

## Chapter 3

# Fibre Products in Village Activities and the Role of Markets

### Introduction

Natural fibres and their products were very important before the introduction of artificially synthesised polymer-based products. However, natural fibre-based products are still used extensively in mountainous regions (as described in Chapter 2) because of various factors, e.g., free and easy availability of raw materials and cheap, durable products. Several mechanisms exist for manufacturing and distributing these fibre products. The details are given in the following sections.

### **Fibre Products in the Rural Household Economy**

Village communities, irrespective of geographic locations, have widespread working knowledge of fibre extraction and of making products from plant fibres. However, specialised or skilled knowledge is sometimes confined to a particular caste in localised pockets because of: (i) the avail-

ability of plants (e.g., *Girardiana*) and (ii) specialised use of products (e.g., use of fishing nets in villages along river sides or paper for horoscopes).

The artisans specialised in common fibre products (*Grewia* and *Cannabis*) are known as *khokhee*. As mentioned earlier, the skill of a *khokhee* is confined to a particular group (caste). Several methods (Figure 3.1) can be identified for manufacturing and distributing products within a village system. Making various fibre products for daily use has played a key role in strengthening the symbiosis between various communities within a village. This activity is carried out in two ways: (i) in the form of a small household industry in which both the extraction of fibre and the making of products are carried out by an artisan, and (ii) raw plant fibre is provided to an artisan to make one particular product. Irrespective of the approach, the artisan receives food in lieu of his services. Sharing of outputs (food grain by farmers and fibre products

