also shows that what happens within the household has its influence on how and in which manner women participate in the labour market. Her research also states that the different works have shown that women encounter hurdles in acquiring skills and are therefore put in jobs which require little or no training.

Ämin and Al-Bassusi maintain that a study in rural Indonesia conducted by Wolf (1992) showed that women in Indonesia often take up wage work to seek their independence from long hours of unpaid labour in peasant households.

Krishnaraj (1999) mentions that economic reforms such as privatisation, commercialisation initiated in 1991 affected the position of Indian women adversely. Increasing privatisation and commercialisation has brought us to a situation where paid work is no longer a choice for women but an obligation since the middle class families will be able to sustain only with two earners. She argues that despite the various other advantages brought in by these policies, stress among working women in urban areas are bound to increase.

Zipp and Plutzer (2000) in *"From housework to Paid Work: The Implications of Women's Labor Force Experiences on Class Identity"* examines the impact on class identity of married women upon entering the labour market. The article reports that until the 1970s non employed married women were assumed to be the norm while employed married women were seen as deviants. So when these women non

employed married women moved into the paid labour market, did their new job function as a source of class identity or did these women continue to identify themselves with the occupation of their husbands as the family head? The study showed that women do tend to change her class identification after her entry into paid labour.

Hein (2005) in her book "*Reconciling work and family responsibilities Practical ideas from global experience*" maintains that financial pressures for survival or to support a certain lifestyle are pushing women to participate in earning for the household along with men.

An international survey was conducted by Myrdal and Klein (2006) in USA, UK, France and Sweden on behalf of the International Labour Office to answer the question; why do women work? They found out that women enter paid work for economic reasons and also to make a place in the economic productivity and to harbour a sense of social usefulness. They further stated that a sense of vocation arouses the need to continue their work after marriage while some are influenced by the feeling of social responsibility and so they continue to be in labour force. This book also brings forth the history of women and their journey into paid work.

Naqvi (2011) in her research on women managers investigates the changing role and status of women managers in the new economic setting. This study also looked into other issues like the challenges they faced at work and home and reasons for the low representation of women in higher managerial posts.

1.4.2 Studies on Working Women in India

The status of the Indian women has been well examined from the ancient and the medieval Indian society by Altekar (1959).

Rao and Rao's (1973) focus in this paper was to examine the relationship between employment of mothers and role conflict. This study revealed that that between the employed and non employed mothers in Hyderabad; role conflict is greater for employed mothers. Another finding of this study is that the traditional husband dominated family is slowly being replaced by a more egalitarian type of family.

Chakravarti (1993) mentions that although subordination of women exists almost worldwide, the extent and mode of subordination is defined by the social and cultural backdrop to which the women belongs. The subordination of Hindu women in the Indian society was legitimised on religious grounds. Her paper mentions that as far back as 5000 BC, women combined their roles as mothers as well as hunters and gatherers. Paintings done on caves in the hunting and gathering stage also suggest that rigid sexual division of labour did not exist which therefore, enables us to embrace the idea that the role of women in the economy was more or less equal to that of the men. She also mentions that agriculture as the major source of food production compelled the production activity to be carried outside the households in which the labour of the subjugated people was sought after. As a result, the woman's labour came to be confined to the household and was considered to be of no value.

Krishnaraj (1999) writes that the obligation on the part of women to perform unpaid work at home establishes restrictions of location, time and availability, restricted mobility which is compounded by poor skills and training thereby, aiding her inferior

position in the labour market. Temporary jobs, convenient jobs in the unorganised sector therefore, prove to be the recourse.

Ramu (1988) explores the concept of marital power and one's economic resources in a study among workers in three major public sector industries in Bangalore. The role of respondents in decision making on various family issues were taken as an indicator of one's marital power. The findings of the study suggested that the economic status of a wife plays an important role in the decision making process within the family. It also revealed that when the women lack the economic resources then they used other ways to influence the outcome of a decision.

Bhandari (2004) in her article investigates and analyses the dual roles played out by working women at home and office using the Quality of Life approach. Other studies on women and employment looks into women's domestic role and occupational role as two different entities which may give rise to role conflict when they become incompatible. Bhandari on the other hand examines the two roles in terms of their joint as well as independent contribution to the quality of life of the working women. The 100 respondents in this study are women clerks working in different Central Government departments from Delhi. These women face many problems such as long working hours, unavailability of domestic help, lack of household gadgets, commuting for long distance to work etc. The study revealed that these women lacked control over their earnings not did their earning power enhance their participation in decision making within the household. Being employed enhanced the social aspects of these women by the social interactions they had outside their homes more than the physical aspects such as distribution of food and division of labour within the household. The office or the workplace was seen as an escape from the monotony of

the household drudgery. Therefore, quality of life of the working women relies more on the socio-cultural environment and impression they have about their jobs than the mere fact that they are in full-time economically gainful employment outside the home.

Kaur and Punia (2008) in a study on the working women of Haryana states that women take up paid work due to a variety of reasons. The most popular reason for taking up employment was out of mere economic necessity. This was then followed by the need to raise one's economic status. Women also took up employment in order to make use of education and to be financially independent.

Gani and Ara (2010) in their study among 200 women working in different white collar jobs such as the educational institutions, media houses, banks government offices, hospitals in Kashmir . The study examines the work family conflicts faced by these working women. In doing so the focus of the study is on the constraints and the coping strategies adopted by these women to combine their work and family. It has been suggested that role conflict is not due to one single factor but is due to a culmination of a number of factors. Among the various employees, it was the doctors, nurses, workers in the media and the bank employees who spoke of more marital problems than teachers or workers in the office. Older women with grown children seem better adjusted in combining their work and family than young working mothers. The degree of role conflict experienced was lesser among women with higher income. The study also revealed an inverse relation between education and role conflict. Apart from these factors, distance between the residence and the workplace and the type of conveyance used for commuting also tends to influence the role conflict experienced by the working women.

Lahiri-Dutt and Sil (2014) investigates the changing gender roles in response to the rapid economic changes. The focus of their paper is on the middle class women from a small town, Burdwan, located in West Bengal wherein these women are fast emerging as "income- earning citizens". The findings of this study reveals a distinct gender bias in the amount of time spent by women on house management and maintenance, child care, care of the elderly wherein all these appears to be the sole responsibility of the women. The study further revealed that these middle class working women compromised on their time spent on leisure, learning, personal care etc in order to balance their home and work.

1.4.3 Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Working Women

The ICSSR report (1971-74) brings to light that women's role especially from the middle classes are multiple. She is expected to take on a number of roles in addition to the already existing traditional ones. To illustrate she is to be a paid worker, fulfilling domestic and childcare responsibilities, a good hostess, a dutiful wife, daughter in law, a concerned citizen and so on. The efficiency required to fulfil all these roles creates considerable amount of stress thereby, making a working woman's life difficult.

Singh (1972) says that children's age plays an important role in understanding the women's role conflict because a mother's time and attention are most essential when her children are small. The size of the family also influences the intensity of conflict for the working women. Women living in family with more members may experience more conflict than those women whose families are smaller in size. Another factor associated with role conflict is the nature of job that one is involved with and the amount of time that is demanded from the job. It was also found out that women who

had joined work out of sheer economic necessity experienced dissatisfaction with the amount of time they spend with their children and the time they allocate to their homes. The study also revealed that more than 50 percent of the working women had alternate arrangements in the form of mother, mother in law or a maid to take care of their children.

Kapur (1974) in his study on employed housewives viz. nurses, trained social workers, research workers of Delhi also reports of the role conflict face by the women in their management of professional role with their roles as a mother, wife and in their social roles. Therefore, gender inequality in differing degrees is ubiquitous with men enjoying a better position in comparison to women in the society.

This study by Houseknecht and Macke (1981) was carried out among women who were highly educated to explore the complex relationship between female employment and marital adjustment using the role theory. It also examines the impact of various indicators of work family conflict. One's employment status does not really affect the marital adjustment of women but rather this depends on the extent to how the family accommodates with the women's employment such as in the case of having a supportive spouse. It also lends support to the role theory which suggests that women's employment as such does not affect marital adjustment but rather whether that violates role expectation and in the process creates role conflict. Child rearing responsibilities also tend to represent possible sources of conflict between a woman's family role and her work role.

Enabulele (1991) delves into how modernisation is affecting child rearing practises among working mothers in rural and urban Nigeria. Other questions raised by her in her paper are: does any differences exist between rural and urban working mothers in

their child rearing practises? Are these differences set up along socio-economic grounds? What adaptive mechanisms have been adopted for child rearing by these women? The study sampled 500 working mothers between the ages of 32 to 39 years living in rural and urban areas of Bendel state in Nigeria. More than 73 percent of the women were working due to financial and necessity to work and no difference was reported in the response regarding the motive to work among rural and urban women. The findings also revealed that there were differences in child care arrangement among women working in rural and urban areas. Women from the urban areas were more likely to place their children in institutional care while they were at work while those from the rural areas kept their children with relatives while they went to work. Educational attainment of the mother did not really influence the child rearing attitudes of these mothers. Large number of respondents from the rural as well as the urban areas in the study however agreed to adopt different child rearing practises. Over all the researcher states that these working women have adapted to a new culture which is a combination of the traditional and modern culture in child rearing.

Ginn and Sandell (1997) seek to understand if there is any variation, according to the family circumstances and employment characteristics of women and men, in the stress which arises from the combined responsibilities of home and employment. It was revealed in the findings that workers with dependent children and with informal caring commitments experienced more stress with the study assuming that the latter source of stress is likely to be more common with the growing ageing population. Family circumstances such as dependent children tend to have as much impact on men's stress level as well as on women. The study suggests family friendly employer policies to help women manage dual roles and to also encourage men to have an equal participation in family work.

Okafor and Amayo (2006) have based their study on the working mothers in the banking sector in Ibadan, Nigeria. The statistics show that the number of working women and working mothers has grown appreciably over the last two decades. Women's emancipation, greater opportunities for education, more jobs, increasing prices, participation in all aspects of life are some of the reasons advanced for the increase in the number of working mothers. However, this rise in the number of working mothers is not free from its associated problems. One of them being society's disapproval and assumption that a working mother is likely to neglect the care of her family and children. The other being the strong patriarchal rooting in the Nigerian society where men may not agree to the idea of their wives working and therefore offer no support or cooperation to them. Lastly, the women are burdened with the pressure of convincing their employers about their loyalties as workers.

Majority of these women had taken up paid work for self fulfilment. With almost 47 percent of these women facing role strain, one coping strategy adopted by these women was using the services of house help and nannies to cope and balance their roles of mothers and workers. The use of hired help by these women also reflects their improved social status and class. It is also indicative of the better income that these bank workers earn. Therefore, even if these women face role strain, they would prefer to continue to work while developing or devising different coping strategies to overcome the challenges that they face.

Narayan (2008) addresses the problem of childcare and creche facilities of the young mothers working under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Tamil Nadu. Unawareness and lack of child care facilities was reported from the study. Children often accompanied their mothers to worksites or were left unsupervised at home.

Harassment from the supervisors and colleagues took place sometimes when the children accompanied their mothers to work which left the women workers with little choice but to leave them with relatives or unsupervised at home.

Gani and Ara (2010) in their study on Kashmiri women working in different white collar situations found that role conflict takes place as a result of a number of factors operating simultaneously and not due to one single factor. Their study reveals that elderly working women, women in nuclear families, higher educated women, women with more income, women with grown up children, etc tend to experience a lesser degree of role conflict whereas women with demanding husbands, women with home oriented personality, with more children, living in extended families tend to have a higher degree of role conflict.

Reflecting the patriarchal undertone in studies on working women in India, Gani and Ara (2010) remarks "A wife, by virtue of her employment and economic independence, should also avoid playing the so-called "male-role" at home. As long as wife does not attempt to establish superiority over the husband and make undue demands on him, as long as the dominant position of the husband in the family is not questioned, as long as the women does not place career above her family roles, the extra burden for the woman through profession may not lead to open conflicts."

1.4.4 Studies on the Unorganised Sector

Mohapatra (2015) refers to secondary sources to bring forth this article on female workers in the unorganised sector. In her article she mentions that the women in the informal sector form an important segment of the labour force in India wherein 94% of the total female workforce operates in the unorganised sector. They work as piece rate workers casual labour, wage earners etc and in construction centres, tanneries,

match and beedi industries and as part time helpers in households. Laws concerning wages, maternity benefits and social security have not benefited these women workers. She further mentions that the studies conducted by ICSSR, New Delhi have revealed the conditions of the women labourers working in the unorganised sector remains pitiable with a significant number of the jobs being performed by the women belonging to the lower caste and classes. Some of the characteristics associated with the women working in the unorganised sector are illiteracy, ignorance, lack of skills, heavy physical work, no job security, long working hours with limited wages, discrimination of wages vis-a-vis men, lack of minimum facilities at the work site, bondage etc are mentioned in her paper. Although women have always been a part of the workforce their contribution to economy and society has always been excluded simply because the definition of work does not recognise their kind of work.

Some of the reasons that women take up work are financial independence, economic necessity, for a sense of achievement and some simply to serve their society. However, women in India take up paid work for reasons of economic necessity. The World Bank mentions that 90 % of women workers in the informal sector are excluded from the official records with their work being undocumented.

The paper concludes with the author putting up suggestions such as the focus on skill development should be made, awareness about their rights should be made to the women workers, setting up of grievance cell etc for the protection and development of these women workers.

Sudha Kumari (1989) on examining the women workers in the unorganised sector mentions that these women face a double obstacle in their employment in the form of lack of job security as well as discrimination in wages.

Omvedt (1992) highlights in his paper the numerous problems faced by women workers in the unorganised sector such as the poor conditions of work, health, safety, sexual exploitation, education and inaccessibility to property. Patriarchy dictates that wages are handed to the male head while rape, beating and murder are occurrences taking place on the women.

According to Panda (1999) mentions that maximum of the workers belonging to the unorganised workforce in India live below the poverty line. Migrant labourers suffer the most with them performing back breaking work in inhuman conditions and who remain exploited in terms of working hours, wages and social security and welfare measures. His study also attempts to look into the composition of the workers in the unorganised sector with regard to age, sex, education, rural urban location and industrial classification.

Mandal (1997) identifies the problems of the women workers in the unorganised sector who mostly belong to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribe or to other backward communities in Bihar. Illiteracy is a resounding problem among these workers as a result of which they continue to get exploited because of their ignorance. The researcher goes on to suggest various strategies to empower these women such as awareness of legal rights, proper implementation of policies and the enactment of new legislations.

1.4.5 Studies on Sikkim

Ethnographic accounts (Gorer, 1967; Foning, 1987) anthropological studies (Risley, 1894) political literature (Das, 1983; Sinha, 2008), historical accounts (Rustomji, 1987, Subba, 2008) and travelogue (Verma,2012) on Sikkim is widely available but the availability of a comprehensive study literature on the status of women in Sikkim

is very scanty or poor. Research works or literature on working women in urban Sikkim is inadequate with the exception of a few published papers (Diyali, 2006; Thapa, 2009, 2014, 2016, 2019).

Risley (1894) is one of the earliest systematic presentations of the facts on Sikkim. This Gazetteer of Sikkim discusses the geographical position of the state alongside the laws, marriage customs, agriculture, religion, monasteries, vegetation and the flora and the fauna of the state. This rich account of the state was written during the monarchical rule of the Namgyal dynasty.

Nakane (1966) traces the migration of the Bhutias and the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. She attributes the organisation of the population of Sikkim into one political unit and the spread of Tibetan Buddhism as the result of the migration of the Bhutias into Sikkim. She brings out the differences among the Bhutias and the Lepchas in terms of their marriage patterns while also bringing forth the similarities between the two communities.

Her paper also focuses on the migration of the Nepalis to Sikkim and their contact with the Bhutias and the Lepchas.

Sinha (1975) analyses and evaluates the political struggle which eventually led to the merging of Sikkim with the Indian Union in 1975 and thereby becoming its 22nd state. The book also deals with the crucial role of the political parties and individuals which helped in the transformation from a monarchy to a democracy.

Bhasin (1987) delves briefly on the historical aspect of Sikkim before moving on to discuss the social organisation and culture of the Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung. This paper is based on a field work carried out by her in North Sikkim. A micro

approach has been adopted to explore the social organisation, household, marriage, economic structure and religious beliefs. It also provides an insight into the reasons for the breakdown of the polyandrous form of marriage as practised by the Lachenpas and the Lachungpas of North Sikkim.

Bhadra (1992) examines the heterogeneity of the multi cultural society in Sikkim while drawing instances from the historical background of the state. She also highlights the changes the state has undergone since its merger with India in April 1975. In this way she has attempted to explore the forces that have led to democracy and change in Sikkim.

Bhattacharya (1992) explores the influence and significance of Buddhism on the everyday life of the inhabitants of the state. She has also talked about Buddhism among the Nepalis and in doing so has tried to bring about a religious harmony co existence between Hinduism and Buddhism in the state.

Bhattacharya (1994) in her study on the Bhutia and Lepcha women of Sikkim has attempted to look into their position in the society by delving into their family system, health care, marriage system, education and professional facilities and opportunities and property rights.

Singh (1997) offers a comprehensive work on the 25 different communities living in Sikkim. This anthropological work looks into the culture, food, religion, traditional attire, language, crafts, festivals and rituals, and their socio political organisations of these 25 identified communities of Sikkim.

Mondal (1999) examines the Bhutia women from demographic features, educational achievements, employment opportunities, political rights and their role in family and

society. He concludes that the Bhutia women do not enjoy a high status when we look at them from the socio political perspective but he cautions that their role in family economy and management, in the retention of culture and tradition is significant. With patriarchy prevailing over the Bhutia society, the men dominate in public and community affairs while the women enjoy greater freedom and say in domestic and family affairs. Therefore, a kind of duality exists in the gender role of the Bhutias.

Sikkim Human Development Report (SHDR 2001, 2014) highlights the progress of the state by focussing on people, their capabilities and opportunities as the goal of development efforts. It advocates governance for sustainable human development as the guiding principle for state and civil society action in Sikkim where in studies have been made on population, poverty, health, education, employment and the position of women. An area of improvement which has been brought to the fore in SHDR 2014 is the increase in the literacy profile of the women in Sikkim within a span of 14 years since the publication of the SHDR 2001. The female work participation rate in the state is seen as much higher than the national average and the report states that the participation of women in economic activities has always been high. The high representation of women in government employment has been attributed to the 30 percent reservation for women in posts and services under the state government and public sector undertakings. However, the report cautions that women continue to be under represented at the highest levels of bureaucracy. These documents also takes into account issues like forest and environment, land and agriculture, industry, power and state finance etc. The challenges faced by the state are also highlighted in this report.

Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya (2004) base their study on secondary sources while highlighting the high participation of Sikkimese women in economic activities even though her primary role continues to be that of a homemaker. This holds true for women in the rural area as well as the urban area. The study has been done among women in agriculture, women in secondary sector as well as women in tertiary and other sector. The paper concludes with the assumption that the work position of women and their contribution to household activities is not uniform with their work often being undervalued and underestimated. Hence, they stress on the urgent need to understand the role and linkages between women, education, employment and development in Sikkim.

Diyali (2006) in a report for National Commission for Women has examined the status of women in Sikkim through various avenues namely health, education, employment and their political participation. She writes that Sikkim since its merger with the Indian Union, Sikkim has recorded certain achievements such as the drop in infant mortality rate, increase in literacy rates, accessibility to electricity and piped drinking water etc. However, she also cautions that women continue to face unequal opportunities in various spheres. Having no rights to inheritance, being involved in traditional and unpaid economic activities, high maternal mortality rate etc are some of the areas that needs to be looked into for improvement.

Thapa (2009) mentions that the women in Sikkim are underrepresented as a gender category in the sex ratio, literacy rate, work participation rate, bureaucracy and in polity despite there being no apparent gender disparity. She stresses that gender parity in terms of literacy achievement would aid in the representation of women in sectors like bureaucracy, polity and other decision making processes. She further suggests

that mere policies, programmes and legislations would be insufficient for the upliftment of the status of women. Rather, change in the attitude of the society towards women along with transformation of the patriarchal mindset is necessary for their upliftment.

Dey (2015) while confining his study to secondary sources reveals that the declining sex ratio in Sikkim is the result of early marriages, low nutrition intake, absence of proper maternal care, poor health status of women and loss of appetite and not female infanticide as is the case elsewhere in India. All these factors leads to an incidence of high maternal mortality in the state. Immigration of male workers is also seen as a factor for the declining sex ratio.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Studies on gender issues can be studied or examined from various theoretical standpoints. A common thread shared by all these perspectives is that gender is a social construct. Functionalism views the society as a complex whole wherein its various parts function to promote solidarity and stability and to meet the needs of the society (Ransome, 2010). Therefore, the functionalist perspective sees gender roles as an efficient mechanism to meet the needs of the society. The contestation given by Malinowski argues that social and cultural institutions serve to meet the needs of the society. Therefore, gender roles within the social and cultural framework helps in the maintenance of the society. Talcott Parsons taking a structural functionalist standpoint sees different gender roles as functional for the society. In other words, when men and women prepare and perform gender appropriate roles, tensions and conflicts can be minimised in the society (Fuse, 1981; Abraham, 2006; Ritzer, 1996). Merton on the other hand disagrees about the functionality of all the parts in the society. He

introduces the concepts of dysfunction and latent function to explain change and challenge the idea of status quo (Dillon, 2010). Unequal and traditional gender roles may be functional only for a certain section of the society while it remains dysfunctional for the women in particular thereby creating a situation of potential struggle such as the women's movement. His idea of latent or hidden function can be used to understand the double burden that working women face today which serves as a dysfunctional aspect as a result of their entry into paid work.

The conflict perspective on the other hand locates economic inequality between men and women as the source of gender inequality. Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* believed that the introduction of private property and economic dominance by men led to the subordination of women. Therefore only with the abolition of private property and capitalism would women free themselves from inequality (Bardhan, 1985). Another conflict theorist, Randall Collins talks about conflict which occurs in subtle forms in our face to face interaction and in our everyday lives wherein the unequal distribution of scarce resource such as economic resources existing in the material form; power resources in the form of social positions and cultural resources which is understood as control over rituals and symbols, is likely to produce potential conflict between those who control it and those who don't (Allan, 2007). Therefore, borrowing from Collin's idea of conflict, resources in all three forms have been unequally distributed between men and women. Looking into history all three resources have more or less always been in the control of men, as a result of which conflicts in the form of movements, protests etc have been raised by women.

Another dominant paradigm employed to look into the gender division of labour is the Feminist theory which explores social life and human experience from a woman centred standpoint (Ritzer, 1996). Different feminist theories such as Liberal feminism, Marxian feminism, Radical feminism, Socialist feminism all advocates for equality for women. Liberal Feminism looks into gender inequality which is especially reflected in the sexual division of labour whereby men are located within the public sphere where the true rewards of social life such as money, power, status opportunities for growth and self worth are to be found while women are confined within the private sphere where tasks which are unpaid and undervalued are located. Marxian feminism, another variant locates capitalism as the cause of the disadvantageous position of women vis a vis men in terms of access to material goods, power and status (Dillon, 2010). Psychoanalytic feminism sees patriarchy as a universal system where men subjugate women. Radical feminism also known as revolutionary feminism advocates complete removal of patriarchy and that women are everywhere oppressed by the patriarchy system and the root of women's subjugation lies within the family, society and the hierarchical division of sex roles (Gottfried, 2006; Appelrouth and Edles, 2010).

However, recent developments in the theoretical paradigm have given rise to various post structuralist and post modern conceptual and theoretical approaches to delve deeper into the understanding of social phenomena. Phenomenology is one such perspective which concentrates on the analysis of the world of everyday life (Dillon, 2010) while maintaining that meanings are created through consciousness and human activity that takes place in a lifeworld (Schutz, 1970) which is a taken for granted world wherein humans presume that they all experience the same world (Turner, 2013). In other words, the reality we experience is always social and intersubjective

that is shared with others. As individuals, we are subjectively engaged social actors living in the everyday world drawing from the stock of previous experiences and using it as a scheme of reference and allow actors to engage in the process of typification (Dillon, 2010; Kundu, 2012; Turner, 2013). Alfred Schutz (1970) asserts that the everyday ways of doing things in a particular community or group or what he calls as the "recipe knowledge" is accepted as the right way and this way of doing things is taken for granted without any explanation. The "recipe knowledge" for a patriarchal society favors men with privileges while denying the same to women and these everyday ways of doing things in a gender centric way is taken for granted without any justification, with women continuing to be treated in an unjust manner. This "recipe knowledge" or "stock knowledge" is imbibed during the socialisation process. Hence gender division of labour, gender roles and relations which transforms into reality for individuals are all derived and learned from the "stocks of knowledge" during the process of socialisation.

Correspondingly, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) sees social reality as one that is created by an individual's internalisation of an objectified reality which then becomes his own subjective reality and so on and so forth through the process of internalisation and externalisation. The objective reality for men and women is one wherein men are dominant and women are suppressed or inferior. This objective reality is then internalised making it a subjective reality for individuals which further gets translated into social reality thereby giving rise to a social order of gender inequality. And the naturalness of this reality is taken for granted.

A common thread that binds together all theoretical framework that justifies the gender division of labour is the patriarchal social set up and its reproduction in all

social institutions. Therefore, discussions on gender, especially in the Indian context cannot be complete unless we bring in the concept or the understanding of patriarchy to our study because it forms the basis of the notion of our society. Thus, patriarchy lends itself admirably to providing an answer to the gendered division of work in the social world and to the unequal distribution of resources between men and women. Walby (1990: 20) defines patriarchy as a "system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". It is also conceptualised as a social system whereby men are considered the primary holders of power, authority and privileges. What about the women, then? This understanding of patriarchy also reveals that women occupy the secondary position with the primary position being taken over by the men. Further, the worth and the value attributed to different types of activities are decided by men wherein they categorise their own activities as important and prestigious while the activities relegated to the women are seen as secondary (Ransome, 2010). This implies that patriarchy produces and reproduces female subordination. Often such societies are patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal.

Walby (1990) also talks about patriarchy having two forms: private patriarchy and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is the domination of women in family and households while public patriarchy refers to the subordination of women in the public arena especially in paid employment where they are paid less and accorded a lower status. Women's pinnacle of achievement is relished as marriage and motherhood and they are left with the responsibility for childbirth and childcare. This explains why women's exclusion and marginalisation continues unceasingly in the public sphere. Women's role as mothers structure their whole lives due to which many of them opt for part-time work, followed by unequal and generally low pay. This is why it makes

sense for the woman to stay at home and care for her family and the man to be the earner (Soman, 2009).

The patriarchal values and gendered roles is reproduced in everyday life as a reality so much so that it becomes culturally ingrained and accepted by individuals as structurally constraining. This gender socialisation and entrenchment of cultural values and its reproduction can be explained more lucidly with the ideas of post structuralists like Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens. In our interaction with each other as communicators, individuals or as Giddens puts it "agents" abides by the rules of the structure. In doing so, the action of these agents create new rules while simultaneously reproducing the old ones (Ritzer, 1996). Therefore, our roles and actions as men or women are guided by the patriarchal norms. When our actions become guided by our gender, we in turn create gender norms which tend to affect our roles, behavioural as well as relational within our families as well as within the larger societal institutions. Therefore, structure can be viewed as both enabling as well as disabling (Ransome, 2010).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is seen as akin to Giddens's idea of structure. Habitus as perceived by Bourdieu is a flexible structure which acts as rules in determining and influencing an individual's thoughts and action (Walther, 2014). Habitus, hence, is the result of a social process whereby people organize their behaviour and a system through which they perceive and evaluate the social world (Ransome, 2010; Soman, 2009). Habitus can also be understood as norms developed as a result of the socialisation process Hence, the reaction or attitude of the person either in the physical or the psychological sense is shaped by the tastes, habits, family, social skills and ideologies to which an individual has been exposed to in their personal life and

their actions are carried out in a spontaneous yet structured, unregulated yet regular manner (Elliott, 2010). When we display regularity in our everyday conduct, we are actually supporting Bourdieu's idea of how habitus can penetrate our everyday patterns of behaviour so much so that we become unconscious of it (Allan, 2013). However, these cognitive structures can be improved on and can be applied to new settings or contexts, therefore allowing us to get through unanticipated social structures. Hence, it is not fixed or permanent.

The location of individuals in certain positions within a structured space termed as "fields" allows for accessibility to different kinds of capital in order to gain dominance and power (Walther, 2014). These fields which make up the social world maybe educational, economic, artistic, religious, cultural etc each with its own social properties and characteristics (Allan, 2013). Capital, on the other hand can be understood as a resource that an individual should possess in order to gain access to any field and in turn the various habitus and practices associated with them. This gives rise to the premise that if one has more capital, then one is likely to occupy a powerful position in the social order (Ritzer, 1996).

Acquisition of economic capital which is associated with wealth and income can be used by an individual to control the possession of other three capitals. Wealth and income have almost always been in the possession of men in most of the societies which is why their retention of the social, cultural and symbolic capital has exceeded those of women. Consequently, the position of males is highly valued in patriarchal societies. In fact, according to Bourdieu structures such as gender or class are reproduced through symbolic capital. Further, inequality is reproduced in the social practices in the field which comprises of specialised institutions in society. Practices,

therefore, arises out of the relationship between habitus and field. In other words habitus guides social action and is continually accommodated to new situations through cultural practices (Soman, 2009). The logic of practice and competence within one field may vary from those of other fields and these variations work to reproduce inequality within their own fields as well as within the society as a whole.

Since habitus determines and conditions our thoughts and behaviours, it becomes not only objective but a significant part of our own subjective experience. In this manner, the notion of habitus which lays out the guidelines on social relations based on patriarchy displays how gender is reproduced in everyday life. Contextually locating, the patriarchal set up in Sikkim serves as our habitus and women as well as men have been socialised into internalising this perspective of patriarchy. So in habitus, gender is structured. Therefore, acceptance to this subordinate position is done unconsciously and our social world is perceived, understood and evaluated through this idea of patriarchy. The habitus or the norms developed as a result of the socialisation process in Sikkim among various communities play along the patriarchal lines. So much so that even the tribal communities like Bhutias and the Lepchas who were widely considered to be egalitarian towards gender despite being situated within a patriarchal set up have now begun to place emphasis on the importance and roles of men. Men as well as women internalise this dominant impression of men and the women having a submissive nature and role. If we look into the different fields of the social world in Sikkim, then we can see the manifestations of these patriarchal relations. According to Bourdieu, our social world is made up of artistic, religious, economic, educational, cultural fields. When we occupy various positions in any of these fields, our habitus or the patriarchal norms guide our actions, thoughts, values in our everyday lives. As a result of which the women of Sikkim often end up in a subservient position in

relation to men. Repetition of these patriarchal rules gives rise to its unquestioning acceptance or legitimacy. However, the positioning of women in various fields may vary according to her possession of various forms of capital like socio- economic background, education, ethnic background, social class position etc. In other words, their position in these various fields depends upon their possession of the different capitals namely, social, economic, cultural and symbolic.

The concept of field helps explain how women can experience different situations in public or private domain. To illustrate, a working woman holding a high position at her work place wielding considerable power may be a dominant wife at her private domain. This is because we are socialised to behave differently in different fields. This patriarchal socialisation or habitus automatically "deploy a kind of semi-automatic grasp of what is appropriate to differing social situations" (Elliot, 2010).

Based on this theoretical and conceptual framework, the present study would analyse the changing role and relations of the working women in urban Sikkim from the sociological lens using various sociological concepts mainly revolving around the conceptual and theoretical perspectives of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu and the reproduction of the phenomenological experience on everyday life.

1.6 Rationale of the Study

In recent times, significant changes in the political, educational, employment and other socio-economic fields have taken place in the traditionally rooted Sikkim society too. As stated earlier the increase in the literacy rate has led to a rise in the non agricultural workforce and a simultaneous decrease among agricultural cultivators. This shift in occupational trend can be attributed to the advancement made in education as well as in developmental activities mainly in the growth of

administrative and commercial activities. Further, this has led to a growth in urbanisation resulting in the increase of the urban population in Sikkim at 153.43 percent with the East District having the largest urban population at 79.59 percent. This increase in literacy rate at 76 percent as compared to 46.76 percent in 1991 (Sikkim A Statistical Journal, 2014) among women has widespread implications in the society one of which is they are now encouraged to seek gainful employment outside of the severely limited traditional ones. Women are represented conspicuously in the government sector owing to the fact that there is a 30 percent reservation for them in the government services (Thapa, 2009). Furthermore, the government also happens to be the largest employer in the formal sector (SHDR, 2014). Although detailed information regarding their representation in various sectors is not available but indications are that they are well represented in the administration and health services and are also making forays into the fields of engineering and forestry which conventionally were not women's domain.

Similarly, in the unorganised sector, women's foray into economic activities such as beauty parlours, hospitality, as paid domestic help is only a recent trend which was not in existence in the traditional Sikkimese society. However, in the recent times with the rising costs in living, consumer lifestyle and increase and popularity of vocational and skill development training programmes such as beauticians, hospitality management etc, more women are stepping forward to seek jobs in these areas (Thapa, 2014).

Therefore, the situation of the Sikkimese women today, especially in the urban set up has altered drastically compared to what it used to be before. Women in Sikkim today have relatively better eligibility, requisite qualifications and plenty of opportunities to

compete and be successful in a working world which previously excluded them. However, the availability of this new world of paid work has also brought alongside a situation where the demands of work and family often are in conflict with each other. The stress and guilt pangs of not devoting enough time to being a doting mother, a devoted wife or a caring daughter in law is present among the modern working women of Sikkim. The scenario in Sikkim as it is elsewhere in the country is dominated by patriarchal values when it comes to the traditional roles of women but at the same time factors such as education, urbanisation, rising expenditures have pushed these women into new career roles. Therefore, the working women in Sikkim remain traditional in their domestic roles while trying to adjust to the increasing demands of time, energy and dedication to their career roles. There is a constant tug between her career role and her domestic role for the working women and the effects of it are evident in her changing relations with the others. Therefore, the present study explores the universal problem of work versus family struggle for the modern working women of Sikkim. It also aims to examine the idea if paid work has brought any change in the woman's role in the private and the public domain and in her relations with family and wider social structure.

Interestingly, earlier studies conducted on Sikkim (Bhattacharya, 1994; Bhasin and Bhasin, 1995) typically portray the women in Sikkim as free from any kind of gender biases and holding an equal status with the male counterparts in the society. However, the notion of patriarchy is again very strong among the different communities of Sikkim. The idea of egalitarianism coexisting with patriarchy is somehow contradictory. Therefore, the present study seeks to find out whether the women in Sikkim are free from gender biases in their everyday lives or if the patriarchal

structure is what dominates their lives and explore how there is readjustment of strong patriarchal ethos in the new changing social set up.

With such startling change in her life role, the paradoxes and conflicts existing in her role as a homemaker and a working woman would be intense and extensive. Implications of this change would be felt in both the private and the public domain because caught between the two is the woman trying to juggle both the spheres. Work-family balance notwithstanding, the shift from the compulsions to which they submitted to the choices women can now make would be seminal to the future of women in Sikkim and to Sikkim itself. However, barring a few articles and chapters (Bhattacharya, 1992; Diyali, 2006; Thapa, 2009, 2014) there is a dearth of a comprehensive study on this research problem in Sikkim which needs to be addressed to. This study, therefore, is an attempt to explore the nature, the extent, the causes, challenges that working women face in urban Sikkim alongside her changing role. It also aims to examine the strategies and coping mechanisms adapted by these women to combat the stress these competing roles exert.

1.7 Research Questions

1. Is there any change in the gender roles and relations of the working women? If so, what is the nature of the change?
2. How do working women manage the demands of home and work?
3. Do working women face any role conflict while managing both home and work?
4. Is gender stereotyping of specific work tasks reproduced in the everyday life routine?
5. How does socio-economic background affect the work-family conflict?

6. Does the management of dual roles vary across different economic and socio-cultural communities? If so, what are the various strategies and coping mechanism?
7. What are the problems faced by the working women in everyday life?

1.8 Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to explore and understand the changing roles of the working women in urban Sikkim. Sikkim is essentially perceived to be a multi cultural society with egalitarian values prevailing among men and women. The objectives of this study in rudimentary form are as follows:

1. To explore the changing role and relations of the women in urban Sikkim.
2. To examine if working women face any role conflict and how do they balance the dual roles of home and work.
3. To assess if various socio-cultural and economic variations play a determining role in work-family balance.
4. To identify if any traditional gender roles is being reproduced in the everyday work routine.
5. To study how working women perceive themselves on being employed.
6. To examine the challenges faced by the working women and their coping mechanism.

1.9 Materials and Method

The universe of the present study is the working women belonging to the Bhutia, Lepcha or the Nepali community in urban Sikkim. Sikkim at present has 9 towns out of which 4 are located in the east district of Sikkim. The research study has been

carried out in the three notified towns of Gangtok, Singtam and Rangpo in East Sikkim. East Sikkim has been chosen as the area of study because it comprises the highest percentage (45%) of the urban population in Sikkim. One can find a congregation of working women belonging to different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, educational levels and different fields of employment. Therefore, sufficient number of working women in diverse situations and circumstances located in the capital and the two main towns of the state would give a clearer and a more diverse representation to the study. Moreover, East Sikkim also houses the important government offices including the secretariat and the head offices of the various departments of the state. Furthermore, East Sikkim also accounts for the highest number of regular state government workers at 61.75 percent and the highest percentage of self employed workers at 60.67 percent (SSEC, 2006).

The selection of people who have taken part in the research is termed as sampling. The study has employed purposive and stratified sampling method. According to the ICSSR report (1971-1974), the categories marked out as per the censuses do not prove very helpful in understanding the nature, problems and drawbacks of women's participation in the economy. To overcome the constraints and give fair representation of diversity, I have classified the working women of Sikkim into two categories on the basis of their "organisation" namely the organised sector and the unorganised sector.

The women working in the various administrative and the technical services in the government organised sector on a regular basis and the women working in the unorganised sector constituted the sample for the study. These respondents belong either to the Bhutia, Lepcha or the Nepali community and are married or have been

married at some point in time. The organised sector was further split into the administrative services³ and the technical services⁴. The unorganised sector comprised women working as (a) domestic workers (b) women employed in the hospitality sector comprising the lower staff such as housekeeping staff and waitresses in various hotels in east Sikkim (c) the women working in the beauty parlours and (d) shopkeepers and salesgirls. 40 respondents were selected from each category of administrative services, technical services and the unorganised sector. Within the unorganised sector 10 respondents from each sub category was selected. Therefore the total sampling population came to be 120.

This diverse representation of respondents from varying ethnic economic backgrounds and engaged in different nature of works would cancel out the possibility of clubbing together of working women as one homogeneous category with similar roles, challenges and solutions to their everyday problems.

1.9.1 Tools of Data Collection

The present study adopted a semi-structured interview schedule. The schedule comprised of 41 questions which are both close ended questions and open ended questions. Three sets of interview schedule was framed respectively for the sample population belonging to the administrative services, the technical services and the unorganised sector as the nature of work for these categories are different. Questions have been divided into three sections. The first part deals with the personal information of the respondents and details about their family. This section has mainly close ended questions. The second part focuses on information related to the

³Related to those tasks dealing with financial planning, record keeping, and other administrative services within an organisation.

⁴Related to those tasks which require some degree of specialised knowledge.

respondent's work details. Questions on professional experience, problems related to work, attitude of the male colleagues, level of involvement in work etc are included in this section. The third part of the interview schedule brings out the opinions of the respondents. This segment consists of questions highlighting the respondent's attitude towards her working status, society's perception of her as employed women, if she has any control over her earnings, her decision making powers within the family, her daily routine, her husband's daily routine etc. This segment also looks into work life balance, coping strategies and role conflict. Questions in the second and the third category are open ended so as to gain insight into the respondent's role as a worker as well as a wife, mother and daughter in law and her attempts to combine these various roles. To augment phenomenological essence in the study, open ended questions with qualitative aspect of this study were included wherein the lived experiences of women, their life narratives and case studies has been explored so as to see the reflections of patriarchy in their daily lives vis-a-vis one's social-cultural background and the influences it has on the balance between work and family. Agreeing to the above statement Hancock (2008) argues that only qualitative data can offer insight into women's lived experiences and the multifaceted ways in which women experience empowerment or subordination. To look into the distribution of everyday routine among working women in urban Sikkim, a time chart based survey was adopted to highlight the gender division of labour within the household. This allows us to look into the division of a day for men and women in paid as well as unpaid work. In other words it gives us access to assess if women's roles are changing or not.

The data were collected by individually interviewing each respondent. The interviews were conducted at the respondents' workplaces but in a reasonably relaxed and quiet atmosphere. Necessary care was taken to explain to each respondent that

confidentiality would be maintained regarding the identity and the information elicited during the field study.

Non participant observation as a tool was also used because it is through observation one can assess the mannerisms, speech and behaviour, acceptance of social norms and the reproduction of patriarchy. The secondary data for the study has been collected from various published and unpublished materials like research articles, books, magazines, newspapers, dissertations, census data and other government publications.

The empirical work has been interpreted using the various sociological concepts however relying mainly within the theoretical paradigm of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu and phenomenological experience of everyday life.

Exclusion of male participants in the present study for a wider scope of understanding the changing role and relations of working women poses as a limitation to the study. However, this lacuna can be addressed as a scope for further research studies.

1.10 Chapter Scheme

The thesis has been organised into seven chapters.

The first chapter entitled "Introduction" deals with the design of the study. It contains the Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Women in Indian context, Contextualising the Problem in Sikkim, Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, Rationale of the Study, Research Questions, Objectives of the Study, Materials and Method, Limitations of the Study and the Chapter Scheme.

The second chapter entitled "Tracing Gender and Work" gives an overview of the growth and development of women's entry into paid work. This has been examined

from general to specific starting with the global level as well as contextualising within the Indian framework.

The third chapter entitled "Sikkimese Women in Changing Perspective" examines the status of women in Sikkim in the post merger period taking into consideration various parameters like education, employment, literacy against the socio-cultural backdrop. The historical background of the state along with the ethnic profile of the various communities of Sikkim has also been discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter entitled "Understanding Working Women of Sikkim- An Empirical Analysis" is based on field setting and deals with the socio-economic background of the respondents. This chapter aims to provide a backdrop for the subsequent chapters.

