

A NORDIC JOURNAL ON ASIA BY EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

ASIA IN FOCUS

“Good Work for Good Mothers”:

Commercial Surrogate Motherhood, Femininity and Morality

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The Globalising Effects of Solar Energy Access on Family and Gender Relations in Rural India

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“The Daughters-in-Law Have Become the Mothers-in-Law”:

How New Forms of Capital Create Class Differences within
North-Indian Households

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CECILIE NORDFELDT

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Editors' Introduction

KENNETH BO NIELSEN, KARINA STANDAL, ANNE WALDROP AND HAROLD WILHITE

This special issue on 'family and gender in a globalising India' is based on a seminar on the same topic held in Oslo in early 2016 at the initiative of the Norwegian Network for Asian Studies. The seminar provided the opportunity for several of the contributors to this issue to meet and discuss the ways in which the contradictory trends of globalisation have affected, or have failed to affect, changes to the institutions of family and gender.

It is commonly acknowledged that India has, over the past three decades, been increasingly integrated into globalised markets and flows of ideas, objects, images, people and capital. This has led to profound changes in, for example, the spheres of the economy and cultural production, with global IT and ITES companies setting sail for India, and with Bollywood going truly global. The alluring trope of 'globalising India' is thus often used as a shorthand to subsume a great diversity of economic and socio-cultural changes that have played out on Indian soil over several decades of economic liberalisation. Although necessarily slippery and imprecise, the case studies in the articles that follow use the idea and concept of globalisation as a common frame through which to assess and make sense of the stabilities, slow continuities, as well as the quicker changes that they see occurring in family and gender relations in their specific field sites. The contributions to the issue are all based on fieldwork of considerable duration that has allowed the authors to analyse how global processes interact with particular local societies, and how ordinary people experience, perceive, partake in, and understand the changes that are occurring in everyday life-domains that we see as broadly co-constituted by the institutions of family and gender.

Gender relations in India are often associated with women's status as inferior to men, something which registers in social indicators. Women's participation in the work force is low, maternal mortality is high, literacy among women is considerably lower than among men, and the country's child sex ratio reveals that women are actively discriminated against already in the womb. However, behind such aggregate indicators and statistics lies an enormous diversity. India, after all, has a population a good deal larger than all of Europe combined, and there is enormous variation across regions, communities, classes and contexts. Notions of relatedness that underpin specific arrangements of household, marriage, kin and family are practiced in a variety of ways, and what is common or even hegemonic in the north Indian plains may resonate very poorly with the way these social arrangements work in, say, the Himalayan region, the tribal parts of North-east India, or among various non-Hindu minorities. Nonetheless, across India, the dominant ideal is the joint Hindu family, founded on patriarchal arrangements and

a certain division of both power and responsibility within the family, where men control women's sexuality to secure and reproduce the male lineage. Marriages are conventionally caste-endogamous and village-exogamous, because people that have grown up in the same village regard one another as related, and in many places actually refer to one another as agnates. Wives are most often recruited from outside the village. As they move into the natal households of their husbands and his parents they are expected to perform household chores along with other women in the family, as well as producing and nurturing children, preferably sons. Men, on the other hand, are cast as protectors and decision-makers in the family. Though these ideas have been challenged and in some places, especially in the cities, also partially weakened, they still inform practices in many parts of India. And, importantly, they underpin moral discourses about how women and men should and should not behave. Despite—or perhaps because of—the growing impacts of globalisation, religious and nationalist appeals to assert 'traditional' Hindu ways of life in the domains of family and gender also remain a persistent feature of public life and discourse.

In globalising India women and men are thus affected by and manoeuvre between a number of discourses of 'tradition' and 'modernity' that create new opportunities and the possibility for increased agency, yet they may also lead to a backlash for women. In light of this, the articles that follow present close-up case studies of some of the everyday dilemmas that individuals and families experience and navigate as a consequence of the changes that have come with globalisation.

The articles by Førde and Standal deal explicitly with how specific technological aspects of globalisation have affected gender roles and family hierarchies. Førde presents us with a nuanced analysis of surrogacy and its simultaneously empowering and disempowering consequences for the mostly low-income women who work as surrogates in an industry that comes with obvious moral and social dilemmas when viewed through the prism of family and gender. Standal's article shows how the effects of solar energy electrification of rural communities in Uttar Pradesh work as both empowering and disempowering for women. Standal offers a closer look at how electricity enables globalisation through media, smartphones, and community participation in an international development project. Electricity positively affects women's everyday life, but cultural conceptions of women's moral boundaries simultaneously limit their access to using these resources, something which is further accentuated by the view of many international development practitioners that the role of women is primarily that of homemaker and care-giver.

The articles by Ilkjær and Helland focus on urban India. In her contribution, Helene Ilkjær addresses the dilemmas and challenges facing Indian women who return to India after having worked abroad, where gender roles and expectations on employment, dress and housework are quite different from those that they encounter on their return. Grounded in a textured account of one woman's experiences, the article reveals the difficulties of re-adaptation to life in a cosmopolitan Indian city, Bangalore, and also points to ways in which returnee women are courageously changing notions of what it means to be a modern Indian woman. In view of the many positive effects of globalisation on urban, middle-class women in India, Helland examines the extent to which poor women in a resettlement colony in New Delhi have been 'empowered' through the interventions

of a development project. She finds that the project, because it offered vocational training and was for women only, offered a space for building self-worth and community among the women, and thereby offered a sense of increased empowerment. However, as the project did not challenge traditional gender roles and conflated 'gender' with 'women', it did not contribute to altering larger gender structures and offered what could be called 'empowerment' within 'traditional' boundaries.

In their article, Sareen and Manuel take us far from cosmopolitan New Delhi and Bangalore into the remote mountainous areas of the Himalaya, where the reach of globalisation has had quite different and mainly negative consequences for women. They make the point that the development literature has glossed over the multiple dimensions of gendered marginalisation and inequality in Himalayan communities and use an in-depth qualitative study to fill the knowledge gap. Nordfeldt's article is also concerned with conditions in the Himalayan region and engages with changes in gender relations within families that come about because of larger structural factors that are more indirectly linked to globalisation. Nordfeldt shows how increased levels of education among a new generation of women interface with their husband's earning power in a context of increased labour migration, to alter intra-household relations between women, both within and across generations.

Rich in context and representing the great variety that makes up India, the articles of this special issue reveal that the effect of globalisation on gender empowerment, equality, and family organisation varies considerably geographically, and across the urban/rural divide. The cases thus underline the importance of intersectionality and positionality when analysing the multiple effects of globalisation on people's lives – a woman with grown children (especially sons) will, for example, have more autonomy than her younger bahu, and men who are poor or have low religious/caste status, face discrimination comparable to that experienced by women. As several of the cases show, access to new technologies, media and mobility give members of the younger generation access to outside 'globalising' impulses and ideas about the conduct of social relations of all kinds which act as catalysts for change. Still, it seems that the persistent ghosts of poverty, inequality and social status continue to make manifest themselves in everyday life and to shape the ways that globalisation affects many aspects of social, family and gender relations.

“GOOD WORK FOR GOOD MOTHERS”:

Commercial Surrogate Motherhood, Femininity and Morality

KRISTIN ENGH FØRDE

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among women acting as commercial surrogates in Mumbai, India, this paper explores how the surrogates motivated and made meaningful their decision to enter surrogacy. I challenge at once the neoliberal image of commercial surrogacy as a “win-win” situation that portrays surrogacy as the pursuit of individual self-interest by autonomous actors and gives a simplistic notion of surrogates as hapless victims of global capitalist “exploitation”. I argue that the women engaged in active and conscious decision processes, negotiating and reconceptualising surrogate motherhood and motherhood in general with reference to key aspects of traditional gender relations and feminine morality, such as submissiveness, sexual virtue and self-sacrifice. As such, commercial surrogacy exemplifies how globalisation contributes to new understandings and conceptualisations of gender and family, yet still in close dialogue with local gendered power relations and ideology.

Keywords: Commercial surrogacy, India, reproduction, gender, family

This paper discusses commercial surrogacy in India as a case for how the globalisation and commercialisation of reproduction contribute to new understandings and conceptualisations of gender and family, in particular feminine morality and motherhood. Commercial surrogacy is defined as an arrangement in which Indian women are paid to conceive, carry to term and give birth to children on behalf of others, many of them foreigners.

The paper will first provide a brief account of the recent history of commercial surrogacy in India, as well as of the debate to which this paper is a contribution: How to understand commercial surrogacy in the context of global and gendered power relations. Then, after briefly discussing my methodology, I will present my data, analysis and argument.

Surrogacy in India

India's first baby born from gestational surrogacy was delivered in 1994. "Gestational" means that the child is conceived through in vitro fertilisation ("test tube") with an egg from either the intended mother or an egg donor; therefore, the foetus is not genetically related to the surrogate. From 2002 onwards, commercial surrogacy started accelerating in India. In 2014, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) identified surrogacy as a 2.3 billion dollar industry annually (V. A. Shetty, 2014). Largely unregulated, no official records have been kept of the business and precisely how many children have been born to surrogates in India is unknown. In 2012 the number was estimated at 25 000 (P. Shetty, 2012). Nonetheless, the future of the surrogacy business in India

is unclear. In 2015, the Indian government—led by the profiled Hindu-conservative Narendra Modi—ordered an immediate halt in surrogacy services to foreign citizens. As a result commercial surrogacy is currently no longer the big business it was between 2002 and 2015. In August 2016, a new surrogacy bill was cleared by the cabinet. This bill, which at the time of writing is awaiting parliament processing, proposes a complete ban on commercial surrogacy.

Commercial surrogacy has been portrayed by some as empowering and by others as exploitative for the women who act as surrogates. In the positive neoliberal self-imagery of the Indian surrogacy business itself, surrogacy is a so-called "win-win", a mutually beneficial exchange of resources that are scarce and abundant respectively: the surrogate has abundant fertility but pursues money; for the commissioning parents it is the other way around. In this projection surrogacy enables the surrogate to escape poverty by taking ownership of a commodity in demand, i.e. her fertility, and profiting from it. Gestational surrogate motherhood and egg donation are seen as giving Indian women new opportunities in an emerging market, as entailing new freedom to participate in the public sphere, and as transcending the traditional ascription of women to the private sphere and to economic dependency. In short, it gives them the opportunity to become neoliberal subjects; autonomous actors pursuing self-interest in a free market.

This understanding of commercial surrogacy has repeatedly been challenged by feminist scholars, who see the practice rather as commodification and commercialising of new parts and functions of

women's bodies, and hence just another form of patriarchal subordination and capitalist exploitation (Qadeer, 2010; Vora, 2009, 2015). In light of the structures that shape their conditions, poor Indian women's participation in surrogacy is seen as an instance of poor women being made "bioavailable" (Cohen, 2008) to richer and more powerful people, and thus another effect of what has been identified as the global "stratification of reproduction" (Ginsburg & Rapp, 1995). Relations of gender, class and race intersect in the production of such bio-availability. Facilitated as it is by shifts in the global economy as well as by gendered divisions of labour and notions of differing femininity, surrogacy and egg donation for an international market fit into the wider context of "globalisation of female services" famously described by Ehrenreich & Hochschild (2003). Similarly, Cooper & Waldby (2014) argue that reproductive outsourcing, of which commercial surrogacy is a subcategory, is "profoundly entwined with the post-fordist reorganisation of other kinds of feminised labour and [renders] formally domestic, privatised aspects of household reproduction as service labor, [which] itself [is] often transnationalised" (ibid: 87). They also point out how this development has been facilitated by multilateral economic agreements and institutions such as WTO. According to Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003), globalisation of female services is supported by an ideological construction of women from the global south as not only available, but also particularly suitable for traditional female services, such as childcare, home-making and sex, which illustrates how globalisation influences gender and family in complex ways. Not yet fully "modernised", Southern women are seen to have retained a femininity lost among the women they replace: "[T]hey are thought to embody the traditional feminine qualities of nurturance, docility, and eagerness to please" (ibid: 30). Similarly, Vora (2015) argues that commercial surrogacy in India should be understood as the intersection between two histories: that of women being produced as disadvantaged through caste, class and gender in In-

dia, and that of how care workers and care work has been put into global circulation.

Departing from an understanding of transnational commercial surrogacy in India as enabled at once by globalisation and local relations of class and gender, I discuss how the surrogates themselves accounted for their trajectories into commercial surrogacy. I will show that motivation and meaning were formed through active ethical work, which aimed at transforming surrogacy from "bad work" to "good work". This ethical work in particular addressed the complex and shifting gendered moral context in which the decision to enter surrogacy was taken. Rather than employing the neo-liberal imagery of autonomous pursuit of self-interest, I argue, the women sought to reconceptualise surrogate motherhood in dialogue with traditional feminine morality.

Methodology

The paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between June 2012 and May 2014. A total of almost 10 months of the fieldwork was carried out in Mumbai, India. 27 women who were in an active surrogacy contract or who had acted as surrogates in the past were formally interviewed, some of them twice. Interviews were conducted with the help of a local research assistant who was trained in the social sciences. She translated between English and Hindi or Marathi. Surrogacy, and especially surrogate motherhood, is highly stigmatised in India, which makes both recruitment and establishing confidence in the contact with the women quite challenging. In this study, surrogate participants were—with a few exceptions—recruited through snowball sampling in networks of women who were friends, relatives or knew each other from work in the fertility industry. I believe that the fact that our recruitment and contact with participants were realised through existing social relations rather than with the assistance fertility clinics arranging surrogacy contracts (that is, the women's employers, whom they did not always trust and feel comfort-

able with) greatly helped in establishing a comfortable setting for our meetings. Moreover, a majority of the interviews were conducted in the small slum colony home of a former surrogate (who also assisted extensively in the recruitment). This location, at once a neutral ground and a familiar environment to the women, also contributed, I believe, to relieve the potential tension of discussing very sensitive subjects with a foreign researcher and her assistant.

I also conducted participant observation in a clinic that makes surrogacy arrangements, and also in some of the women's homes and other arenas where they lead their everyday lives. However, by discussing how perceived moral dilemmas were addressed through a reconceptualisation, i.e. new ways of thinking and speaking of commercial surrogacy, this paper however draws mainly on data from the interviews. In the following sections, I elaborate on these reconceptualisations and how they were negotiated in the women's accounts of their trajectories into surrogacy.

“I did not do it willingly”: the value of choice and autonomy

The women always made relevant their material conditions: poverty and social insecurity often expressed as “desperation”, when they explained why they had entered surrogacy. Such “desperation” resonates with the findings of, for example, Pande (2009, 2011). Several scholars have suggested Indian surrogates' motivation should be understood in the context of poverty as structural coercion (Qadeer, 2010; Twine, 2011). Arguing for the need to analyse surrogacy in India as work, Pande (2009) claims that surrogacy in India differs from surrogacy in the West in that it is a veritable survival strategy for the women hired as surrogates. My findings support this. Many of the women in my sample lived in precarious situations. Reported monthly household incomes ranged between EUR 15 and EUR 200, which means that most, though not all, fell below the World Bank poverty line of USD 1.25 per day per person. Many struggled with huge debts, often ac-

cumulated over years of insufficient income. While six of the women were illiterate in the strict sense, a much higher number were also illiterate in the functional sense. Most of the women did not have any paid work outside the home when they decided to enter surrogacy. Of those who did, the majority were maids in private homes, usually part-time, and earned between EUR 25 and EUR 45 a month. Some did occasional temporary work, for example, in catering as cooks or waitresses at wedding receptions and other special occasions. While all the women had been married at some point (which is in fact a criterion for being recruited for surrogacy), almost half were separated or widowed. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of those still married had husbands who could not or would not provide for the family because of substance abuse (mainly alcohol) or other health problems. In effect, thus, many of the women functioned as primary providers. In this situation, surrogacy formed part of a wider reproductive job market that also consists of egg donation and recruitment and care-taking of donors and surrogates on behalf of clinics, where the women, who lacked job opportunities elsewhere, could and often did operate over several years.

Their interest in the money notwithstanding, the relatively big amount offered was not in itself enough to motivate the women I met to enter surrogacy. Most of them had initially perceived of surrogacy as utterly morally problematic and undesirable. Thus, the women sought to reconceptualise surrogate motherhood and converted it from “bad work” into “good work”, by negotiating values such as money, parental obligations, and feminine respectability.