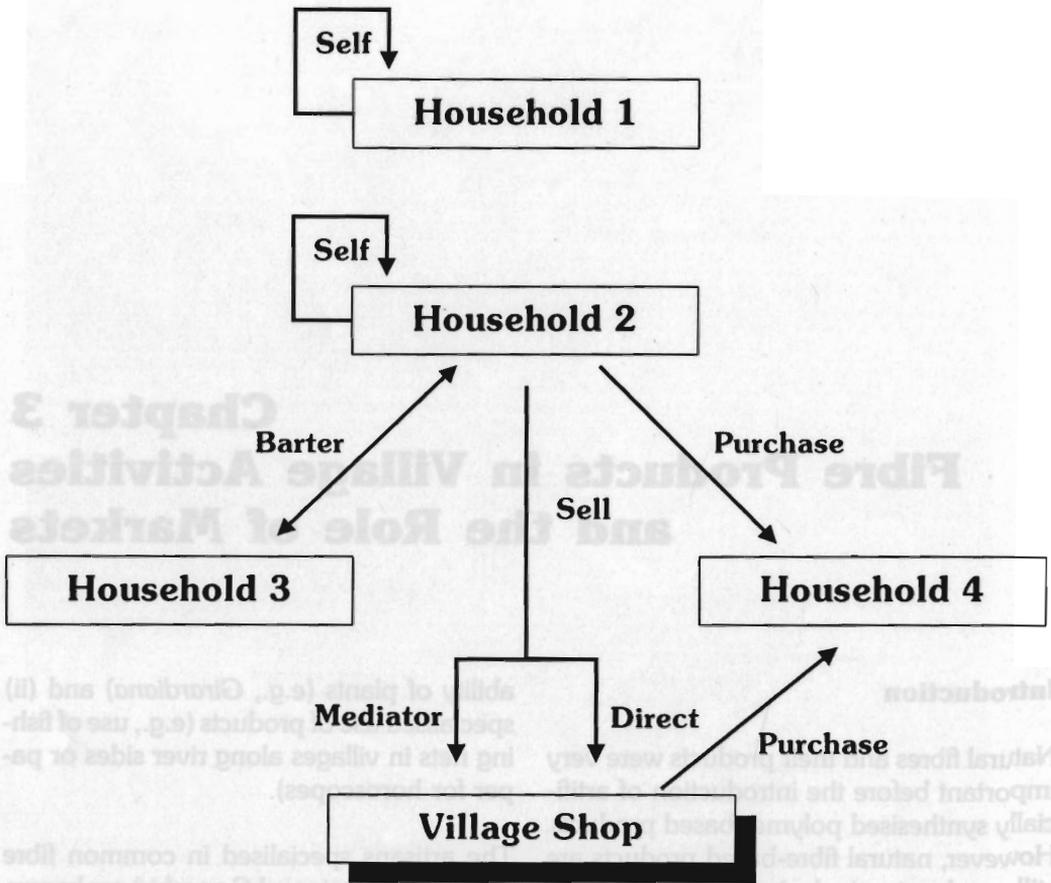


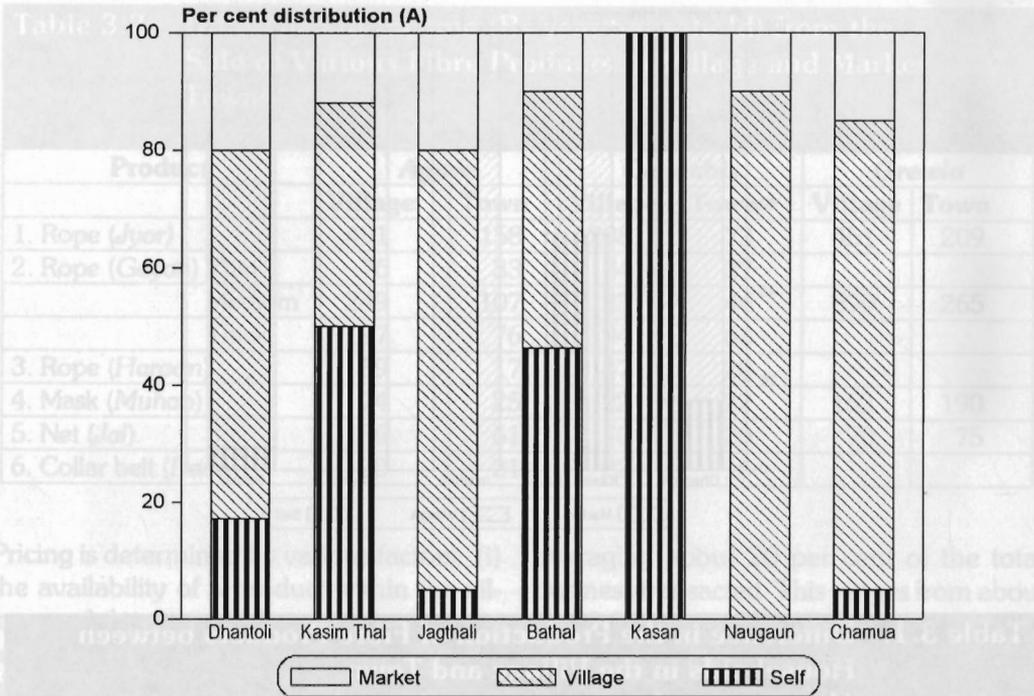
Figure 3.1: Trade Linkages between Different Households and/or the Village

by artisans through a barter system) within a village community is a common practice throughout the Central Himalayan mountains.