The fifth chapter entitled "Redefining Gender Roles and Relations: Intersectionality of Ethnicity, Class and Gender" is based on empirical study and explores the life of the working women in urban Sikkim. The chapter highlights the objectives and ramifications of employment, both functional and dysfunctional consequences into the lives of the working women.

The sixth chapter entitled "Challenging Social Constructions of Gender: Constraints and Coping Mechanisms" assesses the reproduction of patriarchy in everyday life by trying to identify the role of men and women in everyday household practices such as their participation in house work and child care. The second and third section of the chapter deals with the constraints, challenges and the coping mechanisms adopted by the respondents to overcome the challenges that they experience in balancing home and work.

The seventh chapter entitled "Conclusion" presents the summary of findings, suggestions and scope for further research and conclusion.

Chapter 2

Tracing Gender and Work

Working women are no longer a novelty in the world today. Women all over the world have always been a part of the workforce. From primitive, hunting and gathering to agricultural societies women have always been working on weaving, gathering food and wood, carrying loads, working on farms, cooking meals and looking after domestic animals. With the dawn of industrialisation and the consequent shift of labour from primary occupations to tertiary ones and from rural areas to urban areas, women are now an integral part of the world's workforce (Peterson, 1964).

Until recently, the division between the two sexes regarding work distribution was clear cut. Men were responsible for the work relegated to the public sphere while women were given the responsibility of looking after the private domain (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 1996). Although women have always been engaged in productive activities their work has more or less remained invisible (Hartmann, 1982) or has been taken for granted which is indicative of their unequal status in the society. However, this inequality does not take place in the same degree among all women. The form, the type and the degree varies depending on the ethnicity, education, religion, class, culture and family (Ghorayshi and Bèlanger, 1996). Sociologically, these factors have to be identified and taken into consideration so as to avoid lumping all women folk together and their problems as the same across the society while also looking for collective solutions (Farley and Flota, 2012). Further, to gain any kind of understanding of women's lives one must look into the historic inequalities between the sexes (Narayana and Lakshmi, 2011).

Since the evolution of mankind, some form of basic division of labour has been maintained between men and women. As a result of her ability to give birth, women were unquestionably given the role of carers which resulted in her not straying not too far from her young children. This restricted her movements which in turn came to affect her ability to hunt and engage in dangerous occupations. This division of labour came to influence the work that women and men did in the future. The hunting and gathering societies functioned according to this arrangement. Men hunted and were considered the providers of the family while the women gathered food from the surrounding areas while simultaneously taking care of the children, cooking, preparing and preserving what was brought home. However, the family's survival often depended on the man's skill and valour. This was not only in terms of hunting animals for food and clothing but also in protecting the women and children from external dangers. Therefore, even if women did participate in the upkeep of the family, it was the men who were seen as crucial for the survival of the family. Cultivation of agriculture as a source of food led to people's settlement in one place. Here too women did half of the active work relating to agriculture like weeding, transplanting, harvesting etc (Chakravarti, 1993).

2.1 Gender Roles in the Historical Perspective

Farley and Flota (2012) mention that while gender roles have always been unequal, considerable variation has prevailed in the specific nature of gender roles both over time and different groups. For instance in the early American society both women and men participated in farming, house work and goods production though majority of the child rearing responsibilities was taken on by the women. However, as production work concerning market goods slowly moved outside of the home, so did the men

while the women came to be left behind as housewives. Initially seen as advantageous for women this shift later proved to be disadvantageous for the women as economic control came to be retained by the men and this spilled into all areas of life. This also established a clear message about the differences in the social roles of men and women (Ransome, 2010).

Another world event which played a significant role in ushering in changes in the gender roles is the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution in Europe led to the movement of economic activities from the home to the public space. It also led to the development of conflict between the two genders. During this movement, women were left behind due to her child bearing and rearing responsibilities while the men moved along with the economic activities and became the sole sources of wages. Ransome (2010) suggests that during the industrialisation period in the 19th century, men undertook every effort to ensure that women stayed out of formal paid employment. Over a period of time when market goods came to replace home based goods and money became the primary medium through which goods could be purchased, the cash income or the ability to earn wages became a defining feature of one's social status. Housework which had no market value and which was attached to women came to play a pivotal role in devaluing her economic status. Thus not only did the economic activities of man and women come to be physically separated but the social value of man's activities came to be measured in terms of money. As a result, women's work which had no market value came to be further marginalised. Her economic status came to be completely dependent on her husband's (Mishra, 1994). On the other hand the technological changes of the industrial revolution altered the processes of production. This transformation in the production process demanded a lot of working hands which is why a large number of women in urban areas were drawn

into the factories, mills and industries as unskilled wage earners. Women in order to supplement the family income because of the increasing expenses joined the workforce taking along with them their children. Conversely, the factory owners, in order to maximize the profits, paid minimum wages to the men and supplementary wages to the women and children. This led to the urban women occupying the position of marginal workers in the new economy (Sengupta, 1960). The employment of women in industrial countries has thus been a development neither from social requirement of women's work in industries nor from women's inherent need for wage employment but was mainly caused by the desire of the industrialists to utilise cheap labour for the maximisation of profit. Thus, the industrial revolution also led to the emergence of urban working women (Mishra, 1994).

Tracing the movement of women into the paid workforce, we find that the two World Wars necessitated a large number of women to move into clerical and other jobs held by men when these men went to fight in the war. No doubt, there were women working as doctors, nurses and teachers but they again fulfilled the traditional role of caregivers as initiated from the beginning of human settlement. So it was during the two world wars that the participation of women in the clerical labour force increased by manifold. Therefore, "the industrial employment of women including those who were married was a fairly widespread phenomenon in the 19th century" (ibid.). Increase in income allowed education to be more accessible to the upcoming generation of boys as well as girls. These young women who were more educated than their mothers began to join the labour force in a large scale. Therefore, by the end of the 20th century, professions such as law, medicine, finance, politics etc came to be expanded to women workers with the result that the number of women in paid work began to increase. However, wage gap, sexual harassment, sexism etc continued

to act as obstacles preventing women from advancing in the career ladder (Heywood, 2006).

These developments and the period simultaneously witnessed and contributed to the growth of feminism. The history of feminism is understood as comprising of three waves. The first wave occurred in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was primarily concerned with gaining equal rights for women, particularly the rights to suffrage. The second wave was in the 1960s and 1970s and which continues to coexist as third wave feminism wherein the focus of the movement extended to the areas of family, sexuality and work. Ever since, the second-wave feminism has coexisted continuously with what is termed as third-wave feminism (Pande, 2018).

2.2 Gender Scenario in the Indian Context

In the Indian context we find that work stratification prevails on the basis of age as well as gender and caste. In fact, the problem becomes complex as women in the Indian society do not constitute a homogeneous category (Srinivas, 1977; Rout, Lewis and Kagan, 1999). There exists an intersectionality of caste, class, religion, region and ethnic diversity. Upper caste women have more status and power than lower caste women and will not do all tasks performed by the lower caste women. Similarly, many house tasks are done only by women and not men. Older women tend to exhibit more power over the younger women in the family and more often than not the labour of one or a group of women is availed by other women and this relationship often is an exploitative one (Srinivas, 1977; Ramu, 1988; Rout, Lewis and Kagan, 1999).

The role of women in ancient India has been examined from various historical texts and classical literature (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, 1996; Basham, 1999). Altekar (1959) has talked about tracing the work that women did in India back to the

days of Indus Valley Civilisation. It is believed that even then the work that men and women did was split into men performing the harder and more masculine jobs while women were associated with the more feminine occupations such as spinning. The cultural pattern of those days reveals that women were responsible for weaving and spinning the cloth worn, they also designed and fashioned pottery and jewellery as well as toy making.

After the arrival of the Aryans in the second millennium B.C, the kind of work that the women did then becomes much clearer as mention of it has been made in the Vedas. It is believed that weaving was done mostly by women. The pleating of mats and sewing and manufacture of wool for clothing were the responsibility of women. Apart from this they also worked in the fields in tasks such as transplanting, weeding and reaping the harvest (Sengupta, 1960). Further, the Rig Vedas mention that women alongside men participated in social, economic as well as religious spheres which thereby indicate her equal status in the society. Altekar in "The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization" mentions that education was accessible to women and they were permitted to become brahmacharis and participate in philosophical discourses (Sengupta, 1960). Renowned female Vedic scholars such as Ghosha, Apala and Visvavara lend support to this fact (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, 2016). Furthermore, the participation of women in the intellectual field is proved by the fact that some of the Vedic hymns were attributed to women authors and there are references to women of high intellectual attainments such as Gargi Vacaknavi, Lopamudra and Maitreyi (Sengupta, 1960). Ancient history of India is littered with instances wherein women have actively participated in the administrative and military field with women sometimes waging war besides their husbands (Altekar, 1959).

Women soldiers armed with bows and arrows were not an uncommon sight (Sengupta, 1960).

Their domestic duties at home consisted of drawing water, churning butter milk, preparing butter and managing household finances. Preparation of the intoxicant Soma juice was a task that the women were particularly skilled at. Besides the women were also in charge of farm labourers, slaves and parents. A common term *dampati* was used to refer to the master as well as the mistress of the household. This also signifies that the woman's position in the household was as honoured as the man's. Equal participation in religious rites by both the husband and wife also indicates an egalitarian relationship in the household (Altekar, 1959). However, with the passing of time this religious role of the wife came to be replaced by the employment of priests. According to Altekar the participation of women in productive activities led to a high status in the early society. But later when these productive activities such as agricultural production, manufacture of clothes etc came to be done by the forced labour of the Sudras, women came to lose their productive role and thus their status and value.

Thereafter, with the invasion of India by foreigners and the rise of religious dogmas bolstered the lowering of the status of women hence on. With the arrival of the Muslim conquerors and the introduction of the purdah system, the women now came to be confined to the domestic or the private world (Basham, 1999).

Living life in seclusion from the outside world, social life for the women in India during the medieval period virtually closed down. As a result, less is said of the activities of the women during this period. Women continued to be a victim of religious disabilities as well as social disabilities. Honour of a woman came to be

greatly emphasized on, as a result of which early marriages came to be popular. Female infanticide came to be practiced especially among the lower classes and the birth of daughters came to be seen as a burden. Sati, a practice whereby a woman gives up her life by sitting on the funeral pyre of her dead husband came to be popular around this time (Raychoudhary, 1999).

The medieval period saw the worsening of the status of women primarily for two reasons. Firstly, the Muslim conquerors wanted to impose their norms on the Hindu population. Secondly, the Hindu society was becoming more rigid in controlling the rights of the women within the Hindu fold. Sandwiched between the strict and unfavourable norms of the two communities, the women of India suffered (ibid). Therefore, the medieval period came to be seen as a gloomy period wherein women continued to be tyrannized by age old traditions, beliefs and customs. They continued to be confined to the private domain. Eventually, this was the state the Indian society existed in until the arrival of the British rulers.

The repercussions of the Industrial Revolution which took place in the west were also felt in India during the initial period of the British rule. The self sufficiency of the village economy in India came to be shattered when the British made goods entered the Indian market. As a result a large number of village artisans and farmers found their livelihood skills redundant which compelled them to migrate to towns and cities in search of other means of employment. Many women especially from the artisan class began to be employed in factories, mills and mines as unskilled workers. Tasks which were earlier performed at home now came to be done at the factories. The wages earned was thus used in the purchase of readymade goods in the market rather than home made goods. Expenses thus arose as a result of which the income of the

man had to be supplemented with the earnings of the women. As a result women and children began to work in industries at low wages. This set the pattern of women occupying the role of marginal workers (Sengupta, 1960). Upon their entry into the workplace, the women and children were subjected to much injustice and exploitation. The 19th century thus, saw the movement of women's participation from traditional boundaries into the non-traditional ones and which were earlier largely done by men.

It was during the colonial period that women's issues came to be highlighted through two major events that took place simultaneously namely the Social Reform Movement and the Nationalist Movement. The suppression of women which manifested in various forms such as sati, dowry deaths, female infanticide, child marriage, denial of property rights and educational rights etc were brought to the forefront and were demanded to be removed from the society (Sengupta, 1960). However, these social reforms were aimed primarily at changing the status of women within the family structure without necessarily altering the women's role within the domestic framework (Mishra, 1994). Therefore, neither was the patriarchal structure of the Indian society challenged nor was it questioned. Rather only those issues were highlighted and were appealed for reform which the British considered detrimental for the Indian society. As a result, attempts were made to create women who would be educated enough to suit the new emerging Indian society but would still cater to be traditional housewives (Pande and Kameshwari, 1987). Despite these drawbacks, the movement did assist in the removal of social atrocities committed against the women while also allowing them to step into the public domain. In fact, it was the social reforms movement which initiated the women's movement in India.

The participation of women in the Indian Nationalist movement against the colonial rule undermined the British rulers claim to be a protector of the Indian women (Siwal, 2005). Woven within the fight for freedom, the national movement became committed to further the women's rights as well. This entry of women into the public world eased the entry of women into the world of formal education, politics, employment and professions. Thus, gender roles came to be redefined within the scheme of the nationalist movement (ibid.).

It was also during this period of Indian history that a number of laws relating to the work status of women came to be passed such as limiting hours of work in organised industries, prohibiting night work, restricting work in the mines, establishment of crèches etc (Narayana and Lakshmi, 2011). These legal reforms came to be introduced with the aim of uplifting the position of women. Consequently, protective legislations were put in place in order to safeguard and improve the position of these marginal workers. Beginning with the First Factories Act, 1881, the labour laws up to 1911 dealt more with hours and working conditions. Other legislations to provide amenities and social security for women workers were introduced only after three decades. With these protective legislations in place for women, the number of women workers employed in factories and industries are decreasing because employing them incurs additional expenses and create complications. For instance, working hours, maternity leaves etc are enforced by the law which may cause some amount of inconvenience to the employer. Therefore, fewer women are being employed in the factories and industries. However, the employment of women in better paying jobs is increasing among middle class women today (Mishra, 1994).

There were many factors which led the movement of women in to work and profession and this was considered to be a departure from the traditional services. Firstly, the Constitutional provisions of equality of opportunity and non discrimination in matters of employment and wages were seen as a significant in leading this change. The expansion of education for women and the ensuing entry into professions and work was another reason. The post independence period also witnessed a boom in the growth of the tertiary sector. Consequently women came to be employed in these sectors as well (Narayana and Lakshmi, 2011).

Due to the expansion of developments in education, urbanisation, industrialisation, the traditional values relating to the confinement of women within the private sphere was slowly being wiped out. This change in social values also accelerated the entry of women into services and professions.

Increasing economic pressure especially among the middle classes also necessitated women to enter into professions and work. Much has changed since India's independence. Urbanisation, increase in education, acquisition of diverse skills, surge in the cost of living and the desire to enjoy a better living standard are some of the factors which are pushing women to seek paid work. Therefore, this has led to the emergence of the urban working women which is considered a post independence phenomenon. Simultaneously it also indicated the changes taking place in the socio-economic and politico-legal spheres (Devendra, 1990) which also contributed to such trend of wider participation of women in the formal work sector.

The post independence period in the Indian society marked the beginning of a number of social and legal changes in the lives of the Indian women. Western impact encouraged the women in India to step out of the private sphere into the public sphere

and earn a living the way men do. While the upper class women's response to this changing process was early and full on, the response from the women coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds was late. These changes further led to the entry of women into non-traditional services and professions which helped them realise their potential, broadened their outlook and created a new purpose for them. The first prominent change was laid down in the constitution of India whereby equality of sexes was granted as a fundamental right to both men and women and it was extended to matters of employment as well. This created additional opportunities for employment of women particularly among upper caste educated women (Sharma, 1990). Education came to be accessible to girls as well as women as a result of which women started pursuing employment in jobs outside their homes. This was of course combined with the modern values of looking into women's paid employment differently. The rising economic pressure was also another important factor which paved the way for women seeking paid employment outside their households and in promoting their economic conditions. Thereafter, employment among women came to be seen in a different light and accompanying it was the change in the women's role. She now came to acquire a new status and a new social structure along with the development of new social norms and new values (Desai, 1957).

The entry of women into formal work organisations in managerial roles started sometime around the fifties. Education, gainful economic participation and market opportunities for women pushed them to gain entree into the medical profession as well since the last few decades. Taking this fact into consideration women began to make forays into fields of public services, business industries and enterprises and prove their mettle in these fields.

Since then, Indian women have long since been active contributors of the nation's economy. From 1971 to 2001, women's work participation rate has increased from 14.2 percent in 1971 to 22.73 percent in 1991 and to 25.6 percent in 2001 and to 25.51 percent in 2011 according to the Census of India. Despite this increase we find that the number of employed women is much less when we compare it to the number of employed men. The low work participation of women is largely because of the cultural and traditional constraints. Correspondingly, the percentage of women employed in the central government services is also very low when compared to the men. Looking into the work status of women in various sectors of employment in India, we find that they tend to be concentrated in low paid jobs and are located at the bottom of the work hierarchy. This compares very adversely with women's attainments in developed countries (Narayana and Lakshmi, 2011).

Therefore, India's position in the gender gap index of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2017 has fallen behind countries like Bangladesh and China owing to the poor performances of participation of women in economy and the low wages given to them. Table 2.1 shows the gender gap index of various Asian countries.

Table 2.1

Global Gender Gap Index Ranking of Asian Countries

Country	Global Index Rank
Philippines	10
Bangladesh	47
Thailand	75
Indonesia	84
China	100
Maldives	106
India	108
Sri Lanka	109
Nepal	111
Bhutan	124
Pakistan	143

Source: World Economic Forum, 2017.

Further, the WEF report 2017 states that 66 percent of women's work is unpaid in India as compared to the men's 12 percent (*Times of India*, 2017). Although written 30 years earlier, Chatterjee's (1988) explanation for the poor work status of Indian women still holds true. According to her, the reasons are varied. She explains that men continue to be the primary providers wherein it is the women who remain the primary caregivers at home (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 1996) and are therefore seen as marginal and secondary wage earners in the labour market. Consequently, these women place preference for part time low level jobs which require low commitment, and fewer responsibilities is understood (Chatterjee,1988) as it allows them to invest little of their efforts in paid work so that success or failure in their jobs makes little

difference to their lives (Hakim, 1991). Therefore, when the demand for their labour falls they quit or change jobs. Often, jobs which require less skill are areas where majority of these women are employed (Chatterjee, 1988) and this is often in the unorganised sector with women workers possessing minimal formal education (Neetha N, 2013). Further, women workers unions hardly exist and most of them are clubbed under general unions where their woman issues and interests as part of the labour force gets overshadowed by the larger interests of the general labour (Chatterjee, 1988). This is further exacerbated by their part-time status in the employment hierarchy which gives them less bargaining power over rights as labourers. Jobs are often quit by women after they conceive (Sen and Sengupta, 2012) and find it difficult to get in after delivering the child.

Their obligation towards housework and childcare makes it easier for them to quit paid work willingly, circumstantially or through coercion without analysing the economic loss, the loss of personal status, and that of their individual and independent identity (Chatterjee, 1988). This is so because their aspiration and efforts are focussed in other life domains (Hakim, 1991).

2.3 Gendered Spaces and Women Workers

In the 1970s and early 1980s work was seen and understood in terms of the 'masculinist' model of employment and this was the view which continued to predominate the sociological understanding of work. The idea of paid employment and household being represented by the male breadwinner was seen as natural and this assumption has also been reflected in Parson's model of family (Crompton and Harris, 1998). He sees the women in expressive roles wherein they provide security, care and manage household and children. Men meanwhile perform the instrumental

role by providing financial support and being the breadwinner. This sexual division of labour would be complementary and would guarantee the stability of the family. However, the increasing participation of women in paid employment led to a garnering of criticism towards this model of male employee (ibid). Today, there are substantial numbers of studies focussing on women's employment (Acker, 1992; Peterson, 1964; Crompton and Feuvre, 1996) as well as those that challenge the idea of a male breadwinner (Warren, 2007; Dunn, Rochlen and O'Brien, 2013).

Despite all these developments, housework continues to be carried out by women irrespective of her marital status, economic status or whether she is young or old. Being engaged in full time professions does not exempt her from this task. The number of hours spent in performing housework tends to increase with the presence of small children. Nevertheless, women continue to shoulder the responsibility of housework due to the internalisation of the gender roles as a result of which they see housework as a source of identity and extension of themselves.

Women workers have been looked as that segment of the workforce who generally occupies the bottom of the work ladder. A plausible explanation for this has been the biological make up of the women which makes her physically weak and preoccupied with reproduction. Feminists while refuting this claim argue that patriarchy rather than biology is instrumental in setting this scenario within the workplace. According to them patriarchal authorities impose regulations over the nature and use of the women's labour while also being given the power to mitigate these sanctions and control (Banerjee, 1982). This denial of control and the loss of voice over her labour power is what belittle the position of women's status as a worker. Further, under patriarchy working spaces become gendered. The kitchen, home, nursing stations,

housekeeping, child care and other unskilled work all are identified with women. As a result housework and rearing children become non-negotiable tasks for women. Housework as Lenin puts it, is the most unproductive and punishing work a woman can do. Yet, without the woman performing the housework it is plausible that the whole structure of the family may collapse. Housework has no fixed hours, no holiday and no pay and it is almost done exclusively by women. Housework is the primary occupation of majority of the women whose identity rests on their roles as wives and mothers despite the fact that many of them may be employed outside the home. The work outside the home, whether salaried or not, is considered secondary because that is what patriarchy dictates (Chatterji, 1988). Thereupon, patriarchy secures the notion that women should perform a disproportionate share of unpaid housework and child care. The repercussions of this notion benefits men in various ways. They become recipients of free services at home provided by their wives, mothers and daughters which further enables them to monopolise the better higher paying jobs since their responsibilities at home are taken care of by someone else. This argument is also substantiated by Sen (2005) in "The Argumentative Indian; Writings on Indian History Culture and Identity" wherein he explains that the Indian tradition has always held womenfolk responsible for housework which includes taking care of home, children, other family members and food preparation.

Banerjee (1978) in "Women Workers and Development" discussed the various features given by patriarchal controls to women as workers which sets them apart from other workers. A woman often has no choice or control over the work she does. They have to be able to multi task and remain flexible in the performance of various chores. Thus, her working hours have to remain elastic or flexible so as to meet the demands of extra tasks whenever necessary. Her position and identity in her

household is tied up with the work she performs and this is seen as a proof of her commitment to the family. Thus, it is likely that her participation in productive tasks may go unrecognised and unrecorded as a contribution to the economic activity for the family. Women workers seldom need supervision in her work. This is because she is socialized to believe that her duty lies in giving utmost satisfaction to patriarchal authorities in each job allotted to her. However, she cautions that the position and other aspects of a woman worker in each society is determined by the existing conventions of time and space.

Working women in India are often confronted with a dilemma generated as a result of the conflict of loyalty between her traditional role of a wife, mother and a daughter vis-a-vis the desire to achieve and sustain economic independence. Statistically speaking, the proportion of women who work in India has declined from 35 percent in 2005 to 26 percent today. (*The Economist*, 2018) As a result India's rank according to the World Bank is at 120 out of the 131 countries for female participation in the workforce (*Hindustan Times*, 2017). Table 2.2 shows the position of different South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries in terms of their female labour force participation.

Table 2.2

Female labour force participation rate, 2018 for SAARC Countries

Countries	Percentage
Nepal	82.69
Bhutan	58.48
Maldives	43.33
Sri Lanka	34.90
Bangladesh	33.19
India	26.97
Pakistan	25.12

Source: The World Bank, 2018.

India's position is significantly low with only Pakistan below her. This drop in position for female participation in the workforce can be attributed to a number of reasons. An explanation given by ILO is that more number of women who are of working age are opting to remain in schools thereby leading to a drop in female workforce participation. In a lot of instances, women's employment may go unrecognised and undercounted and an overall decline in employment opportunities for women as jobs become scarce, which could be other reasons attributed to the decrease in workforce participation.

The situation continues to remain grim even in areas where women workers are available. For instance, the corridors of power and position in workplace are predominantly men-only zones. An instance of this is projected in the table 2.3 regarding the distribution of women officers vis-a-vis the male officers in the country's top government posts.

Table 2.3**Women in All India and Central Group A Services**

Service	Year	Total			% of female
		Female	Male	Total	
Indian Administrative Service	2016	838	4088	4926	17%
Indian Economic Service	2014	139	320	459	30%
Indian Foreign Service	2014	207	2346	2553	8%
Indian Forest Service	2016	111	2480	2591	4%
Indian Police Service	2016	349	3429	3778	9%
Indian Postal Service	2016	-	-	561	-
Indian Revenue Service	2014	-	-	5872	-
Indian Statistical Service	2016	173	556	729	24%
Indian Trade Service	2014	-	-	191	-
Indian Legal Service	2016	-	-	153	-
Indian Metrological Services	2016	-	-	461	-

Source: 1) Department of Personnel & Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievance and Pensions
 2) Indian Economics Services Website 3) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 4)
 Department of Posts Website 5) Indian Legal Services Website 6) Indian Metrological Services
 Website

Employment of women in the different branches of the central government services is very low compared to the men. Often women tend to occupy low paid jobs and are concentrated in the bottom of the work hierarchy. Ahmad (1979) explains that lack of career commitment and career orientation among women leads to this phenomena. A similar explanation has also been given by Crompton and Le Feuvre (1996) who states that paid jobs require and demand a level of commitment from the workers and

this becomes incompatible when the responsibilities at home are fully managed by the women themselves. Therefore, women were reluctant to take on added responsibilities and challenging posts at work. Hakim (1991) also substantiates this by stating that the focus of women often lies in other life domains such as her family and home and little effort is given to her paid work.

Moreover, gendered working spaces are often endorsed and championed by customs and traditions which is why division of labour tends to be gender specific. Be it in agriculture, weaving or village industries, jobs which are insipid, endless and requires minimum or no skills are performed by women. For instance men play a major role in weaving while women tend to be involved in the laborious pre weaving activity of collecting, dyeing and drying the yarn. Marx's theory of alienation can be brought in at this point to bring about a comparison between men and women in the role of a capitalist and that of a bourgeoisie respectively. It is the men who own the means of production that is the handloom machines and the house and the land while the women is the one who has only her labour to offer with no say or control over the final product since the weaving and the design is determined by the one who is actually doing the weaving i.e. the men. The profit generated from the final product is likely to be pocketed by the men while the women in return receive little or no wages for the labour put in. As a result, the woman worker remains alienated from the product of her labour whereby her labour is coerced and not voluntary for the sake of her family and survival. Engel's (2001) similarly states that women lose out on their equal status to men when private property comes into existence. The control of private property by men and its ability to generate surplus or profit out of it transforms the family into a patriarchal one wherein the women become the property of men in the family. Separation of household from the production unit further leads the women to

become economic dependents on the men leading to the solidification of control of men over women. This situation tends to get replicated in all village industries where women carry out tedious unskilled tasks while men take on the skilled tasks.

Moreover, women have longer working hours compared to men. Paid work for women is often combined with child care as well domestic work which may involve cooking, cleaning, washing as well as collecting water, fodder and fuel. Discrimination may also be reflected in the wage differential among men and women despite the nature of the work and the working hours remaining the same. Moreover women often tend to occupy the lowest segment in the workforce and are often the first ones to be removed if the work becomes scarce. There is no doubt that workers in the unorganised sector tend to be more exploited but women bear the double burnt of being a woman as well as a worker in the unorganised sector. Therefore, the women workers in the unorganised sector experiences acute subjugation and vulnerability. Further, women often remain the victims of double burden and stress leading to many psychological and personal problems.

Therefore, keeping in mind all the consequences and issues of paid work and for more inclusion of women in the paid workforce Karanjia (1986) states that the United Nations Decade for the Advancement of Women (1975-1985) put forward some important changes to be adopted in the social as well as national strategies:

1. Women like men have a constitutional and moral right to employment and economic freedom. Any breach of this right goes against the constitutional rights of women to work and earn a basic livelihood.

2. Men and women were equally accountable for the nurture and maintaining of a family. Any violation of this rule was identical to discrimination and exploitation.
3. Housework should be recognised as a valuable contribution to society and the gross national product and that the monetary figures are accordingly reflected in official statistical data. Recognition should be made that housework and child rearing do have monetary value and women working in the home without dignity and monetary remuneration was identical to slavery.
4. Adequate steps were to be taken to grant women equal opportunities for study and training and special programmes were to be conducted in order to rectify past imbalances in this field.
5. To ensure full participation of women in government and other agencies and to ensure that they take active part in the decision making process.
6. This programme asserted that special emphasis was to be given to the right to work and to earn a livelihood.
7. Legislation for maternity leave was to be examined and appropriately implemented.
8. Make efforts to mobilise women particularly poor women in rural and urban areas.

Although these changes were recommended more than 30 years ago, we are yet to see these changes adopted in all their aspects and in a universal manner. There is no doubt that development in education, employment and technology has set in but the societal perception rooted in patriarchal social values which has been institutionalised in all social domains has not changed in the same pace. Consequently, gender inequality continues to be reflected in all social institutions.

To conclude, this chapter has attempted to trace the entry of women into paid work force from general to specific starting from its historical perspective and contextualising in India. In the global context the industrial revolution and the two world wars have seen as important factors for ushering changes in the gender roles. In the Indian context, the nationalist movement played a significant role in pushing middle class Indian women to participate beyond the private domain. The chapter has also simultaneously looked into the evolution of the gender division of labour in order to have a clearer picture of why women continue to be delegated with responsibilities of a carer despite the vast changes that are taking place around her. With this backdrop the next chapter will seek to look into the status of the women in Sikkim taking into account various variables and consequently assess the changes that have taken place within the social set up of Sikkimese society.

Chapter 3

Sikkimese Women in Changing Perspective

3.1 Introduction

Sikkim, an erstwhile Buddhist kingdom, was incorporated into the Indian Territory in 1975. It is the 22nd state of the Indian Union and a part of the northeastern region of India. Sharing borders with China, Bhutan, Nepal and West Bengal, it remains landlocked. It consists of four districts namely the East, West, South and North districts. Rich in biodiversity, agriculture and animal husbandry accounts as a primary source of income for a large number of rural households. However, over the last few years various development programs have given rise to wage employment opportunities thereby giving a new picture to the economy of Sikkim. Even though, agriculture remains the mainstay occupation, a large number of people are entering into service sectors in both government services and in the private services. Thus, after its incorporation into the Indian Union in 1975, the state experienced vast changes in its social, cultural, economic, political and educational fields.

For understanding the position of women and their changing role, it is imperative to study their socio cultural context because according to Alfred Schutz, women are moulded by their life world. Similarly, Bourdieu also highlights the significance of the habitus in conditioning one's thoughts and actions. Therefore, to understand the back ground of the respondents, the present chapter puts forward an overview of the people and society of Sikkim which is essential for the overall understanding of the women issues contextual to the Sikkimese society.

3.2 Sikkim: A Brief Profile

The history of Sikkim attributes the Lepchas as the first settlers in Sikkim along with the Limbus. Two influential groups who played a pivotal role in ushering changes in the Sikkimese society were the Bhutias and the Nepalis. After the installation of a Bhutia ruler in 1642, Lamastic Buddhism, Tibetan culture and a combination of pastoral and semi settled agricultural life was introduced in Sikkim (Sinha, 2008). The Nepalis on the other hand brought with them “Hinduism, Indo- Aryan languages and a settled agricultural practice” (Bhattacharya, 1997). Another turning point in Sikkim’s history came about when Sikkim became a protectorate of British India in 1861. The British then initiated the setting up of schools, hospitals, copper mining, land tenure system, apple cultivation, carpet manufacturing etc and encouraged the settlement of the Nepalis in Sikkim. Over a period of time, the influence of the Nepali culture was so great that the Nepali language came to be the most widely spoken language in the kingdom and still prevails as the mode of inter ethnic communication (Bhattacharya, 1997; Bhasin and Bhasin, 1995; Arora, 2007).

The present chapter contains two sections. The first section deals with a brief overview of the demographic, ethnic profile and social structure with special focus on women in the Sikkimese society. The second section deals with how women are located in the various socio economic indicators and how women are responding to these developmental policies of the state.

3.3 Ethnic Profile and the Position of Women

This section presents the demographic profile of Sikkim in general with special focus on women in particular.

Today Sikkim is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi religious state. Despite its small size, the state exhibits a complex character from cultural, ethnic, social and economic viewpoints. Over the years, social transformation is taking place owing to the influence of information technology and the various development activities which are reshaping the way of the life of the Sikkimese (Sinha, 2008; Diyali, 2006).

The ethnic groups inhabiting Sikkim can be broadly be divided into three main groups namely the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis. The culture of these communities is closely intertwined with their religious structure.

The Lepchas are considered to be the earliest inhabitants of Sikkim who the anthropologists believe, have migrated from across the Himalayas through the north eastern states (Das, 1983). However, there are no concrete historical records to prove how they came to inhabit this area (Subba, 2008). The Sikkimese Lepchas are followers of three religions namely Shamanism or Animism, Buddhism and Christianity. Lepchas were originally followers of Shamanism or Animism. Later sometime around the 18th century a huge majority of them converted into Buddhism under the influence of the then ruling Buddhist monarchy. Conversion of the Lepchas into Christianity began sometime around the 19th century as a result of the influence of the missionaries. However, their cultural practises have more or less remained animistic alongside their converted religions. The Lepchas are divided into a number of patrilineal clans called the *ptso* whose function is to ensure the rule of exogamy is practised by the clansmen (Sinha, 2008). Today, by and large the Lepchas of Sikkim are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. According to the State Socio Economic Census (SSEC) 2006, the total population of the Lepchas in the state stands at 45,239 which comprise 7.77 percent to the total population of Sikkim.

The second group comprising the Bhutias are believed to be migrants from Tibet. Sinha (2008) writes that the Tibetan grazers and the missionary lamas from Tibet were the earliest immigrants to Sikkim in search of new grazing grounds for their animals and for seeking prospective converts to Buddhism. They were followed by traders and then by the peasants who came to Sikkim with their own interest in mind. In order to convert the animists Lepchas into Buddhists and to establish the Bhutia control over Sikkim, the migrants from Tibet felt a strong necessity to establish a central authority to their liking (ibid.). The year 1642 A.D witnessed the installation of the first Buddhist king and the beginning of the Bhutia rule over the state of Sikkim along with the acceptance of Buddhism as a state religion. The society came to be now stratified into the aristocracy, clergy and the commoners. Today, the Bhutia community is largely dominated by Buddhists wherein the Buddhist clergy play an important role in life cycle rituals as well as in festivals and everyday life. The Bhutias, according to SSEC 2006, comprise the second largest community in the state with a population of 76,070 that accounts to 13 percent of the total population. Out of this, 96.17% of them are Buddhists. 2.17% of the Bhutias are Christians, 1.62% is Hindus, and 0.01% is Islam converts. Like the Lepchas the Bhutias are also patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. Although recognised as communities where the womenfolk enjoy a comparatively better position, both these communities exhibit and practice patriarchy in their everyday life. Diyali (2006) remarks that the Bhutia-Lepcha women in Sikkim play a significant role in the earning of the family. They are active participants in the cultivation of the land while also being involved in other forms of self employment like basket weaving, carpet weaving and running small businesses. She also mentions that Bhutia-Lepcha women working as labourers at the road making or building construction is an uncommon sight.

The third ethnic group of Sikkim is a generic category known as the Nepalis. Sinha (1975) classifies the Nepalis into two broad categories on the socio ritual grounds namely the 'Tagadhari' meaning those who wear the sacred thread like the Brahmins and the Chettris and the second group as the 'Matwali' meaning those who do not wear the sacred thread and who consume alcohol. However, they are largely Hindus by faith and forms the largest community in the state. The communities comprising the Nepalis exhibit diverse physical and cultural characteristics but a common thread amongst all these communities is the presence of Nepali language as lingua- franca, a strong patriarchal structure and the gender division of labour. The social structure of the Nepali society is based on caste hierarchy. The upper caste communities of the Nepalis comprises of the Bahun and the Chettri while the lower castes is made up of the Kami, Damai, Sarki and Majhi (Choudhury, 2006). Other backward classes of the Nepali community include the Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Sunwar, Thami, Tamang and Pradhan (Sinha, 2008). The Pradhans or the Newars belong to the business or the trading class. The Newars came to settle in Sikkim as monopolists of copper mines and the minting industry (ibid.). The culture of these ethnic groups is closely intertwined with their religious structure. Belonging to the patriarchal setup, their everyday social life is perceived, understood and evaluated through the patriarchy perspective (Bhasin and Bhasin, 1995; Bhattacharya, 1997; Gazetteer of Sikkim, 2013).

Although many of the communities taken within the generic category of Nepalis have staked a distinct ethnic claim with their distinctive socio- cultural identities and do not identify themselves as similar to caste Hindus, for the purpose of the present study I have put them in the same category because at certain points in history and in many existing literature on Sikkim they are seen as one category. In fact until 1979, the state

recognised only two broad ethnic groups namely the Lepcha- Bhutia and the Nepalese (Sinha, 2008).

Despite ethnic and cultural diversities, gender division in household labour is an established phenomenon in Sikkim as elsewhere in the rest of the country. Women are almost exclusively responsible for the maintenance of home, child rearing and in taking care of the aged and the sick. In addition to their participation in community activities, various agricultural operations and other allied activities such as livestock, running small trades, business and employment in service sector has long been the feature of Sikkimese society. Although, there is no written documentation, yet, when narratives from oral histories are taken into account we find that women in Sikkim have always been subject to gender bias and gender stereotyping. An example of this would be that if a married couple had only daughters, they would be regarded as childless or the lady would be considered barren. Women folk although actively engaged in the agriculture process were prohibited from touching certain agricultural tools for fear of bringing bad luck to the harvest. Similarly, women were prohibited from touching hunting bows for fear of bad luck. It is believed in the earlier days, wives never ate their meals before the husbands ate but rather ate from whatever was leftover from his plate. Inheritance to ancestral property was always denied to daughters and if a family had no sons then the ancestral property was often passed off to the nearest male relative bypassing the female biological offspring. Oral narratives from some elderly local women who were born into *mandal* (local landlords) families and who are now in their 70s say that their brothers were sent to schools, some as far as the private Catholic schools in Darjeeling and Kalimpong but the daughters in the family were never taught to read and write. And they say they never questioned it or found it odd. As a result, illiteracy was common even among women coming from

economically well off families. These are some instances collected from oral histories to show how women were seen as the inferior sex despite their major contribution in their everyday life. Therefore, the position of women in Sikkim often presents a paradoxical picture.

3.4 Socio-Demographic Features

The socio demographic features discussed includes the demographic composition of Sikkim, the sex ratio, the rural-urban population and the marital status of women in Sikkim.

3.4.1 Demographic Composition

The first Census of Sikkim with regard to population was conducted in the year 1891 when Sikkim was still a protectorate of India. Thereafter the census undertaken in 1981 was the first since its incorporation into the Indian Union. Unlike the earlier censuses which were conducted jointly with West Bengal, this census was done singly for Sikkim. An analysis of census figures over the years indicates that the population of Sikkim has been steadily growing over the past decades. According to the 2011 census report the total population of Sikkim stands at 610,577 out of which the population of the females is at 287,507 which is 47.0% while percentage of the male population is 52.9%. The 2001 census recorded the population of Sikkim at 540,581 thereby indicating a population growth of 12.36 percent.

Table 3.1

**Decadal growth of the male and female population of Sikkim from 1981 to 2011
(Percentage distribution)**

Decade	Male Population	Female Population	% of Decadal growth of female population	Total Population
1981	172,440	143,945	50.77	316,385
1991	216,427	190,030	28.47	406,457
2001	288,169	252,236	33.07	540,581
2011	323,070	287,507	12.36	610,577

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

Table 3.1 shows the decadal growth of the female population of Sikkim since 1981 to 2011. The decrease in the decadal growth of the female population especially after 1981 is striking and it has come down even further in 2011. This has also been reflected in the sex ratio of Sikkim which has been presented in Table 3.2 for the last four decades. Sex ratio is the term used to indicate the number of females per 1000 males and it is used to measure the status of males as well as females in a society. The sex ratio in Sikkim has been on a decline except in 2011 where it has shown an upward trend.

Table 3.2

Sex ratio since 1981 to 2011, Sikkim and India

Census Years	Sikkim	India
1981	835	935
1991	878	927
2001	875	933
2011	889	940

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

The sex ratio in Sikkim shows a sharper decline when compared to the national level despite the fact that women in Sikkim are widely regarded as not discriminated or instances of female infanticide and female foeticide rarely take place. Women's role is visible in various spheres within the society thereby reflecting her autonomy yet, the sex ratio remains discouraging and a matter of grave concern. Dey (2015) in his paper "Declining Sex Ratio in Sikkim: A Spatial Analysis" lists different factors like early marriage, high maternal mortality rate, short spacing of birth interval. Lack of attention towards maternal care, health issues like anaemia, tuberculosis and high influx of male migrant workers are also seen as some of the causes for declining sex ratio (ibid.).

Similarly, the distribution of female population in terms of age group according to the 2011 Census shows that the percentage of females is less than 50 percent which in other words means that the proportion of males is higher than females in all age groups and a drastic fall in the female population is noticed especially in the 30-34 age group (ibid). A plausible explanation given for the decrease in the female population from the 19-44 age categories onwards is the high maternal mortality rate. On the other hand, the child sex ratio for 0-6 years for 2011 is at a notable 944 which is higher even than the national average of 914 (SHDR, 2014).

3.4.2 Rural Urban Population

Distribution of the urban and rural population is shown in Table 3.3. Sikkim is India's least populated state with a population of 610,577 which is unevenly distributed over 7,096 square kilometres.

Table 3.3

Distribution of urban and rural population in Sikkim's Districts, 2011

	Population	% urban	% rural
East	286,583	43	57
South	146,850	14	86
West	136,435	4	96
North	43,709	11	89
Sikkim	610,577	25	75

Source: Census of India 2011.

East Sikkim is the most densely populated district in the state while also having the highest percentage of urban population. SHDR, 2014 states that 43 percent of the state's population resides in the east district. North Sikkim on the other hand, is the least populated district with population which is less than half of the population in other districts. West Sikkim has the least percentage of urban population with the rural population being as high as 96 percent.