What the women perceived as moral dilemmas of commercial surrogacy was largely associated with gender and sexuality. Transnational commercial surrogacy, the movement of women's reproduction and perhaps even sexuality into the market by means of modern technology and in exchange with Westerners, implied a series of perceived transgressions of gendered norms, possibly making it bad work. The

values of choice and autonomy often hold a central place when the ethics of commercial surrogacy is debated (Kroløkke & Pant, 2012; Markens, 2007). Women's right to bodily autonomy is frequently employed by supporters of the practice; each woman should be entitled to decide for herself if and how to make money from her body. In their analysis of neo-liberal ideology in discourses on surrogacy in India, Kroløkke and Pant (2012) point out how surrogates are constructed by the clinics along such ideological lines: as neo-liberal subjects exercising individual autonomy, choosing surrogacy in order to pursue their goals. I argue that although elements from this neoliberal imagery were indeed included in the construction of surrogacy as good work, the surrogates' ethical work produced an understanding of surrogate motherhood that distinctly contested notions of choice and the pursuit of economic self-interest, and appealed instead to feminine virtues and subordinated womanhood: dependency, helplessness, submissiveness and self-sacrifice. For example, 32 year old Jamila, a house wife and mother of three, said this about the issue:

We do it because we are desperate for money and have our own problems. Otherwise, this work does not interest me at all. Why would I have done this? Only because I had no choice! And I did not do it willingly. I stayed without my kids for 8-9 months.

Like Jamila, hardly any of the women I met would portray surrogacy as something they "wanted" or had "chosen". For the most part, it was more or less explicitly portrayed as a "non-choice", something they did out of "desperation". Poverty among the women was indeed great and I certainly do not question the surrogates' claim that they were "needy" and even "desperate". However, as Pande writes about the surrogates she studied (Pande, 2014), reference to "desperation" was also a way of distancing oneself from the act. In the context of the surrogates' ethical work, pointing to "despera-

tion" functioned as a way of keeping the decision to enter surrogacy within an acceptable feminine morality in which there was room for "need", but not for "greed".

In line with this, the women would often explicitly tone down the individual agency of their decision. In contrast to the assumptions often made by critics of surrogacy in India, I did not see any evidence of women being coerced into surrogacy by family members or others. Quite the contrary, the women reported that they found out about surrogacy by themselves first, then searched for additional knowledge and established the relevant contacts. Among those who lived with husbands and/or mothers-in-law, they were typically 'persuaded' after the woman had made up her mind herself. Despite being the active party in this sense, married women would usually strongly implicate their husband—and often their in-laws as well—in the decision making process, and stress their own submissiveness as wives and daughters-in-law. In doing so, they underlined the absolute need for permission and made it clear that they were ready to respect the husband's right to veto their decision in line with gender norms and women's subordinated position (Dube, 2001; Nielsen & Waldrop, 2014).

Twenty-five-year-old Aisha provides a unique example of a surrogate who reported she acted against her husband's will. In our interview, she clearly felt the need to justify this by pointing to his failure to comply with his obligations as a husband and father: He was an unemployed alcoholic who contributed very little to the family financially. Aisha had asked his permission once and he had refused, giving the standard arguments that it was bad work. Aisha's husband found out about her surrogacy pregnancy after delivery, and this caused him to go into a violent rage. Aisha had to seek police protection as she feared for her life. Though the husband was physically abusive on a regular basis, this especially strong reaction suggests that he found Aisha's act entirely unacceptable. Similarly, Aisha expressed that this was out of line for a good wife,

but felt her transgression was justified in light of her “desperation”: “I thought that even if I lie to my husband, it is ok. At least I will get money to provide for my kids and feed them.”

The breach of one set of feminine values, i.e. obedience in marriage, was necessary in order to comply with an apparently superior obligation, namely to nourish one’s children. In this case, parenthood, more specifically good motherhood, morally encompassed both lies and disobedience. Along the same lines, Aisha portrayed relinquishing the surrogate baby as an act of good motherhood, in which she gave away one child in order to “bring happiness to two”, i.e. the two children for whom Aisha had to provide. While Aisha was one of the surrogates who, to the highest degree, reported a sense of deep attachment to the surrogate child, she made a distinction between this child and her “own”.

“Conceived through medicines”: a morally different pregnancy

Discussing the highly stigmatised character of surrogate motherhood in India, Pande (2009) emphasises the parallel often made to sex work as a central reason for surrogacy being largely regarded “dirty” work. A possible link to immoral sexuality was indeed the primary concern for close to all of the women I talked to. Thus, recruitment relied on providing concepts and interpretations of surrogacy that separated surrogate motherhood from sexuality, and distinguished it from bad work, i.e. prostitution. The possible involvement of sexual relations was a key issue, as this quote from Bushra illustrates:

Initially I did not like it, but then I thought of doing it for my kids. I thought that it was impossible to conceive without having physical relations (giggles). But then when I was explained how it was done medically, that is when I understood.

The notion that the surrogate baby was “conceived medically” was provided to the women by the recruiting agents from the clinic and played a crucial role in the women’s ethical work. To a population generally unaware of the existence of IVF, agents explained the procedure using expressions such as “made through medicines”, “done medically” and “medical baby”. The “medical conception” was understood to imply a clear distinction between surrogacy and ordinary procreation, not only because it eliminated the need for sexual intercourse, but also because it conceptually distinguished the surrogate pregnancy and baby from ordinary pregnancies and the surrogates “own” children.

Moreover, the label “medical” and the fact that surrogacy was practiced by doctors, seemed to have a moralising effect beyond distinguishing it from prostitution. Very often, the surrogates would put surrogacy in opposition to tradition, as Beena does in this quote: “In India, we still follow traditions and customs, and something of this sort [that is, commercial surrogacy] was never spoken aloud. So I was scared of what the people would say when they get to know of it.”

Opposing tradition, surrogacy came to represent a possibly immoral modernity. Highlighting commercial surrogacy’s association with medicine seemed to be a way of addressing such possible conflict with tradition. For example, 27 year-old Preeti, a deeply devoted Hindu, had donated eggs several times when “Sir”, the fertility doctor, convinced her to sign up for surrogacy to earn more money. Like many of the women, Preeti had to make an effort to convince her husband, and she succeeded only when she physically moved him into the medical sphere and let the doctor explain why surrogacy was not wrong:

I thought I could do it, and told my husband, who thought I did not talk any sense. So I took him to that Sir, who showed him all the medicines, and how surrogacy is done. Sir also told my husband that there are many people

who come as [commissioning parents] as well as surrogates. If this were wrong or shameful, then not many people would do it.

By highlighting its medical nature, surrogacy was linked to a brand of modernity that was predominantly perceived as positive and respectable. Along these lines, the moral authority of doctors was called for, both symbolically and actually.

“For my children only”: motivation and morality

Judging from the surrogates’ accounts, in the initial recruitment phase, surrogacy was firmly placed in the economic sphere and portrayed as “work” by the agents, as opposed to a vocation or an act of altruism. This differs from the recruitment strategies in the USA as described by e.g. Ragoné (1994), in which emotional reward and the value of gift giving is emphasised and financial gain downplayed.

By contrast, the monetary motive is strongly emphasised by Indian surrogates. The women quite consistently referred to surrogacy as “work” and, as mentioned previously, the money involved was their motivation. For some time, I grappled with the striking difference between Indian and Western surrogates in this respect. Why was economic motivation morally dubious in one context, and apparently the only thinkable and acceptable in the other?

Exploring the surrogates’ ethical work however, it became evident to me that economic motivation was far from unproblematic for the Indian surrogates; indeed they took great care addressing the moral perils of exchanging something of ethical value (motherhood, their reproductive body, a child) for money. I have already argued that the moral value of monetary motivation was negotiated through the distinction between desiring money and needing them (“desperation”). I also argue that notions of non-monetary motivation, especially in the form of maternal sacrifice, contributed to transforming surrogacy into good work, i.e. a morally acceptable form of exchange and the act of surrogacy into a

morally good one.

Motherhood lay at heart with practically all of my informants: they may have undertaken surrogacy for the money, but the money was a means to do good, not a goal in itself. Saveetha described how her articulation of her motivation—as a wish to improve her children’s future—had made surrogacy acceptable to her husband: “At first he said no, fearing the society’s reactions, but then he agreed when I convinced him that this is for the children, and their future. That was when I did surrogacy.”

Saveetha had pointed out that a value superior to respectability was at stake, and that value was the parental obligation to take care of your children in present and in the future. Children and the parental responsibility played this crucial role in the motivational narratives of practically all the women.

The surrogates’ ethical work on themselves was not only about making moral sense of the act, but was also about motivating oneself to overcome one’s own “unwillingness” and endure the expected hardships. “Money” itself could not do this. What could, was the perceived ethical value of replacing the pain, illness, and suffering of others with happiness, health, and comfort. Seema explained how she overcame her own fears by focusing on the faces of her two small children.

Seema: I was scared of taking injections. But then I told myself, that I am doing it for my kids, so why should I get scared of that pain? When I saw the faces of my kids, I forgot all about that pain. And from then on, I never looked back.

Kristin: Ok, what do you mean by “the faces of your kids”?

Seema: I thought that if I get more money, I will put some in the bank for their future, I would be able to get things for them, which they like. I could renovate my house a little as the condition is not good. That is what I thought.

Surrogacy was in fact often portrayed as an act of self-sacrifice: the surrogate sacrificed her health and well-being, even her respectability. According to this understanding, which contrasts the neoliberal, utilitarian notion of the surrogate as a utility-maximising player in the market, the fact that surrogacy is painful—physically and emotionally—adds value to the act of sacrifice and makes surrogate motherhood a less morally dubious choice.

To summarise my argument: Rather than “choice”, powerlessness (“desperation”) and submissiveness were the core elements in the surrogate’s accounts of their decision to engage in surrogacy. In this way, I argue, the surrogates sought to adjust surrogate motherhood to traditional femininity, and in effect distinguished from the typical neoliberal individual pursuit of self-interest. Surrogacy was portrayed as ultimately an act of kinship obligation and maternal sacrifice, rather than the pursuit of economic reward. The women interviewed dealt with the moral dilemmas by attempting to encompass them within a feminine meta-value: motherly self-sacrifice.

Conclusion

In this paper I have contributed to our understanding of surrogate motherhood from a space between the binary positions “win-win” and exploitation. By merely understanding the decision to engage in surrogacy as the pursuit of financial gain through all available and acceptable means, I believe one fails to grasp both the impact of global and gendered power relations and the significant ambivalence in which the decision was embedded. On the other hand, resting our understanding on pointing at the impact of such power relation, i.e. “exploitation”, obscures the active and conscious work through which the women in this study motivated themselves. Nuancing this, I have argued that although surrogacy was perceived as an opportunity to escape precarious conditions (“desperation”), active ethical work addressing perceived moral conflicts was required for the women to make it an accept-

able option. Besides capturing how motivation and meaning were actively formed with reference to the complex moral reality in which the decision was embedded, the present analysis sheds light on the changing understandings and conceptualisations of gender and family that are produced during the interplay between processes of globalisation and local relations of gender and class.

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THE GLOBALISING EFFECTS OF SOLAR ENERGY ACCESS ON FAMILY AND GENDER RELATIONS IN RURAL INDIA

KARINA STANDAL

ASIA IN FOCUS

This paper discusses the effects of energy access, in the form of newly implemented solar energy, on the dynamics of gender and family in rural Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. India has seen a remarkable transformation into an emerging economic power in recent years which has brought change also to political, cultural and social relations in society, thus bringing India ‘closer’ to the rest of the world. These globalising effects often related through media and communication are contingent on access to energy. The global access provided by the implementation of electricity provides challenges to local norms and hierarchies of community, family and gender. Still, India’s institution of family is depicted by counter discourses, as being made of a ‘different fabric’ upholding traditional Hindu gendered culture and values. By exploring the everyday life of three informants—a young *bahu* (daughter-in-law), a young educated bachelor, and a self-help group leader in her 40s—this article illustrates that access to energy provided many important benefits, but at the same times the outcomes are not equally distributed and reinforce existing inequalities.

Keywords: family, gender relations, rural India, globalisation, energy access, solar energy

India is changing as a result of increasing economic liberalisation, urbanisation and socio-economic polarisation (Costa 2012). Several of these transformations are welcomed as means for economic growth and development, and also for challenging and hopefully eradicating, old conceptions of power and inequality based on gender, religion and caste. One of the major aspects of a transforming India is linked to the electrification of the country. These globalising effects often related through media and communication are contingent on access to energy and the aim of this paper is to explore the effects of energy access, in the form of newly implemented solar energy, on the dynamics of gender and family in rural Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Jharkhand. Exposure to the global world (through electricity access) challenges local norms and hierarchies of community, family and gender. As Nye shows in his account of the electrification of America, the absorption of technological innovations also entail social and cultural process, “an extension of human lives” (Nye 1991, p ix). Previous studies have shown that energy access creates new opportunities for women, by simplifying care work responsibilities, and by providing resources for income generation and access to information. In an Indian study, access to cable TV was found to have changed perceptions on women’s abilities, domestic violence and son preference (Jensen and Oster 2009), while a study of rural electrification in Afghanistan indicated that access to Iranian TV allowed women to argue for their rights within an accepted Muslim discourse (Standal 2008). Further, access to Mobile phones has been found to provide

security for women in rural India by allowing for better contact with their natal family (Tenhunen 2014).

Despite the continuing expansion of globalisation, there are counter discourses that invoke religious and nationalist ideals to assert “traditional” Hindu ways of life, particularly in connection to gender relations. I put the term traditional in brackets, as it is based on a selective construct of Hindu traditions and scripts biased towards curtailment and control of women’s sexuality and mobility (see also Oldenberg 2007). Western influence and women’s transgressions of moral boundaries (often referred to as ‘crossing the Lakshman rekha’) are seen as dissolving traditional family values and the protection of women within the sanctity of the (patriarchal) family. These views have been put forward during several of India’s transformations, such as the post-independence period, but also notably voiced by several public figures in relation to wide-spread publicity on recent incidents of sexual violence in the country (Brown and Agrawal 2014).

Electrifying rural India

One of post-independence India’s grand projects was the electrification of the country (Kale 2014). Jawaharlal Nehru envisaged that electrification would transform both the process of unification and modernisation: “Electricity is perhaps the most necessary and the most revolutionary thing which you can take into the rural areas ... The whole life of people is changed” (Nehru, in Kale, 2014, p. 1). Despite Nehru’s ambitions, India’s electrification has until recent years not significantly extended to rural areas. As a result India has seen a growth in de-cen-

tralised energy systems that take a variety of forms, such as solar, hydro and bio. In reality this means that ever more villages experience electricity for the first time in contemporary India, an experience that differs considerably depending on the type of intervention, technology and contextual community factors. Several such energy interventions come as a result of NGO implementation with foreign ownership of the energy system.

Energy projects initiated through foreign interventions are in themselves globalising as they build on particular ideas of beneficiaries, which also frequently see the energy technology as men's domain in terms of expertise and ownership, whereas women are seen as being benefited as consumers within their role as the family care-workers or running micro-enterprises in the vicinity of their homes (Standal and Winther 2016).

This article draws on interviews and observations carried out over about four and a half months in two villages in UP and one village in Jharkhand, which had implemented a solar rural electrification project (for more details see Standal forthcoming 2016). The project was initiated by a Norwegian solar energy company in partnership with Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Indian Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA). In the UP villages, the implementation of Community Solar Power Plants (CSPP) provided villagers with household electricity for lightbulbs, and sockets in the house. One of the villages also had a solar driven water supply to the households provided by the project. In Jharkhand the CSPPs were implemented to electrify silk-reeling centres where women self-help groups worked. The electrification of the silk-reeling process meant higher quality of yarn, more efficiency and reduced physical labour for the women, and as a result significantly increased their income opportunities. Men were given the primary role in maintenance and ownership as the local positions as Village Operators (VO) and Village Energy Committee (VEC)

President, where held only by men. As I will elaborate on, despite providing important resources and new opportunities through the implementation of modern energy solutions, these benefits were not equally distributed but rather were contextualised within the social markers of gender, age, socio-economic status and, to some extent, caste.