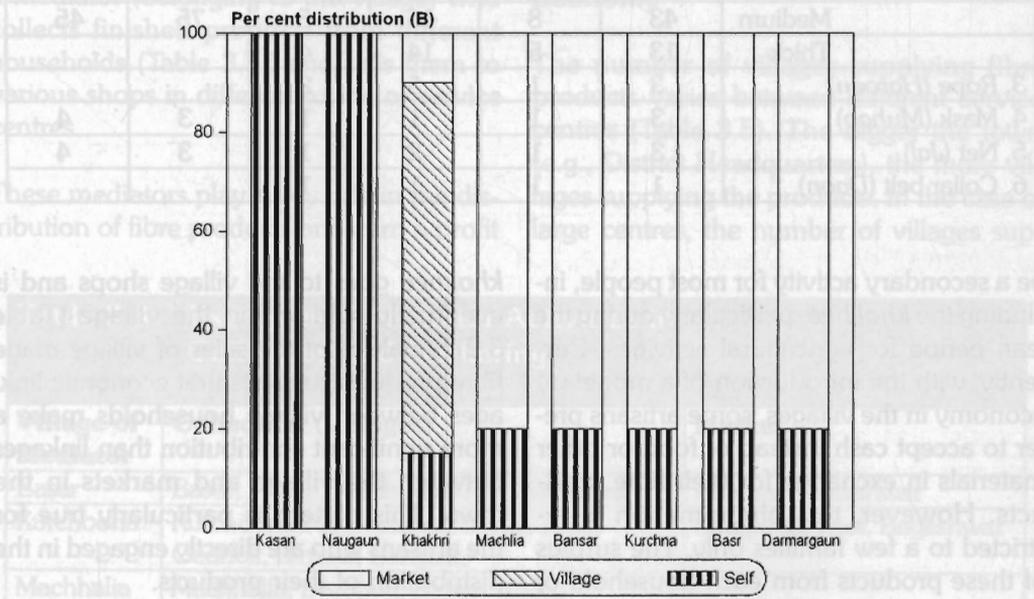
The pattern of exchange and distribution of fibre products of three main species (*Grewia*, *Cannabis*, and *Agave*) is significantly diverse among species as well as in different villages for a given species (Figure 3.2). These diverse patterns depend upon: (i) access by road to the main service cen-

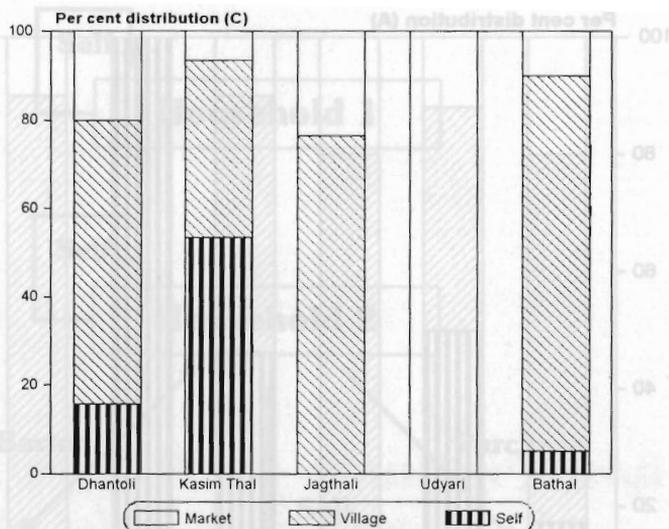
tres (e.g., Almora and Bageshwar), (ii) demand within the village, and (iii) one's own requirements. An analysis of proportional distribution of different products made by an average household or artisan (Table 3.1) indicates that most products, particularly those related to livestock and daily household operations, is used within the village.

Manufacturing of these natural fibre products did not appear to be the main occupation of villagers; rather, it was observed to



**Figure 3.2: Distribution of Fibre Products (A) Cannabis, (B) Grewia, and (C) Agave for Personal Use, within the Village and Market Trade**





**Table 3.1: Difference in the Production of Fibre Products between Households in the Village and Town (Average number per item per household per year)**

Product	Agave		Cannabis		Grewia	
	Village	Town	Village	Town	Village	Town
1. Rope ( <i>Jyor</i> )	49	15	29	8	58	43
2. Rope ( <i>Gayan</i> ) Thin	23	10	27	11		
Medium	43	8	16	5	75	45
Thick	13	5	14	4		
3. Rope ( <i>Haroon</i> )	3	1	5	2		
4. Mask ( <i>Muhao</i> )	3	1	1	1	3	4
5. Net ( <i>Jal</i> )	3	1	2	1	3	4
6. Collar belt ( <i>Daon</i> )	1	1	1	1		

be a secondary activity for most people, including the *khokhee*, particularly during the lean period for agricultural activities. Currently, with the introduction of a monetary economy in the villages, some artisans prefer to accept cash instead of food or other materials in exchange for their fibre products. However, this phenomenon is restricted to a few families only. The surplus of these products from each household or