3.4.3 Marital Status of Women in Sikkim

Marriage by negotiation or what is popularly known as *magni biha* or arranged marriage is the accepted norm of contracting marriages in Sikkim. Apart from this the different communities in Sikkim also practice other forms of marriage such as marriage by elopement widely practised by the Rai community, love marriage which is increasingly gaining ground in the Sikkimese society. Marriage by service which used to be practised by the Lepcha and the Bhutia tribes when agriculture was the predominant form of livelihood but is no longer practised as a result of education, urbanisation and other available employment opportunities apart from agriculture.

Sikkim also offers discretion to individuals when it comes to remarriage for widows and individuals who have separated or divorced and as such no social stigma is attached to it. The traditional forms of marriage ceremonies practised by the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis are very elaborate and incur huge expenditure on the families. However, with the forces of change time saving adjustments are being adopted.

Table 3.4 shows the distribution of population according to their marital status and gender from 1981 to 2011. The percentage of males in the never married and married category is higher than the females. However, in the widowed category the females outnumber the males. This trend has also been reported at the national level. The explanation given for this upsurge of widows is the increase in life expectancy particularly of women. Further, in connection to this argument the age gap between men and women during marriage is more than 5 years in some cases and with the increase in life expectancy women are more likely to live as widows for longer (*Times of India*, 2015).

Table 3.4

Distribution of population according to marital status and sex in Sikkim, 1981 to 2011

Year	Sex	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced/Separated
1981	Total(Nos.)	184,158	119,483	10,505	2,166
	Male %	56.51	52.47	42.13	55.54
	Female %	43.49	47.53	57.87	44.46
	Total(Nos.)	240,350	156,158	8,271	1,621

1991	Male %	55.21	50.86	41.49	52.75
	Female %	44.79	49.14	58.51	47.25
2001	Total(Nos.)	303,669	217,164	15,474	4,544
	Male %	54.85	52.62	35.34	47.93
	Female %	45.15	47.38	64.66	52.07
2011	Total(Nos.)	305,986	278,114	20,327	6,150
	Male %	54.91	52.28	32.51	49.05
	Female %	45.08	47.71	67.48	50.94

Source: Census of India, Sikkim Series, Government of India, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011.

In the divorced and separated category the percentage of males is higher than the females in the year 1981 and 1991. But the percentage of females outnumbered the males at 52.07 percent and 50.94 percent respectively in the years 2001 and 2011. This trend is prevalent at the national level as well as states such as Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Kerala. This is likely because of the increase in literacy among women which makes them more aware of their legal rights and interests and economic independence also has played a crucial role in allowing the women to take up this step. Further, another explanation given for this is that it is much easier for men than women to remarry in a patriarchal society (*Times of India*, 2015). Living in a patriarchal society it is also much easier for the society to accept a man's remarriage than a woman's remarriage. The common justification given here is that a woman's remarriage may dishonour the family and have a negative impact on her children.

The following second section in this chapter deals with the various socio economic indicators and how the women in Sikkim are responding to these developmental policies of the state.

3.5 Women and Literacy in Sikkim

The level of education in any society is an indication of its development and similarly the level of education also has a direct bearing on the status of the individual (Chanana, 2000). Lack of education or illiteracy has been a hindrance to the upliftment of the status of the Indian woman for decades. Even today with education being a fundamental right, the right to education is still being denied to individuals at various parts of the country and at various stages. In many Indian families, girls after a certain level are discouraged from pursuing higher education and are rather encouraged to marry and bear children (Sen and Sengupta, 2012). In case of any economic misfortune in the family, it is the daughters who are pulled out of school to save expenses. It is observed that in different rural pockets of Sikkim during the harvest season the daughters are the ones who absent themselves from school to help out with the parents in the agricultural fields. These are indications to show that there is not enough seriousness given to women's education by the society and their individual families (Thapa, 2016). Therefore, despite the efforts made at the national level to increase the literacy levels, the female literacy rate in India is only 64.6 percent. Illiteracy hinders the development of an individual, the society and his country while prompting gender inequality in a patriarchal society like ours.

Sikkim in the year 1951 had a literacy rate of less than 7 percent with only 1 percent of women who could read and write (SHDR, 2014). The 2011 census shows that the literacy rate in Sikkim has increased to 82 percent with women who can read and write at 76 percent. This increase has been due to various reasons. The education in the state government schools in Sikkim is free up to the twelfth standard. Moreover the state government also provides free school text books and midday meals to

primary school children. This has played a pivotal role in the development and increase in the sphere of education. Sikkim today has a substantial number of schools to cater to its population. The data collected from the Human Resource Development Department for 2013-2014 shows that Sikkim has 781 government schools, 421 private schools, 71 monastic schools, 25 local body schools, 11 Sanskrit schools and three Islamic schools. Table 3.5 shows the literacy rate and gender gap in literacy of Sikkim from 1981 to 2011 among the population aged 7 and above in Sikkim.

Table 3.5

Literacy Profile and Gender Gap in Literacy in Sikkim 1981 – 2011 (% of population aged 7 and above)

Year	Total Literacy Rate	Males	Females	Gender Gap in Literacy	Rural	Urban
1981	34.05	44	22	22	22	16
1991	56.94	66	47	10	17	11
2001	68.81	76	60	15	16	8
2011	81.42	87	76	11	12	8

Source: Census of India.

The literacy rate in Sikkim has increased at a significant scale since its incorporation into the Indian Union. Sikkim, prior to 1975 was a small independent kingdom where education imparted was more religious and vocational in character with the secular education being the privilege of a few in the society. The number of schools which existed were few and far in between. The last census of 2011 shows that the literacy rate has increased to 81.42 percent with the females' literacy rate at 76 percent. In fact

in the 1991 census Sikkim's literacy rate at 56.94 percent has surpassed the national average literacy rate of 52.21 percent. It is apparent that the female literacy rate too has increased noticeably over the years yet, they still fall short when compared to the male literacy level. This gender gap in literacy is a result of the continual discrimination or denial of education to one group of people based upon their gender largely based on patriarchal social values. When there are systematic differences in schooling level between men and women then it creates a gender gap in literacy and this is a matter of grave concern because it stunts the social, economic and the cultural development of a country (Islam and Mustaquim, 2015).

The gender gap in literacy has narrowed down in the last four decades with the most decrease witnessed in the 1981 to 1991 period. We also find that the gender gap in literacy is more pronounced in the rural areas than in the urban areas. However in both the case of rural and urban Sikkim there has been a visible decrease in the gender gap over the past four decades. This indicates a positive reflection towards the education of the girl child in the Sikkimese society. Moreover, the state also provides financial support in the form of 100 percent scholarships to meritorious students to attend renowned public schools within and outside the state. In order to retain children in schools and also to provide nutritious food to small children, free midday meals are also provided to children up to the primary level in all the government schools across the state.

SHDR 2014 also reports that the levels of youth literacy among women aged 15-24 years are high. About 95 percent of the youth between 15 to 24 years was literate in 2007- 2008 with the gender parity ratio at 0.97. The sex wise enrolment of girl students in government schools in Sikkim from 2005 to 2012 has been more than 50

percent. Similarly, out of the 3211 students enrolled in the four government colleges in Sikkim, 59 percent of them were females (SHDR, 2014). The district wise gender enrolment also shares a similar trend.

Another measure to assess the number of students enrolled in school at different educational levels, regardless of age, and this is expressed in percentage and is known as the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) (UNESCO, 2009).

Table 3.6
Gross Enrolment Ratio in Elementary, Secondary and High Secondary in Sikkim and India, 2013-2014

Category	GER		
	Male	Female	Total
Elementary	129.89	129.32	129.61
All India	95.11	99.09	97.00
Secondary	90.21	106.65	98.37
All India	76.80	76.47	76.64
High Secondary	54.81	70.60	62.62
All India	52.77	51.58	52.21
Higher Education	21.4	25.9	23.6
All India	22.3	19.8	21.9

Source: Thapa, 2019

In Table 3.6 the GER of females in elementary, secondary, high secondary and higher education in Sikkim is much higher than the males. Although the enrolment ratio narrows as it climbs towards the higher education scale yet it fares better than the rest

of the country. This therefore implies a favourable trend towards female literacy in Sikkim.

Table 3.7

Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education (18-23 years), AISHE 2015-2016

Sl. No	States	All Categories		
		Male	Female	Total
1	Sikkim	36.7	38.5	37.6
2	Arunachal Pradesh	28.8	28.5	28.7
3	Assam	16.2	14.7	15.4
4	Manipur	35.3	33.1	34.2
5	Meghalaya	20.4	21.1	20.8
6	Mizoram	25.2	23.0	24.1
7	Nagaland	14.2	15.6	14.9
8	Tripura	19.9	14.0	16.9
	All India	25.4	23.5	24.5

Source: AISHE 2015-16 cited in Thapa, 2019

Table 3.7 shows the GER in higher education among the different states in Northeast India and also at the national level. Sikkim in comparison to the other states in the north east as well as to the rest of the country shows a better performance. This is applied in the case of the males as well as the females.

3.6 Women and Employment

In the early societies, women's work was confined to the private sphere and was unpaid and not even considered as work. Women and paid employment especially of the middle class is a relatively new phenomenon. In the earlier Indian society

especially from the post Vedic period onwards, work outside the home was performed only by women belonging to the lower strata (Altekar, 1959). It was only from the early years of the 19th century that women belonging to the other classes started participating in the paid employment outside their homes (ibid.). Moreover the Constitution of India lent support to the assertion that women should not be discriminated in any form of employment. As a result educated upper caste women started seeking paid jobs outside their homes. However, during the initial stages the employment of women generated negative reaction from social scientists and psychologists alike (ibid.). Increase in divorce rates, crime and delinquency were attributed to the employment of women outside their homes. Bossard and Stroker (1954) espoused that the employment of women was harmful to children. In fact employment of women was seen as the cause of numerous and complex social problems (Sharma, 1990). Women's work especially domestic work performed within the household has often been excluded from the National income of the country (Viswanathan, 2001).

With the encouragement of the state government in ecotourism, organic farming, cooperative societies and other income generating activities, women in Sikkim, today are venturing in to varied livelihood sources and economic activities in the rural areas as well as the urban areas. Alongside agriculture in which 59 percent of women workers are engaged they also manage trade and business. Other allied activities such as small farm agriculture, food processing, gathering, poultry farming, animal husbandry etc make up for other income generating activities in which the women of Sikkim are involved. Contribution to the family income allows the women in Sikkim to participate in decision making within her household (SHDR, 2014).

As elsewhere in the country, women in rural Sikkim too are actively involved in the various agricultural activities such as weeding, planting, harvesting, processing and preserving the food grains. The women from the Bhutia and the Lepcha communities work alongside men although the heavier and difficult tasks are taken up by the men folk. Besides they are also involved in the running of small businesses and rearing animals such as poultry, piggery and cows. An interesting instance of economic autonomy can be located in the traditional *pewa* system which was traditionally practised in the Sikkimese society. Under this practise, women or young girls were given exclusive ownership rights over some domestic animals reared or patches of vegetable gardens from which they could generate income through growing and selling the vegetables. The money earned was their own and how they used it was upto them. Therefore, the *pewa* system functioned as a mechanism for economic independence for the women in Sikkim.

Taking into account the economic participation of women in Sikkim, Table 3.8 shows the distribution of workers in Sikkim alongside that of the country.

Table 3.8**Distribution of workers in Sikkim, India by Percentage- 1991, 2001, 2011**

Year		Total workers			Main workers			Marginal workers		
		Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1991	Sikkim	51	30	42	58	29	40	0.43	2	1
	India	51	22	37	50	16	34	0.6	6	3
2001	Sikkim	58	39	49	51	27	39	7	13	9
	India	52	26	39	45	15	30	7	11	9
2011	Sikkim	60	40	51	50	24	38	10	15	13
	India	53	26	40	44	15	30	9	10	10

Note: Percentages have been rounded off.

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001, 2011.

The work participation rate for Sikkim is 51 percent according to the 2011 census. The male work participation rate in Sikkim is 60 percent while at the national level it is 53 percent. The female work participation rate is 40 percent which is much higher when compared to the national average of 26 percent. Taking into account the three censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011, we find that the work participation rate has been much higher in Sikkim in comparison to the national level. Moreover, the work participation of the males is much higher than the females at both the national and state level. A plausible explanation for this is that women's work often goes unrecognised (Viswanathan, 2001) and this could hold true for Sikkim too. The percentage of female main workers in Sikkim has declined from 29 percent in 1991 to 24 percent in 2011. On the other hand the percentage of female marginal workers has

gone up from 2 percent in 1991 to 13 percent in 2001 and further to 15 percent in 2011.

Table 3.9

Workforce participation rate by gender and area, Sikkim and India, 2011

Area	Gender	Sikkim	India
Rural	Male	61.0	53.0
	Female	44.6	30.0
	Total	53.3	41.8
Urban	Male	57.52	53.76
	Female	24.8	15.4
	Total	41.90	35.31
Total	Male	60.16	53.26
	Female	39.57	25.51
	Total	50.47	39.79

Source: Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General, India.

Table 3.9 shows the workforce participation rate of India and Sikkim in accordance to urban and rural areas. The workforce participation rate at both the state and the national level is higher in the rural areas than the urban areas. Similarly in both the urban and the rural areas the workforce participation rate is higher in Sikkim than in the country. The workforce participation of males is higher in both the cases of Sikkim and India when compared to the females.

Table 3.10

Categorisation of Women Workers in Sikkim

	Total	Rural	Urban
Workers	37	45	25
Main workers	61	57	84
Marginal workers	39	43	16

Source: HDR, 2014.

The Census Report of 2011 states that the women in Sikkim accounts for 37 percent of the total work force in the state while the national average is 26 percent. Out of the total women workers in the state, 61 percent of them are classified as the main workers while the marginal workers stand at 39 percent. Table 3.10 also shows that the proportion of women workers in the rural areas is higher at 45 percent while in the urban areas it is only 25 percent. On the other hand, the main workers in urban Sikkim women account for 84 percent of the women's workforce while in rural areas it is 57 percent. Marginal women workers in urban Sikkim make up 16 percent while in the rural areas it is 43 percent.

Table 3.11**Percentage distribution of working population according to category, 1991- 2011**

(Percentage to total main workers)

Year	Gender	Category				
		Total main workers (Numbers)	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry workers	Other worker
1991	Male	1,09,994	51	8	1	40
	Female	5,4398	72	7	0	21
	Total	1,64,392	58	8	1	33
2001	Male	1,46,541	42	5	2	51
	Female	66,363	63	9	1	27
	Total	2,12,904	50	7	2	42
2011	Male		33	7	2	59
	Female		48	12	2	39
	Total	2,30,397	38	8	2	52

Note: Figures are rounded off.

Source: Census of India, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Although, the majority of the female workers are involved in agriculture the proportion of female cultivators has decreased over the years from 1991 to 2001. In 2011 women accounted for 48 percent of the total cultivators in the state. When we compare the female cultivators vis-a-vis men we find that they are higher in number during all census years which also indicates the high involvement of women in agricultural in Sikkim. Another reflection of the significant participation of women in

agriculture is the fact that about 12 percent of the women are agricultural labourers whereas the percentage of male agricultural labourers is only 7 percent. In the household industry women account for 2 percent of the workers and 39 percent of the female workers are in the "other workers" category. The trend as shown in Table 3.11 indicates a shift in occupational pattern even though agriculture still remains the dominant force. It is also noticed that there has been an increase in "other worker" category indicating a shift in occupational sector owing to occupational diversification and opportunities given by the state government.

Table 3.12

Sectoral Distribution of Workers in percentages

	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary	62	86	73	1	3	1	50	77	62
Secondary	16	5	11	25	10	20	18	6	13
Tertiary	22	9	16	74	88	78	32	18	26

Source: Sikkim HDR, 2014

Table 3.12 shows that 62 percent of the workers are engaged in primary sector such as agriculture forestry and fishing. It is also shown here that the number of women engaged in the primary sector in both the rural and urban sector is more than the men. 13 percent of the workers are engaged in the secondary sector such as mining, manufacturing, construction and water supply. In this sector there are more males than the females. 26 percent of the workers are found in the tertiary sector where there are more males engaged than females in the rural areas while in the urban areas we find that the number of females outweigh the number of males. Enhancement of literacy in

the state has led to a decrease in the dependence on the primary sector corresponding with a decrease of the working population in agriculture as cultivators from 60 percent in 1981 to 38 percent in 2011.

Further, the SSEC 2006 states that the state government employed 18.5 percent of the main workforce. A significant number of female employees at more than 50 percent is working under the government sector indicating the large presence of women employees in the state government. In fact an increase from 21.01 percent in 1994 to 34.0 percent in 2002 has been noted. Around three percent were employed in the Central Government and Public Sector Undertakings. The private sector accounted for only 5.4 percent of salaried employees of the workforce.

The state government is the largest source of employment in the organised sector. Increase in the literacy rates among women has led to a positive representation of women in the state government employment sector. Studies have also shown that the educational level and female employment share a positive relationship because higher the educational level, the chances of taking up paid employment is also likely to rise (Houseknecht and Macke, 1981).

Further, this has been supplemented by the 30% reservation for women in the jobs within the government sector. The reflections of the increase in education and the 30 percent reservation are seen in the figures that follow. Further, Diyali (2006) also mentions that the number of women in government employment is greater than that of men. In 2004-05 there was only 8 percent of women representation among the departmental heads in Sikkim belonging to the IAS cadre. However, this rose to 12 percent by 2011. The State Civil Service comprising Group A and Group B officers has a higher representation of women officers at 34 percent. Similarly, the State

Health Services also have a positive representation of women officers belonging to the Group A and Group B category at 47 percent (Barnes and Rai, 2018). The lack of the latest detailed data regarding the distribution of women government employees according to various government departments has compelled the use of the only data available from 2002 for this study. Nevertheless, the data in the table 3.13 does serve the purpose of showing that the number of women employees in the various government sectors is on the rise. This increase in the recent times is likely due to the 30 percent reservation in jobs for women given by the state government. This has further been substantiated by Thapa (2009; 2014) in her study on the women in Sikkim.

Table 3.13

Distribution of Sikkim Government Women Employees, 1994 and 2002

Department	1994	2002
Agriculture	0.39	17.0
Animal Husbandry	0.23	15.0
Building and Housing	21.66	15.0
Co-operation	0.11	22.0
Courts	0.10	30.0
Culture	0.13	24.0
DESME	0.08	-
Ecclesiastical	0.02	23.0
Education	10.94	40.0
Election	0.04	36.0
Electricity Advisory Board	-	7.0

Excise	0.04	11.0
Finance	0.13	24.0
Fisheries	0.02	3.0
Food and Civil Supplies	0.05	13.0
Forest	13.84	13.0
Health and Family Welfare	4.02	48.0
Home	0.20	17.0
Horticulture	-	13.0
Income and Sales Tax	0.03	-
Industries	0.11	44.0
Information and Publicity	0.07	25.0
Irrigation	0.05	20.0
Labour	0.03	38.0
Land Revenue	0.11	19.0
Law	25.0	26.0
Milk union	-	15.0
Mines and Geology	12.82	2.0
Motor Vehicle	30.77	-
Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Training	30.19	23.0
Planning and Development	32.26	25.0
Police	3.83	4.0
Power	9.10	20.0
Printing and Stationery	5.19	11.0
Public Health Engineering	15.0	20.0

Raj Bhavan	4.76	12.0
Rajya Sanik Board	10.53	10.0
Roads and Bridges	12.30	23.0
Rural Development	17.04	28.0
Science and Technology	-	20.0
Sikkim Legislative Assembly	23.08	28.0
Sikkim Public Service Commission	19.05	18.0
Sikkim ST/SC/OBC Development Corporation	-	29.0
Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation	-	8.0
Social Welfare	38.71	41.0
Transport	2.24	7.0
Tourism	28.87	24.0
Urban Development and Housing	17.67	26.0
State Bank of Sikkim	-	38.0
STCS	-	22.0
Temi Tea Esatate	-	21.0
Tibetology	-	13.0
Total	21.01	34.0

Source: Sikkim Manpower Review, 2002

3.7 Women and their Participation in Politics

Since the incorporation of Sikkim with the Indian Union in 1975 and the ushering of democracy in the state, the participation of women in politics has been encouraging with each passing year. This rise in numbers has not been limited to the female voters alone but it also accounts for the number of women contesting elections in Sikkim. It

was as far back as in 1975, Sikkim had its first woman legislature elected. Over the years the progress of the political participation of women in Sikkim has been slow but steady.

Table 3.14

**Performance of women candidates vis-a-vis men candidates in General elections
1989-2014.**

	1989		1994		1999		2004		2009		2014	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
No. Of Contestants	113	05	275	9	99	6	85	06	152	15	110	11
Elected	31	1	31	1	31	1	29	3	28	4	29	3

Source: Election Commission of India, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014.

Table 3.14 shows the number of women candidates who contested and were elected vis-a-vis the men during the last six elections. Out of the 32 constituency seats in the state general elections the maximum number of elected women candidates stood at 4 in the 2009 elections. Even though the number of women candidates contesting the elections are increasing with each elections the number of women candidates elected is not very encouraging especially when you take into account the number of male candidates being elected.

Although the action of democratic decentralisation has started in Sikkim, representation of women in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly is not very encouraging. Table 3.15 shows that the highest percentage of women members in the highest law making body in the state has been at 12.5 % in the year 2009. On the other hand, the political representation of the women in Sikkim State Legislative Assembly has

stayed stagnant with only 3 women being elected out of 32 members for the 2004 and 2009 assembly elections.

Table 3.15

Women Members in State Legislative Assembly

Year	Women Members	Percentage	Total
1974 – 1979	01	3.12%	32
1979 -1984	00	–	32
1984 – 1989	00	–	32
1989 – 1994	02	6.25%	32
1994 – 1999	01	3.12%	32
1999 – 2004	01	3.12%	32
2004 – 2009	03	9.37%	32
2009 – 2014	04	12.5%	32
2014 – 2019	03	9.37%	32

Source: Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Government of Sikkim.

On the other hand the number of women elected as members of Panchayat through the Panchayat elections in Sikkim has been encouraging. Tables 3.16 and 3.17 shows the distribution of elected women in both Gram Panchayat and Zilla Panchayats in 2017. The designated reservation of one third seat for women panchayats was increased to 40 percent and eventually to 50 percent in 2011. As a result the percentage of women in panchayats has gone up to 52 percent after the 2012 elections (SHDR, 2014).

Table 3.16

**District wise details of male and female candidates elected in General Election to
Gram Panchayat in 2017.**

Districts	Total candidates elected				
	Male	Female	Total	Male %	Female %
West	176	172	348	51%	49%
South	140	143	283	49%	51%
East	143	140	283	51%	49%
North	59	65	124	48%	52%
Total	518	520	1038	50%	50%

Source: Panchayat Cell, Rural Management & Development Department, Government of Sikkim, 2017.

Table 3.17

**District wise details of male and female candidates elected in General Election to
Zilla Panchayat in 2017.**

Districts	Total candidates elected				
	Male	Female	Total	Male %	Female%
West	13	18	31	42%	58%
South	14	14	28	50%	50%
East	13	17	30	43%	57%
North	14	08	22	64%	36%
Total	54	57	111	49%	51%

Source: Panchayat Cell, Rural Management & Development Department, Government of Sikkim, 2017.

The district wise breakup of the women candidates elected in the Gram Panchayat, 2017 is shown in Table 3.16. North district has the highest representation of women Gram Panchayat (52%) followed by South district (51%) and then the west (49%) and east district (49%). This representation of women at the level of zilla Panchayat is even more encouraging and it is shown in Table 3.17. The highest number of women zilla members is seen in the west district at 58 percent followed closely by the east district. Apart from the North district, all the other three districts has more than 50 percent of women members as zilla panchayats. Within a patriarchal set-up, assimilation of women in decision making bodies is often a difficult process due to social structural constraints such as gender division of labour and women subordination (Thapa, 2009). Thus, this representation of more than 50% of women members in Panchayats is indicative of the progress and the inclusivity of the women in the polity and decision making bodies at the grass root level. In the recent times, education, political awareness and the reservation system has been encouraging the active participation of younger women in rural decentralisation. In other words, this visible presence of women in the decision making bodies in the state points towards the changing roles of the women in the Sikkimese society.

To sum up, this section examines the demographic composition as well as the status of women in Sikkim after its incorporation in to the Indian Union taking into consideration various parameters like demographic characteristics, education, employment, literacy and political participation against the socio-cultural backdrop. High influx of male migrant workers, lack of attention towards maternal care, tuberculosis etc have been listed as some of the causes of the declining sex ratio. The gender gap in literacy has narrowed down considerably indicating a positive reflection towards the education of the Sikkimese girl child. Incentives such as scholarships,

free midday meals, uniforms are given to the students to encourage and retain them in schools. Increase in literacy and education has led to a positive representation of women in the workforce in the state. Political participation of women in Sikkim is also seen as encouraging with many young educated women coming forward to actively participating in the democratic decentralisation process. The historical background of the state along with the ethnic profile of the various communities of Sikkim has also been discussed in order to enhance our understanding of the study. Taking into account this backdrop of the women in the state would facilitate our empirical understanding of the working women in the field study in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4

Understanding Working Women of Sikkim- An Empirical Analysis

Since Independence, the last seven decades has brought in startling changes in the lives of the Indian women. From its inception as a democracy, India has granted equal rights to men and women. This has resulted in helping the women to carve out an identity for herself which no doubt has been propelled further through education and the ability to earn a living by her entry into the world of paid work. Participation of women in the country's workforce is also indicative of the changing social status of the women in the society. Increased female literacy level is evident of the fact which according to Census 2011 was 65.46 percent and is a huge leap when we take into account the female literacy rate of 1951 at 8.86 percent. The increased literacy level is also reflected in wider participation of women in school and higher education which has enabled the women to explore and gain entry into occupations which were earlier the exclusive privilege of the men folk. Women today are increasingly becoming a part of the global economy.

Despite this movement of women into the paid work sphere and the global economy, the social expectations of women as care givers and caretakers of the home continue to persist. More often than not, these views are internalised and accepted unquestioningly by the women themselves (Fletcher, Pande and Moore, 2017). Thus, they are often caught up in the battle of trying to fit family and work together leading to the problem of the clash of interests between tradition and the new global economy.

Coupled with these are the developments in technology, education, urbanization, industrialization and mass communication which have been accompanied by substantial changes within the family in India and in the various roles played out

among its members. Despite the lack of systematic documentation of the impact of such changes, there is reason to believe that a subtle transition in the values, norms, and roles related to marriage and family is taking place. Such transition is more pronounced in urban rather than rural families. The study by Ramu (1988) and Kapur (1972) also substantiates that the changing economic roles of women has also brought about noticeable alterations in the marital relations of married couples. Thus, a shift in the women's attitudes towards work both inside and outside the home has been noticed. Contextualising in Sikkim, the present chapter attempts to look into the shift that the women in Sikkim are making inroads into in the changing reality.

The transition of Sikkim from a traditional society to a modern one has also witnessed massive social transformation. Participation of women in education and the involvement of women in paid work being some of these transformations. Therefore, to comprehend the present scenario and assess the impact of such transformation on the social role of women, the present study needs to be located in history or what C. Wright Mills called as the sociological imagination. This would enable us to look and grasp the association between one's personal experience with the wider society and its historical root. Traditionally men and women have always had access to unequal positions of privileges and power. This bias in access to positions of power and privileges have their root in history in a patriarchal society where the women were relegated to the back seat. The denial of education to women, to paid work, the unquestioning obligation to be a caregiver and a caretaker may have been the outcome of a wider social structure strongly embedded in patriarchy. Despite the ethnic, socio-cultural diversity and distinct socio-cultural practises, the gender roles in the Sikkimese society has been influenced and marked by the patriarchal social structure in all ethnic groups.

The present study thus, attempts to understand the phenomena of working women, the probable changes, the challenges as well as the coping mechanisms that have accompanied the subsequent changes. Therefore, to have a comprehensive understanding of women and work and its ramification in social roles, the study selected 120 working women respondents in urban Sikkim notably from Gangtok, Rangpo and Singtam in the East district of Sikkim. The chapter describes them in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics and variables such as age, marital status, religion, education, employment and their ethnic community. However, an in depth qualitative analysis has been done in the subsequent chapter. This chapter also takes into account their work profile in terms of duration of service, their nature of work and placement in the state categorisation of employees viz. Group A, B, C or D category.⁵ The issues at hand have been looked into with a view to identify within the broad profile, the respondents' location in the social structure. Subsequently, the data on the present chapter has been obtained from the exhaustive semi structured interviews conducted among the 120 respondents working in various capacities within the administrative, technical and the unorganised sectors in Sikkim. In other words, the sample population of the study has been divided into three categories namely the administrative sector, the technical sector and the unorganised sector. 40 respondents from each category have been selected for the in depth study. Within the administrative and the technical sectors, working women belonging to the status of officers designated as Group A and Group B as well as those belonging to the Group C and Group D categories have been included in the study.

⁵ The Government of India has classified public workforces in four different groups namely Group A, B, C and D. Group A comprises officers occupying executive, managerial or supervisory ranks in India. Group B officers are seen as those who report to the junior most Group A officers. Group C are those in non managerial roles such as typists, clerks, constables etc. Group D workers are those in all manual labours who may be trained or semi skilled like peon or sweepers.

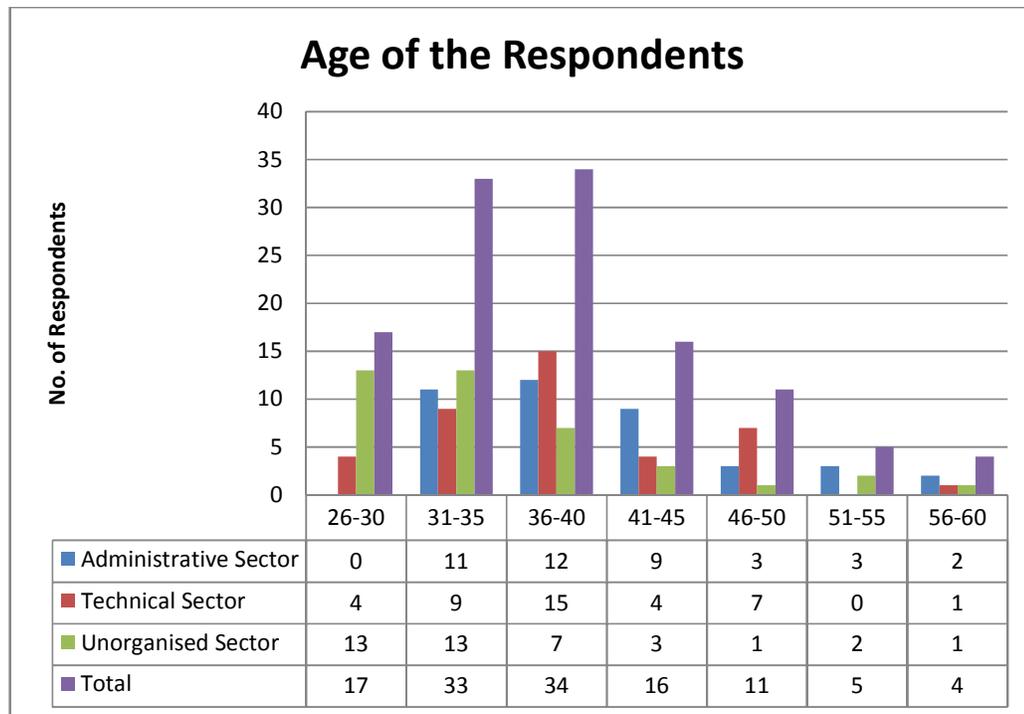
Karl Marx in his 'A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy' states that the social existence is what determines the consciousness of individual. Incorporating this argument into the present study, it is assumed that an individual's location in the social structure which makes up his/her background such as his age, family, level of education, type of occupation, ethnicity etc determine to a great extent his consciousness which is reflected in his attitude and beliefs which in turn influences his or her role. Thus, the present study seeks to find out how much if any, of these variables influences a woman's role within her home and in her work place. Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist also has talked in a similar track by arguing about the influence of habitus in determining and conditioning one's thought and behaviour whereby gender hierarchies are sustained in everyday life. In his work on the Kabyle of North Africa, he has tried to show how male domination assumes its place through the objective structures of the social world which is then embodied and reproduced in the habitus of the individuals (Thorpe, 2009). Taking cue of this argument, women in Sikkim inhabit a habitus that is largely patriarchal in its structure and this is often reflected in the representation of the way women do things and act out roles in everyday life. This habitus of patriarchy is so deep seated that women unconsciously and unquestioningly follow it thereby reproducing it in everyday life. Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of the habitus of the respondents the following section contains a comprehensive discussion on the socio economic background findings which emerged from the field study. However, along with the socio economic background, the family's attitude towards working women as well as the work ambience has also been discussed in the present chapter since these two factors play a determining role which widely impacts the work family balance as well as role conflict among working women.

4.1 Socio- Economic Background of the Respondents

4.1.1 Age Group of the Respondents: Age as a variable is considered to be a significant factor in understanding the respondents' perspective on the various roles and responsibilities thrust upon her. The age of the respondents of the present study has been distributed and is shown in the following diagrams.

Figure: 4.1

Age of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the age of the respondents in the administrative sector, the technical sector and the unorganised sector. Majority of the respondents in the administrative sector belong to the age group of 36 to 40 followed by the age category 31-45. The smallest number of the respondents in the administrative sector belongs to the 56 to 60 age category.

Similarly, in the technical sector, majority of the respondents belong to the 36 to 40 age group followed by the 31 to 35 group. Unlike the administrative sector, here, the 46 to 50 age group category has the third highest number of respondents.

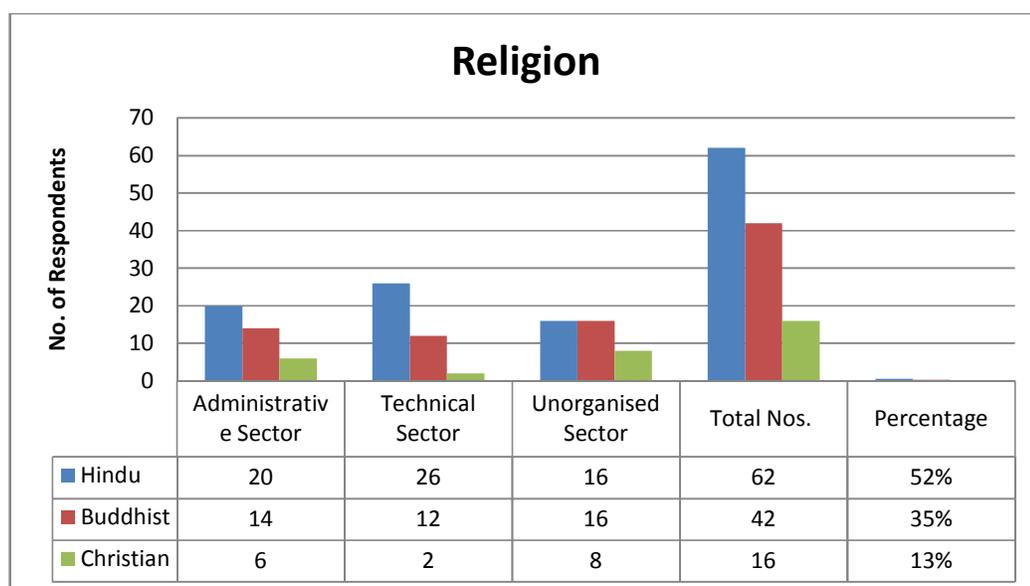
In the unorganised sector we find the maximum number of respondents in the younger age groups. Working women in the 26-30 age categories is the highest alongside 31 to 35 age category. The disparity here in the age group distribution in the unorganised sector could be attributed to the fact that jobs in this case are not seen as something permanent or for a long term. Therefore, the number of years they spend in a job is short, with the likelihood that they may not work again especially if they marry and start a family. Another plausible reason for this is that the respondents in this category are women with education below the secondary level and are willing to take up any work to support themselves and their families even if it is for a short while. In the hospitality and the beauty parlour sectors it is found that women enter the workforce when they have no children but leave the job when they become mothers. This however, is in contrast to the findings of Bharathy (2013) who reports that many women get into the beauty business after they have fulfilled their domestic responsibilities like raising their children up to a certain age.

4.1.2 Religious Background of the Respondents

The religious background of the sample population is shown in figure 4.2. We find that the Hindu religion is the dominant religion among the respondents in the Administrative and the Technical sector followed by the Buddhists and the Christians.

Figure: 4.2

Religious Background of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

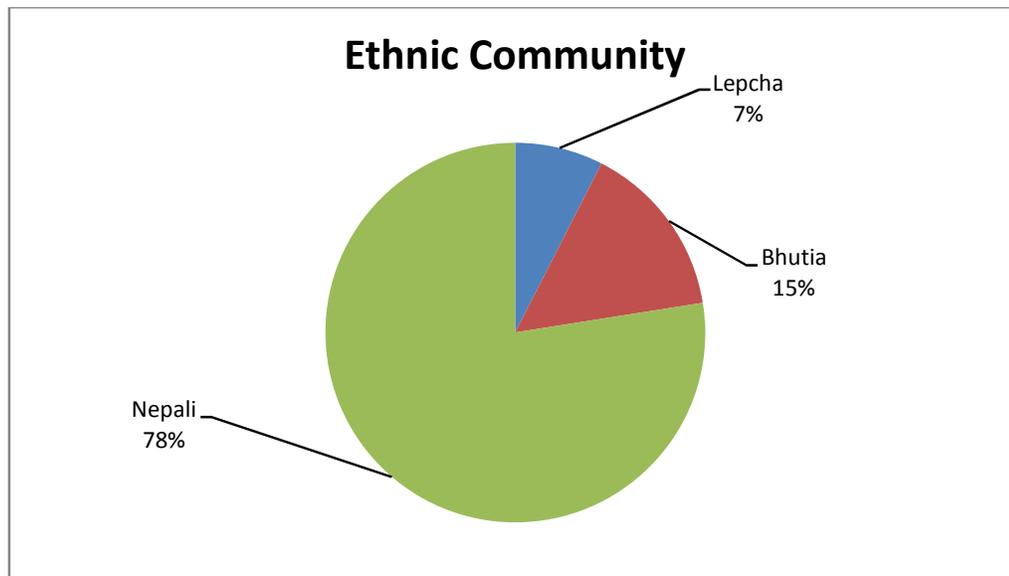
This also corroborates with the state level religious composition and dominance of Hinduism because 57.76 percent of the population of Sikkim follow Hinduism according to the Census 2011, thereby making it the leading religion in the state. Similarly, Buddhism is the second largest religion in the state with 27.39 percent of the population professing it. Christianity is the third largest religion found in the state with its followers comprising 9.91 percent of the total population. However, in the sample from the unorganised sector both the Buddhists and the Hindus are dominant with 40 percent each while the Christians stand at 20 percent.

4.1.3 Ethnic Composition of the Respondents

In Figure 4.3 the ethnic community of the respondents has been calculated keeping in mind the population of each community so as to give a fair representation to each of the ethnic groups in Sikkim.

Figure: 4.3

Ethnic Composition of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

As explained in the earlier chapter, the Nepali community is a heterogeneous category comprising a large number of castes, sub castes and tribes and is represented at 78 percent. The Bhutia community at 15 percent is the second largest sampled community followed by the Lepcha respondents with 7 percent. This break up remains the same for all the three sectors namely the administrative sector, the technical sector and the unorganised sector.

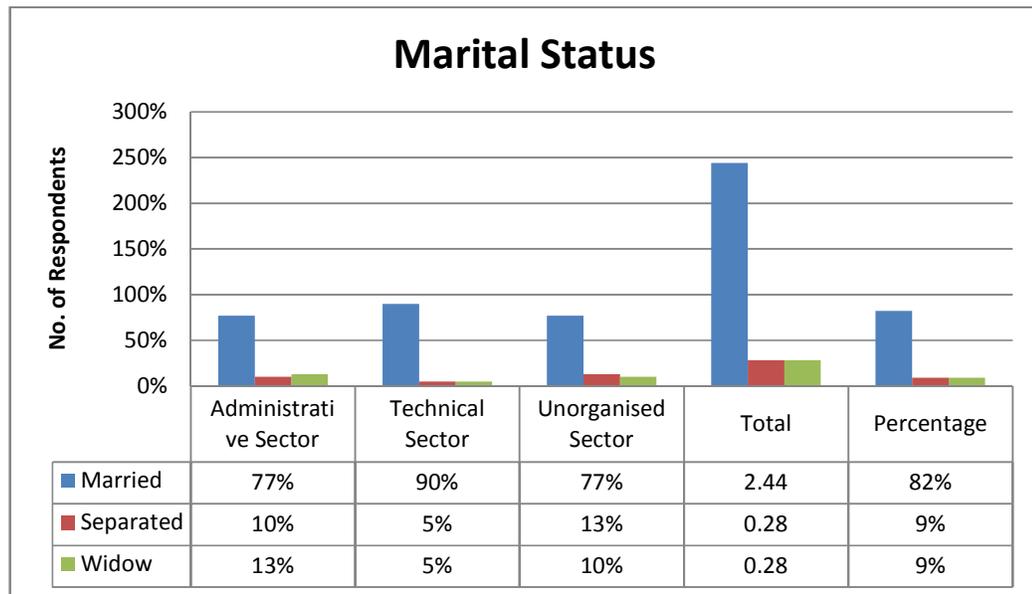
4.1.4 Marital Status of the Respondents

In a patriarchal society, housework is women's domain and is accepted by the society at large as the woman's social obligation even if she is employed elsewhere for her paid work. Work/family conflict often arises when there is a clash associated with the time required to perform work and family roles simultaneously. The result of such conflict is shown in the findings of Sudarshan and Bhattacharya's (2009) study conducted among women in urban Delhi which states that conflict in families over

domestic chores and neglect of children are some of the negative aspects attributed to being in the workforce by both women who are engaged in paid work as well as those who are full time homemakers. Lahiri- Dutt and Sill (2014) also reports similar findings from their study on married middle class families in Burdwan that middle class women have increased their participation in paid work yet, they continue to be solely responsible for household maintenance, caring for children, sick and the elderly and community services. These married women manage to balance both by cutting short on their own leisure time.