Conceptualising the North Indian family and gender relations

The institution of marriage, though with great variations, is a strong cultural norm in India. Divorce and alternative set ups for couples' relationships are rare, especially in rural areas (Béteille, 1999). With the notable exception of many Adivasi (and partly Muslim) communities, the predominant family ideal in rural North India is the joint Hindu family where fathers live with their sons and their wives, and unmarried daughters. The joint Hindu family is founded on the systems of patriarchy and patrilineality. Family power is divided along gender and age hierarchies with male control over women's sexual behaviour and fertility to secure the male lineage. Further, women marry out of their kin and into their husband's family where their basic role is to provide service to their parents-in-law and produce sons (Lamb 2000, Wadley 1994). Male power in the patriarchal system is upheld through mechanisms of control. Women are expected to conform to *Purdah*, meaning that women are secluded from public sphere (often through their clothing and restrictions on mobility) and women should never speak in public and only in whispers to male affines (Wadley 1994). Patriarchy is also denoted as the sexual division of labour, where men have confiscated the modes of production in society, so women work in the home under economic dependence of men for survival (Fox 2001).

The Hindu joint family is not just a system of inequality but is also a system of reciprocity where all members fulfil different mutually dependent roles. Lamb uses the model of center-periphery to explain the hierarchy of gender and age in terms

of social position in the family in West Bengal: The principal married couple of a house whose sons were not yet married were felt to be at the warm reproductive “center”... they gave food, knowledge and services and made decisions for all the others around them, including retirees and the young children who were located on the households peripheries” (Lamb 2000, p. 58). For the senior generation, the shift towards the periphery of the household meant more freedom and less work responsibilities, but it also meant a gradual loss of power in the household. Hence, women’s role in rural family and community does not entail a fixed position. Rather most women’s social identities undergo significant changes during lifecycle events such as progressing from daughter, to sister, to wife, to mother and to mother-in-law (Lamb 2000). Women’s age and position in the family therefore matters greatly for their power and agency.

In the rural communities in question the intersection of women’s identities adhere to their class and caste status as well as their position in the household. The villages included in the project were quite homogenous, constituting only Hindus and with few caste groups. In the UP villages there were on the other hand clear distinctions in socio-economic divisions where Yadavs in general seemed more affluent than others. In Jharkhand the differences in caste and class were less obvious and the villagers were all on the “upper” ladder of the caste system. Interestingly in UP, it was households from all castes and socio-economic positions that chose to have an electricity connection (costing 2000Rps and purchase of expensive CFL bulbs). There were also few differences in households’ assets (beyond housing standard and ownership of land) such as mobile phones, TVs, fans and coolers. This may have been because objects were often acquired through the practice of dowry, another important feature in the Indian institution of family. The expenses for a daughters’ marriage are a perpetual concern for Indian families as the social and material costs drive many into poverty (Krishna 2011). This

also has detrimental effects on family relations as fertility is enclosed in an economic and social reality that increases the rate of sex-selection abortions and produce skewed sex ratios (John 2011).

In the next sections, I focus the analysis on two women and one man: Leelah, a young mother and *bahu* from a SC (Scheduled Caste) household; Daarun, a young educated bachelor from a more affluent Yadav family; and Anita, a self-help group leader with adult children (all names are pseudonyms). Their narratives capture three views on the impact of energy access from different gender, social position and economic situation.

Leelah

Leelah is a young mother in her early 20s living in a large joint household with her husband’s family in a village in the Bundelkhand region in UP. The family belongs to Ahirwar, the only Scheduled Caste (SC) group in the village (about 18 % of the village population). The rest of the village consists of mainly Yadavs and Kushwahas, both Other Backward Castes (OBC) and two Brahmin families. The village is small with 100 households and therefore the village has not been viewed as relevant for central grid extension. Instead, the village was electrified through CSPP in autumn 2011. The village has a sex ratio of 899 women to 1000 men, a lower average than UP and India as a whole. Though school enrollment rates of girls were improving in the village, families with sufficient financial means sent their sons to private schools or tutoring, further widening the gendered educational and socio-economic divide in the village.

Despite reporting low income from their agricultural output (5 bighas), by 2015 all adult members of Leelah’s household, including the women, had their own mobile phones. The family also owned bicycles, tractor, motorbike, TV, fan and a cooler, which with the exception of the TV, were all acquired as dowry gifts.

When I first met Leelah in 2012, she had a 2 year-old child and a 5 month old baby. In line with

the customs in her village she was in *purdah*, and would not leave the house alone and was always veiled in front male affines. The practices of *purdah* in her community was gradually lifted when women had borne two or more children and become affiliated members of their households. Then a *bahu* would also receive new responsibilities such as fetching water or firewood, which Leelah's mother-in-law or husband's sister did.

Leelah exemplified the typical *bahu*, who is described by Lamb and Wadley as subservient, with modest gentle appearance and balancing her voice and words out of respect for her in-laws. In many ways the implementation of the CSPP benefited Leelah to a great extent. The provision of solar driven water supply meant that a water tap was installed in their house, thus relieving the women 4 hours a day for fetching water. Light and fans were placed inside their home, which reduced the problems of heat and mosquitos. Cooking was also easier in a well-lit kitchen. Leelah also felt the electricity had benefitted her family and community socially and psychologically. In her words life was literally brighter and included more socialising among family members in the evenings (with light, fans and TV). According to her, electricity had changed life from a more depressing mood (*dukhi*) to happiness in the village. Taking care of her children was also easier when her home was electrified some months after the birth of her second child. The change to simply flicking a switch for light helped soothe the children and she could nurse them easier:

When there was no light the children were often crying [in the night] because of [fear of] the darkness before falling asleep, but now I can feed them easily in the evening with the light... Before when there was no light, they cried and I said don't weep, don't weep and in frustration I beat them. Now, it's easy with the light and they don't get scared anymore (cited in Standal forthcoming 2016).

Leelah's work as the village seamstress had also profited from electricity. Before she had children she could work during the day and earn about 700-800 Rs a month. However, with light in the evening, her working hours were more flexible and she could work in the evenings. In 2012 she was earning about 1600 Rs monthly, which she used for herself and her children, but at times she was asked to help the joint family with her income. As most mothers of small children she was worried about her children's welfare: feeding and nursing them, ensuring their education and balancing childcare with her other responsibilities. Every morning she would wake at 5 am to start preparing food and throughout her day she had regular chores.

In 2012 the family's TV was not working so the family did not have access to news and information other than via mobile phones. When I returned in 2015 this had changed and they had grown accustomed to adapting their lives to more socialising and watching TV in the evenings. In some families restrictions were put on a *bahu's* access to TV programs, which limited their access to information. Unfortunately, the energy provision was severely hampered by 2015 due to equipment failure and there was resentment against the energy project both in Leelah's family and the village in general. They now felt compelled to go to bed early, and there were fewer opportunities for the children to do homework.

As shown, Leelah and her family experienced several benefits from household electricity: increased income, easier everyday life and new ways of socialising, to name a few. As mentioned, for Leelah the light brought both happiness and means to fulfill the (practical) expectations of family. Leelah was also exceptional in the fact that she was the only woman in her village who was earning an independent income. However, despite the benefits of energy access, Leelah was still not able to make decisions about her fertility or what Kabeer (1999) refers to as strategic life choices. She had, upon instruction by her father-in-law, given birth in the local

hospital which earned her 1400Rs with the National Rural Health Mission scheme. It was also common knowledge that young mothers in her village underwent sex-selection abortions upon 'request' by their parents-in-law. These issues were not deemed as matters where a *bahu* was free to voice her opinion; doing so would be gravely disrespectful.

In spite of facilitating an easier everyday life and a higher income, the narrow focus on women as only end-users in the energy project in Leelah's community reinforced values that see women's main accomplishment in life as the provision of care work for the family (Standal forthcoming 2016).

Daarun

Daarun is a young man in his early 20s with a college degree, who comes from another Bundelkhand village in UP. He lives in a nuclear household with his parents and younger brother. They belong to the Yadav community and are among the more affluent in his village with income from selling buffalo milk and farming. The household was among the first houses to connect with the CSPP, and had installed light in most rooms. They owned a tractor, a motorcycle, fans, a cooler and an electric iron. His father, younger brother and Daarun also had mobile phones that his mother was free to use.

Daarun's village has 69 households and about 90% of the villagers are SC, but households from all caste groups and social-economic status had connected to the CSPP despite the costs of the 2000 Rs connection fee. The sex ratio of the village is even lower than Leelah's village with a meagre 883 women to 1000 men, and a child sex ratio of an alarming 667 girls to 1000 boys. In this village as well, anyone who has the possibility sends their sons to private schools in the nearby town a few kilometers away. Nevertheless, the perception of the government village school was that the quality had improved, partly because the electricity also made it possible for the children to use computers in their education and do homework in the evenings in electrified households.

In many ways Daarun and his family were in a position to enjoy all the benefits of energy access. As Daarun has a college education and proficiency in English, he used his mobile phone to connect with friends on social media, read news and acquire information. His family also used the mobile phone to connect with people to find out about prices for agriculture in the market, which is not possible if one does not have a robust economy. In a conversation with Daarun and my research assistant, he phrased it in this way:

If people need the money, if he is a really poor guy he needs to get some money. If the price is low or high he just sells (sic). He doesn't wait ... he (Daarun's family) can just wait ... if the price go low he stocks, when the price goes high he sells (cited in Standal forthcoming 2016).

Daarun benefits from the electrification of his village in other ways as well. He has a position in the village energy committee, and, when we met in 2015, he was eligible for marriage and therefore his family received many guests who scrutinised his home and family. Before the village was electrified, it was more difficult for men to find a wife as many would be hesitant to marry their daughter into an un-electrified household. If he marries, Daarun and his family can expect a considerable dowry including 'modern' appliances that run on electricity. Receiving dowry might also alleviate some of the costs the family had when marrying off Daarun's sister when they gave; "... motorcycle, fan, TV, iron, washing machine... We also gave 4-5 lakhs [Rs]" (cited in Standal forthcoming 2016). As according to custom, all these items were loaded onto a car when his sister was taken to her new home.

With his higher education and socio-economic status Daarun is not representative of the majority of young men in his village, but he is a good illustration of the benefits of electrification on those of his generation and gender that have the ability to make the most of having access to energy. Daarun

plans to join the Police Academy or take a Master's degree in natural science, when he settles with a wife in the nearby town. Nuclear households were not unique Daarun's village, but said to be dependent on whether parents wished their household to consist of one or more sons. As the oldest son and educated with prospects of steady income, Daarun has the privilege of choosing his family script and either live in a joint family or establish a separate family. Despite his young age, the moral boundaries of the traditional Hindu family values do not apply to him in the same way as Leelah or other women in his community. This does not free him from moral obligations to his near and extended family such as covering the cost of energy consumption (by paying electricity bills and acquiring dowries for female relatives), but he has the capacity to challenge these norms in a different way to Leelah, as education and being of the male gender provide him some prerogatives. When he marries, Daarun will also have the opportunity and freedom to live both the traditional family life and be "modern" as he will most likely have a wife at his side that will dutifully uphold the ideals of home and motherhood, while he can continue his education and hopefully take a well-paid job in the city.

Anita

Anita, who is in her 40s with grown-up children, comes from a small village in Jharkhand that have implemented CSPP to electrify the women's silk-reeling production in the local self-help groups. The village has about 39 households and all villagers belong to the Kshatriya or Vaishya group, which means that there are no SC or OBC families in the village. Anita's village generally has considerably lower housing standard in comparison to the villages in UP, but the village is connected to the central electricity grid. Also, the women enjoyed somewhat freer mobility and did not veil in public as was expected in Leelah and Daarun's village.

Despite son preference and dowry customs it was claimed that sex-selection abortion was un-

common.

Anita has freedom in her elevated status as a mother-in-law, now constituting what Lamb (2000) terms 'the center of the household', which meant she had less care work responsibilities and more autonomy than a young *bahu*. She also enjoyed a higher status in her position as a self-help group leader in her village. The self-help group's involvement and support from the CSPP project elevated this position considerably. The electrification of the silk reeling process had enabled the women to greatly increase their income as the quality of yarn was better, and they could work longer hours since the physical labour was reduced. Anita worked long hours with the silk reeling and earned about 2000-3000 Rs a month. Several of the other women, especially mothers with young children worked much less, and earned about 1000-2000 Rs a month.

Anita's income gave her more independence regarding economic priorities in the home. Women's access to "independent" income is often heralded as one of the more empowering effects of energy access in development discourse by institutions such as the World Bank and ENERGIA. Like Leelah, Anita and many of the other women in the self-help group, the income was theirs to dispose of as they saw fit. However, the income would also frequently comply with the husbands' wishes or for dowry savings, which supports the value of son preference. The families' dependence on agriculture in Anita's community meant that during harvesting seasons the silk-reeling production (and income) had to be suspended for the greater good of the family, and the women's labour was diverted to their unpaid responsibilities in the family household.

Anita is a very outgoing person with a strong charisma and authority. As a self-help group leader she has considerable power and some of the other women feared her. The network of the women self-help groups in the district area provided an important arena for solidarity and a challenge to gender discrimination. An incident in one of the meetings showed how the group provided support in cases

of discrimination: Allegedly, a man in one of the villages had, for many years, harassed women while they were asleep in their homes. The women had reported the incidents to the police to no avail. The self-help group women had beaten the man as punishment, which had caused outrage by the (male) village elders, on the grounds that this crossed the moral boundaries of women's acceptable behavior. The women did not want to challenge the elders, so instead they set up a mock tribunal near his house, ordering him to attend. The meeting ended in the joint decision that the man had to pay a fine of 5000 Rs and obey curfew regulations. This decision was acknowledged by the man in question and the elders.

As a result of long-time NGO support and the CSPP project, the women in the self-help group, with Anita at the forefront, actively challenged discriminatory gender norms in this case and others. This involved negotiation of the moral boundaries they ideally should have adhered to, where the men, in this case the police and the village elders had the last say. Anita shares the same benefits and challenges as the other self-help group women in terms of poverty and women's inferior status in society (as illustrated by their futile attempts at stopping the sexual harassment), but she also stands out, as her personality and relative freedom in her position in the household enable her to earn an independent income and raise her voice publicly about issues that concern her and her community. For the younger generation of *bahus* in the self-help group, this would be a more challenging position to maneuver.

The three narratives described above represent different perspectives of positions in the family and illustrate how the potential benefits of energy access are subject to their relative gender and position in family and community. These informants have different social profiles and life situations and this impacts on how energy access can transform their lives.

Conclusion

As exemplified in the cases of Leelah, Daarun and Anita, energy access "globalises" the family in many ways; for instance, it provides more efficient ways to provide income, do household chores, socialise and communicate. However, as illustrated with Leelah, it is also evident that the provision of energy may undermine women's agency by upholding and perhaps even strengthening subversive structures such as patriarchy and dowry, even though she became empowered by being a 'consumer' of electricity. By contrast, in Jharkhand the energy project enhanced the self-help group model and thereby contributed to a women's network that actively challenged some forms of gender discrimination. The opportunities of income and networking did not alter the value put on the traditional status of family and marriage in the local contexts. Daarun stands out as the star example of being able to utilise the benefits of the newly implemented electricity in his more advanced use of Internet and communication, and now being able to attract a partner as his household has an electrified status. As Nordfelt (in this issue) points out the 'class within the household' determines each household member's access to resources such as education, income, decision-making and mobile phones, TV, restricting women's ability to fully benefit from these opportunities in accordance with traditional family values.

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RELUCTANT RETURNEES: Gender Perspectives on (Re) settlement Among Highly Skilled Indian Return Migrants in Bangalore

HELENE ILKJÆR

Taking its point of departure in the personal story of Nalini, this article examines highly skilled Indian women's experiences of moving back to India after years of working and living with their families abroad. The article touches on themes of gender relations, family commitments, career opportunities, and social and cultural conservatism within the context of recent waves of return migration to Bangalore, a prominent hub in the imaginary of a "new" globalising India. Tracing Nalini's story in and out of states of depression, the article points to ways in which returnee women find their own, at times, unexpected ways of dealing with the upheavals of return migration.