*khokhee* goes to the village shops and is eventually sold within the village (Table 3.2) Analysis of the sales of village-made fibre products suggests that economic linkages between village households make a more significant contribution than linkages between the village and markets in the town. This pattern is particularly true for the artisans who are directly engaged in the distribution of their products.

**Table 3.2: Difference in Income (Rs/year/household) from the Sale of Various Fibre Products in Village and Market Towns**

Product	Agave		Cannabis		Grewia	
	Village	Town	Village	Town	Village	Town
1. Rope ( <i>Jyor</i> )	491	158	238	73	451	209
2. Rope ( <i>Gayan</i> ) Thin	76	33	84	37		
Medium	249	107	123	44	899	265
Thick	197	76	194	63		
3. Rope ( <i>Haroon</i> )	39	17	47	20		
4. Mask ( <i>Muhao</i> )	74	25	22	22	152	190
5. Net ( <i>Jal</i> )	136	61	70	20	70	75
6. Collar belt ( <i>Daon</i> )	20	21	22	16		

Pricing is determined by various factors: (i) the availability of a product within the village and the demand for a product and its availability in the village market; (ii) time available to visit markets in town, particularly when the markets are at a distance from the village; and (iii) cash needed to buy the items needed.

Fibre products are also marketed through a mediator (belonging to the village) who collects finished products from different households (Table 3.3.) and sells them to various shops in different towns or service centres.

These mediators play a key role in the distribution of fibre products and earn a profit

averaging about 20 per cent of the total business transacted. This ranges from about Rs 20,000 to Rs 75,000 per annum (Table 3.4). A higher profit margin was observed in the sale of ropes and *Gayan* (20-40%) than in the products that involve complex weaving, i.e., masks and nets (e.g., *Muhao* and *Jao*).

### **Role of Market Towns in the Rural Economy**

The number of villages supplying fibre products varies between different service centres (Table 3.5). The bigger the town (e.g., District Headquarters), the more villages supplying the products. In the case of large centres, the number of villages sup-

**Table 3.3: Examples of Mediator Activities in Collection and Marketing**

Village of Mediator	Collection (Villages)	Market
Basar	Basar, Thaily, Kurchoona Aar, Kaulipara	Almora, Someshwar
Kurchoona	Kurchoona Par, Kafalkot, Naula, Jyoli, Gadholi, Bimola, Bangsar,	Kathpuria, Kosi, Bageshwar
Machhalia	Machhalia, Darbhag, Baburr Khola	

**Table 3.4: Business, Profit Margins of Mediators and Individual Profit from Products in Percentages**

Mediator	Total business transacted (Rs per year)	Total profit share (%)	Individual profit share of products				
			Rope	Gayam	Gayam	Muhao	Jao
Mr. N. Kandpal	75,000	22.6	30	20	25	14	11
Mr. K. Kandpal	74,750	19.4	30	20	26	14	10
Mr. Prem Ram	36,700	22.6	22	25	27	16	10
Mr. Jashod Ram	19,850	16.5	34	25	20	10	11