The marital status of the respondents has been shown in the figure 4.4. Here we find that 77 percent of the respondents in the study belonging to the administrative sector were married. 10 percent of them were separated or divorced while 13 percent of them were widows.

Figure: 4.4
Marital Status of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Similarly the breakup of the marital status of the respondents belonging to the technical sector shows that 90 percent of the respondents from the present study were married while the widow and the separated category formed 5 percent.

In the unorganised sector 77 percent of the respondents were married with 13 percent of them separated and 10 percent of them as widows. Over all the percentage of the married respondents in the study is 82 percent, 9 percent each are separated and widows. SSEC 2006, states that the Bhutia community and the Rai community from the Nepali category have the highest number of married females. Correspondingly, SSEC 2006, also reports that the largest number of widows is found in the Bhutia community while the Rai community has the maximum number of divorced or separated persons.

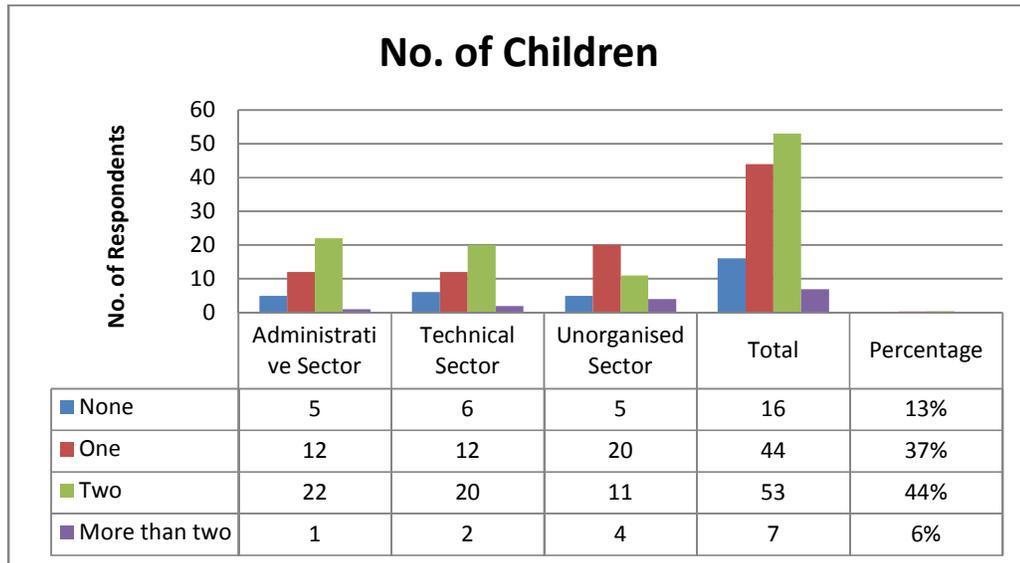
4.1.5 Number of Children of the Respondents

Studies (Brines 1994; Presser 1994; South and Spitze 1994) have shown that the domestic workload of the working women increases with the presence of dependent children. The higher the number of young children in household, the bigger will be the demands and attention required of these children on the mother (Enabulele, 1991). Childrearing activities may interfere with work schedules and the total amount of family work may contribute to over- load and energy depletion. Therefore, housework and child care activities is expected to be related to work/family conflict (Voydanoff, 1988). Higher demands concerning children consequently brings about stress on the working mother especially so when the work-family demands come into conflict with each other. Often, working women with young children experience a longing as well as an commitment to fulfil the role demanded of a parent rather than delegating these responsibilities failing which they may feel guilty or see themselves as incompetent

parents (Elman and Gilbert, 1984). Contextually locating, the study shows that a high proportion of the respondents at 87 percent have one or more children. Therefore, it is likely that these working women in Sikkim are increasingly combining motherhood, child rearing and paid work.

Figure: 4.5

Number of Children of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

We find that more women working in the administrative sector and the technical sector have two children while the in the unorganised sector one child was the dominant norm as shown in figure 4.5. An explanation for this could be that the number of respondents in the administrative and the Technical sector belonged to the 30- 45 age group where it is expected that the task of bearing children would be over by this age. Likewise the unorganised sector had a large number of respondents in the 25-35 age group categories where it is likely that the women would be just starting to having children. Working women with more than two children were also found to be higher in the unorganised sector than the administrative and the technical sector. Thus,

can we consider this to be an indication of an inverse relationship between education with the size of the family?

4.1.6 Type of Family of the Respondents

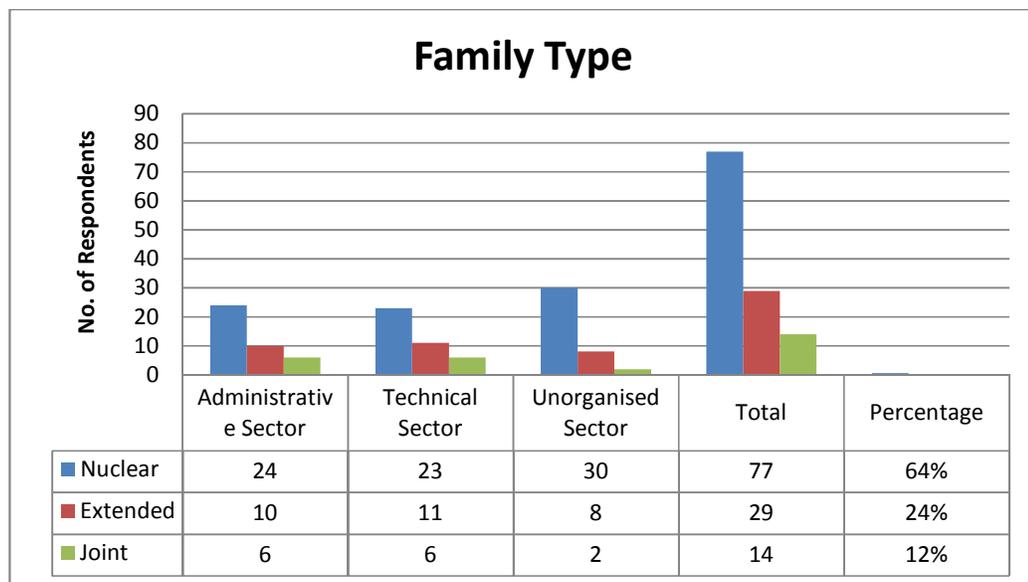
Aileen Ross (1961: 31) defines family as a group of "people usually related as some particular type of kindred who may live in one household and whose unity resides in patterning of rights and duties, sentiments and authority." Furthermore, a family can also be understood as a group of persons of both sexes and who are related through ties of blood, marriage or adoption. Thus, family as a social institution is found in all societies at all times. Even though it is an universal institution we find that its form and structure varies across time and space. These variations in the forms of family can be attributed to a number of factors ranging from geographical conditions, cultural values, and economic conditions. Therefore classification of family into neat divisions which can be applied all over the world is a daunting task. For instance, the understanding of the concept of joint family is cloaked in confusion. Scholars like Madan (1962) and Shah (1998) do not consider a common hearth as a necessary criterion for joint family whereas Karve (1965) sees it a necessary element for the constitution of a joint family (Singh, 2003). Moreover, sociologists Madan (1962), Desai (1964), Karve (1965), Kolenda (1987) have given varied classifications of families which may not be suitable for the present study. As a result, for the sake of convenience and to avoid any form of confusion, the present study has classified family on the basis of size and structure viz. nuclear, extended and joint family.

K. M Kapadia (1958) defines nuclear family as the universal type of family with husband, wife and their unmarried children while in extended family either the husband or wife's relative(s) live along with the family. Or sometimes the husband or

wife's parents live with them for a certain period of time. Irawati Karve (1965) defines joint family consisting of parents and two or more married sons with their wives and children living under the same roof, sharing the same kitchen, same place of worship and common ownership of property and are related to one another as some particular type of kindred.

Figure: 4.6

Type of Family of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

As elsewhere in the rest of the country, nuclear family is seen as the emerging trend when it comes to the type of family found in the Sikkimese society as represented in figure 4.6. In all the three sectors, we find that the nuclear family is the leading form of family followed by the extended family and the joint family. A likely explanation for this is offered in Singh's (2003) argument that the Indian household patterns and the family system have undergone conspicuous changes due to industrialisation and urbanisation. Urbanisation alongside education often entails young people with choices to secure work elsewhere and this has posed a continued threat to the structure

of the traditional joint family. Moreover, emergence of financially independent, career-oriented men and women, who are confident of taking their own decisions and who crave to have a sense of individual achievement, has greatly contributed to the disintegration of joint family (ibid.).

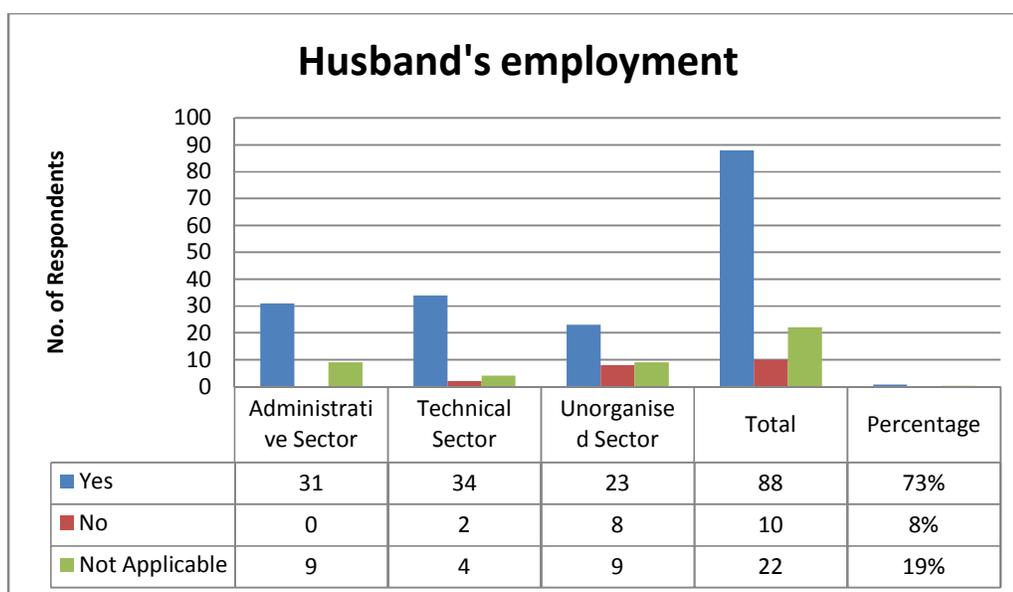
Furthermore, studies have shown that the dominant form of family structure among the tribals is nuclear rather than joint or extended type of family (Singh, 1997; Chakravorty and Singh, 1991). With so many tribal communities found in the state, the empirical findings show similar situation and predominance and trend of nuclearisation. Therefore, taking into account the above findings nuclear family is found to be the dominant form of family.

4.1.7 Employment of the Husband

With data showing from across the world that the number of women in paid employment is increasing year by year, it is only rational for us to expect that this is being accompanied by some adjustment in the distribution of household tasks between men and women. After all a transition such as this is expected to affect the organisation of the household. Moreover, what if the husband or the male companion is unemployed? Would gender division of household work remain status quo or would it change? Wheelock (1990) has suggested that it would lead to more egalitarian relations within the household. Contrary to this Morris (1985) in her study of unemployed steelworkers families reiterates that involvement in domestic activities were hardly influenced by the employment situation of men or women which lessened the chances of men being involved in those tasks which were traditionally considered feminine.

Figure: 4.7

Employment of the Respondent's Husband



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

In figure 4.7 the percentage of employed husbands is well represented in the technical sector followed by the administrative sector. However, in the unorganised sector we find that the number of unemployed husbands is relatively noticeable. Out of the 120 respondents we find that 73 percent of them have husbands who are employed while 8 percent of the husbands were unemployed and 19 percent of the women were either separated or divorced and the question did not apply to them.

The general notion since the set up of a patriarchal society has been of men as the primary breadwinners. Even today a woman's earning is seen as a supplementary income to the one that is already being provided by the men folk. This is one of the main tenets of patriarchy and has been unquestioningly accepted by men as well as women (Soman, 2009). Walby (1990) espouses similar views in her understanding of patriarchy through the six elements one of which is the exclusion of women in the labour market from certain types of work, are paid low wages and are segregated in

less skilled jobs. Therefore, Hochschild (1989) states that when men perceive that their identity of a primary breadwinner is being threatened then they may refuse to participate in household tasks in order as to make up for the loss of this position of primary provider. As a result, the greater the threat to a man's financial identity, it is more likely that he will be less willing to further threaten it by doing "women's work." Similar findings have been reported by one of the respondent belonging to the Tamang community from the present study who works in the beauty parlour business:

"I have to wake very early in the morning in order to manage everything at home before I leave for work. Cooking, cleaning and washing are some of the chores I do. I also have to ensure my son eats a proper meal before he goes to school. So mornings are always hurried. Moreover, I also have to prepare lunch for my husband as he cannot cook. He stays home because he does not have a job. He goes to Paljor stadium to play football in the mornings. I cannot even ask him to help me with housework for fear of hurting his ego. As it is he does not earn, if I ask him to help me with housework he will get angry and accuse me of treating him like a woman. So to avoid confrontations and because he is my husband and the '-ghar ko bau'-(father of the house), I try and do housework myself. I also drop and pick my child from school because my husband says he does not have the time. When I fall ill and cannot cook, I send my husband and child to my in-laws place which is a few buildings away from where I live".

The above interview from the field work shows clear instances of how patriarchy plays out in our daily lives. The freedom to earn your own livelihood exists but at the

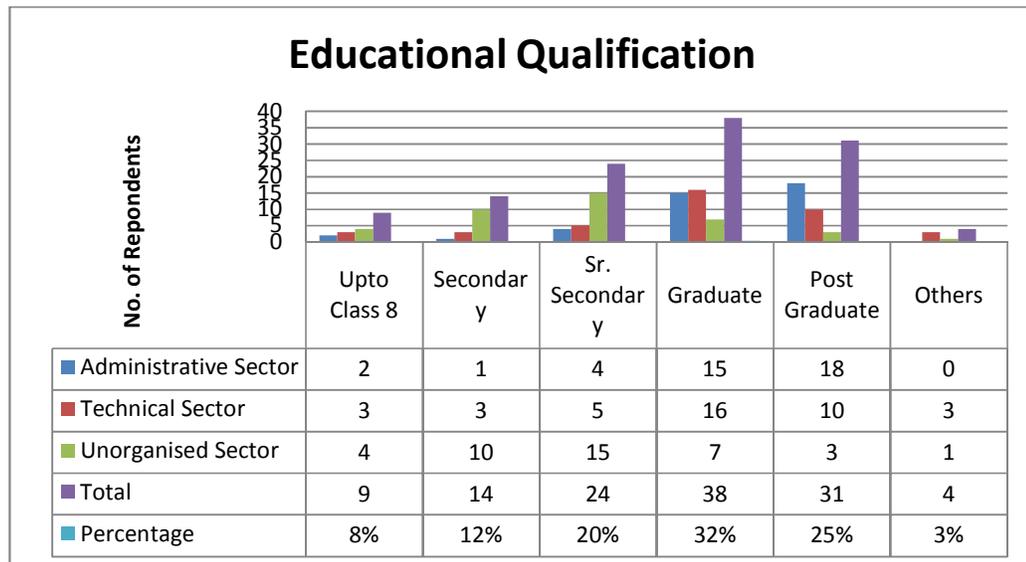
same time our everyday life is still shrouded in shielding the men from performing any form of domestic labour, while allowing ourselves to get overworked and exploited because women have been socialised to accept and embrace the idea that a man's role has nothing to do with housework.

4.1.8 Educational Qualification

Education for Bourdieu serves as one of the forms of capital which can be translated in to a symbol of power for an individual within a social space. The search for employment especially in the organised sector seeks education as important criteria. This institutionalized cultural capital which was denied to women for ages in the Indian society has become one of the significant factors in allowing the women to raise their status in society.

Figure: 4.8

Educational Qualification of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Moreover, education is one among the many mediums through which an individual is able to attain overall development alongside a rational outlook to fulfil the various pre-requisites of life. It also serves as an indicator of the society's development as well as the status of women and an enabling factor to change the perception or the mindset of men as well as the women regarding the subjugated position of the womenfolk. Education influences different aspects of one's life. It enhances one's awareness of their rights, needs, perspectives and decision making abilities along with economic independence and this in turn has a detrimental effect on her family and the wider society. A clear link can be traced between higher literacy rates and lower infant mortality rates. Studies by Dreze and Sen (1995, 2002) show a clear interrelation between women's educational status and infant and child mortality. In other words, the educational level of women is significant because one's educational attainment and knowledge can influence one's age at marriage, reproductive and hygienic patterns, the health and nutritional levels of the family, migration trends and above all their own status.

A number of initiatives was taken up by the Government of India during the post Independence period to promote women's education. The emphasis of these various committees and commissions was to widen and make education more accessible to womenfolk while keeping in mind her specific needs thereby enabling her participation in social, economic, political and educational fields. There is no doubt that the literacy rate especially the female literacy rate has increased yet, when we compare it to the male literacy rate or to the rest of the world we find that women are lagging much behind. Poverty, dowry, early marriage, domestic responsibilities as priorities for the daughters, inability to bear educational expenses, conservative mindset, lack of infrastructure facilities etc are some of the reasons which can be

attributed to this discrepancy in the literacy ratio among men and women in India (Nair, 2010).

In figure 4.8 the educational level in the administrative services shows a high representation of the respondents as post graduates and graduates. It also shows that the majority of the respondents in the technical services are graduates followed by the postgraduates. In both the services the respondents who had studied up to class 8 were working in the capacity of support staff such as peons, gardeners and guards.

The educational status of the respondents in the unorganised sector had a different representation. Here majority of the respondents had studied up to class VIII followed by those who had studied up to class V. The different categories in the unorganised sector in the study did not consider educational level as criteria for employment. In other words, institutionalised cultural capital does not have so much of an impact in their seeking employment. Rather, the nature of the work in this sector emphasised more on learning on the job and picking up the needed skills along the way. As a result this sector has respondents who were illiterate and were engaged as domestic helpers.

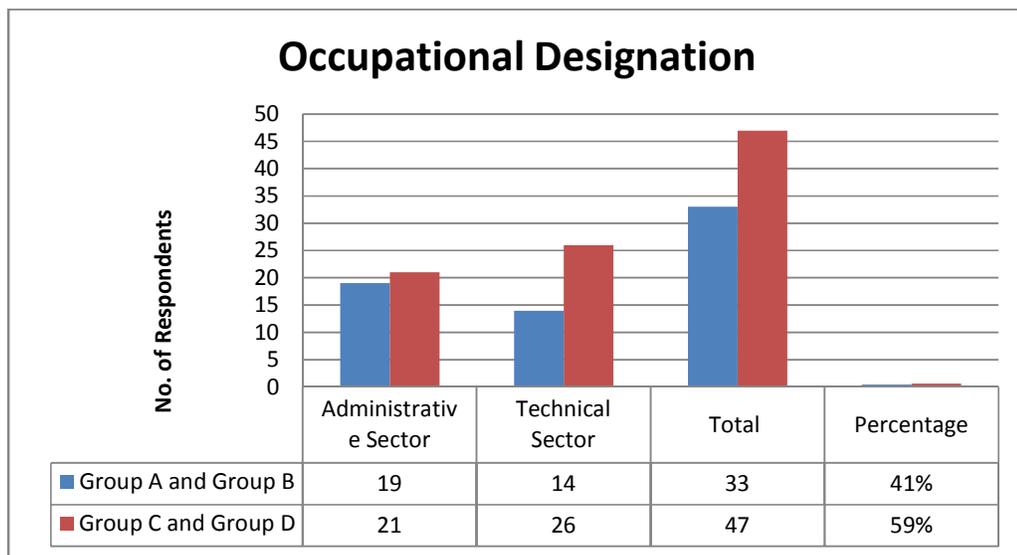
4.1.9 Occupational Category of the Respondents

Employment in the government sector has been classified into Group A, B, C, and D. In figure 4.9 we find that in the administrative sector women working in the Group C and D is more than in Group A and B. This is very much in tandem with the Human Development Report 2014 which states that women continue to be under-represented in the highest levels of bureaucracy. To highlight this concern, in 2011 out of the total number of departmental heads belonging to IAS cadre in the state, only 12 percent of them were women. Similarly, in the technical sector the representation of women in

Group A and B services is even lower. The cluster of women tends to be more concentrated in the lower rungs of the occupational hierarchy and in certain jobs which have been traditionally associated with women such as teaching, nursing and clerical jobs.

Figure: 4.9

Occupational Designation of the Respondents



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

In the study of the administrative sector 19 respondents belonged to the category of Group A and B officers while 21 respondents occupied the Group C and D categories. The Technical sector comprised 14 officers from Group A and B category while 26 of the respondents belonged to the Group C and D category. Respondents were taken from all the categories so as to look into varying situations of women in different levels of work organisations. On the other hand, the unorganised sector in the study had no such distinction.

An area of inquiry looked into while classifying the respondents into different categories of workers was to observe the participation of these women in the decision

making process at the work place. Interestingly it was observed that 97 percent of the workers in Group A and Group B participated in the various decision making capacities at their workplace. To borrow from Pierre Bourdieu these women working in the higher rungs of the government clearly possesses the cultural capital which in turn allows them to have access to a habitus which earlier was the privilege of only the men. Cultural capital for Bourdieu can be present in three ways, embodied as a outlook of the mind and body; objectified as cultural goods in the form of art or books, and in its institutionalised state as, for example, educational qualifications and degrees (Allan, 2013). Possession of the cultural capital, more precisely the institutionalised cultural capital allocates them the privilege of being accustomed to a field where decision making is a practice supported by that field. As one senior woman officer in the Government puts it in the following narrative

"By virtue of the position I hold I am required to make almost all decisions. However in extreme cases I prefer to leave it to the higher ups as a safety measure.....I have always enjoyed the confidence of my bosses that they thoroughly rely on my decisions".

Similarly, in Group C and Group D of the technical sector we find that 92.3 percent of the respondents stated that they were trained personnel in jobs where skills and training are a requisite and instant decision making is a necessity. Jobs such as policing, forestry, medicine and engineering demands certain skills and aptitude and often the nature of the job is such that one is likely to develop practices akin to that particular field such as taking important decisions. As a result they did not hesitate to be a part of the decision making process. On the other hand in the administrative services 42.8 percent said that they did participate in the decision making process

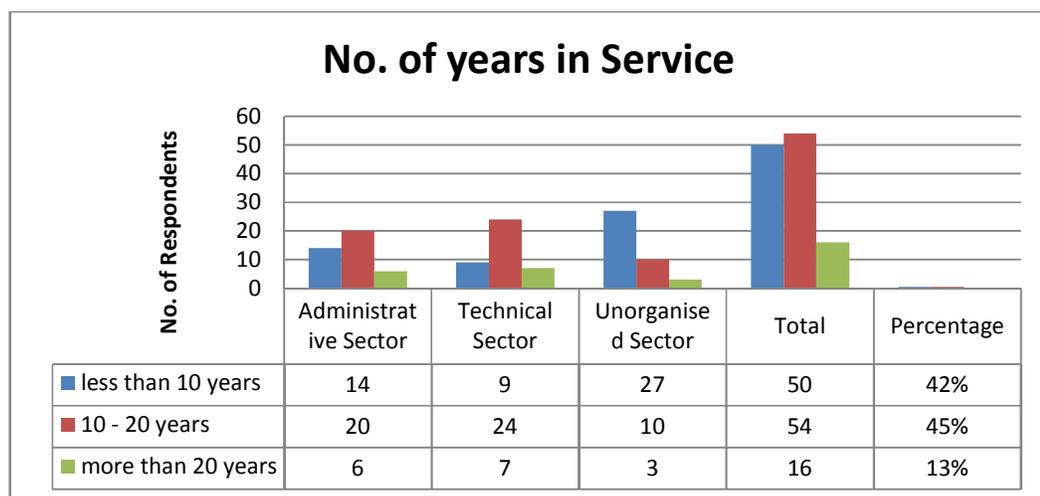
while the same number i.e. 42.8 percent of the respondents said that they took no part in any kind of decision making at their workplace. A likely explanation for this is given by a 35 year old Group C worker who says:

"Because our position in the work is at a lower rank and we do not have much to contribute regarding decisions at work. This responsibility falls on the higher authorities".

4.1.10 Duration of Service

The length of service in a particular job comes with certain advantages such as seniority, promotions, monetary benefits, knowledge and experience about the job and in a lot of cases it also allows the participation of workers in decision making. Conversely, workers in a temporary capacity and new entrants in a job are more hesitant to speak up and participate in decision making and are more likely to be silent observers. Workers in the initial years are a lot less secure about their job compared to the later years.

Figure: 4.10
Duration of Years in Service



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 4.10 shows the number of years of service rendered by the respondents in their respective jobs. In the administrative sector fourteen respondents have been in service for less than ten years. Twenty of them have been working for a period varying from ten to fifteen years while six respondents have been working for more than twenty years.

Likewise in the technical sector we find that the majority of the respondents have been in service for approximately 10 to 20 years. This sector also has the largest number of workers working for duration of more than 20 years.

In the unorganised sector we find the majority of the respondents have been in service for less than 10 years. This in tune with the age of the respondents as it is the same group with a large number of young respondents. Because of the transitory nature of the unorganised sector we find that only 3 respondents have been in service for more than 20 years.

Based on the nature of work, the present study has categorised work into regular and adhoc or temporary. In the administrative sector, thirty seven of the respondents were working in a regular capacity while three of them were in a temporary or in an adhoc position. The technical sector on the other hand had thirty three respondents whose nature of work was regular while seven of them were appointed on a temporary or adhoc basis. Workers from the unorganised sector again did not fit into this particular classification because their nature of work was such that their retention in their job was largely dependent on their own decision. It was also found during the course of the fieldwork that women working in the adhoc or temporary capacity had less bargaining power and were less likely to speak up if they faced any problems managing work and home. A job for them is a necessity and all too often economic

pressures are so immense that they accept whatever job they can get with little regard to personal choice.

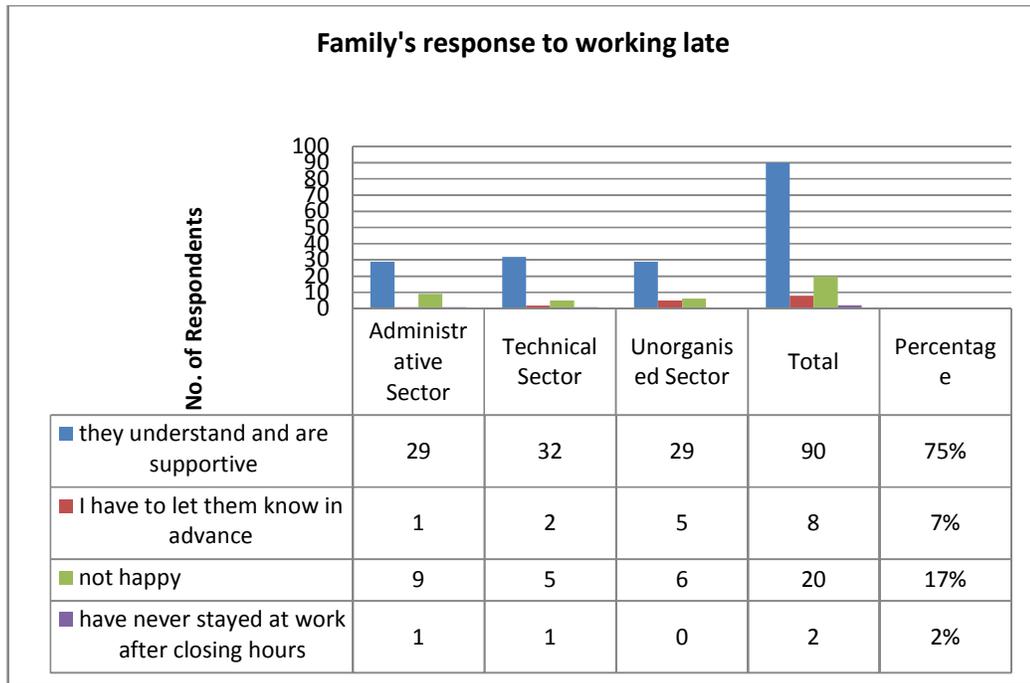
With the above backdrop of the socio economic indicators of the respondents, the next section attempts to explore the perception of the family towards working women as well as the ambience of the workplace. The work ambience as well as the family's attitude to the working role of women plays a significant role in determining the balance between home and work and to role conflict.

4.2 Family's Response to Working Overtime

In the administrative as well as the technical sector we find that the majority of the working women and their families have adapted well to the idea of working beyond regular hours even though Lippe et al. (2006) in her paper "Combination Pressure The Paid Work-Family Balance of Men and Women in European Countries" states that working in the evening or working non-standard hours or working overtime generally can cause stress and tensions in the case of both men and women.

Figure: 4.11

Family's Response to Working Late



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 4.11 shows that 17 percent of the women in total did mention that if they had to work late or did not manage to reach home on time then their family did not like it. A common theme running through the explanation given was that if these women reached home late then their household duties got interrupted and everybody's routine would be affected. The aftermath experienced at home as a result of working late is given in the following narrative of a 52 year old Group B worker:

"In my line of work I do not have to stay overtime. But sometimes when we have excess work then my superiors ask me to stay back. When this happens then everything becomes -"lathalinga"- (chaos) in the house. My children do incomplete homework and watch tv nonstop. Dinner is prepared late so they go to bed late. Often dinner is not cooked when I

reach home. My husband is in a grumpy mood because he has to supervise the children and there was nothing that could be cooked for dinner.....so the days I have to work late everybody is unhappy including me because our everyday routine gets disturbed".

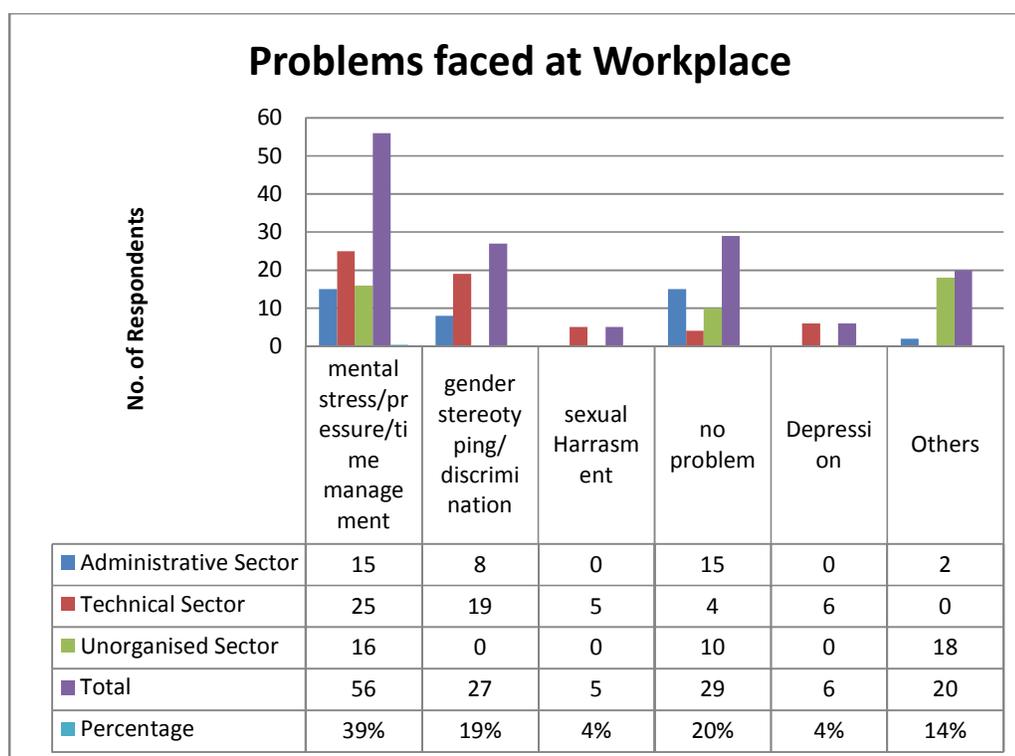
80 percent of the respondents in the technical sector stated that though their working hours were irregular with night duties, their family members were used to it and accepted it because of the nature of their job. It was also mentioned that night duties for the medical and the policewomen personnel were tough to manage when the children are young and are being breastfed. But the consolation given to them were that to earn money one had to bear with the hardships.

4.3 Problems Faced by Women at Work Place

Schor (1998) believes that the 'stress' society is no longer only a US phenomenon. It has become an intricate part of the rest of the working world. Overspill of job characteristics with those within the non-work situation are said to bring on stress (Karasek, Gardell and Lindell, 1987). Figure 4.12 shows that 39 percent of the respondents in the present study spoke about mental stress as a problem faced at the workplace.

Figure: 4.12

Problems Faced by Women at Workplace



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Work overload, meeting deadlines, uncooperative staff etc were some of the causes of mental stress. Gender discrimination was also experienced by the respondents in terms of work distribution or in the distribution of facilities such as vehicle allotment or office rooms or work posting. Discrimination was also perceived when the women spoke up or tried to assert their opinion or did their jobs well. A senior administrative officer mention in her narratives that discrimination is exhibited even when they do well in their area of work and this is often received with surprise or doubt. She says that women workers often encounter "*labelling- for being ambitious, honest, upright, sensitive, sensible, vocal etc. Any personality trait in a working woman is intensely scrutinised*".

Another senior woman officer working in the Forest Department of Sikkim, in a similar narrative mentions that *"I must mention that once somebody informed me that my boss (of that time) remarked about me – " she can work like a man ".I don't take that as a compliment"*.

15 out of 40 respondents in the administrative sector said that they did not face any problem as such.

When it came to discussing the varied problems faced by women at their place of work the technical sector had interesting findings to present. In the present study too, mental stress was found to be highest among those women engaged in professions like police, medical personnel, engineers and forest officers with more than 50 percent of the women stating mental stress as a major problem faced at the workplace. Mental stress came about when there was work overload, deadlines to meet, "office politics", attitude of the public, limited leave etc. Various narratives regarding mental stress have been mentioned to highlight the causes leading to it. For instance, a nurse working in the state government hospital states that *"In some cases the patient party do not understand the prevailing situation and they will start threatening us. This becomes very stressful for us"*. Stress in a different context was also highlighted by another nurse from the medical profession. In her words *"Being a nurse we have to go through mental trauma seeing patients suffer. Regarding mental pressure we have to work directly dealing with different sets of people with different mindsets and views. It's very difficult to explain things to people but we have to deal with it with compassion and act calmly"*.

Similarly, a police woman while speaking about the stress that is generated through her profession mentions that *"In our profession mental stress is always there due to*

the nature and load of work and I feel every person in this field goes through bouts of depression. As we have to balance our life with a 24X7 professional work as well as our personal/family life. It is kind of very tough sometimes".

Correspondingly, gender discrimination was also highlighted as a problem faced by almost 50 percent of the women working in the technical sector. The work under this sector was considered to be typically male dominated like policing or engineering: an explanation which may be considered to explain the patriarchal attitude by the men towards the women who are working in these sectors. Even today these jobs are still thought to be a man's profession and the narratives below throw interesting light on how the work done by women in these professions are looked at with surprise or suspicion. Women doctors in professions which require full commitment often face gender discrimination. For instance a respondent working as a doctor reported in her narratives that "*Being a woman sometimes, patients tend to have less faith in our judgements*".

Similar cases were also reported from other professions such as forestry. Gender stereotyping is also reflected in the experiences in the case of a respondent forest officer working in Group A category who narrates that "*There was this one time where I managed to complete a lot of tasks in a short period of time and in a public function a senior bureaucrat while referring to me remarked in his speech that "she has accomplished a lot in a short period of time despite being a lady". Again in another instance, where I was working overtime my male boss asked me why was I working late and wasn't my responsibilities elsewhere in my home? I remember these statements as being very gender centric*".

Therefore, gender bias is not limited to ethnicity and caste. Stigmatisation is often translated in the context of work distribution too and this has been brought forth in the narrative of a forest officer who says *"Power postings are given to male officers"*. Challenges on the work front, the study reveals is often handed over to the men workers.

However, in the course of the interviews conducted, an interesting finding that came about in the technical sector was the women officers themselves practised gender discrimination when it came to choosing their subordinate staff like the police constables or forest guards. This has been highlighted in the narratives of a forest officer:

"As an officer I am at a position to order a subordinate to go for field visits and tours. But a woman forest guard may find it to difficult or uncomfortable to follow this order. Because she may have to stay overnight in a tent or a watch tower while leaving her small children behind. Thus, I am aware of the problems encountered by women forest guard because of her field duty. This is why I prefer to hire male forest guards under me rather than females".

In a different context, another forest officer mentions that

"If I have to go to a situation where there is some wild bear sighting then I would rather have male forest guards with me.....I would feel safer with them than being with women forest guards".

The narrative here brings out how the assumption of one's gender traits comes in the way of one's discharge of duties. The following narrative by a police officer on the

other hand reveals a different instance where women often use their gender to escape responsibilities and duties at work.

"I prefer male subordinates because women come up with a lot of excuses to stay away from work and responsibility. In fact when we have challenging postings women are the first ones to use social networks to ensure that they do not get posted there".

Thus, we find that gender discrimination can take place due to a number of reasons with men as well as women being responsible for it. A number of studies are available where women also practise gender discrimination because they have been socialised in the patriarchal framework. Similar cases were also found in some case studies in the present study. This seems to be more conventionally reflective in the technical sector where the nature of job was traditionally identified with men.

Unlike the administrative and the unorganised sector, sexual harassment was also reported as a problem by the women in the technical sector. Safe guards against sexual harassment at the work place came into being in 1997 and are popularly known as the Vishaka Guidelines which defines sexual harassment as well as provides guidelines to deal with instances of it. Based on this definition, sexual harassment could be empirically located in the present study too. An engineer presently posted in a field posting reports that

"Few male colleagues have the habit of touching your shoulders/ arms or they put their arms around my shoulders and I don't feel comfortable at all. Sometimes they may also make inappropriate jokes with indecent language".

In another instance, a police woman narrates that her status as a divorcee and her presence in a male dominated profession makes her susceptible to sexual harassment.

She says

"I am a divorcee and in a profession which is male dominated and the work culture is such that we are exposed to a lot of indecent situations. My colleagues and the superior officers sometimes make indecent jokes or suggestions which I think is because of my status as a divorced woman."

Here too, we see that the presence of women in professions conventionally identified with men is still seen as unfavourable. As a result depression emerged as a problem faced due to these work factors. Over all, mental stress was seen as the dominant problem in the workplace with 47 percent of the workers talking about it.

Even though the respondents in the study were all working women, each respondent's here-and-now reality differed from the others because in the words of Schutz each person inhabits a unique "biographically determined situation" (Dillon, 2010). Therefore, the unorganised sector had other type of problems at work such as standing for long hours during the working hours, physically tiring because their work involved a lot of manual labour, limited leave and so on. In the hospitality section women were not permitted to go for room service. Rather they were encouraged to work more in the restaurant. The respondents in the study also saw work in the unorganised sector as something of a temporary arrangement so they had no hesitancy in leaving it if they faced any sort of grave problem at the workplace. This was in contrast to the women working in the government sector who continued to work no matter what problem they faced due to financial security.

4.4 Summary

The present chapter discussed the respondents of the study in terms of their socio-economic characteristics and variables. More number of women in the younger age group was found in the unorganised sector. This is likely because the respondents in this category were women with education below the secondary level and had hence, started working at an earlier age. Another finding that emerged from the study was that in the unorganised sector, women entered the workforce when they have no children but then left the job when they became mothers. Working late or on night duties for the medical personnel and police women was considered problematic especially when the children were small and being breast fed. Narratives from the field also echoed the persistence of patriarchy as the respondents continued to see themselves being responsible for housework even if they were engaged in employment elsewhere. However, there were instances reported from the younger respondents working in the unorganised sector wherein their husbands helped them with various domestic chores such as fetching water, washing, cooking etc thereby, indicating some degree of changing gender roles. Class variation also comes into play in this case, because higher number of these respondents belonged to the unorganised sector. There was little or no ethnic variation reflected in the above instance. Further, the nature of the work, whether it was a temporary or a regular job, influenced one's participation in decision making at the workplace.

Information pertaining to the work culture of these women has also been examined in the later part of the chapter. In doing so, an attempt has been made to provide a backdrop for the subsequent chapters. Mental stress, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and depression were some of the problems that were reported from

workplace. Discrimination was encountered by the respondents even when they worked hard and well in the form of surprise or doubt from their superiors. This is again, reflective of patriarchal domination wherein women are seen as the weaker sex and therefore incapable of performing well outside of her home. The technical sector had the maximum number of respondents who stated mental stress as a problem encountered at workplace. It was also found that the judgement of the women doctors was often faced with suspicion from the patients. Similarly, the police women were often taken for granted by the convicts and the offenders. These instances project that the entry of women into professions which were traditionally male dominated were yet to be completely accepted by the society. An interesting finding that came about in the technical sector was that the women officers themselves practised gender discrimination especially when it came to choosing their subordinates as they felt that women especially in the police force have too many domestic problems relating to children and family. This therefore, proved to be a very contradictory situation where women in positions of power discriminated against women in lower positions reflecting a strong patriarchal socialisation of the women themselves.

The overall understanding of the location of the respondents in the socio economic structure would thus, facilitate our understanding of the dynamics of the changing roles of the working women in Sikkim.