Keywords: Gender relations, return migration, (re)settlement processes, Bangalore, India.

“I never had it in my mind to come back – I was desperate to stay in the US. I have absolutely not been happy about coming back to India.” Nalini, a 35 year old microbiologist, had only just stepped foot within the front door of her flat in a gated community in the eastern part of Bangalore when she made this statement. Standing upright in the doorway, dressed in Levi’s jeans and a short kurta, she sent her father – who sat in one of the living room couches – a defiant look. Following her gaze, I watched him shift uneasily in his seat. In the hours prior to Nalini’s arrival home he had taken it upon himself to talk me through key moments in the family’s history, in particular Nalini’s recent homecoming to India. He was proud; he had told me, of his daughter’s “right” decision to return to India with her husband Gopal and their two daughters aged four and eight. It was right for many reasons, he said, but most of all because it was what Gopal wanted. And Nalini’s father expected her to comply with her husband’s wishes, also when it meant putting her own dreams and ambitions aside.

In many ways, Nalini embodies the story I often heard during my fieldwork about Indian women being less willing to return to India than their husbands. Many of the returnees I met in Bangalore could tell stories of friends, or friends of friends, who wished to make the move back to India but who could not do so because their wives refused. Using Nalini’s personal story as an example, the article examines questions of why Indian women may be reluctant to return to India, and, if they eventually do, how they experience and handle the return and the (re)settlement in the so-called “new” globalising India? While the imaginary of a “new” globalising India is often analyzed through themes of economic liberalisation and growth (cf. D’Costa, 2010; Kaur, 2012, 2014; Nielsen & Wilhite, 2015), this article approaches it from the perspective of return migration of highly skilled Indians. I suggest that the growing numbers of return migrants and the emergence of Bangalore as a global destination for skilled in-migration are intricately linked with the imaginary of a “new” globalis-

ing India. The article thus takes the everyday experiences of (re)settlement among Indian returnees in Bangalore as an entry point to discuss this special issue’s themes of gender and family relations in a globalising India.

Return migration and “global Indians”

Nalini’s story and the other empirical data in this article form part of my PhD dissertation entitled “Bangalore Beginnings. An Ethnography of Return Migration among Highly Skilled Indians” (Ilkjær, 2015). The dissertation is based on 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Bangalore in 2011-2013 and regular follow-ups on social media and Skype. All names of interlocutors are pseudonyms. In collecting data, I have used primarily qualitative methods of participant observation, semi-structured and informal interviews. Of the 47 individuals that I interviewed, there are 37 men and 10 women. In addition to the interviews, I spent considerable amounts of time with return migrants in their homes, including with the wives of the men I had interviewed, hanging out with them and participating in their weekend activities. 15 returnees – eight men and seven women – became key interlocutors whom I met with regularly. They are among the thousands of highly skilled Indians who have returned to India in recent years. Estimates ranging between 29,000 and 60,000 returnees have been cited (Khadria, 2004, p. 19; Radhakrishnan, 2011, p. 27). Other sources suggest that 10,000 to 20,000 Indians have returned annually since the year 2000 (Varrel, 2011b, p. 305), and that the city of Bangalore housed around 300,000 returnees by 2010 (Kalita, 2010, p. 22). Clearly, these numbers are clouded in uncertainty. A major cause of the difficulty in making accurate counts is the slippery nature of the category of return and hence determination of who to label as returnees, i.e. who to count. I define a returnee as an individual born and raised in India to Indian parents who has lived abroad for at least two years. Yet, while I use “returnee” as a category to describe my interlocutors’ migratory life situation at the time of my fieldwork,

the term is not intended to imply any finality with regard to their migration trajectories.

Due to Bangalore's history and current reputation as an international science and technology hotspot for knowledge-based industries (see Heitzman, 2004; Nair, 2005; Nisbett, 2009; Vasavi, 2008), the city attracts many returnees with degrees and professional experience in IT, engineering, and the bio- and data sciences. Holding at least a BA degree but often also MA and PhD degrees, my interlocutors were among those popularly described with terms like "reverse brain drain," i.e. a counter-movement to the outbound "brain drain" of educated Indians leaving the country. The returnees thus make up a new wave of migration that is changing – or adding to – the directionality of movement among the so-called "best and brightest Indians" (Kalita, 2006).

When I met them, most of my interlocutors were in their 30's and 40's, they were married and had children. Most of them moved back to India in 2008 or later – often after more than 10 years abroad – many from the US but also from countries such as the UK, Canada, Germany, Australia and Denmark. Their reasons to return included, often in a mix, the proximity to family, feeling the obligation to care for elderly parents, career opportunities in India versus the fear of unemployment abroad due to the financial crisis, and value-based reasons to do with culture and lifestyles. Usually, the men had left India first, often as young adults going abroad to study at university, then marrying in India and bringing their wives over on spousal visas. Most of the wives in the returnee families were highly educated and usually both husbands and wives had worked while they lived abroad.

Having spent considerable parts of their adult life abroad many returnees described themselves as "global Indians." According to them, a "global Indian" is an open-minded, internationally oriented person who has travelled the world and who takes a modern (as opposed to traditional) approach to family and gender matters. On an everyday lev-

el this means, for example, that the husband and wife share the household duties and that they live as a nuclear family in their own house rather than with the husband's parents. On a broader level it means, among other things, gender equality in decision-making and support of women's career ambitions. Many returnees formed a direct link between their experiences of living and working abroad and their self-ascribed identity as "global Indians." Others pointed out that Indians who had lived all their life in India could also be "global Indians," had they travelled and developed an open mindset. Indeed, international migration does not automatically create global mindsets or cause the migrants to change practices and values, e.g. concerning family life. Several studies have noted a pattern of social conservatism among Indian IT migrants, for example visible in their continued preference for arranged marriages (vs. "love marriages") and in their emphasis of "family values" (see Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Upadhya, 2006, 2008; Upadhya & Vasavi, 2006). In discussing the paradoxical relations between Indian IT professionals' global career paths, international exposure and cultural conservatism, Carol Upadhya and A.R. Vasavi write that while working in a global industry seems to have given rise to a certain kind of cosmopolitanism among Indian IT professionals, "they nonetheless cling to older middle class social values and attempt to reproduce what they regard as the traditional Indian family structure" (Upadhya & Vasavi, 2006, p. 103). The traditional family structures are evident e.g. in the IT professionals' dedication to care for elderly family members and in the fact that married women are not expected to – or in some cases not allowed to – work outside the home in India (Upadhya & Vasavi, 2006, p. 109-113; see also Varrel, 2011a). Although many of the returnee women I met had continued their professional careers after moving to Bangalore, others had taken some years off work to focus on their family and/or to do voluntary community work. Many of the returnee women who did not work while living in Bangalore

intended to go back to work – “back to the rat race” as they referred to it – at the time of a likely future re-migration abroad.

In line with the arguments of the above-mentioned studies I found that cosmopolitan lifestyles and traditionalist attitudes to family and gender relations coexisted among returnees. While many of the returnees I met – both men and women – proudly described themselves as “global Indians,” and recognised the influence of their migratory experiences in their global becoming, other returnees – mostly men – were happy to reproduce what they described as traditional Indian values, including patriarchal family structures and gender relations. For many in the latter category, wanting to preserve and protect their “Indianness” had been a key motivation for the return move. This kind of motivation resembles what is referred to in return migration literature as return migration driven by conservatism (Cerase in King, 2000, p. 12), implying that the migrant has remained oriented primarily towards the values and traditions of the home country throughout the stay abroad. The wives of some of these returnee traditionalists, however, sought to challenge their husbands’ conservative ideals. Often, it was the returnee women’s discomfiting sense of restriction after the return to India that brought about their attempts of creating changes in their husband’s – and others’ – attitudes. In their post-return bids to re-sculpt expectations of Indian women’s roles and behavior in the family and in society, the returnee women used the sense of freedom and independence and the observations of gender relations they had gathered abroad. Some chose quite unusual means to inspire change. One of them was Nalini.

Nalini’s story

After some introductory small-talk, Nalini and I leave her father in the living room and retreat to one of the flat’s three bedrooms with our cups of coffee. We sit down on the mattresses on the floor and Nalini offers me “cheese bites” from Pizza Hut for lunch. She had stopped in a mall to buy them on

her way home from a job interview earlier in the day. She was overjoyed because she had been offered the job, and she hoped that this would prove to be the turning point she had longed for in an otherwise dreadful post-return period.

Nalini had returned to India with her family just a few months before I first met them in late 2011. She and Gopal had met as students in Mumbai, and following what Nalini described as “my own decision,” they had gotten married: “so it is like a love marriage.” The family had been away for five years, living first in South Africa for two years and then three years in the US. From the beginning, Nalini had been supportive of, and shared, Gopal’s wishes to leave India in search of better research opportunities. She had accepted to quit her good job in Mumbai and “slog along” in lower job positions abroad than her PhD degree should have qualified her for. The subject of return to India came up when Gopal was offered a position as manager in the research department of a major government cooperation based in Bangalore. Weighing this against the US recession, the insecure academic career path and factoring in that his mother had been diagnosed with cancer, Gopal wanted to return to India. When I later interviewed him, Gopal explained his experiences abroad and the decision to return:

Resettling in India has been the most easiest thing for me, I would say. For some reason, I always felt that I was under tremendous pressure in the US. One was the work pressure, second was the family pressure [I was] kind of having since my mother was ill and all these things. [...] A postdoc is not paid very much in the US. So, all this financial constraints were also there. I have two daughters and so somehow their stability was also much more important, family stability was also very important for me.

Once he caught a good job break in Bangalore, making the decision to return to India was easy, Gopal said. Nalini, on the other hand, was firmly set against

it. After two periods of maternity leave, she finally felt that her career in the US was getting on track, and she appreciated the many outdoor leisure opportunities in the surroundings of their rented flat in Louisiana: “I enjoyed it actually [being abroad], but my husband did not – he never understood the Western culture. He never enjoyed it there,” she said.

With Gopal determined to return to India, Nalini faced intense pressure from him, his parents and her own family members to go with his decision. In dealing with Nalini’s averseness Gopal was particularly happy about the support he had received from his father-in-law: “I remember that my father-in-law he really supported me in a very nice way. I mean, my wife was completely opposed to coming, but he used to tell me that ‘you come back and just do it.’” After months of discussions, Nalini eventually caved in. Her unhappiness about returning to India, she now explained, stemmed from feelings of having to give up on the things she dreamed of in order to follow her husband: “So many times I have had to resign [my job] because of family.” Gopal, besides being very loving and caring, was very “traditional,” she said, clarifying that this meant that he preferred her to stay at home now that they were back in India and he had a reputable job. Nalini was depressed by being “just a housewife” in Bangalore; unable to pursue her goal of a career in science. Yet, while Nalini followed her husband’s wishes in returning to India, she did not want to settle with being a homemaker. So, she applied for various jobs in Bangalore and other major Indian cities, hoping to end the situation where “at parties I am sometimes just introduced as the wife.” Nalini elaborated:

Outside India you are just yourself whereas in India you are first the wife, then the mother. In India, women are supposed to stay home and family comes first. If you don’t do that you are labeled as not being a good house-maker and people think that there is something seriously

going wrong with the marriage.

But, said Nalini bluntly: “I am not channelised for housework.” She did not like to cook what she called “Indian Indian food,” i.e. traditional recipes, and instead preferred “Western food [because it is] more health oriented.” Besides, she insisted on being an agent of her own time, meaning that she was not always at home to wait on guests even when the visits had been planned in advance. These “short-comings” (Nalini did quotation marks with her fingers) as a housewife made her a target of labels such as “crazy” from parts of her husband’s family and from neighbors who dared not socialise with her out of fear of being associated with her values or seen as condoning her behavior. Although Nalini described herself as a very performance-oriented person, the home sphere was just not what interested her the most: “I think there is more to life than packing lunch boxes and being supportive to your husband,” she said. Yet, this approach to home and family life was hard for Nalini to practice after her family’s return to India. In India she felt increasingly scrutinised by her family, by neighbors, by her husband’s work colleagues, by her daughter’s teachers and by prospective employers. Their joint mission was, she said, to judge her according to traditional patriarchal ideals of a good Indian woman being a non-working, ‘home-loving’ wife who places family first (cf. Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007, p. 138-139). Nalini was well aware that she would fall short of approval on such a scale of judgment. In comparison with the everyday scrutiny in India, Nalini’s life abroad had felt free. As we continued to talk about the years the family had stayed in South Africa and the US, Nalini was overcome with emotion and started crying. Looking at me with a tear-stained face she said about her life abroad, “it was like seeing the castle and not staying there ... I feel defeated.”

In the face of her obvious sadness, I asked Nalini about Gopal’s insistence on returning to India, even when she was so clearly set against it. Nalini

explained that she believed it sprang from Gopal's increasing fears about the lifestyle Nalini and their two daughters enjoyed in the US – although she knew that he was reluctant to openly admit this. She said:

Somewhere in his mind it was spinning that I was starting to change. I was wearing tight pants. I started cycling. I was very jolly and had lots of friends. So he got scared. He thought that I would be out of reach because I was becoming too free. And then we have two beautiful daughters. Our elder one was turning eight, right, and a few of his friends had told him that at the age of ten or 12 years the girls start to go out [in the US]. So, he got kind of scared and, as I told you, he is a very traditional person. So he could see that everything is dipping off [changing with us]. I mean, he would eat some Indian food and we three would be eating pizza. We three are drinking Coke, we three are enjoying our weekends more and more outside [the house]. Our clothes started to become shorter and shorter day by day. So it was nothing new for the local guys [the Americans], but it was very alarming for him. And then a few guys in the local Indian community, the hardcore ones [traditionalists], they told him that “you better pack it up now because it is going to be more difficult day by day” because they knew that I am a very opinionated person and if the girls also grow up and start having their opinions then it is going to be very difficult for him to battle against the three of us.

An unofficial men's club

Seeking a way out of the home in Bangalore and away from her mental state of depression, Nalini chose a measure that was quite unusual for a woman in India – she went cycling. She liked to take rides of 60 kilometers a day, leaving from their gated housing development and going through the villages surrounding Bangalore. Nalini also participated

in day-long races and week-long adventure challenges all across the country, and she successfully finished competitions abroad. Every time I came to visit the family, Nalini showed me her bikes, which took pride of place in an otherwise empty room in their sparsely furnished apartment, and she had permanently featured her love for biking with an artistic tattoo of a cycle inked on her upper arm. Nalini had done lots of spinning classes and taken her bike out for long rides in the US, and despite female cyclists being very unusual in India, she insisted on continuing this activity. This did not come without cost, though, as biking was still considered a man's sport and activity by most in India. Nalini explained:

There are now five or six ladies who are in the racing hall [club] and cycling in Bangalore ... out of like eight or nine million people. [Laughter]. Sometimes when I go cycling alone things happen. One day I was going in one village and one village guy came ... usually they pass comments, but I don't care. But one day this guy came and he tightly slapped my butt! It was very insulting. It just happened eight days before [ago]. So, I mean, it is not that easy when you try to break the boundary. You just have to bear the consequence of it.

In contrast to the environmental and ethical motivations cited by many of the new middle-class cycling enthusiasts in Bangalore (cf. Anantharaman, 2016), Nalini confided that for her biking in India had at first been therapeutic; an attempt to cling to the lifestyle she had led in the US and that she loved dearly. She said that her family had been somewhat ashamed of her behavior, yet they had allowed her to keep on cycling in the hope that it would lift her depressed post-return spirits. Also, Gopal “who is not a gym guy at all but very academic” quite admired her courage, strength and endurance and thus defended her against accusations from the family. Although Gopal, in Nalini's words, was a “traditional” man, his support of Nalini eventually

prevailed over traditional Indian ideals of wives as home-makers putting family first. While Gopal had been fearful of Nalini's changing ways when they lived abroad, he developed into a proud fan of her independent accomplishments after their return to India. Now, he often manages things in their home, sometimes with the help of his father-in-law, while Nalini is out on her bicycle. Gopal's vision of moving back to India and having a house-maker wife has thus seen some significant post-return changes. Driving much of this change in the traditional family and gender relations in their home has been Nalini's experiences of, and ways of handling, their (re)settlement in India.