**Table 3.5: Statistics of Supplier Village and Purchaser Village from Various Market Towns and Service Centres**

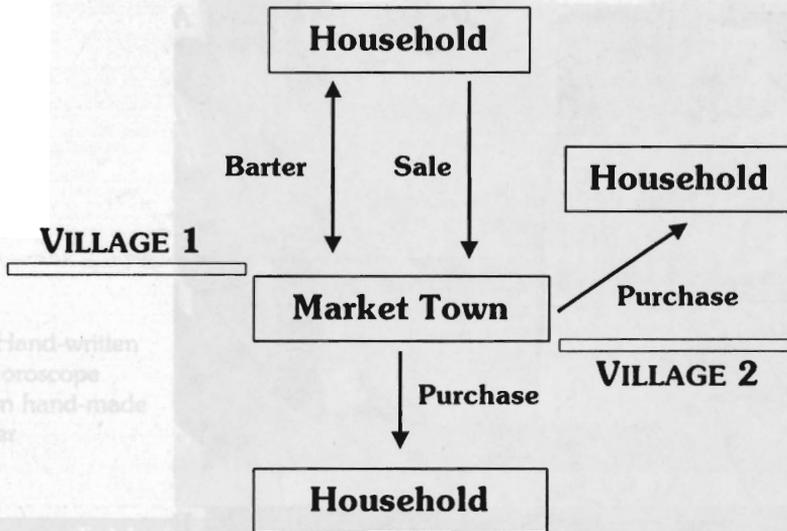
Market	Villages		Ratio	Supply to the same villages
	Supplier	Purchaser		
<b>District Headquarters</b>				
Almora	23	8	0.34	0
Bageshwar	23	12	0.52	12
<b>Block Headquarters</b>				
Berinag	15	12	0.8	10
Dhaulchina	2	3	1.5	1
Bhainsiachana	2	5	2.5	2
Takula	6	5	0.8	4
<b>Service Centres</b>				
Kotmanya	4	6	1.5	4
Dharamghar	3	4	1.3	1
Jageshwar	2	5	2.5	0
Bitholi	3	4	1.3	0

plying products exceeded those buying; in small centres, the number of villages buying products was more.

The commerce in fibre products from and to market towns overlaps between: (i) supply from and to the same village, and (ii) linkages between two villages (Figure 3.3). One interesting observation was that the mechanism was common at all service centres, except at the District Headquarters and

the small service centre of Jageshwar (Table 3.5).

The marketing mechanism also varies with the method of payment to an artisan. Some artisans prefer the barter system and take food or other subsistence items in lieu of their products and, therefore, sell their products within the village. Others prefer cash and, therefore, mostly sell in the market or to middlemen.



**Figure 3.3: Trade Linkages between Two Villages and a Common Market**

The cost of fibre products varies with the plant species used. This is dealt with in later sections. The term 'selling price' stands for the price paid by the shopkeeper to an artisan.

*Cannabis sativa*

The range of prices for various hemp products is given in Table 3.6. These give an average picture of the various markets located in villages and towns. However, products such as *Budla* or *Kuthla* (Plate 3.1) seldom come to the market because too much time is required to prepare these items and returns are not satisfactory. In addition there are cheaper and better substitutes for these in the market.

*Girardiana heterophylla*

Only one product (small or large fishing nets) of this species has cash value.

*Grewia oppositifolia*

Fibre products from this plant are easily available in different markets in the region.

*Agave sisalana*

The products of this species are not common in all markets but are considered to be superior to the same products made from other fibres.

*Daphne papyracea*

The only known fibre product, paper (Plate 3.2), is not available in the market any more.

It appears from Tables 3.6 to 3.9 that fibre products of each plant species have a certain market value. However, in any market, plant products of all or a particular species may not necessarily be available in shops dealing in fibre products (Figure 3.4). An analysis of the availability of products