Chapter 5

Redefining Gender Roles and Relations: Intersectionality of Ethnicity, Class and Gender

The preceding chapters have led us to understand that half of the world's population is comprised of women and they make up for more than 40 percent of the workforce in many countries. Yet, they are poorer in resources, inadequately represented in decision making power (Peterson and Runyan, 1993). Okafor and Amayo (2006) states that women today enter paid work with various motives such as wanting to be engaged in something purposeful, to utilise their education in a proper manner, due to their interest in a particular vocation, some simply to escape the monotony and insipidness of home life, a large number due to economic pressure while some women enter the workforce due to some exigencies in their families. Studies have also shown that the women have now begun to realise that employment can factor in them confidence and self esteem while also helping them achieve socio psychological security and financial independence (Ahmad, 1984; Chatterji, 1988). Desirous of enhancing the family income and raising their standard of living are some of the other reasons why women are encouraged to work. Paid employment gives women the choice to spend their earnings on modern household appliances, nutritious food, facilities for their children in the form of toys, pocket money, vacations, co-curricular activities, their beauty upkeep etc. The upsurge in the number of women taking up paid employment has been as a result of the desire to involve oneself in all aspects of life. In this sense, paid employment in the words of Giddens has been seen as an enabling structure for these working women who in Giddens terminology are "agents"

creating new rules while simultaneously reproducing the old rules for their working and familial roles.

Desai (1996) maintains that the 1970s witnessed a rapid increase of employment of women in paid work outside their homes yet; the distribution and management of household work saw little or no change and continued to be gendered. As a result, despite being employed in paid work, women continue to be responsible for the maintenance of their homes and the care of their family members. Borrowing Merton's argument that any aspect of a society, in this case we may cite women's employment, may not always serve a functional purpose but can sometimes have dysfunctional consequences too. Correspondingly, women's entry into paid work has also led to what many address as the double burden or the second shift for these working women (Apter, 1985; Rubin, 1986; Hughes, 1977). Various studies from India (Kapur, 1969; Rao and Rao, 1973; Ahmad, 1984; Behera and Padhi, 1993) has revealed that employed married women face a greater degree of role conflict as a result of having to manage home and work roles. Similar studies conducted in the western societies (Damico and Nevill, 1975; Lippe, Jager and Kops, 2006; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Ginn and Sandell, 1997) too revealed that the pressure from work and family responsibilities result in stress and role conflict among the working women. Therefore, to achieve the required adjustment to the changing social setting, a reorientation of the roles and values, relations and attitudes of women and other members in the family and society becomes important. However, in the Indian context, gender roles have not been redefined and have remained unchanged. A woman's role revolves around the upkeep of her family and home. Despite the fact that traditionally defined status and role pertaining to women has been challenged by the employment of women outside her home in the recent times, the change in roles is not the

replacement of one by another. Rather, what we see is a simultaneous existence of both traditional and modern roles being carried forward by these working women while bringing in the necessary adaptive changes in her domestic sphere (Kapur, 1969). Consequently, many women at present have to manage dual roles related to home and work without upsetting their role relations with other members of the family. In such a situation, employed women, are the victims of conflicting role expectations from the home and work domains (ibid.).

In the backdrop of working women managing the dual and conflicting roles and in view of its ramifications, the present chapter attempts to explore the life of the working women in urban Sikkim. Based on the analysis of open ended questions as well as the narratives and lived experiences of the working women, the study highlights the objectives and ramifications of employment, both functional and dysfunctional consequences in the lives of these working women.

5.1 Women Seeking Paid Work : Need and Reasons

The study conducted among the 120 respondents belonging to different classes and communities highlighted diverse responses with regard to the query for taking up paid employment. These responses varied in terms of class, socio-economic background and their nature of employment. The reasons given for taking up paid employment by these working women are sometimes a combination of a number of factors. However, for the sake of convenience in the present study, these reasons have been broadly classified into two categories namely economic reasons and non- economic reasons.

5.1.1 Economic Reasons

One of the major reasons for the entry of some of these women respondents of the study into paid employment was dire economic necessity. Among the numerous studies conducted on working women, economic necessity is cited as one of the main reasons for women to seek work. Many micro studies (Bardhan, 1985; Swaminathan, 1993) have established an inverse link between women's participation in work and the income position of their households. Therefore, if the income level is low then the women are more likely to work and earn so as to support themselves and their families. The earnings of these women are used in the maintenance of their families. Subsequently, the understanding that education, training and employment form a vital link has come to be realised among people. Therefore, the parents even in the poorer sections of the society are conscious that the capacity to earn is an asset for girls especially in times of emergencies. Lending support to Bourdieu's notion that the habitus of an individual is a flexible structure which is significant in determining and influencing an individual's thought and actions is the change in the way women's earnings are viewed in the society today. Dire economic necessity in different forms such as death of a spouse, husbands becoming alcoholics and unable to provide monetary support were some of the factors which acted as push factors for these respondents to take up paid work. This has also been supported in the study by Bardhan (1985) who states that when husbands deserts, migrates or dies, the wife must work for any income, however low, for the day-by-day subsistence of her family. These economic factors will hence, be discussed in the following subsections.

(i) Financial Difficulties

Among the many factors identified in the socio cultural setting of Sikkim, taking up paid work for the necessity of surviving was a significant factor reported in the study. Some respondents cited that financial problems at home were what pushed them to look for paid employment. One such instance is that of a 38 year old woman of Gurung community who has studied up to class 8. She started working from the age of 15 years as her family was undergoing some financial problems. Being the eldest in the family she started to look for jobs to help her family financially. She began work at a beauty parlour and gained the necessary skills and training there. Today she runs her own beauty parlour. Her husband is very supportive and looks after their two children and helps them with their school work while she is working for almost nine hours, six days a week. He also helps with housework and cooking in case she is tired or late from work. Her husband is a small time private contractor and is home most days. Although she runs a business establishment, she said that financial decisions in her family are taken exclusively by her husband simply because he knows better.

A similar case of being coerced into taking up a job because of financial difficulties is in the case of a 36 year old shop owner who belongs to the higher caste Nepali community. In her words

"My husband is a driver and his earnings vary depending on the customers and the seasons. Sometimes when the earnings were not good it became difficult to run the house and pay for my children's education. My children go to a private English school where the fee is quite expensive..... so to support my children's education I took a bank loan to open this shop".

A 35 year old domestic worker who is a Buddhist by religion and who has studied up to class 2 is another instance where the woman was compelled to take up paid employment because of acute financial difficulties. She lives with her employees and has left her only child with her parents in the village. Her husband has no regular income so it is she who works and provides for the child. During the holidays i.e. dusshera she goes home to meet her son and her parents. From her earnings she gives some money to her parents since they take care of her son. Therefore, there is hardly any savings. Even though her in laws are alive but they are of no help because they themselves are struggling economically. Her husband stays with his parents and sometimes goes to his in laws to meet his son. But otherwise she thinks he is useless.

The influence of globalisation has infiltrated every aspect of our lives. This free movement of goods and services across international borders has also led a rise in consumerism. As a result the consumption habits of the individuals have changed which has further led to a rise in the expenses of everyday life. Moreover, the evolution of the nuclear family further necessitates the need for two pay checks in order to meet the economic needs of the family. During the course of the interview the predominant view of the man being the breadwinner was being challenged as a considerable number of the women respondents stated that it was not possible for a man alone to support his family. Rising expenses necessitated the sustenance of a family through the joint incomes of both the husband and the wife. In other words, the "recipe knowledge" or the "stock knowledge" as Alfred Schutz puts it, seems to be slowly changing and the everyday view of men in the provider role and women in the dependent role is slowly losing its acceptance.

For instance, a 26 year old upper caste Hindu respondent who has studied up to the primary level and is working as a domestic helper says

"I started working because the money earned by my husband was not enough for my family.....everything is costly these days".

Another 40 year old respondent belonging to the upper caste of the Nepali community narrates that she got a job when her husband's salary became insufficient to run the household and educate their two children. Although living in a nuclear family her husband has to send some money every month to his aged parents who live in a close by village. Since she had a BSc degree she decided to look for a job in order to contribute to the family's income. Today she is working in the Group C category of under the Sikkim Government.

Similar response can be found in the narratives of a 53 year old respondent belonging to the lower caste Hindu of the Nepali community and who works in the Group C category. Therefore, in her words:

"I started working in order to help my parents financially. I have a number of younger brothers and sisters. Being the eldest I thought it was my duty to look for a job after my graduation so that I could contribute to the family's expenses".

In the above instances, the respondents took up paid work because what their husbands earned was insufficient. Therefore, women often seen as secondary earners are compelled to take up any work to supplement the primary income in the household.

On the other hand some respondents were compelled to take up paid work because of the death of the spouse and the sole earning member in the family. One such lived experience is that of a 52 years old respondent belonging to the Rai community and who is a widow working in the Group D category. She is Hindu by religion and has studied up to primary level. She lives with her son, daughter in law and her grand children. Her husband, the sole earning member in her family passed away when her children were still in primary school. With two dependent children she had no source of income. She did have a small house built on the land given to her by her parents in the outskirts of Gangtok but that was all that she possessed. Thereafter she applied to the state government for any job in order to support her children.

Similar is the story of a 38 year old Gurung woman who got a job after the demise of her husband. She narrates

"I got this job after my husband passed away. My younger child was only a year old when he died. I also had an elder daughter and a widowed mother in law to take care of. There was no other earning member in my family. So now it was up to me to look after them. So I approached the Chief minister through our Panchayat for a job and this is how I managed to get one".

In both the cases the women were offered a job in the Group D category because the State government has a policy of providing for jobs on compassionate grounds to the widow or natural son or natural daughter of a Government employee who dies in

harness⁶. However this compassionate appointment is applicable only in the instance of Group C and D category jobs.⁷

A 35 year old Group D worker in the forest department has a similar story to recount. She belongs to a high caste from the Nepali Hindu community. She eloped and got married when she was in class 10 thereafter putting a stop to her studies. It was only after her marriage that she found out that her husband used to drink a lot of alcohol. As a result they used to have a lot of fights. During a fight one day, he stormed out of the house after she threatened to leave him. The next day they found out that he had committed suicide. When her husband died, her daughter was only two years old. She was given a job in the Group D category because of the absence of an earning member in her family. In her narration she also mentions that her husband became an alcoholic because he had "learnt" it from his "matwali" friends who used to drink alcohol every day. Among the high caste Nepali, consumption of alcohol is not culturally permitted which is why in her narration we find the blame of alcohol consumption by a upper caste as an influence of his "matwali" peers.

In all the above case studies the respondents were driven to take up paid work consequent to the death of their husbands and the sole earning member in the families. Borrowing Bourdieu's terms, the field occupied by these women and the capital possessed by them invariably assigned them to a habitus of a job in Group C or Group D category.

The study also revealed that desertion by spouse compelled respondents to fend for themselves and their children. Polyandry was traditionally observed among the Bhutias and the Lepchas. However, it is rarely practised in the present times.

⁶ According to Notification no. J(47)/385/GEN/DOP-Pt-II, dated-05/05/2011

⁷ According to Notification no. J(47)/Pt.-II/139/GEN/DOP dated -10/07/08

Polygyny on the other hand continues to be practised in all the three communities existing in the state today despite being governed by the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Therefore, instances of women being deserted by their husbands in order to marry another woman are not an uncommon scenario in Sikkim. One such instance is that of a 30 year old Bhutia woman who is also working as a domestic worker and has a similar story to tell. Her education is up to the primary level. She narrates that

"I am a single mother.....my husband left me to marry someone else.....I am hardly educated so this is the only work I could get to earn some money".

With polygyny not being uncommon in Sikkim, it is often the case when the woman who is economically dependent on her husband is left to fend for herself especially when the husband deserts her to remarry. Hence, compulsion to earn a living from any work that the woman can find is a significant reason for taking up paid work.

(ii) Alcoholism as a Contributing Factor

A consistent problem besieging the state today is alcoholism (SHDR, 2001). Out of the three ethnic communities included in the present study, the Lepchas and the Bhutias and Nepali Matwali communities use alcohol in their secular as well their religious life. Liquor or alcohol forms an important component in the different lifecycle rituals of these communities. Most of the religious rituals of the Bhutia and Lepchas and Nepali Matwali communities have alcohol offerings made during prayers. Thus, traditionally there is regular use and acceptance of alcohol as a part of their tradition in their everyday life and alcohol consumption is culturally legitimised among many communities in Sikkim. The ritualistic acceptance of the use of alcohol has led to a social acceptance of the consumption of alcohol whereby alcohol is

offered even during social visits and it is not uncommon to offer alcohol instead of tea when one makes social calls. However, this customary use and consumption of alcohol has led to what Merton terms as dysfunction for the society in Sikkim. Alcoholism, today poses a major social problem in the state. HDR, 2014 reports that the use of tobacco and alcohol in Sikkim is much higher than national average. NFHS 4 states that 51.2 percent of the population in Sikkim drinks alcohol which is more than the 50 percent of the population and this is certainly alarming. A Times of India report states that Sikkim has the highest number of women consuming alcohol in the country (*Times of India*, 2016). The study conducted by National Health Survey lists 23 percent of women in Sikkim consume alcohol ranking highest both in the country and the north east region. Assam takes the number two spot with 6.9 percent of women consuming alcohol. The difference between Sikkim and Assam, occupying the first and second spot in alcohol consumption among women, is 16.1 percent which is indeed significant and a cause of concern for Sikkim.

Contextually locating, there were respondents in this study who attributed their seeking employment as a result of their husband's drinking habit. One such case is that of a 35 years old respondent belonging to the Gurung community. She has three children and her husband works as a driver. She has studied up to class 6. Her children go to government schools and the family lives in a rented accommodation in Gangtok. Her in laws live in a far away village while her mother lives close by and often helps out looking after her children if she gets held up at work. She works as a domestic help from 8:30 a.m to 4:30 p.m. She started working ever since her husband took up drinking and stopped giving her money on a regular basis.

A 51 year old respondent from the Limboo community recounts a similar story. In her words

"I separated from my husband in 2006. He used to drink a lot and we used to fight every day. Sometime, he used to hit me too. I got fed up and left him. Since I have hardly studied this was the only job I could look for. So I started doing domestic work for other people. I somehow manage by..."

Another respondent Mrs. Rai who is a 52 year old widow working in a Group D position in Singtam also says that she ended up in paid employment because of her husband's alcoholism which led to his death. She has been in employment for more than 25 years now. Her children are married and she has grand children. Her daughter lives away from Singtam but she lives with her son, daughter in law and her two grand children. Her children despite her attempts to educate them became school drop outs. She thinks that the absence of a father figure in the lives of her children led to their failure in education. In other words, to borrow from Talcott Parsons, the absence of an 'instrumental role' of a father or a man in her family has led to the breakdown in her family. According to the functionalists, men and women have specific functions and roles to play in order to meet the needs of the society and to minimise tensions and conflicts. When the roles are not appropriately played out then the breakdown takes place as it has been reported in the above case study.

Another similar case was reported in the instance of a 29 year old Bhutia lady working in the hospitality sector and who has studied up to class 9. She says

"I separated from my husband. He was an alcoholic and used to trouble me a lot. So after I left him I began to look for work in order to support myself and my child. This is how I came to work for this hotel".

A 32 year old Lepcha woman also separated from her first husband because he was an alcoholic as well as abusive. Even though her first husband came from a well connected political family, she chose to leave him because she was fed up of his drinking and fights. Today her second husband is someone who comes from an ordinary background but she says that she has peace in her life. She has to work hard in her job in the hotel but she says that she does not mind as her present husband is supportive and respects her.

The above narratives and case study highlights alcoholism which is a culturally legitimate practise in a number of 'Matwali' groups within the Nepali community in Sikkim and among the Lepchas and the Bhutias appears to have led to discord in the marital relations of the various respondents. On the other hand, it has also compelled these respondents to take up paid jobs as a result of their spouse's alcoholism which has in turn contributed to economic hardship within the family.

(iii) Economic Independence

National Family Health Survey- 4 reports that 48.6 percent of women in Sikkim earn money which is more or about the same as their husbands. Likewise, 49.1 percent of Sikkimese women have some money that they can decide how to use. These findings can presumably be linked to the fact that a considerable number of women want to be employed for the sake of financial independence. Economic independence is one way of assuring self sufficiency and to no longer be seen as a liability. For instance, the personal wish to achieve and maintain total economic independence can be found in

the narratives of the following respondents. A 41 year old Chettri respondent working in the hospitality industry who has studied up to class 7 works in a prominent hotel in Gangtok. She lives in a nuclear household with her unmarried sister and her child in a rented accommodation in Gangtok. Since she is separated from her husband she says she applied for this job because she wanted to be financially independent. Her husband gives her money for the child's upkeep but she says earning her money gives her a sense of independence.

Similarly, a police constable aged 33 years belonging to the lower caste Hindu community cites that her work is difficult but she says that there is a sense of power which comes from earning your own money. On being asked why she got into paid employment she says

"Earning money is an important thing for my family.....therefore being employed and earning money makes me happy because it gives me the chance to stand on my own feet".

Likewise a 41 year old Group C worker belonging to the upper caste Nepali community and living in a joint family also states that she wanted to work because she did not want to depend on anybody for money. Living in a joint family she thinks that having a job allows her to be free from depending on others for things.

A 32 year old doctor belonging to the upper caste Nepali Hindu community states that

Being a doctor meant that I would have achieved something which people would look up to..... it would give me confidence and a sense of security.

Having a job serves the purpose of financial security and this is what has been captured in the narrative of Mrs. Rai who is a widow, is 32 years old and is working in the Group C category. She says that

"To have a job means that one would never starve nor be homeless...I have always wanted to earn some money in any kind of a job as long as it paid me. Job means your life is secure.....and I am thankful to god that I have one today because if I did not have one, I don't know how I would feed my child today...."

A Nepali officer in the Group A category, aged 45 and who is divorced narrates that her status as a divorcee which is still seen as a stigma in the Indian society tends to get overlooked because of her status of an officer.

Similar thoughts can be traced in the narration of a Limboo respondent who is an officer in the Group A category and who is 36 years old. According to her

"Getting a job meant security and financial freedom, so working was always a part of my future plan"

To be financially independent works as a motivating factor for these respondents to seek employment. Further, the repercussions of paid work are not limited to financial independence alone. It factors in a sense of confidence, a feeling of security and removes the notion of being dependent on another person.

The empirical finding reflects that a higher number of respondents in the unorganised sector and those belonging to the Group C and D stated that financial necessity was what pushed these women to take up paid employment. This is in contrast to the findings of Elman and Gilbert (1984) whose study says that it is doubtful that working

women from dual career families work because of financial necessity. The economic reasons to take up paid employment indicate no variations in terms of ethnicity, religion or caste. Rather the findings here points towards it being more class specific as the different respondents belong to a specific class category wherein they lack the financial support from other members of their families. Thereby, they are left with little choice regarding their choice of work or their willingness to work. Marx's economic determinism can be brought into focus here whereby economic factors play the determining role over caste, ethnicity or religion in women taking up paid work. The structural factors like socio-cultural issues like husbands becoming alcoholics, desertion by their husbands or becoming widows, directly or indirectly, have worked as push factors for women taking up paid work under dire circumstances so as to enable them to provide for their family. It is through their own earnings that these respondents have managed to eke out a decent living for themselves and their children. Without spousal support or in some cases minimal support, these respondents see their jobs and income as factors which have permitted them to carry on with their lives with dignity.

Therefore all the narratives in the above case studies have cited financial reasons as a survival need wherein the respondents were compelled to take up paid work since they were the sole earners in their family. On the other hand, there were other respondents in the study who reported that they took up paid work not due to economic compulsion but as a form of security and to be financially independent. Whether the job pays less or more, the respondents in the above cases were willing to work as long as it allowed them to have some amount of their own earnings. Closely linked with financial independence is a sense of security that emerges out of having a job which entails that one is not economically dependent on another person. Being

financially independent would therefore, provide a sense of security for these respondents and their dependents.

5.1.2 Non Economic Reasons

However, entry into paid work is not always for economic reasons. During the course of the field work it was reported that a number of respondents took up paid work for reasons other than economic. Some of these have been discussed under the following subcategories.

(i) Education and Employment

The personal desire of the educated woman to pursue employment with the hope of putting her education to use and realising her personal ambition is another cause for women to seek work (Mishra, 1994). Education is considered a significant factor in the advancement of women's employment (Reddy, 1986, Mishra, 1994). Education instills the ideas of logic, reasoning, self respect and the desire or the need to be self sufficient (Kapur, 1972). The desire to utilize what has been learnt in some gainful activity is another motivating factor which has encouraged women to enter and seek paid work (Kishor and Gupta, 2004). In fact the increase in employment of women in Sikkim has been attributed to the rise in the literacy rate of women over the last two decades with the female literacy rates moving higher than the national average, which finds reflection in different levels of education, both technical and non- technical. Contextualising Bourdieu's notion of the conversion of capital in the present context, education in the form of cultural capital in the present empirical situation is being transferred into economic capital i.e. a job that pays the worker. Increase in cultural capital in terms of higher and better qualifications is likely to lead to an increase in economic capital in terms of a better paying job as well as symbolic capital in terms

of prestige, honour and social status. Therefore, it is not uncommon for educated women to start looking for employment once they have completed their studies. However, higher cultural capital is not in itself a guarantee of greater gender equity in the family.

This has been reflected in the case study of a Group A officer who is 44 years old and belongs to the lower caste hierarchy. She gives a different perspective on being asked the reason for her getting into paid employment. She is a post graduate, has two children and is a divorcee. Because she is a single parent in a nuclear household, both her children are in boarding schools. Her parents are retired government employees who live nearby but she has set up an independent home for herself and her children. She narrates that

"After finishing my studies I started to look for jobs. My parents also encouraged me to work. So working was a natural thing for me. I had my degree and the next thing I knew I was looking for employment".

Similarly, a Bhutia respondent aged 40 years and working in the Group B category says she joined her job because that was what was expected of her after she completed her studies. She says that it was understood that joining work would be the next thing after the completion of her studies. Her husband is also very supportive of her working and contributing to the family income and also helps her out with housework and in taking care of their only child.

Another instance of seeking employment as a result of one's education can be found in the narratives of a 39 year old Newar engineer belonging to the Nepali community. She has been working for the last 14 years and she says on being an engineer she says

"I had an engineering degree. When the job vacancies came out I applied and got this job".

Weber's life chances theory points a positive correlation between one's life chances and one's status. The empirical findings in the above studies shows that education has played an important role in changing the life chances of the women respondents whereby they have been able to utilise their qualifications to better their opportunities and fulfil their needs. Education and seeking paid work for the respondents in this case was an integral part of their habitus when they were growing up wherein the inculcation of the two i.e. education and employment as mentioned in the narratives is what prompted these respondents to take up paid work.

(ii) Enhancement of Status Through Paid Work

Status refers to the position that an individual holds in a society. Attributes such as income, education, occupation, position in one's community all determine one's status. Based on these attributes prestige, respect and deference is shown to individuals. Modern societies today accord immense importance to the status that arises out of the position that one holds in one's workplace and the income derived from it. Achieved status hence holds primacy over ascribed status. Ralph Linton has also stated that achievement or achieved status is a trait of modern urban societies. This thought has been echoed in Talcott Parson's framework of pattern variables as well wherein he speaks of the shift of the pattern variables from ascription to achievement and this serves as a reflection of modern society. Pierre Bourdieu too recognises the role of cultural capital in bestowing or denying status position to individuals while also allowing for social mobility within a stratified society. Seeking paid employment is not only for economic reasons. Rather it can also be looked as a factor to enhance

one's status and along with it to empower oneself. Moreover, DiMaggio (1982) states that there are early evidences which shows that parental cultural capital plays a key role in the educational attainment of children. Therefore, one often finds individuals vying for paid employment so as to improve their status in the society and community.

Moreover, the desire for prestige and for social status in the family and society by virtue of earning an independent income is almost universal. It has also been noticed that members of some families encourage employment of women especially in white collar jobs for reasons of economy, social status etc. In a few cases, the influence of class habitus on the choice of one's occupation is also seen. This influence on one's choice and desire for employment can be as a consequence of one's habitus which is "understood as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions*" (Bourdieu, 1977). Drawing on this idea of habitus on the present study, it is likely that individuals decide on their choice to work and their choice of occupation based on the influence of their families since that is the reality in which they have been socialised and it is that habitus which transmitted within the home becomes detrimental in influencing one's social action and choices which may include their notion of employment.

The interplay between habitus and field in terms of occupational choice can be seen in the instance of a Bhutia respondent, aged 47 years who is working as an officer in the Government of Sikkim narrates that

"Both my parents worked in the government as officers. And they encouraged me and my sister to study well so that we could also become officers like them. Because of their encouragement my sister is

a doctor and I am an officer in the government today. I think this encouragement was what pushed us to get into these jobs".

Another instance of where children are likely to be influenced by the occupational habitus of the family members can be conceived from the following narrative of a 46 year old Rai respondent

"I come from a family of doctors. Both my parents are doctors as well as my husband. From a young age I have been exposed to how important medicine and health care are to people. My father was a big influence in my ambition to become a doctor".

Similarly, a Bhutia officer aged 48 years and working in the Group A category says

"I had finished my studies when an employment opening for this technical post came out..... My family especially my elder brother was very keen that I apply for it. I was the only lady selected in this batch of officers. It was a proud moment for the family. Today, I enjoy my position and the facilities that come with being an officer and this has increased not only my status in the society but also of my family".

Seeking employment in order to improve one's status in the society and family was not limited to instances of Group A category of workers alone. It was also narrated by those working in the unorganised sector. For instance, a 30 year old Lepcha woman who works in a beauty parlour narrates that since earning her own income, her status in her husband's family has increased. From her salary she is able to purchase small gifts for her mother in law and sister in law who live in the village.

According to a 38 year old doctor who belongs to the lower caste in the Hindu community studying hard to get into medical college was a step towards attaining success in her life. She says she was aware that once she became a doctor she would be accorded a high status in her family and in her society as well. Today, she feels her family and her community treats her with respect.

Drawing from Bourdieu's idea of habitus, the respondents in their narratives mention that their idea of work and their relation to it has been drawn from their social world and how they have come to view themselves by that social reality and have disposed them to think and act in a certain way relating to their habitus. Therefore, the respondent who is a doctor, from a young age was conditioned by her habitus of having both her parents as doctors, to become a doctor herself.

The study has revealed these factors which have encouraged the respondents to take up paid work. In the next section, an attempt has been made to look into how being in paid work has influenced their perception about themselves and the impact it has created on their identity.

5.2 Perceptions of the Respondents on Having Paid Work

Identity is used to locate individuals in specific contexts by helping them understand who they are, what they do and what will become of them. "While Bauman reminds us that identity is forged in the domain of the social, other theorists focus on the up-close, everyday social practices that shape a sense of self." (Kehily, 2009:2) Employment, in the sense of being a part of our everyday social practise therefore gives us an identity of ourselves. This identity which arises out of what we do every day plays a crucial role in defining our position in the society. In other words, occupation, identity and status are inter related and define each other. Contextually

locating, when the respondents were asked how employment has affected their identity, varied answers were given. A large majority of the respondents stated that being employed gave them a sense of power and prestige and a feeling of security as a result of which they felt confident about themselves. Having a job also gave them reason to be satisfied with their achievement in that they were able to take care of their families and give their children whatever they could afford. Therefore, employment for these women gave them what could be called as status in the Weberian sense. Beneria and Roldan, (1987) in their study conducted in Mexico City showed that any form of income for women facilitated her bargaining position within her household. To highlight this point a Group A official aged 55 years working in the technical sector and belonging to an upper caste family of the Nepali community says that being employed was what enabled her to continue with her life when she became a widow with two very young children at a very young age. She says that her being employed has allowed her to enjoy a certain status in the society even though she is a widow and this has had a positive effect on her identity. What is apparent here is what Bourdieu refers to the possession of cultural capital in the form of educational credentials and occupational position is what enabled the respondent to enjoy the positive status and identity that she mentions. Similarly, Collins' idea of power resource (social and work position) was in the respondent's control and this was what facilitated her everyday life. Her narration is as follows:

"Having come from an impoverished background and to reach the position of an officer in the government today is a huge achievement for me. I was able to support myself and look after my two children when I became a widow at the age of 24. Because of my job I did not have to ask for anybody's help or pity. My job gave me the confidence

to move ahead with my life when I lost my husband and when my in laws asked me to move out of their home".

Similarly, a 45 year old Limboo respondent working as an officer in the Group A category narrates that having a job has allowed her to feel secure and maintain her dignity despite being a divorcee. She feels that a woman is often blamed or pitied upon in case of broken marriages. Being employed has protected from these sort of scrutiny is what she mentions in her narratives.

A police woman who is 47 years old and belongs to the upper caste Nepali community states that having a job has given her an identity and makes her feel empowered. She has been working as a police woman for more than 20 years and at present holds a post in the Group C category. Being employed as a police woman has given her a distinct identity and she says that when she wears her uniform to work there is a sense of power and confidence in what she does.

Similarly a 40 year old doctor belonging to the Bhutia community with two children but who is separated from her husband says

"Being employed, I feel free and independent in every ways and people do respect me for that fact".

The notion of being financially independent was another effect that the respondents experienced on being employed. To be able to earn and provide gave them a sense of freedom as it entailed that they were no longer dependent on anybody.

36 year old Subba constable from the Nepali community says that her earning capacity shaped her relations with her in laws. Even though they do not live together and she is not able to take care of them the way daughter in laws are expected to, she

feels that they understand and overlook all that because they know that their daughter in law is a policewoman which is a demanding job. In fact she thinks being employed gave her the opportunity to maintain a harmonious relation with her husband's side of the family.

A 44 year old Lepcha police woman respondent working in Group D category of the Sikkim Police also has a similar view regarding employment. She narrates that having a job makes her feel useful. The money that she earns herself gives her the opportunity to buy things for her children. Apart from that she says that her job has kept her busy and allowed her to make new friends.

"It has given me financial independence, it keeps me busy. I can support my children and it has given me new friends and confidence".

Similarly, a 35 year old Tamang respondent from the Nepali community living in a joint family and working in the Group B category sees employment as an significant factor in instilling confidence and independence. She states that

"Being employed especially for a woman is very important. It makes one confident and independent. Being financially independent helps me to take decisions in my life".

A Bhutia officer in the Group A category who is 38 years old and living in a joint family also cites that financial independence as a result of being employed has allowed her to enjoy a certain status in the society. According to her,

"I think financial independence is very important and this has helped me in maintaining a certain dignity in my private as well as public life".

Other effects of being employed have been captured in the following narratives of the respondents. One of them being that women see jobs as a gateway to do things as they please while also being respected for the same. Respect and recognition are given to these women not because of the housework that they do. Rather, it is so because of the employment and their earning power. For instance a 48 year old Bhutia officer in Group A category mentions the role of employment in her life in the following narration:

"I feel being employed has given me a sense of freedom. It allows me to do as I please. My position and my earning power influences the way others treat me. I do not do any housework at all and I feel I can get away with it despite living with my in laws because of my earning ability. I think if I were not employed then I would not be the carefree daughter-in-law that I am today and I am sure my in laws would expect me to be involved with housework".

Mrs. Tamang from the Nepali community is a 39 year old policewoman who puts in the following narrative to address the effect of employment in her life

"Compared to other unemployed members of my family, I get more respect from my own family as well as my husband's family".

Mrs. Rai who is 34 years old with two children and living in a nuclear family works in the Group B category. She states that she receives appreciation from her family members as well as her neighbours for managing work and family so well. She narrates that employment has earned her appreciation. Here employment of a woman is seen as a necessity but at the same time a woman's role continues to be linked with her familial setting. Employment of women in this globalised society is seen as

enabling whereby individuals or agents have created new rules for women to cope with the changing societal institutions. But at the same time her familial role stems from the process of typification wherein individuals continue to draw ideas and use as a scheme of reference from the stock of previous experiences about how women ought to be or ought to do in the everyday world.

A 37 year old Lepcha respondent with one child and living in a joint family with her in laws works in the Group D category. Even if her salary is minimal she feels that her job and her earning ability allow her to be financially independent. Therefore, the effect of being employed has had a positive effect on her identity. She narrates that

"Certainly being employed has affected me in many ways. I have the liberty of making decisions, it feels good to be independent, don't have to depend on anyone for small things".

A 45 year old Bhutia woman respondent from a nuclear family with two children reflects another dimension of the significance of the working women and this reflects the changes that are seen in the role of the women in Sikkim. She feels that a woman's occupational status is given primacy over other virtues like kindness, compassion, temperament etc when scouting for marriage proposals. She says:

"In the Bhutia community, a working woman is looked upon with a great deal of respect. In social circles the higher the position / status of a woman, the more respect she commands. While choosing prospective brides, the job she holds outweighs other qualities like kindness, compassion etc".

Another instance of the changing role that women in Sikkim have embraced as a consequence of employment is found in the narratives of a 57 year old respondent belonging to the lower caste in the Hindu Nepali community and who is working in the Group C category. She is a widow and according to her employment has empowered her whereby she is able to take and make decisions for herself and her children. Employment has enabled her to be a provider for her children. According to her,

"It has given me the freedom to do what I like with my money. I am able to provide better facilities for my children so I feel a sense of empowerment. I make my own decisions".

From the above narratives we can see that employment is viewed in a positive manner. The respondents of the present study also tend to view employment as a step towards upward mobility. Being employed gave these women a sense of empowerment even though it was expressed in different ways. It helped create a different social reality through the internalisation of the idea of being employed and this idea translated into an objective reality which challenged the natural social order of gender inequality. Sen (2005) also argues that from being financially independent to gaining respect and allowing a woman to live as she pleased or having a sense of control over her own life are some indications of being empowered. The social transformation that has taken place in Sikkimese society rooted in otherwise traditional patriarchal society has widely contributed to the positive attitude towards women employment and as such the traditional stereotypes and the division between private and public domains and gendered division of labour has largely been challenged. Thus, employment having an

instrumental value has led to a shift in modes of orientation. All the aforementioned reasons eventually leads to empowerment and paid employment.

5.3 Paid Work and Empowerment

Empowerment is a multi dimensional process which refers to the allowing of a woman to lead her life as per her wish. The Ninth plan had empowerment of women as one of its primary objectives whereby every effort would be made to create an enabling environment where women can freely exercise their rights both within and outside home, as equal partners along with men (Kumar and Rani, 2001). Women's empowerment can be indicated in a number of different ways. UNDP takes into account three variables to measure empowerment namely the distribution of administrative and managerial positions, professional and technical jobs among men and women and representation in parliaments. Strengthening of the women's movement, participation in public activity and involvement in national and local decision making bodies are some criteria listed by Jahan (1995). Similarly, Hashemi, Schuler and Riley (1996) measures empowerment on the basis of eight individual indicators. Eleven indicators of women's empowerment namely mobility, decision making power, ownership of household assets, autonomy, freedom from domination in the family, political and legal awareness, participation in social and development activities, contribution to family expenditure or income, reproductive rights, exposure to information media and participation in development programmes were used by Biswas and Kabir (2004) in measuring the empowerment of women in Bangladesh. Contextualising empowerment in the present study, the indicators taken into account to measure empowerment of the working women in urban Sikkim are freedom to participate in decision making concerning issues relating to her life, exercising control

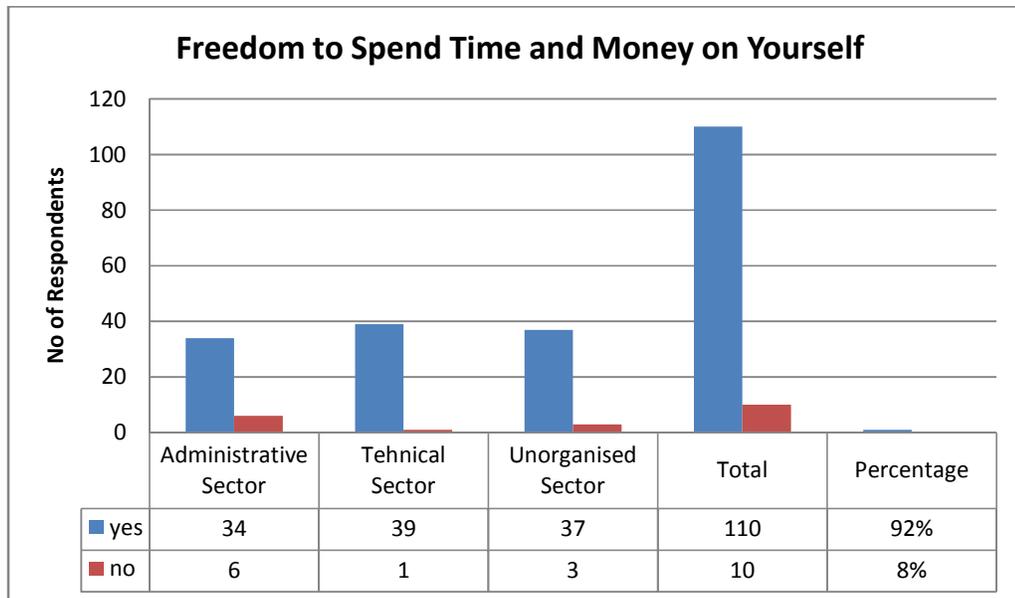
over her money earned, ownership over one's property. The study reveals the following indices of empowerment.

(i) Freedom to Spend Time and Money on Oneself

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices wherein the fundamental aim of the development approach should be to expand the opportunities so that people can lead meaningful lives (Stewart and Samman, 2018). Therefore, the choice to invest time and money on oneself is also indicative of development and empowerment. This argument also finds support in Kishor and Gupta (2004) who states that accessibility to paid work alone is not sufficient to determine women's empowerment but having control over one's earning is a determining factor. Figure 5.1 reflects whether the respondents spent the money earned on themselves and if they spent time to do things for themselves.

Figure 5.1

Freedom to Spend Time and Money on Yourself



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

92 percent of the respondents said that they did spend money and time on themselves. Spending was done on buying things of personal choices like cosmetics, medicines, clothes, knick knacks, mobiles, going out with their friends and families, beauty parlours etc. Time for oneself was spent on activities like gardening, knitting, watching television, visiting beauty parlours and visiting friends. The above observation from the field are also substantiated by NFHS 4, which states that 85 percent of the women in Sikkim participate in decisions about their own healthcare and visiting friends and families. NFHS 4 further mentions that 5 percent of the married women do not participate in making decisions concerning their health and visits to family and friends. In the present study, the findings from the field shows that only 8 percent of them remarked that they did not spend either money nor time for themselves due to their busy schedules. These respondents were busy catching up with housework as and when they had the free time which reflects the traces of gendered role in the patriarchal social set up.

Regarding the query if the respondents spent any time and money on themselves, we see some degree of inter ethnic variation. Those belonging to the Bhutia community had 100 percent answering in the affirmative. The Nepali community had 91 percent of the respondents answering in the positive to the above query while those belonging to the Lepcha community had the least number of respondents at 78 percent agreeing to the above statement. A likely explanation for this is that a higher number of Lepcha women interviewed for the study were working in the Group C and D category. While 100 percent of the Bhutia respondents in all categories i.e. in administrative, technical and unorganised sector responded positively, 91 percent of the respondents from the Nepali community also gave a positive response to the above query, even though it is widely regarded that the various groups from the Nepali community being

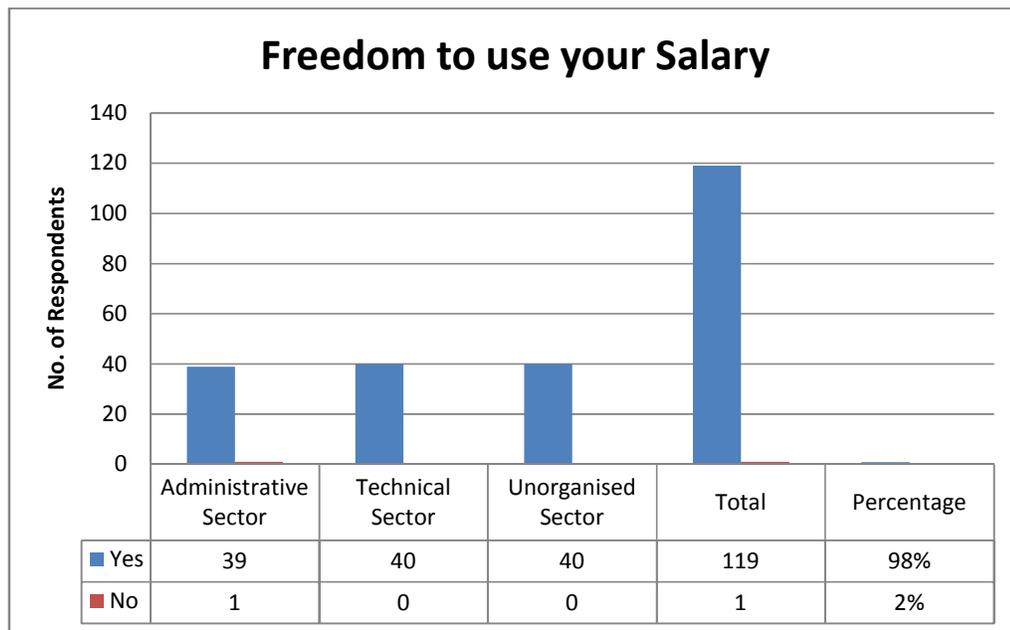
predominantly Hindus follow the more rigid patriarchal structure. The respondents who answered negatively to the above query mostly represent the D group category of workers. This highlights the respondent's location in socio economic structure largely determines the degree of freedom to spend time and money.

(ii) Freedom to Use One's Salary as Per One's Wish

In response to the queries whether the respondents had the freedom to use their salary according to their wish, varied responses were given and are presented in the figure 5.2.

Figure: 5.2

Freedom to use your Salary



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

In figure 5.2 we can see if the respondents are free to decide how to use their salary or earnings. This indicates the control they have over their money. 98 percent of them stated that they had the freedom to use their salary according to their wish. In fact in

the Technical and unorganised sector we find that 100 percent of the respondents said that they had full control over their salaries which corresponds with NFHS 4 reports that states that the proportion of women with control over their money is found to be higher in the urban areas than the rural areas. Further, the earnings of women workers in urban areas especially in the government sector and the private sector is about the same as their husbands. This has also been stated in NFHS 4 where 56.2 percent of married women and 90.2 percent of married men agree to the fact that they earn more or about the same as their spouses. Therefore, wage disparity among men and women in urban areas in Sikkim seems to be insignificant.

Variations in terms of ethnicity are minimal while the empirical findings show no interclass variation in this regard. The single respondent from the Nepali community belonging to the lower caste who talked about the lack of control over her earnings did so in reference to the time when her husband was alive a year ago. She is a widow today with full control over her earnings but psychologically she still gets scared when she spends her earnings as per her wish.