As it happened, Nalini's attempts at rekindling her academic career in Bangalore have not worked out. Yet, her biking successes continue. She has twice been awarded the "national super randonneur" award for her cycling achievements and she has earned five sponsorships from large international sports companies. She is featured in cyclist magazines and national newspaper articles as a voice of inspiration for Indian women to take up sports, even if it seems, like cycling, to be "an unofficial men's club." Although unintended, her biking activities have opened up a new career path for her in India as invited motivational speaker to corporate leaders and as organiser of sports-based team-building and adventure events. Due to Nalini's perseverance, the condemnation of her admitted disinterest in housework has shrunk in the company of her accomplishments as a racer and endurance athlete. On the bike, Nalini has been able to beat the post-return blues and (re)settle into life in India in her very own way.

Conclusion

Although theirs is just one of many return migration narratives, I suggest that Nalini and Gopal's story exemplifies the way in which highly skilled Indian migrants' decisions to return – and their everyday experiences of post-return life in Bangalore – are multifaceted, encompassing aspects of both tradi-

tion and change, cosmopolitan and conservative influences. On the one hand, Indian patriarchal family and gender ideals continually influence returnees. On the other hand, by bringing back new ideas and practices returnees contribute to an ongoing process of change in family and gender relations in a globalising India. The case study of Nalini's experiences of return and (re)settlement in Bangalore points to ways in which female returnees to India overcome post-return restrictions to their careers and personal freedom, channeling the independence they have gained abroad in, at times, unexpected directions once back in India. The article thus contributes to shedding light on some of the gendered differences in highly skilled Indian migrants' experiences of return.

While she is still mourning her lost career in science, Nalini keeps busy with cycling events and treasures the boost of confidence her athletic skills gives. The ever-ambitious Gopal continuously applies for patents, dabbles with start-up ideas and looks for senior job openings in India, in Europe and in the Gulf region. When he catches his next "good break" the family will once again be on the move, following Gopal to wherever his career takes them. In all likelihood, Nalini will bring a bike along with her.

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To Stand on Her Own Two Feet: Women Empowerment at the Grassroots in Delhi

GUDRUN CECILIE E. HELLAND

The essay explores what the ubiquitous concept of (women) empowerment looks like in a state-civil society partnership development programme in Delhi at the grassroots level. The Mission Convergence Programme (MCP) was initiated in 2008, at a time when ambitions of transforming Delhi into a world-class city ran rampant through the governing bodies. Neoliberal ideals and targets have influenced urban governance in Delhi, and this essay sheds light on how this might affect social security projects aimed at the population of female urban poor. I achieve this by conceptualising the term empowerment, both on the global stage as well as in the Indian context, and then elucidate the Mission Convergence Programme and how it was received and used by the target group, namely urban poor women. Using data from of a qualitative study carried out in 2012, I find that the realities of daily life, gender roles and societal values affect the implementation of empowerment objectives in development programmes in Delhi.

Keywords: Urban poor, empowerment, public services, Mission Convergence Programme, governance, gender and development, Delhi, India, neoliberalism, gender dynamics

Indian development thinking and praxis have closely followed changing global paradigms of development. The contemporary developmental thinking in India is as such an integrated part of the global discourse, not least because of multilateral and intergovernmental developmental funding (Prakash, 2013, 29). Women empowerment, especially, has become both a means and an end within global and national development initiatives.

Globalisation, combined with neoliberalism, has led to a rapid change in urban Indian society, not least for women. They participate in the workforce to a greater extent, and gender roles and ideals are shifting as they are influenced by different practices from around the world. This is especially true for members of the diverse and growing middle class, but what about urban poor women?

The aspirations to transform Delhi into a 'global city' came as a result of the economic liberalisation that started in the 1990s, as well as a changing culture of consumption (Ramakrishnan, 2013). This transformation has not included all the inhabitants in the city. The emergence of a growing middle class identity has influenced urban governance and development, which has resulted in socio-spatial trends whereby the urban poor and working class are being removed from public space (Ramakrishnan, 2013, 101). However, the Indian state is legitimised in part because of its welfare system, and the urban poor and working class constitute a proportion of the electorate that the state cannot ignore.

Thus, the state must mediate between its neoliberal aspirations and its responsibilities towards its vulnerable citizens by introducing new techniques of governance and development initiatives that are aimed at the urban poor. I argue that urban poor women in Delhi experience changes that pertain to globalisation and are influenced by neoliberal ideals, and that they have increasingly become the 'ideal beneficiaries' for a plethora of national and international development projects based on a constructed notion of the 'Urban Poor Woman'.

The Mission Convergence Programme (MCP) was a government initiated, internationally acclaimed 'good governance' social security project that was implemented in collaboration with over one hundred non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across Delhi. It aimed to radically change the way the government related to the 'vulnerable population' and vice versa, by placing Gender Resource Centres - Suvudha Kendr (GRC-SKs) in the low-income areas of the city. The MCP adopted the classic development myth that poor women are the best agents to lift their families and communities out of poverty (Dhanju, 2011, 72). It thus maintained an explicit focus on 'women empowerment' throughout its objectives, and largely conflated 'gender' with women in its activities.

Drawing on Naila Kabeer's conceptualisation of empowerment (2001), this article explores how notions of women empowerment in the MCP might be interpreted and utilised by the MCP and its target

group, urban poor women. The article is based on fieldwork conducted in 2012 for my Masters' thesis 'Poor subjects or empowered citizens? Perspectives on rights and public service delivery among female urban poor in Delhi' that I submitted to the University of Oslo in 2013. During my fieldwork, I conducted eighteen semi-structured interviews with various actors involved in the MCP; twelve interviews with fourteen women from the target group living in low income areas, which included both women who were using the GRC-SK and women who were not; four interviews with GRC-SK employees from the nongovernmental sector; and two interviews with government officials from the central and district level of the MCP. In addition, I engaged in participatory observation in meetings, events, and the everyday operation of the center, and had informal talks with a wide range of actors. All names in the article are pseudonyms, to ensure the informants' anonymity.

In the next section I discuss the term 'empowerment' in the global development discourse and the Indian context, and then I turn to the MCP and its place in a postcolonial megacity that is governed increasingly through neoliberal ideals. Further, I discuss how the empowerment objectives of the MCP function at the grassroots level in their interaction with prevailing gender norms and societal values.

The 'empowerment' turn in development

The 1970s were characterised by the increasing visibility of women's issues, feminism and the situation of women in development worldwide. The first UN Conference for Women was held in Mexico in 1975, with the UN decade for Women following directly after (Waldrop and Nielsen, 2014, 3). In India, the landmark report by the Committee on the Status of Women in India was published in 1974, which resulted in the social and political realities of Indian women being put on the political and legislative agenda throughout the 1980s and 90s. The report revealed that even though Indian women had equal rights on

paper, the reality was different, especially regarding matters such as inheritance, political participation, health, workforce participation and education (Waldrop and Nielsen, 2014, 3). The situation for many women in India remains unequal, even though governments and NGOs are seeking to rectify this through various social security measures explicitly targeted towards women.

According to Aradhana Sharma (2008, 2), feminists working in development have played a significant role in globalising the concept of 'empowerment' as a favored strategy for promoting gender-equal and just development. Their ideas have since been re-inflected, appropriated and operationalised by international agencies such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank. Thus, as Sharma states, empowerment is not a transnational discourse that is applied to national or local realities; rather, the prevailing mainstream global discourse on empowerment is an effect and assemblage of several transnational circulations of empowerment ideas (Sharma, 2008, 2).

Even though 'empowerment' has reached an almost hegemonic status within international development discourse, it is not easily defined. Naila Kabeer (2001) offers a useful definition: Empowerment is the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied them. Kabeer makes a distinction between first and second order choices. Strategic life choices are the former, choices that have a greater significance for people's lives as they constitute its defining parameters. The latter, second order choices, might affect the quality of people's lives, but are less consequential (Kabeer, 2001, 19). The distribution of power is central to Kabeer's definition, and empowerment entails a process of change from being disempowered to being empowered. As empowerment is an explicit target for the MCP, it is interesting to look at how it might enable such a process.

According to Harriss, there is another, neoliberal conceptualisation of empowerment we could

consider a fundamental theme of the governmentality of the post-liberalisation state in India (Harriss, 2007, 2716). The World Bank, who once defined empowerment as '(...) the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives' (World Bank, 2002, cited in Harriss, 2007, 2716), has revised its definition of empowerment to one that corresponds more with neoliberal ideals: 'Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes.' (World Bank Poverty Net Website, 2007, cited in Harriss, 2007).

In comparing Kabeer's definition with the World Bank's definition in 2007, there is a shift in focus away from the distribution of power and towards increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to choose, which depoliticises the concept of 'empowerment'. Further, the contents have shifted towards neoliberal governance ideals. According to Sharma, empowerment initiatives help facilitate the neoliberal ideals of small and good government. As such, empowerment initiatives may allow post-colonial, developmentalist states like India to downsize their welfare bureaucracies and redistributive role by educating individuals and communities in the techniques of self-care and self-development as well as delegate their welfare responsibilities onto 'empowered people' and NGOs (Sharma, 2008, 42).

The Indian State's turn toward women's empowerment as a desired strategy and goal of development policies was the cumulative result of several intersecting local, national and transnational processes. The mushrooming of NGOs in the 1970's largely corresponded with the emergence of the second wave of the Women's Movement in India, with NGOs, which were often centered around women's issues, stepping up to deliver development where the state failed. This involvement of the NGO-sector in delivering development services was not without challenges, and has influenced debates in Indian feminism since (Roy, 2015).

In the 1980's many NGOs in India increasingly focused on women empowerment. The first State-led initiative focusing on women empowerment was the Women's Development Programme implemented by the Government of Rajasthan in 1984, a tripartite partnership between the government, NGOs and academic institutions (Sharma, 2008, 1). Many have followed, and the MCP falls into a long line of various nongovernmental, national, and transnational women empowerment initiatives in India that have been initiated over the last 30 years. Even though the concept of women empowerment might not be new, the meanings of the term have shifted considerably both throughout time and regional contexts. According to Kabeer, translating feminist insights to instrumentalist forms of advocacy and quantitative forms of measurement has had its costs, and empowerment has lost some of its intrinsic value in the process (Kabeer, 2001).

'Reaching the Unreached' in a world-class city

The Mission Convergence Programme was launched in 2008, a time when Delhi was preparing to become a 'world-class city', a process that further marginalised the majority of the urban poor (Dhanju, 2011, 77). The city was preparing to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games, and urban development was booming. This development was far from inclusive, and an estimated 140 000 urban poor families were evicted and 'resettled' because of the Commonwealth Games (Williams, 2010). Settlements in Central Delhi that could not be demolished were hidden behind large billboards before the opening ceremony, and remained obscured from view until the end of the Games.

According to Dhanju, plans to modernise cities to attract global capital are intolerant of the urban poor and the marginal spaces they occupy. She explains how the MCP grew out of an intersection of neoliberal urban governance and development; through projects like the MCP, the Indian state is carving its own developmental path and maintain-

ing an image of a paternalist welfare state. Concomitantly, there have been notable shifts in economy and governance towards hybrid forms of neoliberalism. Through development projects and ‘good governance’ initiatives like the MCP, the state introduces new techniques for governing the urban poor in an attempt to mediate between the diverging interests of urban poor citizens and global forces. The collaboration between the state and NGOs within such projects creates technologies of new paternalism by enabling the state to better access, supervise and manage the urban poor citizens (Dhanju, 2011, 77-78).

The MCP was to converge the 42 different social security services of nine different departments in the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and make social security easier to access for vulnerable populations. It corresponds to a global neoliberal ideal of ‘good governance’ with an agenda that has two main goals: to promote empowerment and citizen participation, and enhance the transparency, efficiency and accountability of governments (Desai & Sanyal 2012, 17, Dhanju & O’Reilly 2014). Based on expansive surveys, the MCP expanded the definition of ‘vulnerability’, to include not only economic vulnerability, but also social and spatial vulnerability. This led to the numbers of eligible beneficiaries increasing substantially, from approximately one to four million people. The majority of the activities of the MCP were directed towards urban poor women – both as citizens entitled to ‘empowerment’ and as the key to lifting their families out of the position of vulnerability. The objectives of the MCP were two-fold: to reform, streamline and extend the Governments’ welfare service delivery to the vulnerable population, and to empower urban poor women through vocational training, self-help groups, health and legal counseling and other activities, within the low-income areas in the city, in the form of GRC-SKs (Dhanju, 2011, 8).

The GRC-SKs were the operational arms of the MCP, and were meant to be the human interface between the MCP and the urban poor as well

as run activities decided by the central administration. By establishing the GRC-SKs in collaboration with community-based organisations (CBOs) within low-income areas frequently inhabited by the city’s vulnerable population, the Delhi Government established an administrative unit within the slums for serving the poor, and for including them within the government records and bureaucratic channels (Dhanju, 2011, p. 80). With the GRC-SKs within their localities, the urban poor would no longer have to go around the city to different departments claiming their entitlements. Further, by including and depending on NGOs for the implementation of the government’s welfare services, the MCP included the NGO-sector within the Government, making the Mission Convergence Programme a government organised nongovernmental organisation (GONGO) (Dhanju & O’Reilly, 2014).

In 2010 and 2011, The MCP won the gold medal in the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) awards. It was also awarded a United Nations Public Service Award in 2011. Both acknowledgements highlighted the innovative way in which the MCP ‘represented a paradigm shift in governance with concrete steps toward holistic human development with poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment as core objectives’ (UN, 2011). It ‘fostered effective community participation in governance by creating a bottom-up implementation structure that currently engages more than 100 CBOs. These centers have now enabled government to reach the doorsteps of the vulnerable’ (CAPAM, 2012). This was all very well, but what was it like ‘on the ground’?

Empowerment at the grassroots

The area serviced by the GRC-SK is located in East Delhi, and is comprised of three resettlement colonies that were created in the Indira Gandhi government’s slum clearances during the Emergency (Naraian, 2014, Banerji, 2005, 10). Two of the colonies were among the hardest hit in the riots following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984,

where several hundred Sikhs were brutally killed (Kesavan, 2014). The atmosphere is still perceived as tense, and communal riots, this time between Hindus and Muslims, erupted in the autumn of 2014 (Ghose and Hafeez, 2014). Several of the informants, both inhabitants and NGO-employees, emphasised the challenges of daily life in the colonies. The area was deemed as ridden with crime, alcoholism, gambling and loitering, and was perceived as unsafe, especially after dark.

Several NGOs have set up centers and activities in the area, predominantly catering to women and children. The GRC-SK and other nongovernmental centers influenced the daily life in the colonies. Many inhabitants used several of the centers in their vicinity simultaneously. For instance, out-of-school children often attended several centers offering remedial education, filling their entire days with learning even though they were not formally enrolled in school. Non-formal educational centers were very popular, both because of the learning opportunities they provided, and as a way for women to ensure their children were properly cared for while they tended to their daily chores. Likewise, several of the women interviewed attended multiple activities at different centers. If a woman started to attend one activity, she would likely learn about and continue to take advantage of other activities in the area, and incorporate them into her own and her families' daily schedule.

The benefits of various development initiatives might not be distributed evenly throughout the area as a result of the snowball effect the initiatives seemed to have. The neighbors in one block frequently shared information with one another which enabled women that did not visit centers regularly to obtain knowledge about services offered should she need them. However, the information did not always travel across lines of identity. Class, caste, religion or even distance from the centers seemed to influence the implementation of projects, as the area is largely comprised of neighborhoods divided along religious, caste and class lines. Activities at

the GRC-SK were held during the daytime, as were the ad-hoc mass awareness meetings held in the communities. As the triple role of women was not sufficiently taking into account in the implementation of the MCP, working women were largely unable to attend meetings or activities.