A



B



C

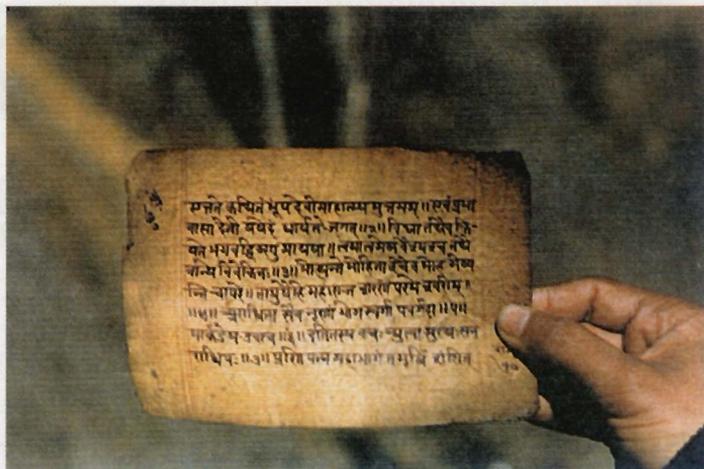
**Plate 3.1:** Various types of cloth made of *Cannabis* fibre

A) Full length *Kuthla* for fodder collection and carriage

B) A new and old piece of *Kuthla*

C) A full mat

**Plate 3.2:** Hand-written (traditional horoscope document) on hand-made *Daphne* paper



**Table 3.6: Selling Price of Finished Products made of Cannabis Fibre**

Product	Local name	Selling Price Range (Rs per piece)
1. Net	<i>Jao</i>	20 - 40
2. Rope	<i>Jyor</i>	6 - 8
3. Rope (Thin)	<i>Gayan</i>	2 - 4
4. Rope (Medium)	<i>Gayan</i>	4 - 12
5. Rope (Thick)	<i>Gaya</i>	12 - 18
6. Rope	<i>Barr</i>	20
7. Rope	<i>Jutora, Haroon, Nara</i>	6 - 14
8. Carrier bag	<i>Seenk</i>	10 - 30
9. Cloth	<i>Kuthla</i>	100 - 150
10. Cloth	<i>Budla, Badar</i>	100 - 200
11. Mask	<i>Muhao</i>	15 - 25
12. Collar Belt	<i>Daon</i>	12 - 20
13. Basket	<i>Jali</i>	20

of different species at a shop shows a diverse pattern within a market and among various markets. Products of three plant species (*Cannabis*, *Grewia*, and *Agave*) were available in all the shops at Bhainsiachana and Takula, however, shops at Jageshwar deal in products made from *Cannabis* fibre only.

Further analysis of availability of a particular product in different markets indicates

that products related to livestock (*Gayan* and *Muhao*), household activities (ropes), and fodder collection (*Jao*) are frequently available in different markets; other specialised products (e.g., cloth) are available in one or two markets only (Table 3.10)

An important observation regarding the availability of these products in all markets was that none of the shops dealt exclusively in fibre products (Plate 3.3). Usually, one

**Table 3.7: Selling Price of Fishing Nets made of Girardiana Fibre**

Product	Local name	Price range (Rs per piece)
1. Net (small)	Fatyao	500
2. Net (big)	Jal	700 - 1,000