"When my husband was alive, I had to hand over my entire salary amount to him. If I did not give the correct amount to him then I was questioned about it and sometimes even hit for it. Then he, my husband used to give me weekly pocket money from which I had to manage my office fare and other expenditure. We had an inter caste marriage with him belonging to the upper caste and he always told me that in upper caste families, women always served their husbands".

In contrast to the above narrative, a 46 year old Bhutia official explains her position with regard to her earnings vis-a-vis her husband.

"However, we pretty much take our own decisions. Also as we don't have joint accounts. I do what I want with my earnings and he handles his".

On being asked if she were allowed to spend her earnings as per her wish a 36 year old Limboo shopkeeper says that

"I can spend my money but I have to let them know what I am spending it on".

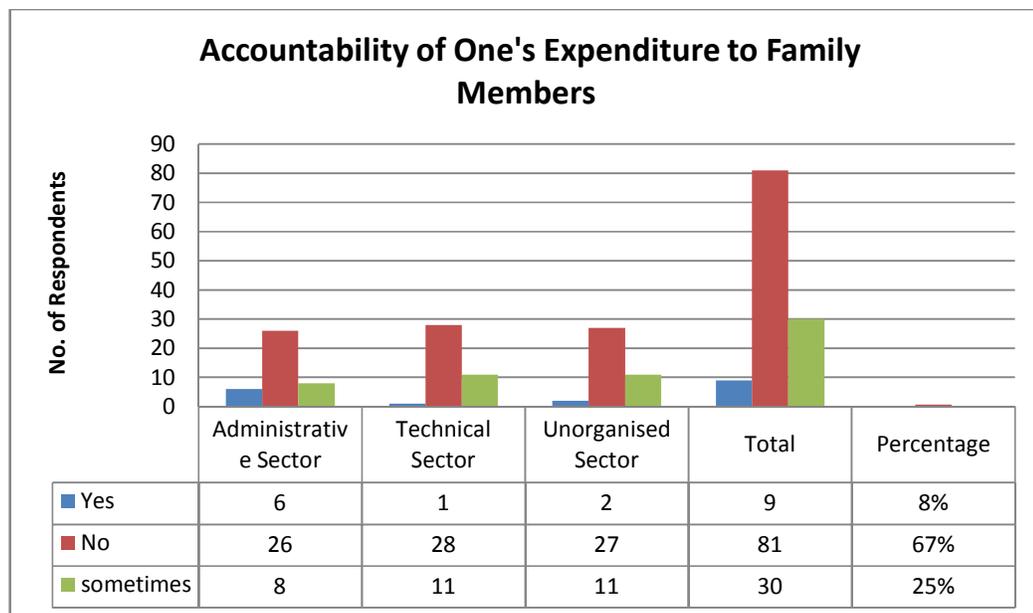
Thus, the case studies in the present study show that ethnicity and caste are not determining factors in the respondents' freedom to spend their salary as per their wish. However, it must be noted that the gender socialisation in Sikkim emphasises women to be supportive of their husbands and have the welfare of the family as a priority. Therefore, most women are careful about their spending habits and what they spend is mainly done for the betterment of the family.

Lending credence to the above narratives, there have been various studies conducted on the Bhutias of Sikkim which indicates that the Bhutia women in Sikkim enjoy considerable autonomy and control over their lives. Bhadra (1992) argues that the Bhutia women enjoy a great deal of independence and are treated at par with men. Similarly, Bhattacharya (1994) further mentions that they represent the primary power within the family as well as the society. SHDR, 2014 also mentions that in comparison to other parts of the country, women in Sikkim enjoy a great deal of autonomy and this holds true for the Lepcha and the Nepali community as well. The existence of the age old *pewa* system in the state is also indicative of the economic autonomy enjoyed by the Sikkimese women.

Closely related to the question of financial independence comes the question of whether these women have to justify their spending and expenditure of their income to their family members, since this can be an indication of the control that they have over their earnings. In other words this can reflect if these women actually are empowered or not.

Figure: 5.3

Accountability of One's Expenditure to Family Members



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 5.3 demonstrates whether the respondents had to explain their monetary expenditure to their family members who may be their husband, in laws or parents. Out of the 67 percent respondents who stated that they did not have to explain their expenditure to other family members, 89 percent belonged to the Bhutia community, 44 percent belonged to the Lepcha community and 65 percent belonged to the Nepali community. The following narrative from a 46 year old Bhutia administrative official in the Group A category captures her stance on her spending her salary:

"I find it important to let my husband know what I am spending on, not for permission but just to keep ourselves informed".

11 percent of the respondents from the Bhutia community and 56 percent from the Lepcha community stated that sometimes they had to explain where and how they spent their money to their husband, in laws or their parents. Although both Bhutia and the Lepcha community are tribals, yet inter ethnic variation seems to exist with regard to the above query. A plausible explanation for this could lie in the class categorisation of the Lepcha respondents with almost 89 percent of the respondents in this study working in the Group C or Group D category, wherein income earned is much less than those working in the Group A or Group B category.

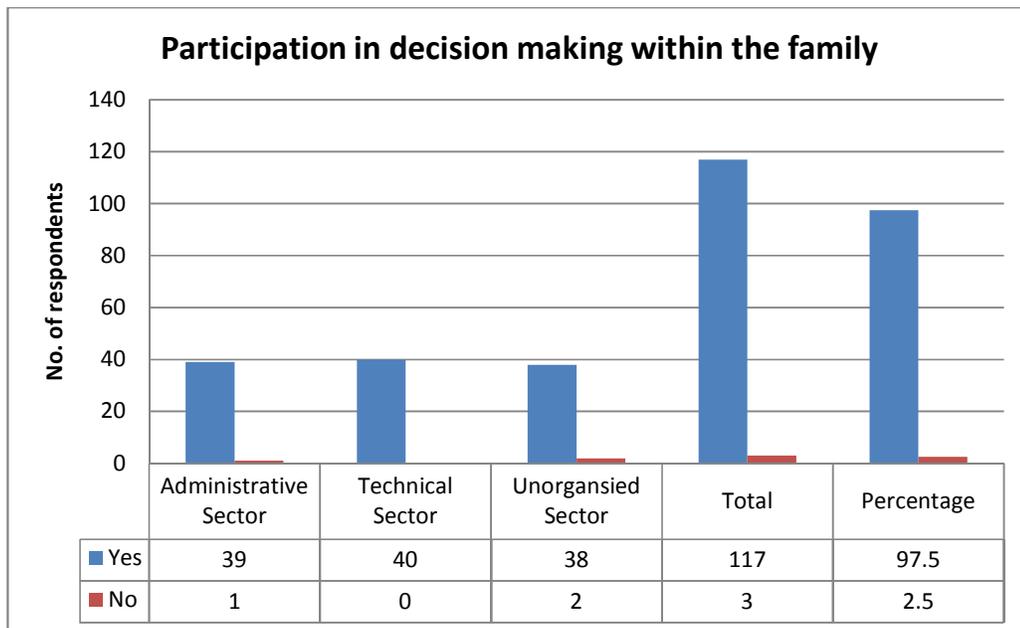
The respondents (10 percent) who had to regularly give expenditure details from their own earnings to their family members belonged to the Nepali community indicating the influence of a patriarchal structure to a certain extent.

(iii) Participation in Decision Making within the Family

Regarding the query on decision making within the family, the respondents gave varied answers to both the categories of decision making within the household regarding everyday life and those involving finances and investments. These are presented in figure 5.4 and figure 5.5.

Figure: 5.4

Participation in Decision making within the Family



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 5.4 shows the participation of the respondents in decision making within the family. 97.5 percent of the respondents said that they did participate in decision making process within the family. Decisions concerning their children, their schooling, health, purchase of everyday items and household goods were areas where the respondents were asked if they participated in.

Bhasin (1987) writing on the tribals of Sikkim Himalayas remarks that there exist equality and mutual adjustments between men and women when it comes to decisions in the sphere of household activities. The empirical results of the present study also reports similar findings since all women respondents in the study belonging to the Bhutia and the Lepcha community stated that their participation in decision making was taken into account. A Bhutia woman, 37 year old forest guard gives the following narrative when asked if she participated in decision making within the family.

"We take decisions together but I am the one who initiates things and is involved in everything. For instance it is me who attends parent teachers meetings in schools, it is I who took the lead to repair our old house and build a new one. Shopping for construction materials, dealing with the labourers were also done by me. At the same time I also cook, clean and look after my in laws who are very old. My husband is very "seedha" (simpleminded) so I have to be the decision maker".

A similar instance is found in the narratives of a Lepcha lady who is a 35 year old Group C worker

"It is me who decides on most things in my family....I do discuss it with my husband but he always ends up agreeing to whatever I say".

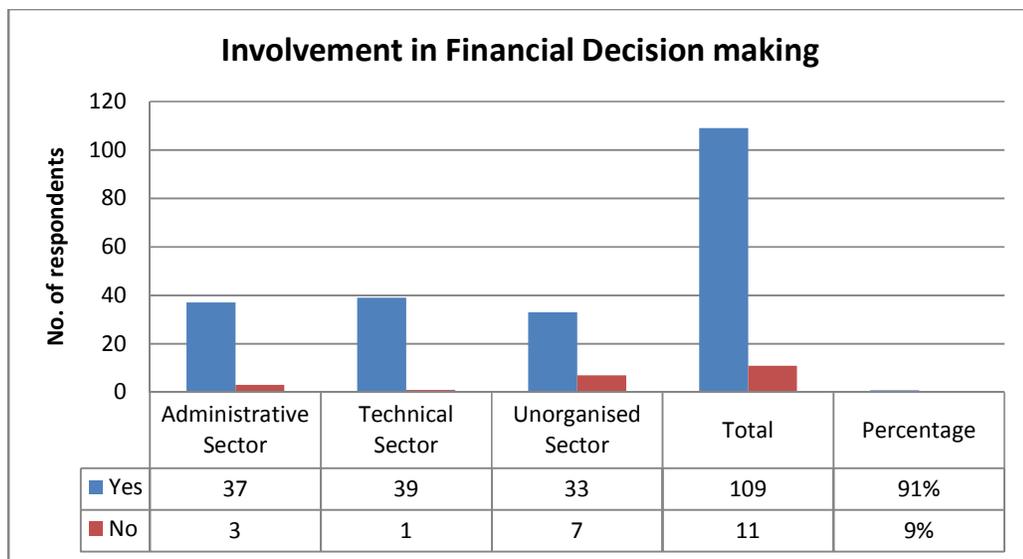
In the technical sector we find that 100 percent of the respondents stated that they were fully involved when decisions were taken within their families. A similar finding is found in a study conducted by Wood on the study of middle class urban women in urban Gujarat which shows that the women in the study shared an egalitarian relationship with their spouses whereby they actively participated in decision making issues concerning themselves and their children.

A miniscule 2.5 percent of the respondents belonging to the Nepali community stated that they were excluded from participating in the decision making within the family which again minimal though it may be, indicates some degree of patriarchal dominance among this community.

Closely related to the question of decision making within the household also raises the question of whether these women participate in decisions regarding finances and monetary investments as involvement in financial decision making is another indicator of economic empowerment. The responses to this query are presented in figure 5.5.

Figure: 5.5

Involvement in Financial Decision making



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 5.5 shows that 91 percent of the working women in the study were participative in decisions concerning financial issues. The findings showed that all the Bhutia and Lepcha women respondents in the study were involved in financial decision making. 9 percent of the total respondents and who belonged to the Nepali community answered that they did not participate in such decision largely because they were clueless about finances and management and they were dependent on their men folk for such decisions. This showed that they relied more on the men than themselves when it came to making financial decisions. The interclass variation here

is quite obvious because the ones who were not involved in such decision making belonged to the unorganised sector or to the Group C and D jobs.

A 37 year old Group C worker belonging to the Lepcha community narrates that *for major decisions we both sit down and discuss... financial decisions taken are on the basis of mutual discussion.*

Similarly, a 48 year old Bhutia respondent from the Group A category says

"We take joint decisions regarding investments and savings. Also where major expenses are concerned, he handles it. Expenses in the home are my domain".

Contrary to the above narratives, Mrs. Chettri, a 41 year old Group C worker says that her husband decides on financial issues. She says that he is more knowledgeable about matters concerning money.

"He decides money matters especially the important ones like taking loans or savings. I am not very aware about interest rates and other things that the banks ask us about. So I let him decide....and he has always been careful about decisions like these".

A 26 year old Chettri domestic worker also espouses similar views on being asked about her participation in financial decision making. She herself has studied up to the primary level so she says she is not sure if she will be able to understand the nitty gritty of finances. She thinks that decisions concerning money have to be made by the male head of the family as they are more sensible. Her narrative is as follows

"Other things we discuss but regarding money matters he decides. I have not studied much so I am not sure I will be able to do the calculations properly... more over decisions regarding money has to be decided by the head of the household and that is my husband".

To summarise, the studies indicate that the overall trend in decision making is neither autocratic nor patriarchal. Rather, the inclination is towards an egalitarian understanding in decision making whereby mutual consultation among married couples describe the decision making process.

Over all, the high percentage of women involved in the decision making process indicates empowerment among the working women in urban Sikkim. If we look back into the history of the Sikkimese society, we find that women have always been a part of the decision making process within the family. The local phrase *ghar – ko – ama-lai- sodhnu- parcha* (we have to ask the lady of the house) is often put across when decisions or opinions are sought after from the men in the household. The indication of this phrase is the necessity of consulting the woman of the house before any decision is taken thereby pointing to her role in decision making even in traditional society. The NFHS 4 also mentions that overall 89 percent of the currently married women in Sikkim participate in decisions regarding major household purchases. This findings can be supported in the argument proposed by Sen (2005) in "The Argumentative Indian; Writings on Indian History Culture and Identity", where he states that "in reality women working outside the home and earning an income tends to have a powerful impact on enhancing women's standing and voice in decision making, both within the household, and in society". Empirical trends suggest that in addition to traditional practice of inevitability of consulting *ghar-ko-ama*, the wider

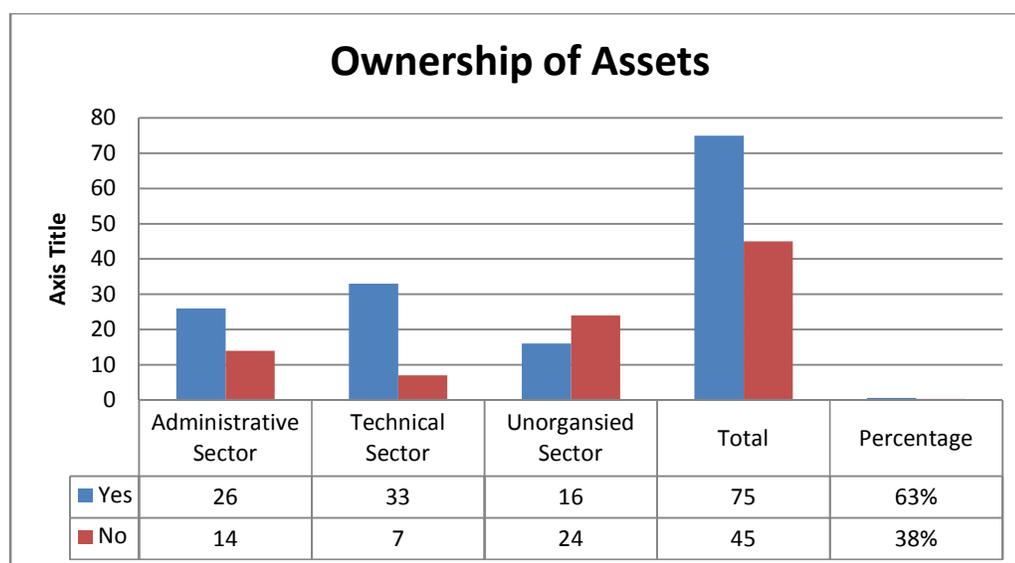
structural transformation and social change has largely impacted the Sikkimese women in decision making within the household.

(iv) Ownership of Assets

Ownership of assets is one measure of economic empowerment which allows for a woman to fall back on in situations of unforeseen emergencies. Besides, it also instils a sense of confidence and a form of security for her. For a large number of Indian women, their everyday life is characterised by unpaid work, dependence on the male members of their family thereby leaving their position open to vulnerability and abuse. The fact that these women own very little property and productive assets makes their situation vulnerable. On the other hand, acquisition of property by women in some form especially in the form of land ownership is likely to decrease violence against women and also help them to increase their capability. (Kelkar, Gaikwad and Mandal, 2015). Whether the respondents in the present study owned any assets in their name or not is presented in figure 5.6.

Figure: 5.6

Ownership of Assets



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 5.6 shows whether the respondents had any ownership of assets in their name. Ownership of assets in one's name is also indicative of empowerment. 63 percent of the respondents said that they owned some form of assets in the form of land, house, vehicle, gold ornaments, and money invested in savings which was registered in their name. These assets were obtained through different channels- some as gifts from their family or relations while some were acquired through purchase from one's earnings. This high percentage of ownership of some form of assets is an indication towards the changing roles of the women in Sikkim because the earlier studies on Sikkim (Bhasin, 1987; Bhattacharya, 1994) mentions that inheritance of property was based on the patrilineal system.⁸ In some instances, land was also gifted to daughters but this was rare and prevalent only among the land owning families. However, in such cases if a

⁸ The Sikkim Succession Act, 2008, gives daughters the right of inheritance in the father's property along with the sons. But the same Act also reinforces the customary practices of inheritance wherein if a woman marries a person who does not possess the Sikkim Subject Certificate, then she cannot claim a share in the father's property (SHDR, 2014).

Bhutia or a Lepcha woman married a non Bhutia-Lepcha man, then they would forfeit the ownership of property rights. Assets in the form of jewellery, cattle were also gifted to daughters. Despite the introduction of Sikkim Succession Act 2008, which provides for unmarried daughters to have equal claim over her father's ancestral property, property rights in Sikkim continues to operate under the old Customary Laws of Sikkim wherein males are seen as the real inheritors of property. However, today, structural changes are taking place. Accessibility to education has led to awareness of the legal rights; parents are opting to have one or two children only even if they are only daughters, leading to a considerable change in the social outlook and values of individuals. The influence of these changes has to some extent affected the transfer and ownership of ancestral property.

38 percent of the respondents in the present study said that they did not have any ownership of assets in their name. The case study of a 38 year old Group D respondent supports how the ideas of patriarchy remains so entrenched in our society that we do not see it as something out of the ordinary. This respondent while narrating her story found the idea of property being passed on through the patrilineal line as sensible and necessary even if her son was only 11 years old. Marxian feminism accordingly locates the disadvantageous position of women because of her inaccessibility to material goods such as land. Therefore, the continuity of the subjugation of women is echoed in the actor's engagement of such form of typification. In her words

"The house I am living in is registered in my late father in law's name.

Now my mother in law wants to transfer it in my son's name. My son is only in class 6 but my mother in law thinks that the property has to be

in the name of males as they are the real custodians. With my husband and my father in law dead, my son is the next male in line".

The empirical findings in this study shows interclass variation in terms of female ownership of property. The respondents who said that they owned nothing in their names belonged to Group D and the unorganised sector. Those working women belonging to Group A and B owned property, house or jewellery or vehicle in their names. These assets were mainly obtained through purchase with their earnings and less likely through inheritance. With regard to inter ethnic variation the study shows that women belonging to the Nepali community at 47 percent had higher instances of women not owning any assets at all in their name. Among the respondents belonging to the Lepcha community, 33 percent did not have any ownership of assets while among the Bhutia community it was only 11 percent.

5.4 Summary

In summing up the present chapter, we notice that ethnic variation has been visible in the case of alcoholism among men leading the women to seek paid work as more number of respondents in this instance came from the *matwali* communities or those communities where the use of alcohol is culturally accepted. It was also revealed that a higher number of respondents in the unorganised sector and those belonging to the Group C and D stated that financial compulsion was what pushed these women to take up paid employment. On the other hand, there were respondents who reported that they took up paid work not due to economic compulsion but to be financially independent. Therefore, the economic reasons to take up paid employment indicated no variations in terms of ethnicity, religion or caste. Rather, the findings here points towards it being more class specific as the different respondents belong to a specific

class category wherein they lack the financial support from other members of their families.

Paid work was viewed as enabling for almost all the respondents as it gave these respondents a sense of purpose and they felt that it had a positive effect on their image and status. Regarding the positive effect of work on the respondent's identity, there was no ethnic, class or caste variation seen.

More number of Group D category of workers reported that they hardly spent time and money on themselves thereby pointing out that class variation does exist in the freedom to spend time and money on self. On the other hand, control over one's earnings showed minimal variations in terms of ethnicity and no interclass variation. However, inter ethnic and inter class variation was quite obvious in the case of decision making regarding children and finances because the ones who were not involved in such decision making belonged to the Nepali community and worked in the unorganised sector or in the Group C and D jobs. With regard to female ownership of property, inter class variation was revealed since those who did not own anything belonged to Group D and the unorganised sector.

However, these are just one side of the story. Despite the trend towards egalitarian roles, these working women are often confronted with challenges and problems which they must work out themselves in order to balance both work and home. In addition, the Indian society still has patriarchy deeply rooted and many spouses and family members may not like the idea of their women shirking their domestic responsibilities in support of paid employment and therefore, may not offer their support in helping out with domestic chores. It may be so that they may want the women to work but her work outside the home should not interfere with her work within the home. This is

when the Indian woman often finds herself struggling to find a balance between home and work. With Sikkim traditionally being a patriarchal society we find that gender roles are still maintained rigidly along the gender lines especially in the distribution of household chores. Or can we expect that some change has taken place in the distribution of gender roles among men and women when it comes to housework and domestic responsibilities? Have the forces of modernity managed to uproot the traits of patriarchy from our society? If not, then what are the various demands and pressure that these working women undergo at home and work and how do they cope with these demands? These are some of the questions being addressed in the next section of the present study.

Chapter 6

Challenging Social Constructions of Gender: Constraints and Coping

Mechanisms

The earlier chapters have led us to understand that along with paid work, women continue to be the primary caregivers of their children along with performing the bulk of household work. It is for this reason that the working women are often found to be under a great amount of stress trying to manage home and work. Consequently, their lives are more conflict ridden and constrained. Furthermore, despite being in dual earner families, men continue to occupy the status of a provider or a main breadwinner thereby helping to maintain the status quo of the traditional division of labour within the household wherein women carry on the majority of the household tasks (Bharat, 1995). Traditional gender roles continue to persist and this has been supplemented by various studies (Aghajanian, 1988; Garcia and Oliveira, 1997; Rout, Lewis and Kagan, 1999) leading to work stress and role conflict among the working women (Kapur, 1969; Damico and Neville, 1975; Behera and Padhi, 1993; Okafor and Amayo, 2006; Jolanki, 2015). In the context of the present study, the discussions in the previous chapters also have revealed that there is dual role present among the working women in Sikkim. Therefore, the present chapter seeks to find out the reproduction of patriarchy in everyday life by attempting to identify the role of men and women in everyday household practices such as their participation in house work and child care. It also deals with the constraints and challenges and the coping mechanisms that these working women adopt in balancing home and work.

Contextually locating, the scenario in Sikkim provides an interesting paradox. The macro level indicators for women and few studies (Bhasin, 1987; Bhadra, 1992;

Bhattacharya, 1994) available on women in Sikkim indicates that the social position of the women in Sikkim is considered to be better compared than women elsewhere in India. Therefore, the patriarchal structure in Sikkim is assumed to be not as pronounced as it is elsewhere in India. Yet, differentiation in gender roles when it comes to the distribution of house hold tasks exists. No doubt, as mentioned earlier, a woman's contribution in economic activities is very high especially when it comes to agriculture. But along with the participation in agriculture and its allied activities, she is also equally responsible for all domestic tasks (SHDR, 2011; SHDR, 2014) so there exists a paradox of sorts here. The women in Sikkim enjoy socio cultural autonomy, yet are still rooted in traditional dichotomy when it comes to the distribution of household tasks. As a result, the question that arises here is do they actually enjoy gender equality? Or is the patriarchal structure in this instance camouflaged by the freedom to be visible in the public sphere yet functions as an instance of double burden.

6.1 Reproduction of Patriarchy in Everyday Life

Various studies show that not much has changed when it comes to the distribution of household tasks. Even today women continue to carry the burden of running the household as well as being involved in paid work outside her home. This is likely due to the deep rooted patriarchal system that has been embedded in our society. Walby (1989) in her definition of patriarchy sees it as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

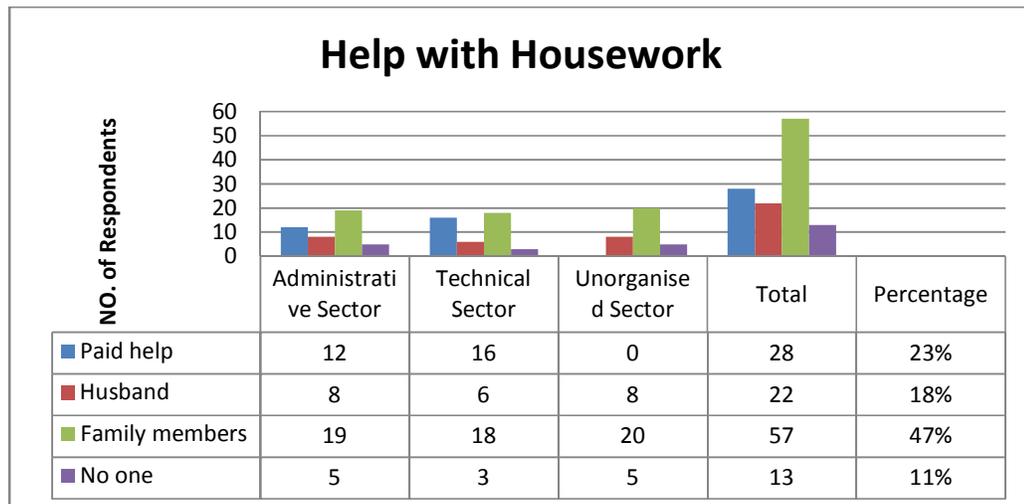
Contextually locating reproduction of patriarchy in everyday life has been captured in the various narratives of the respondents which are presented in the sub sections below.

6.1.1 Help with Housework

The notion that housework which is usually identified as the sole responsibility of women along with child care is slowly changing. More men are stepping forward and getting involved in childcare and household chores. Responding to the query on who helped the respondents with housework, varied responses were given and they have been presented in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1

Help with Housework



Source: Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

In figure 6.1 we can see the different sources of help that a working woman gets in getting her household work done. Reliance on family members who include in-laws, parents, and relatives as sources of help in housework has the highest percentage followed by paid help and then husband. 11 percent of the respondents said that they manage housework by themselves receiving little or no help from other family members. In the unorganised sector, we can see that none of the respondents have listed paid help as a source of help in housework. This can be supplemented by the fact that paid help these days are increasingly difficult to find and are also expensive

and therefore, difficult to afford. Further with 18 percent of the respondents relying on their husbands for help in completing housework indicates that men and women are slowly moving away from certain notions of patriarchy which discourages men from performing housework. Therefore the changing roles of men and women are evident from this analysis. This is in contrast to what Ramu (1987) states in "Indian Husbands: Their Role Perceptions and Performance in Single and Dual Earner Families" that working women sought help and assistance from other women rather than demanding help from their husbands in fulfilling domestic tasks thereby, ensuring that housework remains securely within the female domain. The difference can be rooted in varied ethnic composition of socio cultural context of the Sikkimese society.

Speakerman and Marchington (1999) informs that a survey from Social Trends found that men used an average of forty minutes each day in comparison to women's use of two and half hours for cooking and housework activities. Similarly the entry of women into paid work and longer working hours bore little or no change in the distribution of housework among men and women with the result that housework continue to be the women's responsibility. Women on balancing home and work have had to adapt to the changing circumstances and rely on various means made available to them. Among the various resources available, studies (Hyman, Scholarios and Baldry, 2005; Gani and Ara, 2010) have shown that social and kin relations are the most sourced after. In traditional communities support from extended family structures measured the relationship between care giving responsibilities and work strain. However, decline in social structures such as the extended family support and the setting up of nuclear families and with increasing participation of women in full time employment, it is probable that tension between work and home domains are likely to increase (Hyman, Scholarios and Baldry, 2005). From interviews conducted

with these working women in urban Sikkim, the respondents in the administrative sector informed that their family members comprising children, in laws, relatives etc played a significant role in helping out with housework which was then followed by paid help and lastly the husband. 12.5 percent of the women stated that they did all the housework by themselves. These 12.5 percent of the women did not belong to any one specific class or ethnic category. However, there were no respondents from the Lepcha community who stated that they did all the work by themselves. 18 percent of the respondents from the Nepali community and 6 percent of the respondents from the Bhutia community admitted to doing all the housework by themselves.

In the Technical sector too family members contributed majorly in performing domestic chores followed by paid help and spouse. However compared to the administrative services only 7.5 percent managed housework by themselves.

In the unorganised sector, family members which includes parents in laws, children, brother, sisters, relatives were among the major source of help followed by husbands. The help extended by the husbands included a wide variety of chores such as fetching water, cooking meals, washing clothes, minding small children if the wife was busy with other work and sweeping and cleaning activities. 12.5 percent of the women stated that housework was done exclusively by themselves. During the course of the interview it was found that sometimes, it is the women themselves who emphasise on retaining the patriarchal values. Women are the ones who do not like their sons doing housework when the wife is there to do it. Nor would she like it if any male member in the family extended help in cooking or cleaning for fear of emasculating their manhood. A 33 year old Limboo respondent living in a joint family comprising of her father in law, brothers in law, husband and her children brings forth this issue in her

narrative to substantiate this particular view. Her mother in law lives in the village. She works as a shopkeeper in Gangtok. When her mother in law is not residing with them, her father in law, her husband and her brothers in law help her with cooking, cleaning, washing and looking after her child. But when her mother in law comes to visit them in Gangtok, then all the male members in her family stop helping her with household chores. Her mother in law firmly believes that housework and child care are a woman's duty and it is only effeminate men who do housework. Men's work is outside the house, according to her. This functional explanation can locate its support in the ideas of Talcott Parsons who explained the differentiation of men and women's roles as a way to meet system needs and balance whereby men are seen in instrumental roles and women are seen in expressive roles.

Similar thoughts are also found in the narratives of a 48 year old police officer of Tamang community. She has a child and her husband works in the Government of Sikkim. Her in laws are no longer alive and she lives in a nuclear setup. Despite working in an area which was and is still identified with men, her ideas about house work and child care are still rooted in the traditional patriarchal mindset or what Schutz refers to as "stocks of knowledge" or rules or ideas about appropriate conduct which are acquired through socialisation (Turner, 2013). She manages house work with a paid help. According to her, her mother in law pampered all her four sons and never taught any of them to do any housework as a result of which her husband is unable to help her with house work and child care. Therefore, the responsibility of cleaning the house, cooking, shopping for the house, bathing, feeding and helping her son with studies is all her responsibilities. In case of overnight duties or touring duties she turns to her own mother for help. However, she does not mind her husband's zero contribution to housework and childcare because that is how men are and he would

look like a sissy, if he started doing housework. This sexual division of labour as debated by the feminists is what confines women to tasks that are unpaid, undervalued and hence compromises her in a disadvantageous position. What is alarming though is that it is women who often unconsciously advocate for this. This is likely because as actors that is the reality we experience and typify as the everyday way of doing things.

Another interesting finding was revealed in the narratives of a 47 year old Gurung respondent who works as a guard in the Forest department. She has one child and her husband works as a cook in another department. In her words

"I do the cooking and the cleaning at home. My husband does work outside the house like collecting fodder for the cows. He does not cook in the house since that is my work".

The case study above is a suitable instance supporting the arguments of liberal feminists who state that labour where the rewards are lacking are attributed to the women while the same labour located in a public sphere with rewards of power, money and status are often identified with men.

In comparing the help extended in housework from the husbands among different ethnic communities of Sikkim in the present study, the Nepali community has the least representation at 17 percent followed by the Bhutias at 22 percent. The Lepcha community had the highest representation at 45 percent. On the other hand 18 percent of the respondents from the Nepali community stated that they managed housework by themselves without anyone's help. This was followed by the respondents from the Bhutia community at 6 percent and zero respondents from the Lepcha community who stated that they managed housework by themselves. Dependence on family members for house work was found to be highest among the Lepcha community at 44

percent followed by the Nepali community at 42 percent and lastly the Bhutia respondents at 39 percent.

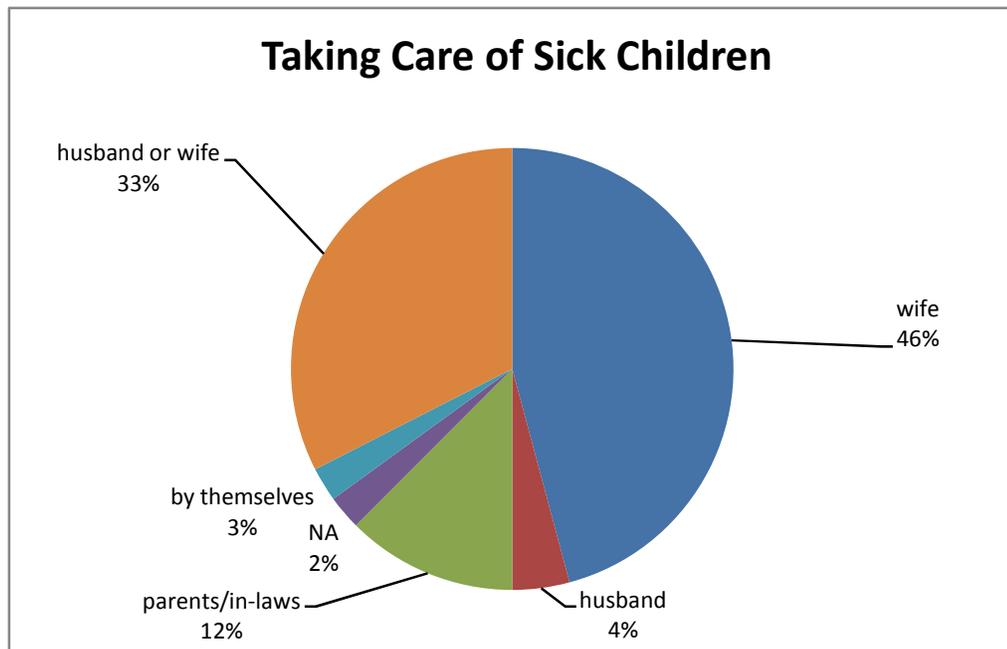
The notion of house work being identified with women appears to be slowly changing with the visible percentage of husbands pitching in to help their wives with housework in the present study. Although the figures appear to be minimal, yet it is indicative of the changing gender roles within the household among men and women. Here, ethnic variation seems visible with the least number of respondents from the Nepali community acknowledging their husband's role in performing work within the domestic arena. This low representation of the help rendered by the husbands of the Nepali respondents can be attributed to the presence and persistence of the more rigid patriarchal structure found in the Nepali community.

6.1.2 Child Care

Studies have consistently demonstrated that even if a couple shares an egalitarian relationship prior to the birth of a child, gendered division of labour will arise among the new parents once a baby is born whereby women often take on the bulk of the unpaid labour particularly of childcare (Rehel, 2014, Newell, 1993). Contrary to this perspective, Menniti, Demurtas, Arima and De Rose (2015) mentions that the gender gap in childcare has been minimised while the decrease in the sharing of household tasks has been slow in the western countries. However, in India the indications points toward the persistence of the imbalance in managing child care and house work between men and women. The situation gets aggravated when the child falls ill. Figure 6.2 below shows the participation and support of various individuals in instances when the child falls sick.

Figure 6.2

Taking Care of Sick Children



Source: Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Respondents in the study on being asked about who stayed back home to care for children when, they fell sick gave varied answers. 46 percent of the respondents stated that they were the ones who stayed back to care for the sick child. However an interesting observation was that fathers were also involved in taking care of a sick child. The study further reveals that the fathers got involved because the mother had run out of leaves or because she worked under a strict boss, who did not allow excess leaves. Another reason given for the husband's involvement in the care of a sick child was when the wife had a deadline to meet or an important meeting to attend. Here, mention must be made that involvement of fathers in the care of children did not reflect any ethnic variation. But the disparity was noticed in terms of nature of organisation. The organised sector which includes administrative and technical sector with limited number of leaves had more men involved in the care of children when

compared to those from the unorganised sector. This gives us an insight in to how men and women are adjusting to domestic responsibilities as well as work responsibilities thereby indicating that a change is taking place in the roles and relations between men and women. For instance a common theme running through many answers to the question of who stayed home to care for a sick child was:

"It depends on which parent is free and will get a day off".

A 33 year old police woman working in the Group C category, belonging to the Nepali Hindu community with two children and living in a nuclear family, who has been working for the last nine years on being asked who took care when the children were sick stated that

"Here it depends on the situation- how serious it is and how busy we are".

Similarly, another 40 year old respondent from the Nepali community who works in the Group A category, with two children and living in a nuclear family and whose husband is also a government employee narrated that either of the parents avail leave when their children fall ill.

In a similar track, a 47 year old Bhutia woman working in Group A category with two children and living in a nuclear family whose husband works as a doctor narrates that

"My husband and I take turns taking care of the children when they are ill. But it's mostly him who juggles his timings as mine are more rigid".

Nonetheless, almost all the respondents stated that if the child was seriously ill then the mother was the one who stayed back to provide care. The justification of the

mother being the primary child care taker can be revealed in the study by Rehel (2014) where it is argued that maternal instinct is believed to develop when the mothers spend sufficient time with their newborns after the birth. It is also during this time that the mother develops a sense of responsibility as the primary care provider understanding the needs and patterns of the child. Fathers often with limited paternity leave do not get this opportunity. This arrangement moves into a regular parenting pattern which becomes naturalised over a period. Subsequently, gendered division of labour comes into play when partners become parents. Similarly, Speakerman and Marchington (1999) in their study on male 'breadwinners' and their involvement in housework found that biological differences between men and women were perceived as the basis for women's primary role in child care. A 53 year old respondent in this study working in the Group B category, belonging the Nepali caste hierarchy with one daughter and living in a nuclear family explains why women need to be the primary caregivers while perceiving it as a biological construction. In her words:-

"Men cannot take care of sick children the way we do. It is just not in them. We women can understand our children more because nurturing and caring is inbuilt in us".

A 48 year old Tamang police personnel from Gangtok who lives in a nuclear family and is a graduate has a 8 year old child. She has been in the police force for almost 20 years and today heads a certain section of the police force. Yet, she admits that a Police woman's life is very difficult. She feels that the difficulty in taking care of home and work is most obvious in the case of police women, which is why she thinks a lot of police women have unsuccessful marriages. The dilemma between wanting to

have a successful career and being a perfect mother and wife comes up time and again in her narratives. For instance in the case of taking care of a sick child, she says

"I take care of my child because if anything goes wrong with my child then his mother will be the first one to be blamed. So that coerces me into being extra vigilant of my son. Men are never blamed if anything goes wrong in the house or with their families. Mothers always carry the blame".

The narratives above also lends credence to the ideas of Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism which states that human beings reside in a society that is largely socially constructed and the actions and exchange of ideas is shaped by the production and exchange of common interpretation of symbols which are inculcated during the socialisation process. Therefore, the women preserve and convey the idea that home and children are their sole responsibility and this springs from the internalisation of the traditional gender roles of the socially constructed world that women are the caregivers while men are the breadwinners or providers. This interpretation further helps create and recreate meanings which additionally shapes the interaction between individuals. Correspondingly, Bharat (1995) in her study on working couples in India also emphasizes that an Indian woman's work status did not help alter their sex-role perceptions wherein they attributed the provider role to their husbands despite the fact that they themselves earned an income. This particular perspective of men in a provider's role has also been identified in Hood's work (1983) in America whereby the employed wives of these men in a provider role may unconsciously experience a greater responsibility for housework resulting in role stress.

The study also reveals that working mothers gained support from their wider kin circle. Grandparents were also found to be involved in the care of a sick child especially if both the parents were working. 12 percent of the respondents stated that their parents or in laws step in to take care of the sick child if they are busy with their work and are unable to avail leave. A 43 year old respondent belonging to the upper caste Nepali Hindu community and with two children relies on her mother in law for help in taking care when her children fall sick. Her profession is in the medical field and she often has to work late or during the night. She is thankful that she lives in a joint family because her mother in law is a huge source of support in running the house and taking care of the children.

Another Bhutia respondent who is 38 years old, works as an officer in a technical post and lives in a joint family with a daughter says that her job is such that she has a lot of touring duties. Therefore, she turns to either her mother or her mother in law for help when her daughter falls ill and she is unable to take leave.

"Sometimes it so happens that I am away on an official trip and my daughter is unwell. My mother in law takes care of her until I get back home. If she is unable to then I call my mother who picks up my child and takes her with her to her house until I get back".

Narayan's (2008) study on the creche and childcare practises among working women of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Tamil Nadu reports that almost 50 percent of the workers left their children at home while they came to work. These children, some as young as 5 to 10 months old were looked after either by older siblings or relatives or neighbours or sometimes left to their own devices. This was a constant source of worry among the working mothers. Similarly some respondents in

the present study especially among the unorganised sector, admitted to leaving children by themselves if there was no one to take care of them and if the illness was not so severe. However, this was done in the cases where the child was much older and could take care of himself or herself. The instance where the husband stayed back exclusively to take care of the sick child was minimal at just 4 percent.