'Soft' empowerment and gender attitudes

As part of the empowerment strategy of the MCP, the GRC-SK offered two vocational courses: sewing and beauty-culture. These courses were very popular, to the point where the GRC-SK was called the *silai-kendr* (literally, the sewing-center) in the colonies. While the women picked up a new skill and a diploma, they also got to enjoy six months in an all-female space talking about daily life as well as their rights, women's issues and got advice on legal help. Most women enrolled in one course after the other, but one could see a subtle difference between two groups: married housewives predominantly attended the sewing course, whereas young women, not yet married, attended the beauty-culture course. Even though the vocational courses were intended to make urban poor women able to join the workforce, most of the women viewed them as activities they could attend in a safe space and spend time out of the house.

All of the women interviewed emphasised the change the center had brought to their daily lives, and would often highlight how spending time outside the four walls of their homes had allowed them to 'grow' as humans. "My life has absolutely changed. I can stand on my own two feet, I can work. My husband does not let me work outside, but because of the sewing course, I can work from home." (Interview, Urmila, 06.04.12)

In the quote above, Urmila makes two interesting points. First, she states that she now has the skillset to work, to 'stand on her own two feet'. In the next sentence, however, she states that her husband does not let her work 'outside'. In other words, her sense of agency had increased, but her

space to exert it, had not. Many of the women interviewed reflected on how they would use their new opportunities to exert agency within their social boundaries, especially by working from home. The sewing course would enable them to support their husband, predominantly the main breadwinner. This is an example of how empowerment components in development initiatives like the MCP do not break with societal gender norms.

There were also examples of men supporting female members of their family in their empowerment processes. Lalita, for instance, a 26-year-old mother of two attending the sewing course expressed:

It was my husband who sent me here. My husband was very cooperative, he says: Leave the children! I'll do half of the work at home, you do half - it's ok. Get out and do something, learn something, outside of the house, grow - both of us will manage together. He supports me a lot! (Interview, Lalita, 03.04.2012)

Sunita, an unmarried 22-year-old, had previously worked in a beauty parlour. She had now enrolled in the beauty-culture course at the GRC-SK to get her diploma. In addition, she was enrolled in a computer course and an English-speaking course at a private educational center in another part of Delhi. She shared with me her dream of opening her own beauty parlour in a 'better' area. She was ambitious, and told me how she would be very happy to go out and earn for her family, so that her father could retire. She was not in a rush to get married, and her family was not rushing her either: "My father says: do something, then marry. (...) He would be proud to see his daughter go out and do something on her own, earn on her own." (Interview, Sunita, 04.04.2012)

Many women would discuss the ways in which gender roles inhibited their movements. The majority of women interviewed, even Lalita in the quote above, would only come to the GRC-SK or go to

the market nearby on their own. We can say that the women empowerment component in the MCP is still largely in line with patriarchal structures in Indian society. It is not breaking the mold of societal customs, but is perhaps gently pushing on the borders. Thus, the Mission Convergence Programme promotes gentle reform, not explicit feminist revolution. According to Moser, this might be intended within the empowerment approach, as a too revolutionary approach to women empowerment might run the risk of appearing too extreme (Moser 1989, 1816). Because the GRC-SK was largely perceived as a safe space for women to spend time, a 'women's activity center', it was not perceived as threatening towards Indian family ideals.

The urban poor woman – the key to development?

The explicit focus on women empowerment on part of the government and NGOs did not go unnoticed within the communities. During the interview with Lalita, a friend of hers joined us. They elaborated on the activities of the GRC-SK and said, jokingly: "Some men now even say that 'ooh, there is so much going on for women, they are so much ahead of us now, this is unfair of the government towards men!" They continued highlighting that the government must also be happy to see women benefitting from the schemes. They took this to be one of the reasons why it kept focusing on women:

Here, I come to know about new government schemes, especially schemes pertaining to women. I feel good about it, because most of the time it is men that take advantage of schemes - there are more schemes for men than for women, but here I feel that women are on equal footing with men, there are as many schemes and opportunities for women. Here, women are no less than men. Here, we are even more than men! (Interview, Lalita, 03.04.2012)

While offering courses for skill building, thus aim-

ing to increase the women's agency and their capability to contribute and participate in the growing economy, the GRC-SK offered women a female-only space where feminism and women's issues were frequently discussed. This seemed to build a sense of community amongst women frequenting the center. Further, by being the focal point in the implementation of MCP, the women inhabited important roles in the colonies, as well as in their families, because of the knowledge they obtained. This knowledge might contribute to informally renegotiating power relations by improving the women's 'backstage' influence in decision-making processes without disrupting the public social order (Kabeer, 2001, 35).

Three young girls aged 18, 19 and 22, who attended remedial education at the GRC-SK, reflected on how the change within their society was unequal. The opening of centers like the GRC-SK had changed the lives of women, but not the community as a whole:

It has changed mainly women's life, they want to go out and do something more, and people want you to do something on your own. Otherwise, it's the same. Actually, opening this center has changed a lot of things for women, but not for men. So the crimes are still happening, you go to other places and all these crimes are taking place. (Interview, Sameera, 04.04.2012)

Focusing on women's empowerment in India is timely. However, exemplified by the quote above, women empowerment initiatives can only go so far without also including men more explicitly. Even though the community centers were called gender resource centers, they were for all intent and purposes intended for women. Following Moser (1989) we see that the global tendency of development discourse to conflate 'gender' with 'women', thereby failing to see the myriad of gender relations people face in their everyday lives, has an effect on the implementation and realisation of empowerment initiatives. Even though the MCP aims to reach the vulnera-

ble population in general, by explicitly focusing on women and being based on specific ideas of who the urban poor woman is, what she needs, does and wants, it may inadvertently serve to alienate large groups of the urban poor. By not taking into account the myriad of ways one can be a woman, it is solidifying the very gender roles it is implicitly trying to modify, and thus possibly alienating women who do not conform to MCPs ideas of the 'Urban Poor Woman.'

After highlighting that they now felt more confident and had learned how to state their opinions and demand their rights, the three women shared their wish for 'a happy life':

I would like to express my happiness openly. What is happening right now is that the men have the right to express openly, but we don't. I mean, we sit like this [and talk], but we cannot express our happiness. (...) Freedom is what we want. In this area it is so bad that when women go out to support their families they are cut with blades, they are raped, you know, there are all sorts of things that happen. So, I just want the entire atmosphere to change, and girls should be allowed to move freely on their own (...) We also have the right to go out and become something. The government should help us in this. (Interview, Hemlata, 04.04.2012)

Even though the girls felt more empowered and were more aware of their rights as women, their circumstances still prevented them from making strategic life choices freely. In other words, their scope to assert their agency had not widened – but they were acutely aware of its potential. They voiced their desire to express themselves as they saw fit without having to take precautions because of the atmosphere in the colonies. As young girls, they struggled with mediating between their ambitions and choices in life, the realities and perceptions of the area, and prevailing gender roles and their families' expectations.

Concluding remarks

Being empowered, according to Kabeer, is about being able to make strategic life choices within the contexts where this was previously denied. The World Bank's definition is to be able, both as individuals and groups, to make choices and to transform these choices into actions and outcomes. By these definitions, have the urban poor women targeted by the MCP become empowered? There is no easy answer to this question. As this essay has shown, the urban poor women targeted by the MCP managed their agency, and their empowerment, within the context of their daily lives, in ways that did not always correspond to the MCPs expectations. As 'ideal beneficiaries', their status as urban poor women and thus, their apparent need for empowerment initiatives influenced the myriad of ways in which the women organised their daily lives and engaged with NGOs and government bodies alike.

In their discussions on rights, empowerment, and the effects of the MCP, the majority of women interviewed highlighted that their lives had changed. They had become more knowledgeable about issues that concerned them, and because of the vocational courses, they were now able to 'stand on their own two feet' should the need arise. However, the MCP did not confront the hegemonic gender roles in Indian society, and thus, women found ways to exert their agency that did not challenge their place within their family and society overall. The GRC-SK, as an all-female space where women could spend time and chat, as well as come for legal and bureaucratic assistance, seemed very valuable for building a sense of community and self-worth amongst urban poor women. Thus, the GRC-SK contributed to the women's sense of empowerment and agency but did not challenge the circumstances in which they lived. As the Mission Convergence Programme conflated 'gender' with 'women' in its implementation, the overall effect on the community was lost. This is one of the pitfalls of making the 'Urban Poor Woman' both a means and an end in

development: Without trying to change the context in which she lives and including her as an active agent in development initiatives like the MCP, her ability to make life choices freely will remain constricted.

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UPHILL TASKS WITHIN KUMAON HIMALAYAN COMMUNITIES: Multi-dimensional Gendered Inequalities in Everyday Life

SIDDHARTH SAREEN AND CELIE MANUEL

This paper contributes an ethnographically informed understanding of multi-dimensional inequalities in rural mountainous communities through a gender lens that focuses on the roles women perform as biologically, culturally, economically and geographically marginalised actors. It is based on a four-month study in a rain-fed agricultural region of the Kumaon Himalayas, and spans two districts of the Indian state of Uttarakhand with different farming profiles. The study employs qualitative methods to examine the impact of globalisation on women within changing rural contexts, identifying several crosscutting gender-related issues. Data analysis follows a grounded theory approach and reveals sets of intersecting inequalities which disadvantage these women, who are in vulnerable circumstances, through processes of globalisation that work in an exclusionary manner. By explaining these inequalities in a situated manner while emphasising their multi-dimensional nature, we present a nuanced account of women's roles in these changing rural societies, and thus foreground the material conditions of gender difference in everyday life.

Keywords: Kumaon Himalayas, intersecting inequalities, inclusive development, rainfed agriculture, gender, vulnerability

The objective of this article is best explained within the historical context of gender and development in the Kumaon Himalayas. The Kumaon administrative division of Uttarakhand state in northern India is a mountainous region in the Himalayan foothills, characterised by rain-fed agriculture in the form of both subsistence farming and cash crops of fruits. In this state carved out of the northern reaches of developmentally-backward Uttar Pradesh state in 2000, infrastructure and governmental support remain a challenge, especially in hilly terrain that is home to remotely-located, small village communities (Kar 2007). A burgeoning population continues to exert pressure on the natural resource base it is heavily dependent on, such as forest wood for use as domestic fuel in rural households. The use of the Central Pahari language Kumaoni, spoken by over two million regional inhabitants, is challenged by the prevalence of Hindi as the official language for bureaucratic matters in the low-lying state capital Dehradun located in Uttarakhand's neighbouring Garhwal administrative division. This is symptomatic of the marginalisation of the general concerns of the Kumaon Himalayas and other hilly tracts in independent India's development planning and in a national push towards modernisation (Tomozawa 2014), which is embedded in the larger discourse of globalisation that has come to gain wide currency since the 1990s.

In the 1970s, independent India's Five-Year Plans for economic development aggressively promoted the Green Revolution as a national food security solution, investing in irrigated agriculture,

which favoured big commercial farmers in the plains but left out marginal farmers practicing rain-fed agriculture (Pingali 2012). Insufficient budget support to rain-fed agriculture, which comprises over two-thirds of India's farmland, has further marginalised farming communities in regions like Kumaon despite India's whole-hearted embrace of globalisation and recent emergence as a global economic force (Reddy & Mishra 2009). This is not for lack of progressive policies, which have steadily moved towards enabling inclusion through resource redistribution and affirmative action schemes as well as proportional representation premised on the recognition of differences along lines of caste, class and gender. Specifically, these efforts have taken the form of quotas for women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes within India's decentralised multi-tier self-government institutions, development schemes such as the Public Distribution System which disburses subsidised grains and other necessities to poor households, and employment schemes to create manual labour opportunities that offer local livelihoods at the minimum wage level.

On the one hand, research suggests that the implementation of such policies leaves much to be desired, falling well short of achieving their intended objectives. It is well established that government schemes in India are seldom free of corruption and are difficult to implement and access (Sukhtankar & Vaishnav 2015). In Uttarakhand and elsewhere, 'seemingly participatory institutions can exclude significant sections' (Agarwal 2001: 1623). Women

comprise one such significant section in Uttarakhand: they continue to face different and greater obstacles for benefitting from modernising forces than men in the same communities despite, or perhaps because of, burgeoning processes of globalisation (Sarin 2001). Traditionally, women are placed at a disadvantage in terms of accessing benefits from development in areas such as health, education and natural resource management; this in turn holds back community development (Mikkola 2005). Women also bear greater burdens from environmental conflict (Ogra 2008) and 'survival work' around the household (Fracchia 2006), and find development a mixed bag rather than something positive according to their experience of it (Klenk 2004).

On the other hand, literature on the gendered aspects of development in the region conveys a rather different impression. Uttarakhand, which boasts a high forest cover (65%) and a literacy rate (79%) above the national average (Chandramouli 2011), is often associated with the eco-feminist icon of the 'chipko' movement of women who used their bodies to protect trees from being felled in Garhwal in the 1970s (Warren 1988). These women have been recognised as resisting unsustainable outcomes of modernisation in the form of natural resource exploitation (Shiva 1988) and as resisting alcoholism amongst male youth as a linked social movement (Pathak 1985). This organising capacity of Uttarakhand's women has also been noted in their recent participation in the movement for statehood (Gururani 2014; Sharma & Sudarshan 2010). Their role is also cited in Kumaon's pioneering of community-partnered natural resource management through village-based forest councils (van panchayats) from the 1930s onward (Agrawal 2005). Given the discourse around these initiatives and the contrasting claims above that Uttarakhand's rural women remain highly vulnerable in globalising India, literature addressing the multi-dimensional and in particular gendered nature of inequality in the region continues to point in strikingly different directions.

We aim to address this ambiguity in the literature and further an understanding of what determines inequality in regional development along lines of gender (Nightingale 2006). The guiding intent of this paper is to highlight the multiple dimensions that relate to a gendered understanding of inequality in Kumaon Himalayan communities, as identified by local community members themselves when discussing life in the mountains in general. We guard against a reductionist tendency to essentialise women as being necessarily close to nature or vulnerable by adopting a perspective from gender and development literature that sees gender as socially constructed (Mitchell 1996), approaching it as 'a problematic construct that is constantly restructuring itself' (Tripathy 2010: 113).

The results we put forward are based on an in-depth qualitative study, complemented by a nuanced understanding partly informed by discussions with staff associated with a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with 25 years of regional experience and partly by field observations. We argue that for globalisation to truly deliver its promised benefits to these Kumaoni communities, the exclusionary tendencies of linked processes must be considered in order to address the intersecting, gendered inequalities that shape their everyday lives.

Methodology: Local variation and hybrid methods

This article is an outcome of an independent qualitative research study the authors conducted as volunteers with the Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG). Being located near CHIRAG's headquarters in Nainital district throughout the conceptualisation, the data collection and analysis phases of the project (October 2011 to January 2012) enabled insight into the ground realities of the region and communities under study. We obtained a historical understanding of regional development and details on basic characteristics of the communities from CHIRAG staff, and collected empirical data in villages where CHIRAG had conducted activities

targeted towards integrated development. Our association with CHIRAG thus served as a basis for introduction to interviewees during data collection.

We undertook fieldwork for two months across four separate areas with different agricultural systems in Nainital and Bageshwar districts. During this time, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 52 respondents (46% women) from separate households in 16 villages, interviewing between one and four respondents in each village. Each area had particular agricultural characteristics that impact women differently: households in Nainital district cultivated mainly fruit or other cash crops, while households in Bageshwar district primarily practiced subsistence farming. Moreover, we selected villages within each area that differed in key features such as distance from the road, access to forest resources, the lay of the land and the distribution of households within the village.

Interviews were conducted using an interview guide which aimed to give a deeper understanding of the broad-based development needs within communities. The three main foci in this guide were what the respondent thinks comprises a 'good life'; what the barriers to securing these components are for the respondent's household and community; and how individual agency and/or external support can enable a good life in this context. Rather than soliciting gender differences directly, we examined how such differences came to light naturally during discussions about everyday life and development overall (on situating knowledge and methodology, see Rose 1997). Interviews were conducted either in Hindi or, using an interpreter, in Kumaoni and Hindi, with both authors posing questions and one author translating simultaneously to English while the other took detailed notes.

We followed the constant comparative approach often associated with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 2009), and fashioned a design whereby the analysis and data collection iteratively informed and improved each other. We each conducted separate analyses, then shared our catego-

ries, jointly grouping them for each area. The same separate analysis and consultative process was repeated to pool categories across the four areas. We jointly identified the key categories based on emerging codes, and abstracted the crosscutting theme of gender inequality from trends observed across categories.