**Table 3.8: Final Products and Selling Price of Grewia Fibre**

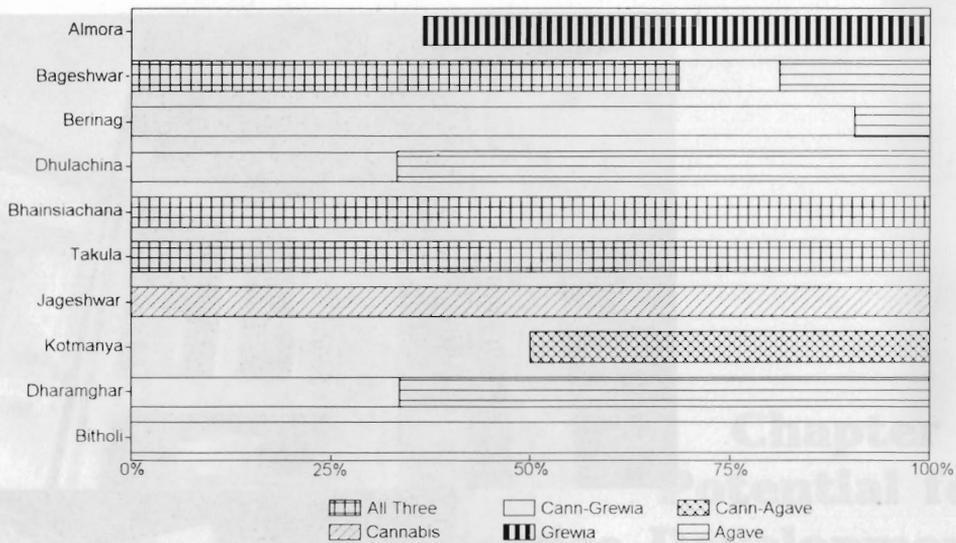
Product	Local name	Price range (Rs per piece)
1. Rope	Jyor	15
2. Rope	Gayan	10 - 14
3. Rope	Jutora	6 - 14
4. Mask	Muhao	25
5. Net	Jao	40 - 50
6. Carry bag	Seenk	15 - 20

**Table 3.9: Products and Selling Price of Agave Fibre**

Product	Local name	Price range (Rs per piece)
1. Rope (Small)	Jyor	8 - 12
2. Rope (Long)	Jyor	20 - 22
3. Rope (Thin)	Gayan	3 - 5
4. Rope (Medium)	Gayan	10 - 12
5. Rope (Thick)	Gayan	8 - 20
6. Rope	Haroon	10 - 14
7. Mask	Muhao	15 - 25
8. Net	Jal	30 - 40
9. Carrier bag	Seenk	15 - 25
10. Collar belt	Daon	15 - 25

**Table 3.10: Product Availability in Percentage of Total Shops Dealing in Each Product in a Market**

Market	Products									
	Rope	Gayan	Muhao	Jao	Haroon	Dao	Kuthala	Budla	Seenk	Jali
Almora	74	100	58	53	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bageshwar	73	100	64	64	9	-	27	27	18	9
Berinag	82	100	36	18	9	18	-	-	-	-
Dhaulchina	100	100	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bhainsachhena	100	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Takula	75	100	75	50	-	-	-	-	25	-
Kotmanya	100	100	90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dharamghar	100	100	33	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jageshwar	67	100	-	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bitholi	100	100	90	90	-	-	-	-	-	-



**Figure 3.4: Distribution pattern of various fibre products available in different markets**

or two shops in small service centres or villages served as small 'super markets' where villagers buy many different products for daily use. In the market towns, these items are available in a variety of shops, e.g., grocery stores, vegetable and tea stalls, etc. Fibre products are considered of secondary importance by shop owners. This can be seen from the annual business transactions (Table 3.11). However, fibre products play an important role in influencing the total business (including other items in the shop) as they help to develop a relationship with customers from the villages.

**Table 3.11: Business in Fibre Products in the Markets under Study**

Market	Income from selling (Rs per year)	
	Range	Average
Almora	160 – 2,220	1,064
Bageshwar	1,008 – 4,500	2,231
Berinag	660 – 2,280	1,214
Dhaulchina	480 – 1,260	752
Bhainsiachana	1,080	1,080
Takula1	1,020 – 2,520	1,540
Kotmanya	96 – 1,776	936
Dharamghar	732 – 1,056	864
Jageshwar	660 – 1,140	702
Bitholi	1,716 – 1,916	1,816

Table 3.7: Selling Price of  
Nets made  
Girardinia

Product	Local Price	Export Price
1. Net		
2. Net		



Table 3.8: Final Price of  
Selling Products of  
Fibre

Product	Local Price	Export Price
1. Bag		
2. Bag		
3. Bag		
4. Bag		
5. Bag		
6. Bag		
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Table 3.10: Product Price of  
Different  
Fibre

Product	Local Price	Export Price
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Plate 3.3: Display of  
different fibre products in  
shops