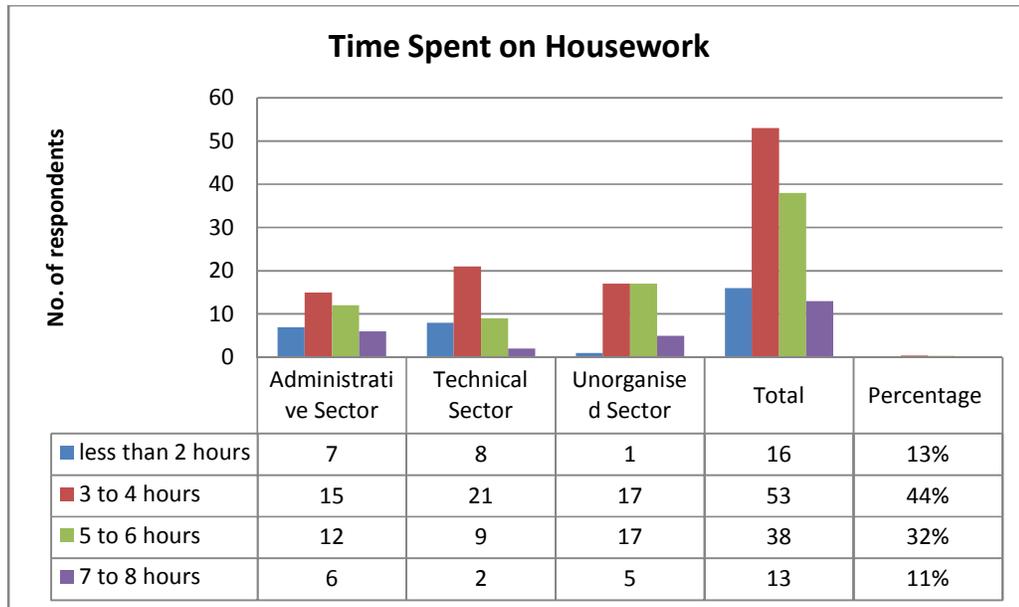
Roles are situationally defined sets of behaviours adapted by individuals to communicate the significance of their action (Damico and Nevill, 1975). With regard to this interpretation of roles, the working women today has multiple roles to play as well as multiple expectations to live up to. She is expected to be a dedicated mother, a wife, a daughter in law, a daughter, a worker and an active community participant. More often than not, the fulfilment of one role situation may come in conflict with the realisation of another role situation. Therefore, she is extremely susceptible to role conflict arising from her simultaneous participation in this wide array of roles. The empirical situation is not much different.

6.1.3 Time Spent on Housework

This section looks into the time spent by the respondents on doing or attending to their household chores. House work can be understood as those involving cooking, washing up, cleaning, laundry etc. The response is presented in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3

Time Spent on Housework



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 6.3 shows the time the working women in the study spent on doing housework. Overall 44 percent of them spend 3 to 4 hours on housework. Spending 7 to 8 hours on housework had the least respondents at 11 percent, followed by those who spent less than 2 hours doing household chores. As mentioned in the earlier chapter the unorganised sector had no hired help in managing housework which is why we find that the majority of the respondents fall in the middle category of spending 3 to 6 hours every day on housework. An irony found in the study was that the domestic women workers often relied on their husband and children to fulfil their own domestic chores while they themselves went out to do the same chores for some other household. The administrative and technical sector did have women who spent less than 2 hours daily on housework. Again, here mention must be made of the use of hired help for completion of domestic chores by the working women who can afford it and who mainly work in Group A and Group B categories.

Narratives from the respondents working in the different areas in the unorganised sector has been selected to show the variations if any in their daily routine. In these narratives the focus has been given to the nature of the work that they do rather than their ethnic or religious background. 36 year old Limboo respondent has been working as a domestic worker for the past six years. She has one school going child and lives in a nuclear set up with her husband. Her husband does not have a regular job. She has studied only up to class two and hence feels that this is only job that she can get. She works in three different households and gets paid Rs.3,500 by each household. Her everyday routine inclusive of the work that she does in her own house is as follows

"I wake at 5 everyday. Then I wash up and do some puja and prepare tea for my husband and me. By 6 in the morning I leave the house. After I leave my daughter wakes up. My husband then cooks food while my daughter sweeps and cleans the house. After that they eat their meal and my daughter goes to school. If my husband has work then he locks the house and goes to work.

I reach the first house by 6:30 and I work there till 9:30. I also eat my breakfast in that house. Then I walk to the next house and start my work there at 10. This shift ends at 1. After this I am free for 2 hours. Sometimes if I have work in the market then I go to the market, otherwise I walk back home and eat my lunch there. By 3 o'clock I reach the third house where I clean and wash and prepare dinner for my employers. After that I go home. Usually I reach home by 6:30. I wash up and tell my child to sit and study. Dinner preparation begins

by 7:15. Sometimes I cook and sometimes my husband does it. I mostly wash the dishes after dinner and my daughter helps me. By 9:00 I go to bed. So in my own house I work for about 3 hours and in the houses I go to I work for 9 hours".

The next respondent works in a beauty parlour. She is 29 years old with a two year old child and is a Christian by religion. Her husband works as a teacher in a private school in Gangtok. She lives in a joint family where both her in laws are employed in Group C category. Her father in law retired recently but her mother in law is still employed in the government. According to the respondent who belongs to the Rai community, her mother in law suffers from a lot of illnesses. And so she says it is the father in law who does the shopping and cooking in the house. On being asked if she helped him she said no because she has to look after her two year old child. Therefore, breakfast, lunch and dinner are all prepared by the father of the house and she says no one in the family finds this odd. Her mother in law does not do much housework. After her father in law retired he also helps in taking care of the child when she goes to work. The following narrative informs us about her daily routine

Similarly, a 32 year old respondent belonging to the Nepali community with one child aged 3 years runs a grocery shop in Gangtok. Her husband works as a government driver. She lives in a nuclear family and is a Hindu. Her shop is in a rented room which is at a distance of 15 minutes by car from where she lives. Her husband does the house work after he comes back from work. He reaches home by 5:30 and cleans the house and washes the dirty clothes. After this he prepares dinner. The respondent spends much of her time in the shop which she keeps open from 10 to 7:30 in the evening. Looking after the child is also her responsibility.

In all the narratives of the respondents from the unorganised sector, we find that these women spend very little time on their own housework. The first three narratives depict an egalitarian relationship between the man and the woman. This is indicative of the changing roles and relations among the husband and wives in Sikkim. The fourth narrative shows the dependence of individuals on the extended family and cousins in times of crisis or in times of need. During the course of the field work, it was found that a large number of the respondents kept young relatives from lower economic backgrounds with them, sent them to the local schools and in turn relied on them for help to cook, clean and run the house.

In the technical sector, time spent in house work by the respondents varied according to their routine at work. A 34 year old respondent from the medical field who belongs to the upper caste Nepali Hindu community lives in a nuclear family with her husband and two children aged 6 years and 2 years. Her husband is a government employee holding a job in the Group A category. She used to have a paid help when her younger child was a baby but the girl left after staying for only a few months. Since there is no one to look after her baby when she is away at work, she decided to leave her two year child with her in laws in the village. She says her baby is happy with the grandparents and though she feels guilty, she thinks this is the best arrangement. Since it is only her husband and her older son who stay with her, she manages house work on her own. Her daily routine is

"I wake up by 5 a.m. After washing up and doing puja, I make tea for myself and my husband. Since my son's school starts early I have to prepare his breakfast and his lunch by 7o'clock. I drop him to his bus stop by 7:45. After that I come home and start to clean the house. If

there are dirty clothes I put them in the washing machine. I also prepare meals for my husband and me. I leave the house by 9:15 to go to the hospital. I stay at work till 3:30 after which I have to reach home to pick up my son from the bus stop. Dinner is usually eaten by 7:30. But before that I help my son with his school work while simultaneously preparing dinner. After dinner, I clean up the kitchen, wash dishes and go to bed by 8:30 or 9:00. So on an average; I work for 6 hours in the house".

The next narrative is from a 47 year old police personnel working in the Group B category. She belongs to the upper caste Hindu category of the Nepali community. She is married with two children who are studying in the local colleges. Her husband works in the administrative section of the police department. She has been in the police force for more than twenty years. According to her;

"The way we police women manage home and work I feel an ordinary woman cannot do it. Because we have to report to work at all odd hours we have to be alert at all times. I wake up by 4:30 every day. I time my routine and I have also learnt to curtail on religious rituals which are done on an everyday basis. I cook, clean and wash the dishes and clothes myself. I do not have a fixed routine because my working hours differ according to the shifts. But since I live close by I manage to go to my house in between breaks and do a few chores during those free moments like checking the water tank or boiling water or cutting vegetables etc. Sometimes I feel like I am a machine working continuously".

Similar is the story of a 38 year old Gurung respondent who is working in the Group D category in the administrative sector. She is a widow and lives with her mother in law, her son who is studying in class 6 and her daughter who goes to college. Her daily routine is in her words:

"I wake up at 5:30. Then I cook, clean, and get my kids ready for school. I then give them food. They leave after which I eat food with my mother in law. Then I wash the dishes and clean the kitchen. If I have time I wash clothes and dry them. Then I get ready for work. In the evenings I get back from work at 4:30. Then I prepare tea and sit and chat with my children and mother in law. I start dinner preparation by 5:30. I serve dinner by 7:30 and then clean the dishes and kitchen. I watch tv for a while before I go to bed at 9:30".

Similarly, another respondent working in Group C category of the administrative sector, says her working hours at housework corresponds to roughly 3 hours every day. She is 37 years old, belongs to the Lepcha community, lives in a nuclear family and has one child. Her husband also has a job and they are Buddhists. She has been working for less than 10 years and is a graduate. According to her, she has a very supportive husband who helps her in doing housework. Therefore, she does not feel the dilemma of managing both home and work except when her child is unwell.

"I do two to three hours of housework every day. I wake at 6:00 and wash up and prepare tea for myself and my husband. After drinking tea I start with breakfast and lunch preparation. My husband in the meantime helps my child get ready for school. He then goes to drop off my child to the school. I then tidy the house and prepare tiffin for

myself to take to office. After my husband comes back we have our meal and he helps me clean up the kitchen and wash the dishes. We then go to office. In the evening if he is back early then he prepares tea for me or if I am back first then I prepare tea for him. By 6'o clock, I start dinner preparation. My husband helps with cutting vegetables or meat for the dinner. I also supervise my child's studies. During the exams I sit with my child to help him with his studies and my husband cooks dinner. That way he is very supportive. We eat dinner by 8. And go to bed by 9:30 or 10:00".

On the other hand, a 40 year old respondent belonging to the upper caste Nepali Hindu society who lives in a nuclear set up with two children says she puts in more than 6 hours in doing housework. She herself works in a job that falls within the Group C category. Her husband drives a taxi for a living. She does all the housework herself while also helping her son with his studies. Her husband leaves home early and comes back late so she has no choice but to all the house work by herself. She also mentions in her narratives that her husband does not like it if she works late.

The narratives above gives us a glimpse into the routine and lives of different women who work in different types of jobs. The daily routine of these women have been included in the narratives in order to allow us to have an idea about how working women in Sikkim manage both home and work. In doing so we are also able to see the amount of time they invest in housework and if the roles of these women within the private domain are changing or not. The study reflects that the respondents belonging to the unorganised sector share a more egalitarian relationship with their husbands when it came to the distribution of household tasks thereby indicating a

change in the gender roles. This egalitarian relationship in the sharing of household tasks is likely due to economic hardship faced by those working in the unorganised sector. Similarly, the case studies also show that the working women in Sikkim rely on family members for the sharing of household chores and child care. This however, is in contrast to the findings of the study conducted among the Jaripo trans national community living in Mexico and the United States by Barajas and Ramirez (2007). Their findings suggest that paid work may have increased the women's decision-making power and authority in the home but it has not provided for more male assistance in household chores among the Jaripo women. Therefore, employed Jaripas in Mexico and United States continue to remain burdened with the double shift. Similarly, a study by Kothari (1997) based in Gujarat reveals similar findings wherein domestic women workers manage household work in two places; in their employers and in their own homes with little or no help from their husbands.

6.2 Constraints and Challenges

The problems faced by the respondents in the study are varied. An attempt has been made to generalise and compartmentalise them into broad categories in the following sections.

6.2.1 Role Conflict

An individual occupies different statuses which may make conflicting demands from that individual. Therefore, while trying to meet the demands of a working woman, she may neglect her duties of being a mother. Or in meeting the cultural requirements of motherhood and in giving time to her children, she may violate professional ethics of not dedicating to her job fully. As a result working women may encounter role conflict. (Ritzer, 1996)

Several studies suggest that the gender roles are as a result of the socialisation process. Women in many Asian countries stay committed to family responsibilities of taking care of children and housework as prescribed by their gender role. Men on the other hand are considered as breadwinners and heads of households (Abdullah, Noor and Wok, 2008). Therefore, when women have to prioritise work over home the natural outcome is guilt among women. Although rapid transformation has taken place in terms of technology, education and development, our traditional value structure has undergone little change or what would be termed as cultural lag. Women are still held responsible for household tasks and child care with few men offering help within the household. Patriarchal notions about what men and women ought to do or not to do still regulate our gender roles (Bardhan, 1985). This dilemma of dual responsibilities of family and office work often gets translated into role conflict and stress for the working women. The narratives of some of the respondents have been brought forth to highlight this challenge faced by the working women.

A 35 year old engineer, who belongs to the Nepali community has one child and lives in a nuclear family. Her husband is a government employee. Even though she has a maid to help her in doing housework she says role conflict is often a challenge that she faces. She narrates that

"Sometimes when we have deadlines to meet then home gets completely neglected. Site visit at odd hours is also problematic. Sometimes exams of my children clash with my work deadlines".

Frustration on not being able to balance work and home was also found in the narratives of a 43 year old Nepali doctor. She has two children and lives in a joint family. According to her

"Time is a big constraint. Sometimes the stress of work is carried back home and my family especially the children had to bear the brunt".

A 44 year old respondent who is separated from her husband and lives with her two children also mention role conflict in her narratives. She works as an official in the Group B category and she says that

"There is difficulty in managing the two. Sometimes, housework and other personal work piles up because of office work. It is stressful when you see things unattended especially more so if you are a single mother".

Role conflict as spoken about in these narratives is a problem faced by working women worldwide. This becomes more visible in societies where patriarchal attitudes prevail and are dominant. The double burden of managing paid work and home leads to role conflict. Bardhan (1985) in her study on women's work in India states that double burden for Indian women is class specific and this holds true even in the context of Sikkim as proved in this empirical study.

Employed housewives who work more for economic reasons are likely to experience more conflict in the performance of their familial roles than those who work for non-economic reasons (Kapur, 1969).

Along with managing time conflicts, working women must also deal with the standards laid down by the society as well as with their own internalized beliefs about what is expected of the proficient worker and a good mother - values which are sometimes incompatible (Elman and Gilbert, 1984). Similarly, studies (Gupta, 1979; Bardhan, 1985; Swaminathan, 1993) have shown that working women experience the

most difficulty in fulfilling their roles as mothers no matter what be their profession. Similar findings in the present work lend credence to the above studies.

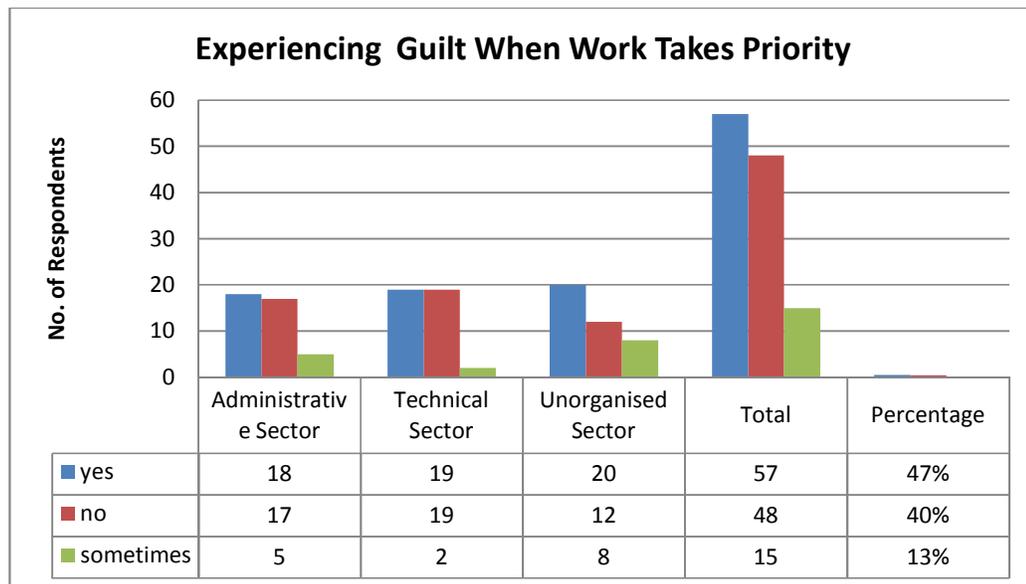
Role conflict in the present study has further been examined through various perspectives of the respondents. Guilt, satisfaction derived from the time spent with their family, thoughts of quitting the job they hold etc lend perspective to idea if the respondents face any form of role conflict. The answers of the respondents have been supplemented by the varied narratives of the respondents.

6.2.1.1 Experiencing Guilt When Work Takes Priority

The varied responses to the query on if any of the respondents experienced guilt when work took priority over home has been presented in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4

Experiencing Guilt When Work Takes Priority



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Figure 6.4 shows the guilt that the respondents experience when they prioritise work over home. 47 percent of the respondents said that they did feel guilty when they

chose work responsibilities over their home responsibilities. 40 percent of the respondents denied any feelings of guilt when work got prioritised over their responsibilities at home while 13 percent said that they did feel guilty sometimes when their household responsibilities took a backseat. Guilt on choosing work over home was felt more among women working in the unorganised sector and the technical sector. Damico and Nevill (1975) in their study conducted among 518 women in a university community states in their result that guilt was a probable result of role conflict among married working women. A 29 year old Bhutia respondent who is separated from her husband and has one child lives with her sister. Her child is 7 years old and she works in the hospitality industry. She states that

"I face lots of pressure mentally and physically. Sometimes I feel guilty as a mother because I am not able to make time for my kid. Sometimes when there are too many guests then my evenings get held up. I do not like that because my child looks for me in the evenings. So not being home on time for my child makes me feel guilty I don't have enough time for house chores".

A 36 year old post graduate respondent from the Nepali community living in a nuclear family with her two children, husband and domestic paid help states that she feels very guilty when she prioritises work over home. Occupying a Group A category position in the banking profession requires her to work after hours almost every day. Although she has a paid help at home she feels that children should have their mother do certain things for them like helping them with their studies, giving them meals and bathing them. And she says she misses most of these activities as a result of her job.

A Limboo police woman in Group D category, who is 36 years old living in a nuclear family with her husband and two children aged 12 years and 4 years says she experiences guilt whenever she has to leave home for her duty especially when her children are unwell. She particularly recounts the times when her younger child was 3 years old. According to her there have been instances when she had to leave her sick and crying child with her husband in order to go for night duties. She says she really felt guilty as a mother during those times. But with bank loans to pay off, she says she cannot quit her job.

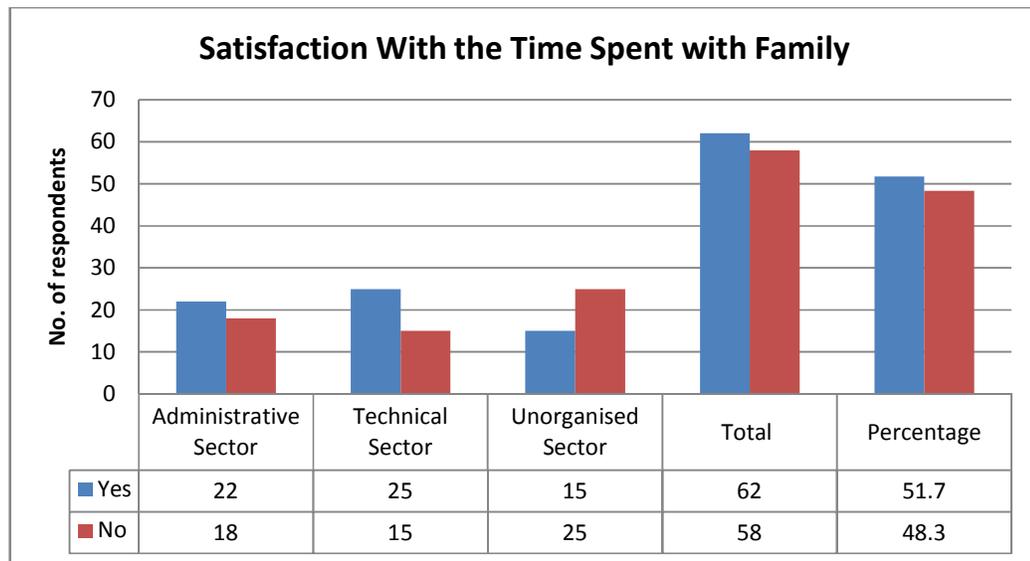
These feelings of guilt arise from the conditioning of the gender roles that takes place during the socialisation process. Girls and women are culturally taught from an early age to be responsible for the upkeep of their home and family. Not being able to do so would mean a deviation from the socialised path. Hence, these respondents underwent feelings of guilt when they prioritised work over home. Moreover, to minimise or avoid the guilt, women often take up lower level of jobs so that the exercise of their familial responsibilities is not interrupted (Mohanty and Tripathy, 2005).

6.2.1.2 Satisfaction with the Time Spent with Family

On being asked if the respondents were satisfied with the time they spent with their family, various responses were obtained which are presented in figure 6.5 and the narratives that follow.

Figure 6.5

Satisfaction with the Time Spent with Family



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

51.7 percent of the respondents replied that they were satisfied while 48.3 percent of the respondents said that they were not satisfied with the time spent with their family. A 46 year old doctor of Rai community who has two children, living in a joint family and whose husband also works as a doctor says because of her hectic schedule, she is not able to visit her own parents as much as she would like to, as a result of which her mother gets angry with her sometimes. She says that her work in the hospital and her clinic keeps her busy. Whatever free time she has she uses it to spend with her children and in making social visits.

Similarly, a 36 year old Limboo respondent who is working as a police woman and has two children aged 12 years and 5 years wishes she had more time to spend with her children and husband. Being in the police force, she has to be on duty at odd hours as a result of which misunderstandings are created between her and the husband. Her

children also complain that their mother is the only mother in the neighbourhood who works at night. She narrates that

"I tend to have misunderstandings with my husband when I have nightshifts. He thinks that I opt for night shifts out of choice in order to have a good time with other men. He always says "ghar ko ama" (mother of the house) should be at home in the evenings and at night time. I wish I had more time with my family".

Another respondent who is 33 years old belonging to the lower caste hierarchy of the Hindu structure with two children and living in a nuclear family also feels that time she spends with her family especially children is very less. Her work being field based she sometimes has to miss important functions and events in the family. For instance, she missed her sister in law's wedding in another village during the President's visit because she had her duty in the police station.

There were more respondents from the unorganised sector who were not satisfied with the time they spent with their families. This could be likely because their working hours are not fixed and they seldom have a say over their workload. A commonly assumed notion that women working in the technical sector as engineers, doctors and police women are very busy and are likely to be dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with their families can be contested since higher number of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the time they spent with their families. A plausible explanation for this could be that alternative arrangements or mechanisms such as hired workers, nannies, household appliances and gadgets can be afforded by those working as doctors, engineers and policewomen. This allows them to spend quality

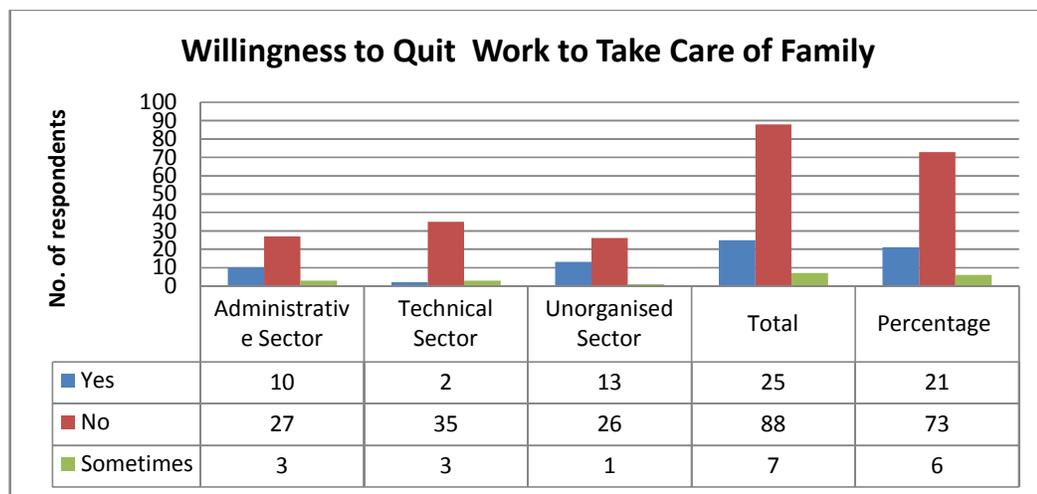
time with their families leading to a higher sense of satisfaction with regard to the time they spend with their families.

6.2.1.3 Willingness to Quit Work

Although some of these working women expressed numerous problems in balancing home and work yet, when asked if they were willing to quit their jobs then a majority of them answered that they would not quit. Having a job that pays them has given them financial independence, it has allowed them to make decisions concerning their lives and those of their children, it has given them a status in the family and society, it has made them confident while also allowing them to meet people and make new friends and colleagues.

Figure 6.6

Willingness to Quit Work to Take Care of Family



Source: Field Work, June 2017 to April 2018

Therefore, figure 6.6 shows that 73 percent of the respondents expressed that they would not quit their jobs. Meanwhile, 21 percent of the respondents on the other hand, said that given a choice they would resign or quit their jobs in order to take care of

their homes and families. Only 6 percent of the respondents said that sometimes they do think of quitting when they are caught up between home and work.

A 36 year old Group A officer belonging to the Bhutia community with two young children expressed her opinion that she would be quitting her job if circumstances favoured her. Her husband is a contractor and she feels that her children are growing up in the care of domestic helpers. So she does not know what will become of her children's education if she has to leave home. She says

"My job is transferable and involves late working hours. So I definitely think at some point I will quit because my children are growing up without me being there".

Contrary to the opinion expressed in the above case study, many respondents stated that they would not quit their jobs despite the difficulties that they face in managing both. Financial freedom, status, independence, enhanced standard of living etc were the advantages that came with having a paid job.

6.2.2 Work Induced Misunderstanding

In the technical sector where working hours tend to be erratic, working women faced a different sort of a challenge. Instances of spouses being unhappy when the wife has to work late nights or have night duties were reported. This was particularly pointed out in the case of the policewomen and forest guards who had night patrolling duties. This is also supported in the findings of Koenig (1978) wherein the wives of male police officers did not approve and objected to their husbands spending eight hours a day with other policewoman in patrolling duties. Similarly, Okojie (1998) in her study of the women in Nigeria also reports a similar finding that working women's

relationship with their partners may suffer socially and emotionally as a result of work load and stress.

A 48 year old married Police officer belonging to the Nepali community says that maintaining a balance between home and work responsibilities is very tough for a police woman. Due to the erratic working hours of the police force, she feels that the women belonging to the police force have to work extra hard at maintaining their marriages. They have to make time for their husbands; children while at the same time give their best to a job that is demanding both physically and mentally. She further adds that a policewoman's husband has to be extremely understanding or else the marriage may not work out. Her husband according to her is very supportive and she maintains that he has never doubted or questioned her working hours. In her narrative she explains,

"The woman may have to spend an entire night in the stations and offices with other men. As a result the husband may feel insecure. I feel a police woman's husband has to be extremely understanding. Otherwise the marriage may not work. A lot of police women tend to have failed marriages".

Similarly, a 36 year old Limboo respondent living in a nuclear family with two children has similar experiences to share in her narratives. She works in the police force as a Group D employee and has been doing so for the past 18 years. Her husband is also a Group D employee in another department in the Government of Sikkim. Although she says her husband is understanding about the nature of her work yet there are times when he gets angry if she has too many night duties. She feels that

men are more suited to work in the police force as they have fewer problems and responsibilities.

Another respondent working in the police force in the Group D category also says that they work for long hours with men in a job that is meant for men. Therefore, more often than not they are in the company of men. And according to her most husbands do not like it if their wives are constantly spending time with male colleagues. For instance they may get patrolling duties with a male colleague where they spend a considerable number of hours together. So when the husbands know this then they accuse their wives of being unfaithful. The respondent herself is 44 years old and has been working as a policewoman for more than 20 years. She is married with two children and lives in a nuclear family. Her husband is also employed. In her narratives she mentions that when her children were small, her officers were kind and understanding enough to exempt her from night duties and allowed her to go home at 5 in the evenings. Her colleagues from those days were supportive and often stepped in when she had emergencies at home like when her children became ill or when she had to visit their schools. However, she says that today she sees her young female colleagues struggling with work and home responsibilities and the discords they have with their husbands because of their working hours and their jobs.

During the course of the interview it was also reported by those respondents who had night duties or had to work late that sometimes in laws too had to be cajoled and made to understand that night duties entailed only work and nothing else. For instance, a 40 year old Lepcha respondent working in Group D category in the Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife says that her job involves patrolling duties with men and sometimes she may even have to spend the night on patrolling duties away from home.

She has two children, a husband who is a government employee and she lives with her in laws who are illiterate and old. Therefore, initially when she had to stay away from home the whole night on duty she had to explain very carefully about her duty to her mother in law and father in law so as to avoid any kind of misunderstanding with them. Sometimes her husband accuses her of volunteering for these duties herself so she can "have fun" in the company of other men. She says it is hurtful when he says things like these but comforts herself with the understanding that men are like that only.

In all the narratives mentioned in the above section we find that respondents faced this particular problem when they had to stay away from their homes for night duties. This was especially in the case of respondents who were working in the police force.

6.2.3 Difficulty in Discharging Familial Responsibilities

The findings of Kapur (1969) in his study on the employed housewives comprising nurses, trained social workers and research workers in Delhi reports that due to their engagement with the professional role, the working women are unable to visit parents and relatives as much as they would want to while also being unable to participate in social functions as they feel they should.

Correspondingly, a 46 year old doctor, belonging to the Rai community with two children and living in a joint family says that

"Managing both home and work creates stress, emotional, mental and physical. Because of my job I do not get to visit my parents often and my mother often complains about my sporadic visits. Shortage of doctors in my section keeps me away from home".

Another instance where the respondent felt that she was unable to give time to her parents because of her busy schedule was expressed in the narratives of a 47 year old Lepcha respondent living in a nuclear family with her two children and her husband. She works as an official in the Group A category. According to her

"When the kids were small, juggling their school work and my job was quite a challenge, especially when one is tired /unwell. Fulfilling filial responsibilities is also quite challenging. It is not easy when one has a job and also a home to run and a family to look after. Also, as a daughter we have responsibilities towards our parents. This was quite difficult at times and I may not have been able to give my 100 percent there".

A Bhutia respondent who is 38 years old and who is working in the Group A category feels that she prioritises work over her responsibilities at home. She lives in a joint family and has a single child. And although her in laws have not brought up any drawbacks in her, she herself feels guilty that she is not doing as much as that is expected of a daughter in law.

"I hardly do any housework; my focus is more on my job so sometimes I feel that my in laws may not be very happy with me as a daughter in law. I am sure they would want me to shoulder more of domestic responsibilities".

Similarly, another respondent who is 41 years old and belongs to the upper caste of the Nepali Hindu category and living in a joint family says that

"Managing leave in the office when the children fall ill or when elders have to be taken to the hospital is difficult. Domestic help is hard to get so I am always tired".

A Lepcha respondent who is 37 years old with one child and who lives in a joint family also faces problems when her baby or other family members fall ill. She works in the Group C category and she narrates that

"Sometimes when my baby falls sick, that is the time it becomes very difficult to manage home and work. It's a very stressful moment or any family member who is not well as I'm under administrative wing and a record keeper can't afford to take leave for long".

The respondents also see their inability to care for sick family members due to work responsibilities as a major problem stemming from being a working woman with limited leaves.

6.2.4 Managing Social Obligations

Sikkim with a low population and a limited geographical area is the second smallest state in the country. Being a small state, the society in Sikkim is very close knit. Social obligations and reciprocity in terms of monetary support and the community presence during life cycle rituals and during illness is a strongly practised tradition in Sikkim. This reciprocal social exchange may take place at the inter community level as well as at the intra community level. However, in the recent times this practise of social exchange has brought with it problems such as time constraint especially with working women who are unable to cope with managing paid work and fulfilling social obligations. For instance, a 51 year old Bhutia respondent who works as a

Group A officer has a different perspective on the problems faced in managing both home and work. She has three children and she lives in a joint family. Her husband is also a government employee. According to her,

"Being a Sikkimese Buddhist and living in a joint family with large network of family and friends, meeting social obligations at times poses problem especially with time management".

Responding to the query on the difficulties in managing home and work, a 38 year old doctor with two children and belonging to the lower caste of the Nepali community says

"In Sikkim social obligations are plenty and keep one busy. Free time and holidays are used for these purposes so we hardly have any free time for ourselves".

A 40 year old widow who runs a shop also has a similar story to tell. She has one child who she has put in boarding because she is unable to give him time and her working hours are long and unpredictable. She says

"I have to manage home and work and social obligations by myself. So I am pressed for time. There are days when I keep my shop closed for days, when I am unwell or I have to go somewhere".

Sikkim being a small state allows for a lot of primary face to face interaction. Still rooted in strong community spirit, social visits in times of illness, marriage, death and birth ceremonies is a common feature in the state. However, with the increase in the number of employed men and women who are expected to be in their work places for

the larger part of their days finds keeping up with these social obligations a problem. This is obvious in the narratives mentioned in this section.

6.2.5 Lack of Leisure Time

Managing work and home sometimes leaves the working women with little time for themselves especially leisure time. This issue was raised by the respondents during the course of the interview. For instance, a 28 year old Rai respondent who works as a doctor and has no children and lives in a joint family says

"Women play so many roles and have been a multitasker but yes it is not easy to manage both work and family. Sometimes I have to juggle between career and family, which deprives me from peace, rest, sleep and luxury to be myself".

A similar case is also found in the narratives of a 32 year old respondent working in the Group C category. She is widow with two children aged 9 months and 6 years and she lives with her father in law. When asked about the problems that she faced managing both home and work, she said

"Since I have a small child it is problematic. Moreover, I am a widow so I have to be a mother as well as a father. I also have to look after my father-in-law, social obligations, work, children so time management is a huge problem..... so much so that I sometimes don't even have time to eat meals properly".

The present study also saw the respondents stating that their participation in both home and work did not allow them to spend much time on themselves. Whatever, free time they managed was spent on completing pending tasks at home or work. In a

similar study reported from Italy by Menniti, Demurtas et al. (2015) it was observed that working women have begun to reduce the time devoted to leisure activities.

6.3 Coping Mechanisms Adopted

Social change is a continuous process and is often accompanied by challenging circumstances. The entry of women into paid work ushered in an era of change wherein the impact of it could be felt among the various institutions of the human society. One of the challenging outcomes of this was maintaining the balance between home and work. Contextual to Sikkim, the respondents in the study came up with various strategies to manage the demands of work and home. Hansen (1991) also mentions that strategies used by women in employment to cope with home and work include reducing time spent doing housework, increasing efficiency, redistributing household chores, giving up leisure time.

6.3.1 Help from One's Spouse

Spousal support is seen as a key factor in managing the demands of home and work. 24 percent of the respondents have stated that they rely on their husbands for help in managing home and work. This is also an indication that the women as well as men are adapting and embracing the changing roles and relations between what a man or a woman should or should not do. The high number of narratives from the respondents of the present study confirms that the patriarchal values are slowly being replaced by more egalitarian values. This is also substantiated in the findings of Elman and Gilbert's study (1984) on married professional women and their coping strategies where help from spouses in coping with the role demands especially pertaining to children and the household prevents one spouse (the female) from being unduly

burdened by home responsibilities while also allowing the growth of a family pattern where roles are more equitably shared.

A 36 year old policewoman who belongs to the upper caste Nepali community with two children and living in a nuclear family manages work and family with the help from her husband. She says

"If I have day duty then my husband helps me with housework and if I have night duty then I manage housework during the day time".

Similarly, another respondent who is 37 years old, has one daughter aged 9 and lives in a nuclear family. She works in the Group C category and her husband is self employed. She narrates that

"I take leave during my child's exams so as to be there to help her with her studies. If my husband is home then he helps with dinner preparation and washing".

Spousal help is seen as very significant in minimising the stress that these respondents confront as a result of having to manage both home and work. In both the narratives, the respondents highlight the help that they receive from their husbands in housework and child care.

6.3.2 Help from Extended Family

Menniti, Demurtas, et al. (2015) study on housework and childcare in Italy shows that living in a household with other relatives is likely to result in reduction in the time spent on housework for both the partners. Similarly, Abdullah, Noor and Wok (2008) points out that Asian women managers facing work-family stress tends to rely on the

support from their extended family and domestic help. Empirically locating the respondents also mentioned that in order to manage housework and childcare they relied on their relatives, parents and in laws.

A 44 year old Lepcha respondent who is working as a policewoman has two children and lives in a nuclear family. She is a Lepcha but is married to a Hindu. Her husband is also employed. On being asked how she has managed to cope with responsibilities both at home and work, she said

"Officers and colleagues have been understanding especially when the kids were small. My mother in law used to help and look after the children when they were small. Then I took hired help".

The above narrative also finds support in studies (Hughes and Galinsky, 1988; Hansen, 1991) which suggests that a supportive and understanding administrator also minimises work-family stress among working women.

A 52 year old respondent who runs a grocery shop also narrated that she relies on her son when things get busy for her. She belongs to the lower caste of the Nepali community and has three children. In her narratives she mentions that she is trying to teach her youngest son to run the shop so that the shop will not have to close down even if she goes somewhere. However, she says that since her son is only 13, he often makes mistakes while dealing with customers.

A Nepali respondent who is 35 years old and is a domestic helper has 3 children. Her husband is a driver and she lives in a joint family. On being asked how does she manage both home and work said

"I take help from my mother in law who supervises my daughters till I get home and my employers give me leave when it is necessary".

Similar studies (Enabulele, 1991; Okafor and Amayo, 2006) have also been reported from Nigeria wherein relatives and family members play a crucial role in the care of children when the mothers are away at work. In the present study too, these respondents have admitted to seeking help from their relatives and in laws for the care of their children.

6.3.3 Private Tuitions or Boarding Schools

Among the many families in Sikkim where the mothers are involved in a full time paid job, availing private tuitions or sending the child to a boarding school is seen as a welcome and accepted trend. In fact, this trend of sending one's child for private tuitions has itself escalated into a thriving business with children as young as 5 years old going for private tuitions after school to tutors who teach groups of children in shifts. This point is highlighted in the instance of a 38 year old doctor belonging to the Nepali Hindu community has two school going children aged 9 and 7. She lives in a nuclear family and her husband runs a private business. Being in a profession where work timings sometimes extend into night, her concern was for her children and their studies. Therefore, she says

"I have hired a maid and my children go for private tuitions for homework and to study because I am not there to help them with their studies".

Similarly, an engineer working in the Group A category has three children and lives in a nuclear set up. She belongs to the Nepali community and has been working for more than 20 years. She narrates that

"I put my children in the hostel so I don't have to worry about them and their studies. I also meditate to get rid of the work stress".

In a similar manner, a 42 year old Bhutia shop owner who is a widow with two children has put both her children in a hostel so that their studies do not get hampered in her absence. Her shop timings are from 9:30 till 7:00 in the evening. With her children in the hostel she does not have to worry about them and rush home every day.

6.3.4 Use of Time Saving Gadgets

In Kapur's (1969) study among employed housewives of Delhi it was revealed that the acquisition of household gadgets and help at home were utilised by them as devices to minimise role conflict. Respondents in this study too have narrated that the use of modern gadgets and machines have helped them in saving time and thereby balancing home and work.

The following respondent who is 57 years old and works in a Group C category position sees housework as her responsibility which needs to be completed within a certain time frame. She belongs to the Nepali community and lives with her husband and two children. In her narratives, she says

"I try to create small goals and work towards achieving them. I try to finish certain work whether at home or work within a certain time frame. So smart time management and the use of time saving gadgets such as washing machines is a strategy I try to adopt".

A 47 year old respondent who works in the Group C category in the police force sees herself as somebody who works nonstop. She belongs to the upper caste Hindu community, has two children and lives in a nuclear family. In response to the query on managing work and family, she says

"I raised my children with a lot of difficulty. I have really worked hard. I wake up every day by 4:30. I time my routine and have also learnt to curtail on religious rituals that are done every day. I manage to save some time because of rice cookers, washing machines and hot water geysers. Yet I hardly have time for myself. I am like a machine working continuously".

6.3.5 Hiring Help

Hiring help is a recent trend that has emerged in the Sikkimese society. Until recently, housework and child care remained the exclusive domain of women and hiring help for these chores was virtually absent especially among the middle class women. However, with more number of women stepping out to work and earn for the family, the earning power of women has enabled the present day working women to hire outside help in carrying out her domestic and rearing responsibilities. For instance, a senior Bhutia officer aged 45 who works in the Group A category has two children and lives in a joint family. She says

"Hiring help and also taking help from my in laws has helped me give my best to my job...I am often on tours and away from home so it helps that there are others at home to run the house and take care of my sons".

Similarly, a 46 year old respondent who is an engineer by profession relies heavily on her domestic helper. The respondent has one child and lives in a nuclear family. She belongs to the Nepali community and in her response to the query on managing home and work, she says

"I don't mix them up. I leave work stress and problems in the office.

Likewise I try not to domestic problems bother me at work. Moreover,

my maid is very efficient so I don't have to worry about housework".

Hiring help is not a solution that everybody restores to as it is expensive as well as difficult to find in Sikkim. Moreover, the respondents who have cited hired help as a solution to managing home and work belong to those working in the Group A category. Therefore, class variation comes into play for this particular solution adopted by the respondents in this study.

6.3.6 Taking Leave from Work

A 56 year old officer in Group A category and belonging to the upper caste of the Hindu community mentions in her narratives of her struggles as a working women with small children. She became a widow when her younger child was only a month old and she was 24 years old. When her older son turned 19, he died to a lung ailment. Life has been one long struggle for her. After her husband passed away her in laws refused to support her and shunned her. Today she has no contact with her in laws. Her parents were there but being conservative in their outlook, they never got comfortable with the idea of living with a daughter who was already married off. Therefore, she had to manage on her own. When her children were small she had kept domestic help at home to look after them. She also mentions that

"I have applied and used various kinds of leave (medical leave, earned leave) to be there for my children. Hired help and sometimes my mother helped me in take care of my home".