The codes within this particular theme comprise the self-expressed variables brought forward by respondents as reflecting gender inequality for community members. These codes form the focus of this paper and we present them as the key variables to target in order to address gender inequality and render processes linked with globalising India more inclusive in mountainous and other communities with rain-fed agricultural local economies.

Results: Multi-dimensional gendered inequalities

The study areas represent rain-fed agricultural districts in a mountainous region of India. These are areas with steep slopes and depleted natural resources, limited services (e.g. healthcare and education) and in some cases lack of connectivity by road. For the most part, people rely on farming to get by, with farming methods informed by tradition – what their families have always done – as well as to some extent suggestions by trusted traders. While Bageshwar district's population is predominantly Hindu (99%), Nainital district's population has a more mixed profile, with 85% Hindu and 13% Muslim people (Chandramouli 2011). Villages in our study areas were predominantly Hindu, with households comprising joint families based on a patriarchal system. Sons typically built traditional houses called bakhliis adjoining their parents' home after marriage, and inherited farmland from their fathers. However, one respondent mentioned that with televisions becoming more common, young people's expectations of life are changing: "Ever since television has come, things are changing. People want to live like what they see." [Elderly male respondent, Gajaar Village] This change involved moving away from joint fam-

ily structures. While fathers want to keep families together across generations, sons want their own family in a more nuclear family setting. At the same time, trends associated with globalisation brought about an increase in consumerism – or the desire for it. Our respondent noted: “Agriculture is not enough for that kind of life” as it comes with its own weather and climate-related risks [Elderly male respondent, Gajaar Village].

However, the possibilities for income generation outside of agriculture are still limited in these areas. Very few individuals in households within each village had formal jobs; in the rare cases that existed, these took the form of relatively well-remunerated government posts. More commonly, households subsisted on farming and generated some income from minimum-wage labour employment through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (known as NREGA) available to both sexes, in some cases combined with seasonal migration by men but never by women. In the study areas in Nainital district, fruit and cash crops also provided some income annually. A large portion of household needs were met through non-income-generating, natural-resource-based livelihood activities such as collecting firewood, water and housing material. Women bore the brunt of everyday labour demands associated with these environmental incomes and farming, with men chipping in where hard labour was required.

Several respondents mentioned a growing trend of people from ‘outside’ who have ‘deep pockets’ looking to buy second homes in the mountains. Seeing the potential for a quick win and better lives, some locals responded by selling off (parts of) their land. However, one respondent reported that selling land rarely led to better lives for the sellers, in fact, since “hardly anyone is able to use money properly” [Young female respondent, Newada Hamlet]. Despite money becoming available to buy assets like motorbikes and agricultural equipment or improving houses, these young female respondents agreed that selling land “ruins lives”, especially when more

liquidity resulted in higher consumption of alcohol. In another village, a young man replicated this sentiment: “If one’s land goes, everything goes – money does not last” [Male respondent, Chokhuta Village].

Exposure to the world and to modern lifestyles

Many men migrate to cities for work, leaving women and children behind in the village to take care of land and homes. Male and female respondents alike overwhelmingly spoke of the opportunities available in cities for making money and the ease of access to modern facilities and amenities there, while also pointing out the flipside of the coin: the hustle, the lack of clean air, and the lack of community. Similar to what respondents mentioned about the influx of television, exposure to city life and modern amenities has introduced a generational gap in life expectations and savoir-faire. One mother told us: “My own son studied in the city and feels alienated from us. These areas lack facilities” [Female teacher, Dhutiya Village]

This generational gap is overwhelmingly gender-specific; respondents, especially in the more remote study areas, pointed out that most women lack exposure to the world and have not even visited a city. One woman, whose husband had lived in Delhi for a time, spoke of cities as places where you could learn something, learn a skill. However, when prodded about what kind of skill she might be able to learn, her answer revealed unfamiliarity and a sense of disempowerment regarding ‘making it’ in the city: “How am I supposed to know? Doing a job in Delhi is difficult. Here in the village, you know the people and you have support. There you need to figure things out by yourself” [Female respondent, Nayal Village].

This sentiment was supported by other respondents. One fairly well-off woman in her late forties mentioned that although “girls are brighter than boys ... it is difficult for girls to adjust to life in outside places, if they’ve always stayed at home.”

[Female respondent, Bohrakot Village].

Other respondents voiced frustration at women being denied knowledge and the opportunity to work outside the village stating that since they are working at home, they don't get to know about development and support schemes and don't get the opportunity to benefit from them: "Since we have no knowledge, we get no benefits" [Elderly female respondent, Chaugaonchhina Village]. In relation to this experience, they mentioned as a positive example a very active woman in their community who "goes to meetings all over to learn things that can benefit the village", indicating that such knowledge sharing can help other women improve their lots.

Life opportunities

Women's opportunities in life were perceived to be much more limited than men's irrespective of a similar level of schooling for girls and boys in rural communities. Speaking of the experience of children growing up, a woman told us: "Now there's a pre-school, then they finish school, and then the girls are married off; they don't go to work. That's all there is in their lives." [Female respondent, Noyal Village]

While this reflection may be overly pessimistic – we did in fact meet female teachers, female heads of village, and women who had travelled all over India as spouses to men in the army – it seemed a common perception, and women, especially in the more remote areas, seemed to feel that opportunities for life improvement to a large extent passed them by.

A combination of high domestic work burdens and very few opportunities for paid employment keep women bound to house work. Tasks such as fetching water, fodder, cattle bedding and fuel-wood (often from kilometres away, or uphill), as well as farm work, tending to the cattle, cooking and looking after children, are all the responsibility of women.

When questioned about the opportunities for development of microenterprise – work that women could do at home, for instance – one young man who had worked both in Bombay and Delhi dubiously responded: "What's possible for women? They have so much work at home... maybe some stitching..." [Young male respondent, Chaugaonchhina Village]

One opportunity for income generation widely available to women is manual labour through the NREGA scheme. A village health worker in Satbunga Village told us that "it is mostly women who use the scheme, because men can earn more elsewhere. Women will get at least 100 days, maybe more."

Voice and empowerment

"I am not educated. I know nothing." [Female respondent, Gajaar Village, upon our requesting to interview her]

Despite the higher work burden of women, respondents generally said that men held control of household finances and it was not normal for women to have their own income. Knowing little about money and not having independent means of livelihood, women often lacked control over their lives: "Women have no idea about what the crops bring in – even though they do all the work, it's the men who bring crops to market and handle finances" [Male respondent, Gajaar Village]

While stating that for women's lives to improve, they needed to feel confident and empowered, respondents emphasised that the lack of legal entitlement would restrict such opportunities. In some areas characterised by a high level of male alcohol consumption, respondents stated that men squandered much of the money (e.g. on alcohol and gambling), and as women not earning their own income, they were forced to put up with this and even domestic abuse. When prodded about women's voice, one respondent retorted: "Voice? What voice? There's so much alcohol in the village, the men

come home and create trouble and then there's no food and you to go bed hungry [...] No woman can speak up against her husband." [Female respondent, anonymised village].

This woman had been chosen as sarpanch (head of village) as a result of an imposed quota for women and her being the most educated. In addition, she worked as a community health worker but told us that despite doing all the household work: "I still get sworn at for working outside and yelled at – what is a woman in that position to do?"

Domestic problems would often not be addressed within the community, not even in more serious cases by public law enforcement officials, because, as she said: "We feel afraid to go out and ask the police" and despite the fact that the sense of community between women was strong and developed through the time they spent sharing each other's company during daily chores like collecting grass and fetching water: "There's no unity for doing anything about these things".

In other villages, the experience of the women was not as dismal. One female respondent said: "Sometimes the woman has to listen to the elders or to the husband, but sometimes the husband also has to listen. In this house, it's equal."

This respondent also reflected on women's need to ensure their own agency upon moving to their husband's village as a bride, while still recognising that not all women are able to:

Regardless of whether I'm right or wrong, it's important that I speak. Otherwise ... they'll think I don't have the right to speak. In some places, it's like that – the woman will hesitate so much, she won't even tell us her name. [Female respondent, Udaidkhani Village].

The lack of women's individual empowerment was also reflected in their rights to their own bodies. Respondents said elders within the household, sometimes with inputs from village elders, decided how many children a woman should have, and women

felt the pressure of tradition to make ritual sacrifices after giving birth, especially to a son, such as being obliged to have a very restrictive (and unbalanced) diet for a long period after the birth despite breastfeeding. Tradition also prevented women who were widowed early from remarrying, although in some cases this had certain positive implications: "Widows have better economic conditions [i.e. without men] because they do not spend money on other things", estimating that some men spent almost two-thirds of monetary household income on alcohol. [Male Respondent, Gajaar Village]

Discussion: The gendered impact of globalisation in the Kumaon Himalayas

The above findings on exposure to the world and to modern lifestyles, life opportunities, and voice and empowerment, reveal a persistently gendered picture of Kumaoni development even as globalisation changes people's aspirations. Villagers are drawn by modern lifestyles and dissatisfied with a future based on the uncertainties and economic limits of subsistence agriculture; yet selling farmland is generally regarded as a mistake since inhabitants lack financial management skills, which renders other investments less secure than land ownership. Indeed, women continue to worry about male spending on alcohol (Pathak 1985), except now with the threat of losing irreplaceable windfall gains from the sale of land. Despite the lure of urban jobs, only men migrate seasonally for work while women shoulder heavy domestic 'survival work' like fetching fuel wood and water, tending to children, cattle and farmland, cooking and doing routine house maintenance tasks (see also Fracchia 2006).

As the sub-section on exposure to the world and to modern lifestyles shows, this gender divide extends to opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills, which are consistently denied to rural women despite their wish to participate in life beyond their village and traditional subjugated roles. In this manner, gendered roles are socially constructed (Mitchell 1996); exceptional cases demon-

strate that some empowered, proactive women can encourage and mobilise others to redress such entrenched social inequity (Mikkola 2005). Yet this sort of exception is at quite a remove from the powerful roles ascribed to women in pre-globalisation community forestry (Agrawal 2005) and environmental resistance (Shiva 1988) movements in Uttarakhand's history.

The sub-section on life opportunities shows that while development schemes do provide women with some local livelihoods, these are not accompanied by political representation and inclusion, as Sharma and Sudarshan (2010) argue for rural Uttarakhand, but rather by acute awareness of the highly circumscribed nature of their options (Sarin 2001). By and large, as Klenk (2004) also argues, women's futures are determined in line with traditional gendered expectations. Being born female drastically restricts their life choices to marriage, back-breaking domestic duties and farm work, in a manner reminiscent of 'participatory exclusions' systematically premised on gender (Agarwal 2001).

Most worryingly, the sub-section on voice and empowerment reveals the enormous power men wield over women, especially within the household, in terms of financial decisions, domestic violence linked with alcoholism, and child-bearing. Many women are not allowed to co-determine how household income is spent, whether land is sold or not, how and where they live their lives, and sometimes even how many children they may have. This marginalisation is based on intersecting biological, cultural, economic and geographical dimensions of life in the mountains (also see Elmhirst & Resurreccion 2008). Women's lack of individual empowerment is visible in terms of their limited access to knowledge, independent income, voice, and legal protection (Klugman et al. 2014). This points to multi-dimensional, gendered inequalities: women are multiply marginalised to such an extent that they are culturally, economically and geographically unable to address the gendered inequalities they face due to their biological identity (Rocheleau et al. 2013). The

dynamic nature of gender (Tripathy 2010) is weakened by limits over women's will and agency.

The findings of this qualitative study thus show marked differences in Kumaoni men's and women's knowledge of and exposure to the world outside their agrarian mountain communities. We saw little evidence of modernisation of agriculture despite the Green Revolution (Pingali 2012; Reddy & Mishra 2009). Rather, in these areas, globalisation has enabled quick access to money for men based on selling land to 'outsiders' and given rise to aspirations of the youth to live modern lifestyles, neither of which appear to be sustainably improving lives in these communities. Stories of children educated and working in cities feeling alienated from their parents and from their home communities, of young men frustrated at seeing amenities on television that remain unavailable to them, and of alcohol and one-off influxes of too much money 'ruining lives' (villager's words) present a picture of the burgeoning processes of globalisation not being routed in beneficial ways towards these mountain communities (Tomozawa 2014). This study shows women to be disadvantaged in these and most other processes (Nightingale 2006).

The bias in favour of males is also reflected in demographic statistics. Uttarakhand's female to male child sex ratio (0-6 years) is 890 (girls for every 1000 boys) which trails behind India's national female to male child sex ratio of 919 (Chandramouli 2011) suggesting a disheartening likelihood of female foeticide despite laws banning prenatal sex determination, as well as better nutritional outcomes for male infants. Almost 15% of women between 20-24 years of age are married before the age of 18, and a gender literacy difference between the sexes of 17 percentage points (pp) persists with 87% of males being literate compared to 70% women in Uttarakhand (ibid.).

The trends emerging from this qualitative study suggest that addressing Uttarakhand's developmental challenges within globalising India entails apprehending the variety of exclusionary ways in

which globalisation does or does not affect the lives of people and the implications thereof, especially for women, in Uttarakhand's rain-fed agricultural communities (Afshar & Barrientos 1999; Mikkola 2005). We have demonstrated some specific forms these exclusions take in two mountainous districts of Uttarakhand. These remain rather removed from the stories of globalising India as an emerging power that have otherwise captured the popular imagination courtesy the spectacle-making of nation-building that dominates mainstream discourses.

Conclusion: Addressing gendered inequalities for development

Our study provides evidence of deep-seated gender inequality within communities, which is being compounded rather than mitigated by modernisation and globalisation processes. Marginalisation based on gender was present across communities regardless of differences in remoteness and livelihood profiles (cash-crop versus subsistence farming). Government schemes and larger processes linked with globalising India have done little to target these realities of everyday life in the Kumaon Himalayas that are so critical towards the integration of mountain communities in the national and global economy (Sukhtankar & Vaishnav 2015). Interventions by public services and actors in development in this and comparable regions need to acknowledge and address these intersecting inequalities (Kabeer 2010; Kar 2007). This study suggests that to truly empower communities and bring the purported benefits of globalisation to them, development interventions must respond to gendered inequalities by targeting the factors that exacerbate or keep them entrenched. It furthers our understanding of what these factors currently are in the Kumaon Himalayas.

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“THE DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW HAVE BECOME THE MOTHERS-IN-LAW”:

How New Forms of Capital Create Class Differences Within North-Indian Households

CECILIE NORDFELDT

The article explores how larger socio-economic transformations affect authority structures in rural households in the Indian Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, focusing particularly on women. It is based on 23 months of ethnographic fieldworks in 2002–3 and 2008–11. I argue that new forms of economic, cultural and social capital available to young women and men work together to create differences in terms of class within multi-generational households in such a way that some younger women may gain a stronger position in their marital home than women had before. While others have studied changes in women’s position as a result of their education—a new and valued form of cultural capital—this article sees women’s position also in connection with their husbands’ status and larger socio-economic changes. These remote communities are today woven into national and global job and commodity markets. While married women remain subsistence farmers in their husbands’ village, men often migrate, in search of waged work. Men who succeed professionally can marry more attractive wives, and a girl’s education contributes highly to her attractiveness. Such women obtain authority not only based on their education, but also on their connection to respected husbands, as the couple may realise new capital possibilities unavailable to other household members.

Keywords: : India, economic change, gender, household, education, class

During fieldworks in the Chamoli and Rudraprayag districts in the Uttarakhand Himalayas, I was often told, by men and older women alike, that “today the daughters-in-law have become the mothers-in-law.” Younger women, however, did not express this inversion of authority in relationships between older and younger generations of housewives within households. Marriages are arranged, and upon marriage, young women have to adjust to the style and demands of the elders in a new family, as they are incorporated into the until-then unknown house and village of their husband. There they typically live in extended households with their mother-in-law and father-in-law, their husband, his brothers and their wives, and any unmarried youths of their husband’s lineage. This has widely been described as a vulnerable social position for wives (Jacobson & Wadley 1999; Lamb, 2000; Nordfeldt 2006; Polit, 2006).

In their natal village, girls today both study and participate in farming. Changes in young women’s confidence, as suggested in the previous quotation, may in part be contributed to their new educational status. Education may help secure girls a good marriage, preferably to an employed husband as an educated wife is seen as an asset for future offspring. A village woman claimed: “I gave one daughter a lot of dowry, and the other less. (...) The one who had less education had to be given a larger dowry.” Their final level of education in part depends on access to secondary and tertiary schools in their vicinity (Forerer, 2012). While the older mothers-in-law married in their early teens, without having set foot in a school, today’s brides in the area I studied, which had been served by roads and buses for a couple of decades, are in their late teens to late twenties and have often completed year 10, high school, or even college. Their increased maturity and their education make them confident at the age of marriage, in contrast to when their uneducated mothers-in-law married. This corresponds well to theories and studies which find that education strengthens women’s capacities as social participants (e.g. Kabeer 1999,

Sen 2000). While changes in women’s situations can and have been studied as an effect of their own status, such as their education and employment (Gjøstein, 2014; Vandsemb, 2014) and new technologies (Tenhunen, 2014; Winther, 2014) I believe that important insights into changes in women’s situations in North-Indian households are gained when looking at the husband-wife dyad and taking larger socio-economic transformations into account. A new capitalist economy, along with a parallel revolution in education, is slowly affecting relationships between the women in rural households through micro-processes which are less well known than processes of household change in urban settings (e.g. Donner, 2005). Husband-wife couples are, as I will show, able to increase social, cultural and economic capital vis-à-vis the other members of the household, and there may thus emerge a class difference within the household itself. In the next section, I will explain how I see this as being connected to global trends, and follow with an outline of the organisation of rural households. I shall then show, using an elaborated example, how women’s education and husbands’ careers can work together to alter structures of female authority. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of class as a relatively new factor in structuring households.

Life and work at the fringe of global change

Globalisation refers to the widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness (Balachandran & Subrahmanyam, 2005), characterised by disembedding, standardisation and acceleration (Eriksen, 2007). Points of reference vary with some referring globally to the period after the Cold War, or locally to the simultaneous economic liberalisation during the 1990s in India, and others refer to these processes in terms of centuries (Balachandran et al., 2005; Eriksen, 2007). Global interconnectedness is unevenly distributed (Assayag & Fuller, 2005), and this article explores globalisation at its fringes, the effects of the commodification of

food and other market goods in local communities where a need for money as a standardised, universal means of payment has risen. The green revolution in 1960–70s India that involved scientists, engineers, funding and policy ideas from Mexico, USA, and India (Kingsbury, 2009) was a global project that affected life in the Himalayan hills. It created a food surplus and a food market in the region - first through the Public Distribution System (PDS) for subsidised food (Banik, 2000) and later through an increasing number of rural private stores. Another effect of food surplus, when combined with storage facilities and distribution chains is that it enables urbanisation, since the labour force that was previously tied up in farming can move to urban centres where new types of jobs can thus be developed. Policies of education in post-independence India, which create the basis for a workforce for the future economy, are also part of a global trend of standardising knowledge production and certification, and connect to a global development agenda (UN, 2016). The economic liberalisation of the 1990s has accelerated the process of commodity demand (Wilhite, 2014) and created new jobs, while work migration to (and new commodity access in) the Persian Gulf and other places around the world provides entirely new opportunities to Uttarakhand youths. Even though a small percentage of youth from the area I have studied migrated to serve mainly in the army, as private cooks, or in similar menial jobs in the last century, the trend has exploded in the last few decades, leaving few young men behind today.

Married women's economic activities today represent a continuation of the past. Women's hard work in the forests and farms remains an important component in local identity (Dyson, 2010; Gururani, 2002; Nordfeldt, 2006). Women are, at the same time, also responsible for cleaning, cooking and nurturing children. In the region I studied, a majority of men were farmers alongside their wives 50–60 years ago as well. At that time, the men were in charge of construction and repairs, ploughing, assisting in some agricultural chores and cattle

grazing (Sax, 1991). Though there has been regional variation in the number of men migrants, in my focus village only a couple of handfuls of men of the current grandparents' generation had migrated. Among these, most served as soldiers in the army, at least one was a school teacher, three were chefs and two were government clerks. Today, all men are expected to earn money, which for the most part necessitates migration (Strand, 2003). In around 200 households, only a few handfuls of men under the age of 40 live permanently in the village. For reasons such as talent, personal contacts, job scarcity, diversification of career-investment in siblings, or the wish to keep at least one man close to home some of the time, young men of the same household end up with more varied life trajectories than those of their fathers and grandfathers a generation or two ago.

Authority Structures within the Household

In kinship terms, women who are married to one of several brothers are ranked according to the age, and thus seniority, of their husband. Young women are directly supervised by their mother-in-law. She decides the division of chores and controls what to cook and when to eat. Mothers-in-law used to carry the key to household granaries around their necks. Older men talked about this as a symbol of their power. However, granaries do not hold the same position today: though the yields from the land are scarce, the PDS and local stores provide additional basic food, and therefore diminish the necessity for severe rationing. Control over and distribution of food remains nevertheless an indicator of power. In the example that follows, one of the daughters-in-law controls everyday food choices, and it is telling of the distribution of authority.

In 2008–9, the housewives of this anonymised household, Parvati (55yrs), Sakuntala (30yrs) and Rekha (25yrs), performed parallel and complementary tasks, which all served to uphold the day to day needs of the family. Tasks were distributed

according to kinship status, but were affected by what I understand as their class rank. Thus, as I will show, Parvati, the mother-in-law, who has the highest-ranking kinship status, would tiptoe around her eldest daughter-in-law, Sakuntala, who wielded substantial authority as the wife of the main provider for the household, and she was also well-connected and educated.

Precarious Balance of Authority and Work

Parvati, the mother-in-law

Parvati was married to Ragvir Singh, a farmer. She was petite, with dark hair, shining brown eyes and a warm smile. Like other older women, she was the regular babysitter during daytime and performed various chores near the house. Parvati seemed to be in perpetual movement, from one corner of the courtyard to the other, inside and out again, upstairs and down, to the cowsheds and back. She showed with her eyes that she was concerned about what her daughter-in-law would say if she took a break. A few times she expressed sadness that her daughters-in-law had failed to call her in for a meal and had eaten without her.

Parvati had been married in her early teens, and had never been to school. One brother had a factory job. She had one daughter, who was married and had moved to her in-laws' village, and four sons. Parvati's relationship with her husband Ragvir was strained. She explained how his failings affected her position in the family:

There are two sons yet to be married, but he does not care. My older son fulfils all the responsibilities. He even found the husband for his older sister. His father does not have any worries in the world. (...) When my own husband does not look out for me, then what can I say to my son and daughter-in-law? I do so much work, yet my daughters-in-law do not

care for me. I have to listen to them! (...) The younger one even answers back at me. (Parvati, transcription from a recorded conversation)

Parvati had had a strict mother-in-law who made her work hard and never gave her enough food. Today, she should have been the woman with power to decide over work and food, like other mothers-in-law. Instead her youngest daughter-in-law dared to talk back, and she herself seldom went into the kitchen to eat before her daughters-in-law called for her (food is served according to seniority). She relates this squarely to her husband's lack of support, and more importantly, to his lack of practical contributions to the household having tacitly left all responsibilities to the eldest son. While the husband-wife relationship could have evolved in a similar way within the old economic system, in the past sons rarely took such radically different avenues, and daughters-in-law were less assertive. As it was, the eldest daughter-in-law, Sakuntala, wielded a different authority.

Sakuntala, the eldest daughter-in-law

Sakuntala was married to the eldest son, Harpal (35). She was strong and well-built, she had a calm heartfelt laughter and a motherly authority. She was quick to invite people to sit down and share a cup of tea and a story.

During the months I lived in her village, Sakuntala mostly stayed near the house looking after her and her sister-in-law's children, preparing the midday meal, cleaning, going to the cowshed and sharing other chores with her mother-in-law. In the evening, she helped her younger sister-in-law with cooking or looking after children in the kitchen. Importantly, she often decided what and when to eat; a neighbour confided that she suspected that Sankuntala sometimes skimmed off the cream when she brought milk from the cowshed to the kitchen.

Sakuntala married in her early twenties after finishing two years at college through remote cor-

respondence. Her father had been a bank clerk. Her brothers were well-educated and held coveted government jobs. Her family owned enough land to sustain themselves in her natal village.

Sakuntala's bond with her husband was strong. Harpal was well-educated. Thanks to their combined connections, he had landed a government school job in the region. The position was well-paid (his salary rose from 12000 to 19000 rupees [160-250 euros] during my stay), and provided security and high social status. Harpal was the family's main custodian. He represented the family in weddings and funerals, he planned and oversaw maintenance, he helped his brothers find jobs and suitable wives, and he generally did whatever was needed.

Being the eldest daughter-in-law grants some privilege. Having a good education and coming from a rich, respected family grants additional privilege. Being the wife of the main caretaker, and having a good relationship with him brings enormous advantage. Both her younger sister-in-law, Rekha, and her mother-in-law treated Sakuntala with respect, lest she complain about them to her husband. To Sakuntala however, the position came with responsibility. On one rare occasion she was upset, and complained: "They all think they are the hardest workers. But the hardest job is done by the one who has to look after it all! Lifting a stone may tire your body, but thinking for everyone, that wears you out - that's a real job!"

Rekha, the younger daughter-in-law

Rekha was married to the second eldest son, Rajpal (32). She was small, but strong, and while Rekha had a temper, she was mostly cheerful, always ready to crack a joke and have a laugh, even after a long day's work.

Though she was pregnant during my main stay, Rekha did all the heaviest and dirtiest chores, and took them up again a few weeks after giving birth. Rekha spent long days working in the fields or in the forest gathering wood and cattle fodder. She

made the first cup of tea for everyone in the morning. She prepared unleavened bread (roti) and most of the vegetables, over open fire, morning and evening, and did the dishes after most meals. Sakuntala and Rekha usually ate together in the kitchen, mostly with the mother-in-law, or after calling for her. If Rekha thought that she was the hardest worker of the women, she never told me so. Rekha had a good relationship with Sakuntala, they spent evenings in the kitchen chatting and laughing. It was only after the two younger brothers of the family got married that she ever expressed to me, during a shorter visit, frustration over the amount of work she did.

She married in her early twenties, after taking the exam for the first year of college. Her natal family did not own much land, and could not survive on farming alone, but her father had been a soldier, so they could rely on a small pension. One brother was in the army, and the other worked in a factory on the plains.

Rajpal, her husband, had abandoned school after 10th grade and worked as a kitchen aid in Bombay, which was a typical job avenue for younger men in this area. He had come home for a month or two every year since they married, and he had high respect for his wife and the work she contributed. Though he earned a fair wage, 6000-7000 rupees, most of which he sent to his brother every month, he took no part in planning for the larger family, but left that to his elder brother, whom he respected immensely.

Incorporating new women to the household ... and splitting up

The family, and the group of women, had been in a state of balanced cooperation during the months of my core fieldwork. They were all working towards the marriages of the two youngest brothers, Devpal (30) and Mukesh (28). Devpal had quit school after 10th grade and worked on a three-year contract in the Persian Gulf, where he, along with many other young men from the area, worked in a restaurant,

earning 20–30000 rupees a month. Devpal married an attractive, high school-educated woman who quickly adjusted to the household.

Mukesh, the youngest brother, held a college degree but was unable to find a job, and ended up dependant on his eldest brother to provide contractual work for him. It was harder to find a bride for Mukesh. Harpal was adamant that the prospective wife be well-educated in order to be an asset for the next generation. However, not many people were willing to marry a well-educated daughter to an unemployed man. When they finally did manage to find a bride that Harpal deemed 'talented', Mukesh did not dare to voice that he had some concerns about their compatability. He depended on his eldest brother for everything. The marriage is an unhappy match.

The compliant cooperation in the household fell apart after Mukesh was married. In less than three years after the last marriage, the household split up. Mukesh is still dependent on his eldest brother, so they have stayed together, but Devpal and Rajpal each set up separate households with their wives and children. The responsibility to care for the old mother and father is divided between the sons' new households.

As I have shown, the men of this family have separate careers. The capitalist market system allows for more independence than the earlier subsistence farming. Such a split of households, a short time after the last sibling had been married, is common today. Earlier, food scarcity and agricultural needs would have required more cooperation. Though most households in the past also split, it often happened later, ideally after the father passed away. An old woman from the same village expressed a common opinion: "For 26 years, we sisters-in-law lived together. The daughters-in-law in today's world refuse to stay in a joint family for even a day."

Such a split enables younger women to run their own household at the expense of mothers-in-law, who are dethroned. The responsibility to take

care of the older parents is then usually divided between the new households. An older woman may continue to care for small children while at the same time being pushed into the life stage of "old age" (Lamb, 2000) earlier nowadays than in the past when she could retain matronage for a longer period of her life.

Class within Households

In anthropology, households have been studied as central, self-contained units of production and reproduction, undifferentiated when it comes to economic status. I have shown above that differentiation related to kinship, age and gender are complemented by elements of class understood in terms of differentiated access to economic, social and cultural capital – three forms of capital that can be accumulated over time and that mutually support each other (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital entails access to material goods, social capital relates to access to formal and informal social networks, and education is, Bourdieu holds, a central component of cultural capital. Though this may not be true for every society, it holds true in Uttarakhand, where education not only grants access to a broader variety of prestigious jobs but is also an exchangeable asset for women on the marriage market. A well-educated daughter could marry a husband with a better-paid job and needs less of a dowry.

The class element stems both from women's backgrounds and their husbands' contribution relative to the other men of the household. In my example, the oldest adult son and his wife were well-educated; he had used networking and his education to find a good job, and could further marry a girl who was educated, rich and well-connected. They were able to use their advantages to attain new ones. It was the social capital, i.e. the network gained via his education and her family, which had helped him secure his current job in a local, government school. His economic advantage and his network made him useful and important to his brothers. This provided him and his wife with a central position in the

household, where the other members did not have comparable access to all three forms of capital.

It is noteworthy that the kinship element often reinforces the class element. The eldest brother is often afforded better education opportunities. He and his wife rank highest in kinship terms within their generation. This position represents an attractive prospect for a girl on the marriage market; therefore an older brother can often marry a more accomplished wife. Traditional expectations often make him take on more responsibilities for the whole family. But this is not always the case; I have seen families where a younger housewife has a stronger voice because her husband is the main caretaker of his generation. In the example above, it was the old parents who had lost their voice vis-à-vis the younger generation.

Conclusions

Though these remote villages are still home to subsistence farmers, global trends are slowly transforming daily life. The green revolution, urbanisation, PDS, village shops, job opportunities and education all contribute to speeding up transformations and reforming internal relations in Uttarakhand households. While a father may be next to illiterate, a son may be a government school teacher in a nearby village, another may migrate to Dubai and earn a substantial salary, though gain less prestige and control, while a third son may 'fail' both academically and financially. Their ability to marry attractive wives differs, and their ways part.

While education was important for the relative position of the women of the household amongst themselves, I have also argued that their relationship with their husbands and the husband's relative contribution to the household are central factors in modifying the women's position. Hence, even if Sakuntala and Rekha had similar education levels, Rekha's control over work division in the household was minimal, not only because she was lower in kinship terms, but also because her husband contributed less to the household and partly depended on

Harpal to find employment. Furthermore, her family was not rich or well-connected like Sakuntala's. In brief, many factors contributed to her lack of control over food and work decisions.

Parvati's relative lack of authority and control was more surprising, given that she was not yet old and was the senior woman of the household in kinship terms. Her husband did not support her, but it was his disengagement in caring for the family as a whole that constituted her main explanation. In a situation where their son had entered another level of achievement and their daughter-in-law was educated and confident, Parvati's lack of authority was deepened compared to what it would have been in the past economic system. The threat of a household split provided a further weakening of her authority and influence. During my main fieldwork, the family was still living under one roof. Parvati could still partly tell the younger housewife what to do, but her lack of control over food gave evidence of how, to an extent, the "daughter-in-law has become the mother-in-law".

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