Another 34 year old respondent when asked on the solutions to managing home and work stated that when things got too busy, then she took leave from work to focus on her responsibilities at home. She works as a doctor and has two children and lives in a joint family.

Availing leave from work in order to give time to domestic responsibilities is cited as another solution to manage home and work in the present study. However, this is unsustainable and does not work always as the official leaves granted may be limited. Moreover, availing too many official leaves can have an adverse reflection in one's career and promotion.

6.3.7 Prioritise and Use Time Efficiently

Prioritising and using time efficiently time was also another strategy mentioned by the respondents to overcome the challenge balance between home and work. A 33 year old policewoman who is married and lives in a nuclear family with her two children has a different solution in managing work and family. She says

"It is quite difficult. I divide work, utilise my free time properly and wake up early to finish chores".

An engineer who is 34 years old and is working in the Group B category lives in a nuclear extended family and has no children of her own. Her response to managing work and family was

"I follow time management and to not take work home. I take time out every weekend for myself and go out with family".

During the course of the fieldwork an interesting case study was located wherein the solution to managing home and work was not found to fit in any of the above mentioned categories. The respondent in this case was a 32 year old widow with two children. However, due to economic difficulties, she had given away her elder daughter for adoption to a relative. She lived with her widowed father in law. She cooked for him but they lived in different floors of the same building. Belonging to the Nepali community she is a Hindu. She works in a Group C category job and has been working for less than 10 years. Her younger child is not yet a year old. Being a working woman and with no help from other family members, she is compelled to leave her child at a charity home during the day when she is at work. She constantly thinks and worries about her child. But she says that she knows her baby will be safe and looked after by the missionary nuns in the charity home. Her officers at her work place know about her problems and they have allowed her to leave work by 3 every day. This uncommon solution adopted to manage home and work arises out of compulsion wherein migration due to work opportunities has led to the setting up of nuclear families and the increasing absence of extended family and kinship network in time of need and support. Help and sympathy is often sought after from people outside the family and this also points to the breakdown in the essential functions of the family.

Having discussed the problems and solutions encountered by the working women in the present study, mention must be made of the achievements of a 47 year old police personnel belonging to the upper caste of the Nepali community, who played a

significant role in bringing about gender friendly changes in the police department of Sikkim. In her own words she says

"Some gender centric changes were brought in to the police force in Sikkim as a result of our efforts. Earlier female home guards were not given maternity leave. And we kept raising this issue till it was granted. The second change requested was that no police woman should be posted alone in a station. She should always have another female co-worker. This too was implemented. Lastly, the earlier police stations had only male toilets as a result of which women while having their monthly cycle found it inconvenient to use them. Since then we have separate toilets for men and women in the police stations".

Summing up, this chapter has tried to examine the reproduction of patriarchy in everyday life through various indicators and to see how gender roles are being re defined in the changed scenario. It has also attempted to probe into the challenges and the coping mechanisms adopted by these working women in urban Sikkim.

6.4 Discussion from Sociological Lens

As more and more women are increasingly becoming conscious of the sexist attitudes and practices which includes their own attitudes that are formed through the process of socialisation and translated into traditional gender roles, challenges are being raised and questioned against male domination. The Indian tradition dictates that the role of a woman is limited to that of a housewife and a mother. However, with the changing economic scenario women have now ventured into the role of an earner as well. Combining the two roles requires not only skill but physical and psychological adjustments as well.

At the outset of this chapter, there were indicators especially earlier studies which showed that the women in Sikkim are not subjected to gender bias but the case studies reflected in the chapter as a part of the field work has proved otherwise. There is no doubt that extreme cases of gender bias such as female infanticide, dowry deaths, women seclusion do not exist in the Sikkimese society. However, what does exist is gender bias in subtle forms and this is institutionalised in various forms and displayed in everyday life. It is done unintentionally or in a manner in which the individual is completely unaware because this bias has become a part of the individual's habitus and therefore, no second thought is given to it. For instance, many respondents in the present study accept that housework and childcare are the responsibility of the womenfolk. This notion about the difference in gender roles have been shaped by the habitus and is so ingrained so much so that women and men mistake in what is known in Bourdieu's terms as "feel for the game" as natural rather than culturally developed. And thus, gender roles and gender bias is justified and accepted. To paraphrase Berger and Luckmann, this social reality of sexual division of labour is created when men and women internalise the objectified reality which is confining house work and child care to women alone. The internalisation of this notion translates into the individual's subjective reality which then becomes a social reality or an accepted social order. Hence, it gives rise to the differing gender roles in the society.

The bastion of patriarchy is often carried forward by the females themselves because of their gender conditioning and socialisation. For instance, in the present study, it was revealed that delegation of housework to the women were stressed upon by the women themselves. This inculcation of gender roles begins from childhood itself wherein the children are socialised into the acceptance of what men and women ought to do in accordance to their gender. Among the different ethnic communities taken

into consideration in the present study, the Nepali community had the least representation of husbands helping their wives with household work. This low representation of husbands in sharing house chores could be attributed to the relatively more patriarchal domination that exists among the Nepali community who are basically Hindus.

With both the parents going to work, providing for child care during working hours is a problem most working parents face today. The problem has become more pronounced with the increase in the nuclear families and the breakdown of joint families. The situation gets further aggravated when the children fall ill. Almost 50 percent of the respondents in the study acknowledged that they stayed back from work to take care of sick children. This indicates that child care is still seen as woman's work and her primary responsibility while also affirming the belief that a woman's role as an earner is secondary compared to her role as a mother and a wife. Women, even if they work are seen as secondary earners while men continue to be seen as the primary providers in a family. Hence, the working role of a woman continues to be sidelined in favour of her role as a mother and a wife.

The patriarchal notion of the ancestral property being passed on along the male line was also revealed in the study. The respondent in fact supported the idea of her minor son being the legal guardian of the house and the land they possessed. Even though the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 has been extended to Sikkim yet, the Bhutias and the Lepchas continue to be governed by their customary laws with regard to succession, marriage and inheritance. Family property is retained in the name of the male head of the family and women lack legal rights on it. However, a Bhutia or a Lepcha woman may acquire property by way of gift from the family but their rights to such property

shall be forfeit if they undergo community exogamous marriage (SHDR, 2014). Acceptance of such notions by women themselves is what gives patriarchy its legitimacy.

Among the jobs that were looked into as a part of the field work for this study, the job of a policewoman which was traditionally regarded as in a masculine domain, was considered the most challenging when it came balancing home and work. Apart from the unconventional working hours, the police women in this study also had to face suspicions from their husbands as their job entailed them to spend long hours with other policemen. Bourdieu states that the possession of capital is indicative of one's position in the society. Similarly, the women police officers position was considerably better than their subordinates. The accumulation of capital in terms of titles, degrees etc facilitated the police women officers to enjoy the privileges and entitlements that came with being an officer unlike their subordinates who had no other choice but to obey the orders of their superiors.

Despite the difficulties confronted by the respondents in managing work alongside their homes, few of them spoke of quitting their jobs. The perks of having a job that brought income was seen as far too advantageous and outweighed the difficulties in balancing home and work.

The women in the study rely heavily on the relatives living with them for completion of household chores. As is often the case, we find that families in urban areas in Sikkim take in relatives and cousins who are economically at a disadvantage and if they are young in age, the responsibility of educating them is also given to the elders living in the urban areas. These economically disadvantaged relatives help out with household chores and the care of young children and elderly relatives in return for

free education, food and stay. Therefore, the present study had a large number of respondents relying on family members, primary as well as secondary kin for help in housework.

Inter class variation was noticed in a number of instances when the question of balancing home and work came up, in the factors which led women to take up paid work and so on. However, ethnic and caste variation with regard to the issues raised concerning working women in the study was not so pronounced. Instead what was revealed through the lived experiences of the respondents was the persistence of the double burden that the working women in Sikkim endure in their everyday lives, which they regard as normal course of social reality. There is no doubt that women in Sikkim match up to the empowerment indices but what lurks underneath the shadow of empowerment are instances of double exploitation wherein her visibility in the public sphere has to be managed with her traditional role in the private sphere as well.

Summing up the above discussion, the study reveals that traditional gender roles appears to have changed more slowly as a result of the slow change in cultural values and normative standards and also due to the reproduction of patriarchy which is practised and observed amply in various forms in everyday life. The study further reveals that patriarchy is institutionalised at the individual level, at the familial level and also at the societal level.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

I

Gender assumed to be a social construct was seen as performing a vital function in the society wherein the performance of gender appropriate roles aided in minimising conflicts, tensions and in promoting solidarity and stability of the society as argued by the functionalists. This social construction of gender roles was functional in the traditional societies. However, with the change in socio economic realities along with the social transformation, this idea came to be contested. Gender appropriate roles came to be, what Merton terms, as a dysfunction for the working women because she had to shoulder the burden of being an earner as well as a caregiver. Further, taking various other perspectives, the structuralists see gender as something imposed upon us through social structures which thereby locates individuals or groups in a hierarchical power relation while the post structuralists like Giddens and Bourdieu see structures as a determining factor but they also argue that "agency" such as women themselves can play a crucial role in reinforcing change within the social structure.

Yet, despite these discourses on gender, the notion of gender roles continues to persist. This is largely because in our interaction as communicators and agents, our actions in creating new rules and in reproducing the old ones for the structure continue to be guided by the patriarchal norms in which we have been socialised in. Structural change is taking place but the normative values are changing at a slower pace. This has brought in situations of dilemma, some sort of a conflicting situation for the working women today especially in a traditional society like India where the patriarchal ethos is strongly embedded.

Even though, women have always been a part of the work force, the nature of the jobs discharged by them has changed from time to time and from society to society. In the earlier societies, men and women had distinct responsibilities and roles in family and work and these were accepted as functional. However, with the advent of women into paid work, it came to be understood that work and family roles could no longer be separate but rather, they intersected in complex ways. Expansion of urbanisation, education, rising costs, higher standards of living are introducing major changes in the women's roles and relations. Today, paid work no longer remains a male domain yet housework and child care, tasks which are undervalued, taken for granted and discounted continue to be the sole responsibility of the women folk. Traditional gender roles especially pertaining to the private sphere continue to persist largely due to the patriarchal social structure that guides our social and cultural norms in the society. This patriarchal social structure forms our life world wherein we continue to draw what Alfred Shultz termed as the "recipe knowledge" from the stock of previous experiences and view traditional gender roles as our scheme of reference. This recipe knowledge is imbibed during our socialisation process wherein we unquestioningly accept the gender division of labour. Similarly, the penetration of a patriarchal habitus in our everyday life is so deeply embedded that we become unconscious of our undervalued gender roles.

History states that the women's movement came to be restricted because of her reproductive capacity to give birth and nurse the baby. This responsibility came to limit her ability to hunt and engage in dangerous occupations. Men, on the other hand, hunted and provided food and protected their families and their role was seen as crucial for the survival of the family. This division of labour came to influence the work that women and men did in the future and the significance that came to be

attached it. This form of economic dominance leading to the subordination of women can also be located in many concepts and theories such as feminism, patriarchy, Engels and Marx's idea of economic inequality. Movement of women into paid employment in the public sphere began only after the industrial revolution in Europe and the two world wars. Overtime, with education becoming more accessible to women as well, the number of women in paid work began to rise and diversify into various professions like such as law, medicine, finance, politics etc.

In the Indian context, we find that stratification in work prevails on the basis of age, gender and caste. In fact, the problem becomes more complex as women in the Indian society do not constitute a homogeneous category since there exists an intersectionality of caste, class, religion, region and ethnic diversity.

Historically, there are studies which supports that women in ancient India enjoyed an equal status with the men in the society. But, they came to be confined to the domestic world after the arrival of the Muslim conquerors and the introduction of the purdah system. However, the position of women changed and their participation in the public world was encouraged during the colonial rule in India followed by the Nationalist Movement in India. Gradually, women came to gain entry into the world of formal education, politics, and employment. Moreover, the Constitutional provisions of equality of opportunity and non discrimination in matters of employment and wages, the expansion of education for women, increasing economic pressure especially among the middle classes were some other factors which contributed to such trend of wider participation of women in the formal work sector.

However, the transition has not been smooth and has brought with it a lot of challenges. Earlier studies have shown that women tend to prioritize family over work

hence, when faced with having to make a choice between career and family, family is always given priority. We can attribute this choice to the influence of the patriarchal socialisation of the women or what Bourdieu addresses as the habitus which is the cognitive mental structure that determines and influences an individual's thoughts and action. Thus, more often than not, her role is oriented more towards family matters rather than self-fulfillment or career goals. Therefore, the modern Indian women, many of whom are now employed, are caught in a dilemma between the modern challenges of life and the traditional expectation of being responsible for the family and home. To balance the two roles, women need a lot of support from the family, workplace as well as the society. The inability to balance these two roles may result in conflicting demands to fulfil her work and family responsibilities leading to stress or what is termed as role conflict.

Various studies highlighted that despite women being paid equal wages for equal work, wherein they also exercise and retain control over their earnings and expenditure, their role as care-givers continue to be their primary responsibility. The absence of the alternatives to family care has not affected the economy or the society largely because women continue to bear the double burden of family care and paid work (Women and Work Triple Burden, 1999). Consequently, if the women are not able to cope with the double burden, their withdrawal from paid work becomes a necessity and a compulsion. Otherwise they have to navigate and find their own solutions so that their role and responsibilities at the home front stays undisturbed and does not disrupt the routine of other family members. Studies by Ramu (1987, 1989), Rao and Rao (1988) have shown that men in India continue to be seen in a provider's role while women who work are regarded as secondary or supportive earners. Rather, Indian traditional norms tilt in favour of women being in domestic roles. In this

backdrop, the purpose of the present study is to examine the changing role of women in Sikkim, their experiences and challenges as well as factors that facilitate and hinder their varied roles and relations.

II

Sikkim being a multi religious, multi cultural and multi ethnic state has three predominant ethnic groups namely the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalis. Although the Nepali community is a heterogeneous category, for the sake of convenience of this study, it has been taken as a homogeneous category because at certain points in history and in many existing literature on Sikkim they are seen as one category. However, care has been taken to give a fair representation to the different categories found within the broad Nepali community. All these predominant ethnic communities are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal in its structure. Since the incorporation of Sikkim with the Indian Union, it has experienced a lot of changes in its social, cultural, economic, political and educational fields. An important indicator of this change has been reflected in the increase in the literacy rate and a shift in occupational trend towards the non-agricultural sector. Moreover increase in developmental activities mainly in the growth of administrative and commercial activities have led to a growth in urbanisation resulting in the increase of the urban population in Sikkim.

Various statistical parameters indicate that Sikkim has a positive representation of women in the literacy rates as well as in the state government employment sector. Although detailed information regarding their representation in various employment sectors is not available but Thapa (2014) mentions that the state has a policy of 30 % reservations for women in public employment, hence the indications are that they are

well represented in the administration and health services and are also making forays into the fields of engineering and forestry which conventionally were not women's domain. The state also has a substantial population working in the unorganised sector comprising of small scale enterprises and private business. Women in Sikkim face no social taboos in working outside their homes (Thapa, 2009), but the struggle in balancing family and work exists for the working women in Sikkim. The general assumption is of the Sikkimese women enjoying a high social status however, the different ethnic communities in Sikkim experiencing a strong patriarchal ethos comes in the way of balancing home and work for the working women. Largely influenced by patriarchy, working women have to deal with issues such as managing the house alongside caring for the children and the elderly in the family, fulfilling social obligations etc. More often than not these issues are translated into sources of stress and fatigue. The scenario in Sikkim as it is elsewhere in the country is dominated by patriarchal values when it comes to the traditional roles of women but at the same time factors such as educational achievement, urbanisation trend, rising expenditures and consumerism have pushed these women into new career roles. Therefore, the working women in Sikkim remain traditional in their domestic roles while trying to adjust to the increasing demands of time, energy and dedication to their career roles.

Thus, the modern working women today are juggling multiple roles while simultaneously adapting to vast social, economic and political changes. Negotiations and compromises between different roles, work and family are constantly being carried out on a day to day basis by women all over the world. The winds of modernity and technology have influenced the exterior part of our lives but our thoughts and values and outlook are still shrouded in traditional patriarchal values. Therefore, in recognition of being caught in this dilemma of modernity and tradition,

there is a need to study the working women's changing roles and relations. However, studies on women in Sikkim are at a very nascent stage and research on the working women in Sikkim is almost negligible.

This study has therefore, attempted to explore and understand the changing roles of the working women in urban Sikkim and examine if they face any role conflict and how do they balance the dual roles of home and work. Further, the study seeks to assess if various socio-cultural and economic variations play a determining role in work-family balance and identify if any traditional gender roles is being reproduced in the everyday work routine. The study explores how working women perceive themselves on being employed while also examining the problems and challenges and dilemmas faced by them as a result of their dual role.

With these objectives in view, a field based study was conducted among 120 working women in Sikkim belonging to the three notified towns in East Sikkim, viz. Gangtok, Singtam and Rangpo. Information were collected through purposive and stratified sampling and semi structured interview schedule. Women belonging either to the Lepcha, Bhutia or the Nepali community in Sikkim and working in the administrative sector, technical sector and the unorganised sector were taken as the sample population for this study. To augment phenomenological essence in the study, in depth face to face interview with open ended semi structured questions to access the qualitative aspect of this study were included wherein the lived experiences of women, their life narratives and case studies has been explored so as to see the reflections of patriarchy in their daily lives vis-a-vis one's social-cultural background and the influences it has on the balance between work and family.

The empirical work in the study has been interpreted from the sociological lens using various concepts but mainly revolving around the theoretical and conceptual paradigm of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu and the reproduction of the phenomenological experience on everyday life.

III

The assumption is that it is the economic dependence of women on men which determines the power structure within the family. Hence, participation of women in income generating activities will not only bring in more income for the family but is also likely to reduce gender inequality (Mohapatra, 2015). However, often the women participate in these income generating activities for varied reasons. The empirical findings of this study conducted among 120 respondents too revealed that women take up paid work for various reasons. Financial compulsions to take up paid work occurred after the death of a spouse or when husbands became alcoholics and unable to provide monetary support or in some cases when the husbands remarried. In such situations, paid employment for these respondents brought in a form of security and a sense of purpose. Another reason why these women took up paid work was to utilise their education and to enhance their status in their family and society. This can be understood on the basis of Bourdieu's notion of the possession of capital to gain access to power and position in the society. Ethnic variation has been visible in the case of alcoholism among men leading the women to seek paid work as more number of respondents in this instance came from the *matwali* communities or those communities where the use of alcohol is culturally accepted. This also indicates that the problem is rooted in social structure. It was also revealed that a higher number of respondents in the unorganised sector and those belonging to the Group C and D

stated that financial compulsion was what pushed these women to take up paid employment. Another finding that emerged from the study was that in the unorganised sector, women entered the workforce when they have no children but then left the job when they became mothers. This however, is in contrast to the findings of Bharathy (2013) who reports that many women look for work after they have fulfilled their domestic responsibilities like raising their children up to a certain age.

Further, the study also revealed that the evolution of the nuclear family necessitates the need for two pay checks in order to meet the economic needs of the family. During the course of the interview the predominant view of the man being the breadwinner was being challenged as a considerable number of the women respondents stated that it was not possible for a man alone to support his family. This has led to a change in what Schutz refers to as the "recipe knowledge" or the "stock knowledge" that puts men in the provider role and women in the dependent role. Further, applying Giddens' discourse on structure, we find that working women as agents in the society or structure are changing the rules and resources of the society by taking up roles which were earlier within the male domain.

Seeking paid employment is not only for economic reasons. Rather it can also be looked as a factor to enhance one's status and along with it to empower oneself. The personal desire of the educated woman to pursue employment with the hope of putting her education to use and realising her higher aspirations or being career oriented was also seen as encouraging motive to join work for the respondents. Instances of being conditioned by one's habitus in the choice of one's occupation were also revealed in the study. Further, women wanted to gain status in the family

and society by being financially independent and this was another motive as to why women wanted to join work. Modern societies today accord immense importance to the status that arises out of the position that one holds in one's workplace and the income derived from it. Sikkim is also no exception to this change. Achieved status hence holds primacy over ascribed status which was also proved true in the case of the emerging socio cultural reality of Sikkim. This thought has been echoed in Talcott Parson's framework of pattern variables as well wherein he speaks of the shift of the pattern variables from ascription to achievement and this serves as a reflection of modern society. Sikkim while rooted in traditional structure is a society in transition. Pierre Bourdieu too recognises the role of cultural capital in bestowing or denying status position to individuals while also allowing for social mobility within a stratified society.

Therefore, the reasons to take up paid employment indicated no variations in terms of ethnicity, religion or caste. Rather, the reasons were more class specific. For instance, women belonging to Group C and Group D jobs opted to work for financial necessity while those in the Group B and A category worked for more for self fulfilment, higher aspirations and career choice.

As shown in the earlier chapters, any form of income for women facilitated her bargaining position and enhanced her status in her household. Paid work was viewed as an enabling factor for all the respondents in the study as it gave them a sense of purpose and they felt that it had a positive effect on their image and status. Collins' idea of power resource (social and work position) was in the respondent's control and this was what facilitated and enhanced her status in everyday life. Thus, there was no ethnic, class or caste variation noticed in this instance.

However, these are only one side to the story. The changes that the society is undergoing with regard to the changes in the roles of men and women are bound to be accompanied by some degree of stress and tension. The empirical findings too revealed that the transition has not been so smooth. Information pertaining to the work culture of these women revealed that mental stress, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and depression were some of the problems reported from workplace. Some of the respondents faced discrimination even when they worked hard and well which is again, reflective of patriarchal domination wherein women are seen as the weaker sex and therefore incapable of performing well outside of her home. Discrimination was also faced by women in professions which were traditionally male dominated indicating that the society is yet to be comfortable with the idea of women working outside the comfort zones dictated by our culture. A very contradictory situation was revealed where women in positions of power discriminated against women in lower positions especially in the selection of subordinates. This can be substantiated with a study "An Overview of Attitudes toward Women in Law Enforcement" by Koenig (1978) wherein it was reported that men and women police officers preferred to have male partners as colleagues. This can be largely attributed to gender socialisation in strong patriarchal values not only for man but also for the women.

Empowerment vis-a-vis paid work was another area explored in the study. Questions on decision making, financial control and ownership of property were raised among the women to analyse empowerment among them. The responses on empowerment showed a positive indication with some degree of ethnic variation revealed. Inter class variation was also reflected regarding the query on whether the women spent time and money on themselves. Women working in the Group C and D category spent limited

time and money on themselves. The empirical findings of the study indicate that the overall trend in decision making is neither autocratic nor patriarchal. Rather, the inclination is towards an egalitarian understanding in decision making whereby mutual consultation among married couples describe the decision making process. Traditionally, the notion of consulting the lady of the house or "ghar-ko-ama" in any decision making process related to the family or the household existed in Sikkim. Thus, consultation with the wives in decision making is not a recent change that is being witnessed. However, what is different today is that the education and employment has further enhanced the decision making power and the bargaining position of the women to the extent that they sometimes are the ones who take the initiative and lead the decision making process.

Contextually locating, the scenario in Sikkim provides an interesting paradox. The macro level indicators for women and few studies (Bhasin, 1987; Bhadra, 1992; Bhattacharya, 1994;) available on women in Sikkim has indicated that the women in Sikkim enjoys active participation in economic activities, in decision making process, contribution to the family income as well as high socio cultural autonomy. In other words, her presence in the public sphere is visible but at the same time she is also responsible for the private sphere or her home. In many cases, women are subjected to dual role or what is termed as double exploitation. Therefore, one of the objectives of the study was to examine role conflict plaguing the working women and her attempts to resolve it. Hochschild (1989) in describing the challenge of trying to manage work and family uses the term second shift to describe this double burden for the working women which according to her is affecting the careers and marriages of these women. The narratives in the study amply reveals that role conflict is a big challenge that the working women of Sikkim often confronts in her day to day activities. This gets more

visible when the children are small and need constant supervision or when the elders in the family fall sick. It also gets aggravated when the working women are caught in a dilemma between the standards laid down by the society as well as with their own internalized beliefs about what is expected of the proficient worker and a good mother - values which are sometimes incompatible.

Another research question addressed in the study was to explore if any traditional gender-roles was being reproduced in the everyday work routine of the men and women. A gradual change was noticed in the unorganised sector wherein it was shown that the respondents shared a more egalitarian relationship with their husbands when it came to the distribution of household tasks showing class variation. This egalitarian distribution of household tasks was more obvious in the case of nuclear families. This change in the unorganised sector is likely due to the economic condition of the respondents wherein affordability of paid help and time saving household gadgets may not be possible. Similarly, the case studies also showed that the working women in Sikkim also rely on family members for the sharing of household chores and child care. There was little or no ethnic variation reflected in the above instance.

At the outset of the study, there were indicators especially earlier studies which showed that the women in Sikkim are not subjected to gender bias but the case studies collected from the field work has proved otherwise. Gender bias appears to be institutionalised in various forms and is displayed in everyday life. It is done unintentionally or in a manner in which the individual is completely unaware because this bias has become a part of the individual's habitus and therefore, no second thought is given to it. For instance, many respondents in the present study accept that

housework and childcare are the responsibility of the womenfolk. To paraphrase Berger and Luckmann, this social reality of sexual division of labour is created when men and women internalise the objectified reality which is confining house work and child care to women alone. The internalisation of this notion translates into the individual's subjective reality which then becomes a social reality or an accepted social order. Hence, it gives rise to the differing gender roles in the society. The situation is not much different in the present study.

The bastion of patriarchy is often carried forward by the females themselves because of their gender conditioning and socialisation. For instance, in the present study, it was revealed that delegation of housework to the women was stressed upon by the women themselves. This inculcation of gender roles begins from childhood socialisation itself. Among the different ethnic communities taken into consideration in the present study, the Nepali community had the least representation of husbands helping their wives with household work. This low representation of husbands in sharing house chores could be attributed to the relatively more patriarchal values that exists among the Nepali community who are basically Hindus.

The study highlighted that with both the parents going to work, providing for child care during working hours is a problem most working parents face today. The problem has become more pronounced with the increase in the nuclear families and the breakdown of joint families. The situation gets further aggravated when the children fall ill. Higher number of women stayed back from work to take care of sick children indicating that child care is still seen as woman's work and her primary responsibility while also affirming the belief that a woman's role as an earner is

secondary compared to her role as a mother and a wife. Hence, the working role of a woman continue to be sidelined in favour of her role as a mother and a wife.

The patriarchal notion of the ancestral property being passed on along the male line was also revealed in the study. Even though the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 has been extended to Sikkim yet, the Bhutias and the Lepchas continue to be governed by their customary laws with regard to succession, marriage and inheritance. Family property is retained in the name of the male head of the family and women lack legal rights on it. However, with the Sikkim Succession Act, 2008, unmarried daughters have been given the right of inheritance in the father's property along with the sons. But the same Act also reinforces the customary practices of inheritance of excluding daughters who are married to somebody from outside the state. The empirical data shows varying means whereby the respondents have come to acquire ownership rights over movable and immovable property. Few case studies revealed that the land in the name of the women was obtained in the form of gifts from the parents. However, higher number of respondents had acquired property, vehicles, jewellery and other assets in their name through purchase with their own earnings. Therefore, this further indicates that the roles and relations of the women in the Sikkimese society are changing since land and house in the earlier generation property were legally registered in the name of the male members in the family.

Among the jobs that were looked into as a part of the field work for this study, the job of a policewoman which was traditionally regarded in a masculine domain, was considered the most challenging when it came balancing home and work. Apart from the unconventional working hours, the police women in this study also had to face suspicions from their husbands as their job entailed them to spend long hours with

other policemen. This was especially relevant in the context of Group C and D police women because they had little say or choice over the nature of their duties or their working hours.

However, despite the difficulties confronted by the respondents in managing work alongside their homes, few of them spoke of quitting their jobs. The perks of having a job that brought income which was virtually necessary to maintain a comfortable life style was seen as far too advantageous and outweighed the difficulties in balancing home and work.

One core objective in the study was to examine the problems of the working women as a consequence of their dual role. Some of the problems that they confronted were work induced misunderstanding, difficulty in discharging familial responsibilities, managing social obligations, lack of leisure time for the respondents which may trigger psychological or mental guilt among the working women.

The exploration regarding the strategies and coping mechanism adopted by the working women to manage home and work, the narratives revealed various solutions such as taking help from one's spouse, from the extended family, sending school going children for private tuitions or to boarding schools, utilising time saving gadgets such as washing machines or rice cookers, hiring help, availing leave from work and prioritising and efficient use of time. This is in contrast to the oral narratives of the women from the earlier generation who often relied on their older children to take care of the younger siblings. Supervision over the children in the earlier times remained lax as the neighbourhood or the community remained small and compact. Moreover, paid work was less demanding on the women. Women often lived with their in laws and child supervision and house work was often shared with the other

women within the extended household. However, in the present times, structural change, impact of individualistic orientation and the breakdown of collectivity in a society that is in transition has led to changes within the family and the society often proving dysfunctional for the working women.

On the basis of the above discussions it can be safely concluded that traditional gender roles appears to have changed more slowly as a result of the slow change in cultural values and normative standards and also due to the reproduction of patriarchy which is practised and observed amply in various forms in everyday life. Development in technology, means of communication, education, employment are being realised in the society here but the pace of change in notion and ideas of gender roles and traditional values does not match the change in material culture and values therefore, indicating cultural lag. Hence, the working women are often trapped in this dilemma of traditional values and career demands.

The lived experiences of the respondents revealed the persistence of the double burden that the working women in Sikkim endure in their everyday lives, which they regard as a normal course of social reality. There is no doubt that women in Sikkim match up to the empowerment indices but what lurks underneath the shadow of empowerment are instances of double exploitation wherein her visibility in the public sphere has to be managed with her traditional role in the private sphere as well, which the working women have accepted it as a part of their social reality.

Thus, based on the empirical findings it is suggested that there is an urgent emphasis to look for alternatives to provide social support services to the working women in Sikkim while keeping in mind that the real change required is a change in the value systems of a patriarchal society. The state could also extend help by providing

monitored and safe child care facilities such as nurseries and day-care centres so that employed women can focus on their work with the knowledge that their children are being well taken care of. Flexible family leave policies, friendly human resource management policies and flexible work timings should also be introduced to encourage more women participation at the higher levels of decision making.

Further, women should be socialised to take up more challenging assignments with confidence and reorientation of gender roles without much guilt. Socialisation of the young children should be gender neutral in nature so as to curtail the principles of patriarchy within the family and the wider society at large. This would help in creating a cooperative environment at home which would prevent the women from taking on responsibilities both in the private domain as well as in the public domain and thus, aid in the aversion of stress and role-conflict on the women. Finally, society's perceptions towards working women need to change taking into consideration the conflicting demands that are placed on them. While this may take time, women on their part, must start making efforts in transforming the stereotypical ways in which they are perceived, and this can be done by making some changes within their individual families.

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Appendix I

Notification No. J (47)/ 385/GEN/DOP-Pt-II

Compassionate appointment

16

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL, ADM. REFORMS, TRAINING, PUBLIC
GRIEVANCES, CAREER OPTIONS & EMPLOYMENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT
AND CHIEF MINISTER'S SELF EMPLOYMENT SCHEME
GANGTOK

No. J(47)/ 385 /GEN/DOP-Pt-II

Dated: 05/05/2011

NOTIFICATION

In supersession of all the earlier notification/ Office Memorandum on the subject, the Governor of Sikkim is hereby pleased to lay down the following guidelines for giving employment on compassionate grounds to the widow/natural son/natural daughter of a Government servant who dies in harness, namely:-

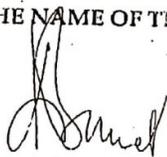
- (1) The compassionate appointments shall be applicable to widow/natural son/natural daughter of deceased employees of Group 'C' and 'D' category who die-in-harness. The Compassionate appointment shall be made only up to the post carrying the Pay Band of ₹ 5200-20200 and Grade Pay of ₹ 3400 and in the case of Teachers only carrying the Pay Band of ₹ 9300 - 34800 and Grade Pay of ₹ 4200.
- (2) The Compassionate appointment shall be considered only in the same department where the Government servant dies in harness. In case the deceased Government employee was on deputation the parent department shall consider the compassionate appointment as per rules.
- (3) Appointment on compassionate ground cannot be claimed as a matter of right. The main motive of compassionate appointment shall be to provide immediate relief to the family members in distress. When a family member of a deceased Government employee is already working under the Government no other member of the family shall be considered for compassionate appointment.
- (4) Rule 4(4) of Sikkim Government Establishment Rules, 1974 shall apply in all such cases of compassionate appointment.
- (5) Applications for compassionate appointment shall be considered only within a period of three years from the death of the Government employee.
- (6) Every department shall constitute a Committee comprising of the Head of Department/Head of Office and any Officer nominated by the Head of the Department. This nominated officer shall normally be an officer of the concerned section where the deceased government servant was serving. All recommendation for compassionate appointment shall be made by the Committee.

Contd...../-

8
(17)

- (7) The responsibility of the Committee shall be :-
- (i) to verify whether any family member of the applicant is in Government service;
 - (ii) to consider aspects like amount of family pension/gratuity/Insurance/property holding/ economic status of dependant while verifying the financial status of the family in distress.
- (8) The Committee should also be fully satisfied while recommending the admissible relaxation of minimum age of 14 (fourteen) years / educational qualification by giving 2 (two) years time to acquire the required qualification etc.
- (9) The Committee shall be held responsible in the event of misrepresentation of facts.
- (10) Category-wise Roster including 30% reservation for women shall be applied after Government approval of the Compassionate appointment.
- (11) All appointees shall sign an Undertaking stating that no one in the family is in Government service.
- (12) Application for Compassionate appointment should be submitted in the prescribed form enclosed herewith.

BY ORDER AND IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNOR.



ADDITIONAL SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT
DEPTT. OF PERSONNEL, ADM. REFORMS, TRAINING, PUBLIC
GRIEVANCES, CAREER OPTIONS & EMPLOYMENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT
AND CHIEF MINISTER'S SELF EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Memo. No.1595-1597/GEN/DOP

Dated: 05/05/2011

Copy for information to:-

1. All Secretaries/ Heads of Department,
2. Additional Secretary, Home Department for publication in the Gazette,
3. Director, AATI
4. File and
5. Guard file.

ATTESTED
M. CALI

Appendix II

Notification No. J (47)/Pt.II/139/GEN/DOP



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
DEPTT. OF PERSONNEL, ADM. REFORMS, TRAINING, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES,
CAREER OPTIONS & EMPLOYMENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND
CHIEF MINISTER'S SELF EMPLOYMENT SCHEME
GANGTOK

No. J(47)/Pt.-II/139/GEN/DOP

Dated: 10/7/08

NOTIFICATION

The Governor of Sikkim is hereby pleased to make the following amendment in the Notification No. 88/GEN/DOP, dated 21/3/1994 regarding employment on compassionate grounds, namely:-

1. In the said notification for the existing paragraph 4, the following shall be substituted, namely:-

"4. Appointment on compassionate ground shall be admissible only to widow, natural son or daughter of group 'C' and 'D' employees who dies in harness".

BY ORDER AND IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNOR

SPECIAL SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT
DEPTT. OF PERSONNEL, ADM. REFORMS, TRAINING, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES,
CAREER OPTIONS & EMPLOYMENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND
CHIEF MINISTER'S SELF EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Memo No. 190-72/GEN/DOP

Dated 10.7.08

Copy for information to:-

1. All Secretaries / Heads of Department,
2. Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister,
3. Special Secretary, Home Department....for publication in the official gazette,
4. File &
5. Guard file.

Appendix III

Sikkim Succession Act, 2008



Gangtok Monday 28th July, 2008 No. 308

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
LAW DEPARTMENT
GANGTOK

No. 22/LD/P/2008

Date: 24.07.2008

NOTIFICATION

The following Act passed by the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and having received the assent of the Governor on 28th day of June, 2008 is hereby published for general information:-

THE SIKKIM SUCCESSION ACT, 2008
(Act No. 22 of 2008)
AN ACT

to provide for law relating to succession to movable and immovable properties of Sikkimese people.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Sikkim in the Fifty-ninth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PRELIMINARY

*Short title,
extent and
commencement.*

1. (1) This Act may be called The Sikkim Succession Act, 2008.
(2) It extends to the whole of Sikkim.
(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may by notification in the Official Gazette appoint and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

*Application
of the Act.*

2. The Act shall apply to:
 - a) any person who possesses Sikkim Subject Certificate/Certificate of Identification (COI);
 - b) descendants of Sikkim Subject Certificate holder identified through COI.

Note:- A woman who has married a non-Sikkimese or has acquired foreign citizenship shall not be eligible to enjoy the rights of descendants and heirs held as descendants under this Act.

Note:- Descendents include sons or daughters and their lineal descendents and include those as specified in Schedule I.

Note:- Descendants include sons or daughters and their lineal descendants and include those as specified in Schedule I.

Definitions.

3. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

- (a) "Act" means The Sikkim Succession Act, 2008;
- (b) "administrator" means a person appointed by competent authority to administer the estate of a deceased person;
- (c) "Government" means State Government of Sikkim;
- (d) "heir" means any person male or female who is entitled to succeed to the property of an intestate under this Act;
- (e) "intestate" means a person is deemed to die intestate in respect of property of which he has not made testamentary disposition capable of taking effect;
- (f) "minor" means a person who (has not attained the age of majority) or has not completed the age of eighteen years;
- (g) "probate" means copy of a will certified under the seal of court of competent jurisdiction with a grant of administration to the estate of the testator;
- (h) "Sikkimese" means persons belonging to Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali Community of Sikkimese origin identified through Sikkim Subject Certificate or Certificate of Identification;
- (i) "will" means the legal declaration of the intention of a testator with respect to his property which he desires to be carried out after his death.

Act not to apply to certain person/class or community.

4. (1) The State Government may by notification in the Official Gazette exempt the applicability of this Act to the members of community or tribe or sect or such other category etc. as may be specified if it is considered expedient to do so.
- (2) The State Government may by notification withdraw or revoke such exemption prospectively.

PART I
Intestate Succession

Intestate property.

5. (1) A person is deemed to die intestate in respect of all property of which he has not made a testamentary disposition.
- (2) When the intestate has left no widow his property shall go to his lineal descendants or to those not being lineal descendants according to rules of succession contained herein after and if he has left none shall go to the next of descendants from his brother or sister if unmarried or abandoned by husband.
- (3) A husband shall have the same right in respect of his wife's property, if she dies intestate, as a widow has in respect of her husband's property if he dies intestate.

Devolution of property.

6. (1) When a male Sikkimese who dies after the commencement of this Act having at the time of his death an interest in the property or has a self-acquired property, the property shall devolve to the extent of his interest by survivorship upon the surviving members of his family which includes his wife, sons and daughters if unmarried in equal proportion:

Provided that if the deceased has left behind him a surviving female relative who claims interest in such property in such cases the property shall devolve to the extent she is entitled.

(2) If two or more heirs succeed together to the property of an intestate they shall take property *per capita and as inheriting respective shares in equal proportion.*

(3) The property of an intestate devolves upon the wife or the husband or upon those who are of the kindred of the deceased as per the Schedule.

(4) Where an intestate has left a widow without any lineal descendants, the property shall devolve to the next of the descendent of the brother of the deceased husband in the manner as specified in the Schedule.

(5) Where a female heir or descendant marries a person who does not possess Sikkim Subject Certificate/COI or has acquired foreign citizenship, such female heir/ descendant shall follow the personal law of her husband and as such shall not acquire any interest in the property:

(6) Where the parents of a minor die intestate such property shall be looked after by administrator if none of the relatives of the deceased within the eligible category of heir comes forward to look after the property.

(7) Where a person has no son, the property will devolve on the daughter, subject to sub-section (5) of Section 6.

(8) An abandoned or divorced woman having the liability to take care of the children and has no source of income, shall have the right to a share in equal proportion along with other heirs to the property of the husband:

Provided that where woman has deserted her husband with or without children and has remarried shall forfeit her right to her share in the husband's property. However, the children shall be eligible to their share of property as per the law.

(9) The property of an intestate shall devolve in equal shares among all the heirs.

Right of child in womb

7. Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) of Section 6, a child who was in the womb at the time of the death of an intestate and who is subsequently born alive shall have the same right to succeed to the intestate as if he or she had been born before the death of the intestate.

Preference of heir.

8. Heir related to an intestate by full blood shall be preferred to heirs related by half blood, if the nature of relationship is the same in other respect.

Disqualification of heirs.

9. (1) A person who commits murder or abets the commission of murder shall be disqualified from inheriting the property of the person murdered.

(2) If any person is disqualified from inheriting any property under this Act, it shall devolve as if such person had died before the intestate.

Escheat.

10. If an intestate has left no heir to succeed to his or her property in accordance with the provisions of this Act, such property shall devolve on the Government and the Government shall take the property subject to all the obligations and liabilities to which an heir would have been subject to.

The State Government may, by Notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

PART II

Testamentary succession

Testamentary succession.

11. Every person of sound mind not being a minor may dispose of his property by Will.

Will obtained by fraud etc.

12. A Will or any part of a Will, the making of which has been caused by fraud or coercion or importunity is void.

Will may be revoked or altered.

13. A will may be revoked or altered by the maker of it at any time when he is competent to dispose of his property by Will.

Execution of Will.

14. A Will shall be executed according to the following rules:-

- (a) The testator shall sign or shall affix his mark to the Will or it shall be signed by some other person in his presence by his direction.
- (b) The signature or the mark of the testator or the signature of the person signing for him shall be so placed that it shall appear that it was intended to give effect to the Will.
- (c) The Will shall be attested by two or more witnesses.

SCHEDULE

Heirs in Class I

1. Son, daughter, widow, mother, son of predeceased son, daughter of a predeceased son, widow of a predeceased son.

Heirs in Class II

1. Son's daughter's son
2. Son's daughter's daughter
3. Daughter's son's son
4. Daughter's son's daughter
5. Brother's son
6. Sister's sons
7. Brother's daughter
8. Sister's daughter

Class II heirs shall come into play only in the event of Class I heir not being available.

By Order.

R..K PURKAYASTHA (SSJS)
LR-cum-Secretary
Law Department

File No. 16 (82) LD/P/2008